

LAKE ELSINORE:  
A SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA AFRICAN AMERICAN RESORT AREA  
DURING THE JIM CROW ERA, 1920s-1960s,  
AND THE CHALLENGES OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
COMMEMORATION

by

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## **Abstract**

As soon as African Americans could afford leisure experiences after the end of American slavery, they joined Euro-Americans at resorts and in travel to other places domestically and overseas. Being able to take a vacation or an overnight trip for pleasure became a critical marker and entitlement of middle class status.

This thesis examines the Lake Elsinore resort in Riverside County, California, and the involvement of African American actors in the area's history and development during the period of legal segregation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century — an issue overlooked in the past. The cultural landscape of this African American resort community presents challenges and opportunities under current preservation policy for commemoration, because significant built artifacts are not extant in this heritage area. When physical traces are lost, how do we memorialize in the collective history a more expansive view of the citizenry, when historic preservation efforts in the United States emphasize tangible aspects of culture?



## Introduction

Since the time of the Greeks and Romans in antiquity, people have traveled to places away from their homes for pleasure, health cures, culture, self-improvement and spiritual rejuvenation, recreation, relaxation and distraction. Not until after the Industrial Revolution in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, did travel and vacations become a privilege that Americans other than just the wealthy or elite could enjoy. Being able to take a vacation — an overnight trip for pleasure, and not just a Sunday afternoon visiting an amusement park — became a critical marker and entitlement of middle class status. As soon as African Americans could afford leisure experiences after the end of American slavery, they joined Euro-Americans at famous and not so well-known resorts, first on the Eastern seaboard, later in other parts of the United States, and in travel to other places domestically and overseas. Some of these resorts continue to thrive today. Others are only a memory, if that.<sup>1</sup>

This thesis examines the Lake Elsinore resort community in Riverside County, California, and the African American visitors, residents and entrepreneurs who were actors in the area's history during the period of legal segregation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These Negro resort actors embraced the California booster dream of a leisure lifestyle with outdoor recreation and living for health and rejuvenation, along with the real estate development opportunity. At Lake Elsinore, African American families were able to enjoy one type of recreational setting offered by Southern

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<sup>1</sup> Maxine Feifer, *Tourism In History: From Imperial Rome to the Present*, (Stein and Day Publishers: New York, 1985), 167; Cindy Sondik Aron, *Working At Play: A History of Vacations in the United States*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999), 5.

California, during a very challenging and sometimes painful time in Californian and American history.

Other well-known and popular Southern California African American vacation and recreation destinations that flourished from the 1910s to the 1960s included Bruces' Beach in Manhattan Beach/Los Angeles County, Santa Monica Beach near Pico Blvd. (known by some as "The Ink Well"), Val Verde in Santa Clarita Valley/Los Angeles County, and Murray's Dude Ranch in Apple Valley/San Bernardino County.

Many happy times and memories were shared at Lake Elsinore and the other resort areas open to Negro Californians. Despite the trials African Americans faced from discrimination, they were able to find places to let their 'souls breathe and celebrate,' and where they could shed inhibitions. At these places, among themselves, Negroes could be insulated from racial harassment, avoid unpleasantness, and hopefully prepare for whatever might come when they returned home to their daily routines.<sup>2</sup>

Free time is one of the most treasured parts of our lives. The ability to choose how we spend our free time in many ways lies at the heart of what we understand the word 'freedom' to mean. This was especially true of African Americans during the period of interest of this thesis study, who were determined to

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<sup>2</sup> Mark Foster, "In the Face of 'Jim Crow': Prosperous Blacks and Vacations, Travel and Outdoor Leisure, 1890-1945," *The Journal of Negro History*, V. 84, No. 2 (Spring, 1999): 130-131, 135.

overcome the legacy of the forced labor of slavery, and its aftermath, the racial barriers imposed by Jim Crow laws, in order to enjoy leisure in their own country.<sup>3</sup>

As *de facto* and *de jure* segregation lessened and became illegal, and as the economies of traveling greater distances became more affordable for all Americans, more options for recreational activities became available to African Americans in particular. Some leisure sites frequented by African American Southern Californians from the 1920s to the 1960s in the Southland, as well as some of these types of vacation communities in other parts of the United States, no longer serve the needs of a population that now has many more opportunities to explore and travel to a far broader array of destinations.

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, resorts and leisure activities gained attention for scholarly investigation. Because there was no “requisite manufacturing base and an industrial working class on the road to self-consciousness, the resort was far from being a typical production of the Industrial Revolution.” Resorts depend on a market that starts off mostly outside the community; they require public space and amenities in order to attract visitors. Sources of resort life have therefore typically been geographically diverse and fragmentary, a condition many scholars choose to avoid.<sup>4</sup>

Many stories about these places, and the structures that housed their various leisure experiences, are being lost, because our society has neglected to document

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 131, 135; and Deborah Slaton, Chad Randl and Lauren Van Demme, ed., *Preserve and Play: Preserving Historic Recreation and Entertainment Sites, Conference Proceedings*, (Washington D.C.: Historic Preservation Education Foundation, 2006), xiii.

<sup>4</sup> Theodore, Corbett, *The Making of American Resorts: Saratoga Springs, Ballston Spa, Lake George*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 3.

them. This lack of documentation is especially true for the African American resort experience. Such documentation of these cultural landscapes is especially valuable, since it offers important information to historians and the general public about the ethnic diversity of California, and about people and events less familiar to many.<sup>5</sup>

Much of the history and many of the structures of the African American resort community at Lake Elsinore have been lost. In using the Lake Elsinore African American resort community as a case study for this thesis, I will show that there are ways in which historic preservation efforts can recognize the more inclusive diverse cultural heritage of a community that has been marginalized and overlooked when its historic sites no longer exist or have been transformed in other ways.<sup>6</sup>

Saving a public past for any city or town is a political, as well as historical and cultural process, whether it is intended to be or not. Decisions about what is to be remembered and protected situate the narratives of cultural identity in the collective memory of and history about a place. Looking towards the future, in addition to the landmark designation of significant architectural or social history sites associated with the multiple cultural landscapes of communities, the public and

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<sup>5</sup> "Five Views: An Ethnic Historic Site Survey of California," California Department of Park & Recreation, Office of Historic Preservation, December 1988. From the Internet: [http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online\\_books/5views/5views.htm](http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/5views/5views.htm).

<sup>6</sup> Delores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History*, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1995), 7-9.

private, cultural and civic infrastructure must come up with innovative programs in order to properly recognize various marginalized groups.<sup>7</sup>

To research resort sites like Lake Elsinore, and the African American experience there, one must search in unusual ways and places for material that might provide insight into these communities' development. Sometimes in place of built artifacts, oral histories, archival sources, maps and photographs may be the only way to connect the heritage and places to cultural landscapes, such as that at the Lake Elsinore African American resort community.<sup>8</sup>

Chapter 1 offers a brief history of the origins and values of the Western European vacation experience and the evolution of leisure choices, from the time of Imperial Roman antiquity, through the Grand Tour of the British traveler of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, to the post-Industrial Revolution American vacation. Some types and sites of European leisure choices influenced the development of the modern vacation experience in both Europe and America. A few favorite early American vacation experiences that evolved out of European leisure choices are examined. Finally, I

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 7-9, 12-13, 52 & 61.

<sup>8</sup> I gained some good insights into development of my research methodology from reading several resort community histories, especially Theodore Corbett's *The Making of American Resorts: Saratoga Springs, Ballston Spa, Lake George*. Others which were useful include: Milton Lawrence Culver, Jr., *The Island, the Oasis, and the City: Santa Catalina, Palm Springs, Los Angeles, and Southern California's Shaping of American Life and Leisure*, (PhD Dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 2004); Stefan Kanfer, *A Summer World: The Attempt to Build a Jewish Eden in the Catskills, From the Days of the Ghetto to the Rise and Decline of the Borscht Belt*, (Farrar Straus Giroux: New York, 1989); Jill Nelson, *Finding Martha's Vineyard: African Americans at Home on an Island*, (Doubleday: New York, 2005); Marsha Dean Phelts, *An American Beach for African Americans*, (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1997); and Lewis Walker and Ben C. Wilson, *Black Eden: The Idlewild Community*, (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2002).

present examples of African American vacation sites that formed outside of California during the Jim Crow era from the late 1800s to the early 1960s.

In Chapter 2, I present the historic context of the development of the city of Lake Elsinore and the Valley as a resort and recreational area, from the late 1800s into the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the new millennium. Included in this discussion are sites and agents of the African American resort community, and its evolution and heritage. I also discuss common patterns of many African American vacation retreats across America, and why it is important to preserve the heritage of these sites.

Finally, Chapter 3 examines the challenges and opportunities presented when looking for ways to commemorate cultural resources in a cultural landscape like the historic African American community at Lake Elsinore, when its built integrity has been dramatically altered over time. I present a discussion of historic preservation policy, and efforts today in general and in the city of Lake Elsinore specifically. Finally, I offer an alternative to landmark designations to commemorate the African American heritage, which could be a part of a larger program that memorializes the collective history of the Lake Elsinore Valley.

The group name used to describe African Americans has evolved over the years. In this thesis I try to use the words “Negro” and “Colored” to identify people of African decent in America during the Jim Crow era, as these are the names they and others would have used. I also use “Black” and “African American” throughout the thesis; these are more contemporary group identifiers for people of African

decent in America, and serve as universal group identifiers that cross historical time periods.

I hope my research efforts will help add the historic, African American cultural landscape to the ‘collective memory’ of the heritage of the region, by giving voice to places where this group of people was present, prospered in the past, and contributed to the growth and character of the local community and California. The lives of those African Americans, who were able to defy the odds of relentless oppression to become successful citizens with the ability to take vacations and buy second homes during the Jim Crow era, deserve as much attention and commemoration as the stories of those who achieved less, and who did not have such distressingly narrower opportunities.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Foster, 130.

# Chapter 1

## A Brief History of Resorts and Vacationing

### Western European

The habits and tastes of the Western European — particularly Anglo-Saxon — tourists that are with us today had their beginnings with the Romans. From their time to the present, cultural directives, social constraints and economic limitations have all influenced this experience of distraction and relaxation. The types of vacation taken continue to announce much about the vacationers. Leisure choices are exercises in self-definition, which say something about class and economic status, as well as personal aspirations and private goals. Sets of rituals have developed in connection with vacation experiences at various locations, which create individual and collective memories that provide selective visions for each vacationer.<sup>10</sup>

As early as the second century Before Common Era (BCE), upper and middle class citizens of Rome made elaborate preparations to go for holiday excursions by the sea at the popular destination of what was then known as the Italian Riviera, on the Gulf of Naples. The 100-mile carriage ride to Southern Italy was a four-day journey from the Imperial capital, on paved roads that were probably smoother than many in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Throughout the Roman Empire there was an infrastructure

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<sup>10</sup> Feifer, 3. Feifer notes there are other cultural traditions of tourism in the Middle East and Asia which also date to antiquity that developed independently of Europe. She and Fred Inglis observe in *The Delicious History of the Holiday* that the English were the most “representative” tourists among the Europeans. We can infer that the English tradition also had a tremendous influence on the American vacation experience; Aron, 2-3; and Orvar Lofgren, *On Holiday: A History of Vacationing*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 2-5.



in place — communications, maps and guidebooks of sorts, as well as roads and inns — to accommodate business and leisure travelers. Although Greeks traveled across their own land to the sacred (Olympic) games, the first European culture to travel en masse for distraction and escape was Imperial Rome. Second century Common Era (CE) marked the height of Roman mass tourism.<sup>11</sup>

As travel was slow, and few were permitted long periods away from work, Romans did not normally journey to faraway cultural attractions unless this was combined with other activities, such as work for the military; at these times wives and children were allowed on the trips. But during the spring and autumn recesses of government there was plenty of opportunity for shorter pleasure jaunts. The weather in Italy at these times of the year would have been most ideal for the large population of bureaucrats and officials who were solvent, urban, and not tied to the land, to venture off for several weeks of sightseeing and relaxation.<sup>12</sup>

Not much is known about the tourists of the Imperial Roman era, other than from the writings of the great social commentators, and the artifacts and structures they used in their daily activities. From these fragments it appears the family-style Roman tourist of this period, eating oysters on the Bay of Naples, had much in common with the package tourists of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. After the confinement of

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<sup>11</sup> Feifer, 8, 10-11; Today the Northern Italian coastline in the Liguria region which borders France is known as the Italian Riviera.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 10.

work, they wanted to take in as much pleasure as possible in their time off, and they were impatient when they did not get what they wanted.<sup>13</sup>

Once travelers arrived in the Riviera towns, a variety of accommodations, restaurants and activities existed to suit their tastes and budgets. The wealthy generally stayed in villas with their or someone else's servants, who took care of their needs, including meal preparation. The middle-classes stayed in boarding houses, and the gamblers and prostitutes at inns. There was also a large retirement community in the area.<sup>14</sup>

Recreational and social activities were many. The visitors might begin the day fishing and swimming. There was sailing during the day and under the moonlight, and strolls in the formal gardens, on the tree-lined streets and along the beach. Vacationers were guests at endless villa-house, beach and boat parties. A visit to the sulphur hot springs was a must for all vacationers. For the cultural tourists there was sightseeing at historic sites, and the docks. People-watching and lots of drinking and eating of delicious foods were other vacation pastimes. Gladiator combat, theatre and literary event attendance appealed to many.<sup>15</sup>

Although passenger ships did not arrive until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, cultural tourists among the Romans who could afford a longer trip traveled by wooden cargo boats to Greece, and to Asia Minor, with stops at Jerusalem and Egypt. In many cases these tourists visited the ancient ruins with local guides leading the way,

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 12-13, 15.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 12-16.

looked at art, and brought home souvenirs to their villas for display in “the art room.”<sup>16</sup>

From the time that Christianity began to take root in the West, around 365 CE, all “pleasure” was sublimated to piety. Pilgrimage became the prominent form of tourism; during the early part of this period not many were able to make these journeys. As Christianity spread in Europe during the Dark Ages, it became a difficult time to travel. The barbarians allowed the road, communication and accommodation infrastructure the Romans had built to fall apart. The unified Roman Empire became domains of small, warring factions, and the hazardous conditions prevented many people from taking to the road.<sup>17</sup>

By the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century, after the great European church-building period, when wealth poured into the monasteries that became the cultural repositories of the era, and the Moors relinquished Spain, masses of people took to the roads to reap the purported benefits of pilgrimage to correct moral infirmity and to cure physical ailments. Pilgrims came from all social classes — except the poor, who were tied to the land. During the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and into the 15<sup>th</sup> century, pilgrims began to go sightseeing as they visited churches and Christian relics. Although pious motivations began to wane at the dawn of the Protestant Reformation and the Renaissance, pilgrimage continued to be the only legitimate way for most people to leave home. To assist pilgrims, a new travel infrastructure emerged in Europe and in the Holy Land environs of Asia Minor, along with the new literary genre of the

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 15-24, 27.

<sup>17</sup> Feifer, 27-28.

travel guide. Even with the latest infrastructure in place, travel preparations continued to be extensive, and foreign travel was an exceptional event. A year of travel cost the rich or more well off (mostly male) pilgrims their customary income for that time period. Some travel by pilgrims was sponsored by the local religious orders.<sup>18</sup>

The Renaissance traveler was called a “merchant of light” by Sir Francis Bacon, for he was a tourist who traveled “to be broadened,” and not to relax. The English version of this trekker was generally a wealthy, young, unmarried, educated man in his early twenties, traveling to see how the world was run so as to prepare himself for membership of the ruling class. This extended excursion of the privileged male included a tour through the countries of Europe, with stops at the important cities. His itinerary always included Italy, with visits to its various churches, shrines and other sites, and he took in all the fashionable and other cultural offerings available to him. Although his socioeconomic survey did not include pleasure stops, this young traveler did stop at a spa town, such Baden in Switzerland, if he was nearby.

Mineral spas in this era served as much the same purpose as holiday resorts in the present one: the visitor simply took a little tonic exercise, relaxed, ate well, and made new friends. The days were spent “around the pool,” dipping, or sipping if the waters were to be taken internally, and socializing...For those that were truly infirmed Baden was a serious place with public baths for the proletarian visitors and private baths housed at the local inns for paying guests.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 28-31, 40.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 64-70.

For the English, travel throughout Europe continued in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries to be a finishing school for the education and refinement of young men. A few tough women began to be seen traveling independently, but not alone. The Puritan ethic still dictated that at least the pretense of travel, whether domestic or foreign, was for self-improvement: to acquire education about the world or to better one's health. As England was prosperous and powerful, the great colonist abroad and the greatest industrialist at home, "there was more money than ever for travel, and social aspirations soared."<sup>20</sup>

Many of the young well-to-do travelers on what became known as the 'Grand Tour' were now of the impressionable age of around sixteen years old, having recently graduated from university, and escorted by a middle-aged tutor. As comfort now became more of a priority, sometimes other functionaries and servants went along. At those times that the young charges might meet up with other English boys on their Grand Tour:

...to the timid tutor's silent chagrin, the boys [would] enthusiastically [gossip] about mutual friends from Cambridge or Oxford or Edinburgh, singing favourite songs at top volume, and [trade] off-colour jokes – in much the same mood as a crowd of young backpackers...nowadays.<sup>21</sup>

The same people that would go off on a Grand Tour during this period also discovered the seaside or inland towns at home and abroad, in order to take in the newly-affirmed life-giving properties of salty and mineral waters, warm or cold, to cure various afflictions. The members of fashionable society began to gather, to

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 98-99; and Fred Inglis, *The Delicious History of the Holiday*, (London: Routledge, 2000) 11, 17-18.

<sup>21</sup> Feifer, 99-101.

socialize, and to rent and build housing in these towns, such as Bath and Brighton in England. A new type of urban space was created, which became known as a ‘spa town,’ watering-place or resort. The most successful possessed a combination of urban sophistication and rural charm.<sup>22</sup>

A Grand Tour of England was also established during the same period as that of visits to the Continent. Although somewhat less exotic than the landscapes and antiquities of Tuscany or Rome, the domestic English tourist could view the picturesque and sublime countryside, and the ruins left behind by the disbanding of the Catholic monasteries two hundred years earlier. Landscape painting, and the new abundance of travel writing of various sorts, captured and presented a vision and experience of the landscape that helped to create meaning for the tourists, and to encourage more people to get out on the roads to see the sites for themselves.<sup>23</sup>

These elite and aristocratic European travelers led the way for their counterparts in the United States, as well as the middle and working class tourists and vacationers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. Resorts developed because of their natural resources, the hosts’ abilities to attract visitors because of the amenities provided, and the transportation options which made it easier to travel. In Europe and the United States, as the by-products of the Industrial Revolution spread to benefit more of the masses, and people moved further across the American Frontier, the Puritan strain began to thin

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<sup>22</sup> Inglis, 16, 40-42; Theodore Corbett, *The Making of American Resorts: Saratoga Springs, Ballston Spa, Lake George*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 15-17; and Aron, 17.

<sup>23</sup> Inglis, 30-34.

out. As vacation communities evolved in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the hosts were concerned with providing “a restful, healthful and entertaining experience that would appeal to the broadest respectable public.”<sup>24</sup>

## **American**

Spas were the first form of vacation life for the American colonists in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century; they learned about the mineral springs from the Native Americans. The Puritan ethic did not allow for “aimless pleasure,” however. At spas, they could allow for the enjoyment of socializing, relaxation and recreational activities as side products of an excursion that was primarily in the pursuit of health and escape from disease. It was difficult to get to the early spring sites. The colonists traveled by stagecoach on primitive roads, or by boat when that was a more convenient mode of transportation. Even for the more affluent colonial, these early American spas were not necessarily comfortable places; the amenities were very basic.<sup>25</sup>

Spa bathing and drinking took place at springs throughout all the Eastern United States, and later in other parts of the nation; a few continue to be fashionable resorts even today. Lynn Springs, near Boston, was a popular early mineral water spring; later, John Adams went to Stafford Springs in Connecticut “to take the cure.” There were other well-liked springs in Connecticut, Massachusetts and New Jersey.

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<sup>24</sup> Theodore Corbett, *The Making of American Resorts: Saratoga Springs, Ballston Spa, Lake George*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 1, 8, 11, 15; and Horace Sutton, *Travellers: The American Tourist from Stagecoach to Space Shuttle*, (New York, NY: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1980), 28.

<sup>25</sup> Sutton, 11-13 and Aron, 17-18.

George Washington visited many springs throughout the colonies, including Berkeley Springs in Virginia, to cure his rheumatic fever in 1761. White Sulphur Springs was another Virginia spa enjoyed by many. Spas flourished in Pennsylvania, such as Yellow Springs, and Bristol, outside of Philadelphia, with visitors arriving from various parts of the country and from the West Indies.

... Yellow Springs and Bristol Springs had become so popular and so fashionable that some Quakers succumbed to the allure and visited the springs on the Sabbath. Protestant ministers decried the people's "immoderate and growing fondness for pleasure, luxury, gaming, dissipation, and their concomitant vices." When some entrepreneurs tried to organize a lottery to build yet another spa, the clergy stomped off in a body to urge the governor to prohibit the scheme "for erecting public gardens with Bath and Bagnios among us." The clergymen had the last and the compelling word. If hot and cold baths were so necessary to good health, they said, then proper facilities could be added to the hospitals.<sup>26</sup>

In New York, mineral water resort life emerged in Ballston Spa, Caldwell, at Lake George and Saratoga Springs, from the end of the American Revolution to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Saratoga Springs was the first town in the U.S. "to base its continuous prosperity and growth on its ability to become a center of entertainment," and it offered access to elites and the burgeoning middle class. In promotional efforts to draw clientele, Saratoga Springs was the first resort to market to the middle class the idea that they had an opportunity to "rub shoulders with the rich and famous." As the 19<sup>th</sup> century marched forward, the crowd that visited the resort became very diverse in class and age, including: wealthy and sophisticated "fashionables;" politicians with varied pedigrees, to "pretentious belles;" "gentlemen

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 17 and Sutton, 11-14.



of the turf” (country squires); rich tradesmen and farmers; clergy of various religious persuasions with their families; the learned and unlearned; men and more women; as well as the invalid.<sup>27</sup>

The upper classes visited the Saratoga Springs resort typically for the amenities: the public space amenities served as an elegant background for leisure activities. They carried on their social activities at: the springs; the hotels and on their porch areas; in the public gardens, squares, parks, promenades and cemeteries; and at the entertainment venues, including the theatre, the racetrack, and various types of gambling and nightlife establishments. The middle classes, on the other hand, went in search of health and spiritual revival. They and the working class visitors to Saratoga Springs stayed a shorter period of time than upper class visitors.

The early entrepreneurial and civic-minded landowners played a key role in the development of the original settlement, with sections of land plotted for more modest middle and laboring classes, as well as more affluent housing budgets. The housing options included large and small hotels, boarding houses, cure institutes and private homes. Almost every dwelling in the town had the potential of being rented to visitors.<sup>28</sup>

Women had many employment and business opportunities at a resort like Saratoga Springs that were not open to them in industrial cities, with boarding houses and hotels. Women in general made up the majority of the workforce at the

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<sup>27</sup> Corbett, 1, 59, 223, 226-227.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 18, 60, 65, 74, 79-80, 83, 98, 136-137, 226; and Myra B. Young Armstead, “*Lord, Please Don’t Take Me in August:*” *African Americans in Newport and Saratoga Springs, 1870-1930*, (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1999) 39.

resort, in household and hotel domestic service jobs. Owning or running a boarding house or a hotel was an acceptable and respectable role for a middle-class, single or married woman, using her domestic skills to support her family. In 1873, “women ran more than half the quality boarding houses advertised in guides and several of them were hotel proprietors.”<sup>29</sup>

Again following the European tradition, in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century to middle 19<sup>th</sup> century Americans also sought health and amusement at seaside watering places such as Newport, Rhode Island, Cape May, New Jersey and Martha’s Vineyard, Massachusetts. At these and other coastal resorts it was believed cold sea baths had therapeutic potential, and “an aesthetic appreciation of the sublimity of sea and shoreline” developed.<sup>30</sup>

By the 1760s, Newport, Rhode Island had emerged as a holiday destination for the colonial elites and as “the most elegant social center of the colonies.” It continues to be popular today with vacationers. The ship captains who managed the trading routes between Newport and the Southern and West Indian ports advertised the pleasures of the Rhode Island coast. Southern planters and prosperous Philadelphia merchants, families from Baltimore and New York, and some vacationers from the West Indies, sometimes spent four to five months there. The expatriate from Europe thought the Rhode Island summer climate to be like that of Italy. Getting to Newport was a long, expensive and challenging trip. In the 18<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Corbett, 98, 156.

<sup>30</sup> Aron, 20-21.

century sea routes were the only ways to get to the Rhode Island coastal city, since as late as 1767 there were no roads from the Eastern cities into New England.<sup>31</sup>

Newport was a principal North American colonial trading post before it was transformed into a summer resort in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The merchants of the city engaged in the triangle trade of slaves between America, Africa and the West Indies. Rum made in Newport, along with flour and iron, was traded by city merchants on the West African coast for slaves. Transported back across the Atlantic to the West Indies, the slaves were then sold to sugar cane and rice planters. The slaves in the Caribbean made molasses that was shipped back to Newport for distilling into rum. Slaves were also shipped to Newport and sold in New England until slavery was abolished in 1807.<sup>32</sup>

The early seasonal visitors to Newport stayed in boarding houses or rented local farmhouses. As the 19<sup>th</sup> century progressed, visitors could stay in hotels; by mid-century, cottages were being built “for exclusive summer residence.” Famous artists, writers and intellectuals, like Bostonians Oliver Wendell Holmes, Julia Ward Howe and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, sought inspiration from the environs of Newport. In the 1870s “fashionable society” discovered Newport, and from the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century forward Newport became “the summer home of

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 16-17, 21; Armstead, 14; and Sutton, 16.

<sup>32</sup> Armstead, 14; and Richard C. Youngken, *African Americans in Newport: An Introduction to the Heritage of African Americans In Newport, Rhode Island, 1700-1945*, (Newport, RI: Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission and the Newport Historical Society, 1998), 3-7.

America's wealthiest families," where they built palatial estates in historical revival architectural styles.<sup>33</sup>

By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century the summer colony popularity of Cape May and Long Branch on the New Jersey shore overshadowed the nationally-known Newport. Like other resorts in America, the New Jersey seaside vacation spots emerged with the rapidly developing cities of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Initially accessible only by the Atlantic Ocean or the Delaware Bay, Cape May was particularly popular with residents from Philadelphia and the southern states. With several hotels by 1850, it was the most famous seaside resort in the United States, and it retained that status for the remainder of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the later decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the combination of sea and land transportation infrastructure improvements — such as railroads, better road access, steamships, new facilities for day-trippers, and residential cottage development — made Cape May more accessible to a broader range of visitors and influenced the city's growth.<sup>34</sup>

In 1976 the city of Cape May was designated a National Historic Landmark. The city has the most complete *in situ* grouping of mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Victorian style buildings east of the Mississippi River. After being overlooked as a vacation destination during the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, due to changes in public taste and "the consequence of being off the beaten path," a new post-1950s auto

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<sup>33</sup> Armstead, 14; and Kay Davis, *Class and Leisure at America's First Resort: Newport, Rhode Island, 1870-1914*, From the Internet:

[http://xroads.virginia.edu/~MA01/davis/newport/newport%20history/newport\\_overview.html](http://xroads.virginia.edu/~MA01/davis/newport/newport%20history/newport_overview.html).

<sup>34</sup> Cleveland Amory, *The Last Resorts*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1952), 19; and Emil R. Salvini, *The Summer City by the Sea: Cape May, New Jersey, An Illustrated History*, (New Brunswick, NY: Rutgers University Press), 17, 20, 32, 40.

thoroughfare was a catalyst for tourism and year-round population growth. The reemphasis on the historic architecture of Cape May has helped to revive the economic fortune of the town by expanding the shore summer season from early April to late October.<sup>35</sup>

By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, tourism had replaced the whaling industry on the island of Martha's Vineyard as the area's most profitable business enterprise. Commercial tourism there grew out of annual Methodist revival meetings held at an area they named Wesleyan Grove. In 1835, worshippers began to stay in tent camps in this open field area leased by the religious organization. The Methodists pioneered and dominated religious resort development of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. People who went to these summer camp meetings sought educational and spiritual goals, as well as leisure activities. They could renew their faith, gain self-improvement, and get away from home to a new setting to socialize with friends and strangers. Wesleyan Grove grew dramatically in the middle decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, "acquiring a national reputation as one of the most successful and institutionally stable of the Methodist camp meetings."<sup>36</sup>

In the 1850s, the growth of secular pastimes among those who attended the camp meetings became a concern of the more pious, who wanted "to preserve a spiritual atmosphere as their community grew." In the 1860s, Wesleyan Grove and some adjacent land were purchased by the newly-formed Martha's Vineyard Camp-

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<sup>35</sup> Salvini, 112-113, 124.

<sup>36</sup> Dona Brown, *Inventing New England: Regional Tourism In The Nineteenth Century*, (Smithsonian Institution Press: Washington, DC, 1995), 77; Aron, 102-106; and Jill Nelson, *Finding Martha's Vineyard: African Americans At Home On An Island*, (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2005), 22.

Meeting Association. This organization included church leaders and elected officers who managed the camp and leased and sold the tent and — later — cottage spaces. During this era the communal tents set up by local church groups on the earlier camp meeting grounds began to be replaced by private family tents, and the first permanent residences were built on the grounds. Ellen Weiss, an architectural historian and a summer resident in the area, suggests that the tents were replaced by tiny, ornate gingerbread cottages, whose architecture combined design elements of the early tents, church architecture and cottages.<sup>37</sup>

By the late 1860s, land speculators and astute entrepreneurs also saw potential profit in settings like Martha's Vineyard. Early developers realized that those who came to the island for religious reasons also enjoyed the “clean ocean, pristine beaches, rolling hills and bluffs, ponds, and cool breezes — and that there was money to be made.” These land speculators purchased land, offered cottage lots for sale, built hotels and wharves, and invested in rail lines near the Methodists and other religious denomination enclaves. The Christian influence of nearby places like Wesleyan Grove on Martha's Vineyard was not seen as a liability, because increasing numbers of the middle class were seeking resorts where this type of influence prevailed. An area like Wesleyan Grove was not unique; by 1870, many other camp meeting locations, such as Ocean Groove, New Jersey, and Rehoboth, Delaware, were being turned into permanent, more diverse vacation communities.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Nelson, 24; Brown, 77-78; Aron, 104-105; and Lofguen, 143.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 105-108; Brown, 79-82, 102; and Nelson, 22.

Those that frequented Wesleyan Grove and the cottages built there in the 1860s and 1870s were not genteel, wealthy or particularly well educated people who were accustomed to summer leisure and travel. At the time, only a few who vacationed there had white collar professional status which allowed taking time off for extensive summer leisure. Instead, the majority of the visitors to Wesleyan Grove were artisans and shopkeepers of varying degrees of wealth and status: coopers, blacksmiths, tanners, watchmakers, grocers, teamsters, milliners and merchant tailors. Some were also employed in office occupations as agents for factories, bookkeepers and clerks. These industrious citizens were all rooted in the urban communities they lived in during the rest of the year. The cottage experience of visitors at Wesleyan Grove environs was characterized by a comfort, rural simplicity, privacy and domestic informality, rather than the formality and conventionality of the great resort hotels and mansions of places like Saratoga and Newport.<sup>39</sup>

Beginning in the late 1860s, new residential developments around Wesleyan Grove copied the circular design of the campgrounds and added parks and other amenities that would attract more affluent vacationers. This late 19<sup>th</sup> century settlement area around and including the grounds of the camp meeting was renamed Oak Bluffs in 1907. After losing some of its temporary features with the establishment of a more permanent infrastructure and institutions, by the 1890s religious resorts like Oak Bluffs and Ocean Grove were attracting a more “genteel”

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<sup>39</sup> Brown, 82-85, 90, 102.

clientele. As those attracted to these summer communities became more affluent, the cottage residents were more secular in their expectations of leisure and enjoyment. Along with camp meetings, a range of activities, such as billiards, dancing, roller skating, croquet, concerts and readings, became acceptable forms of diversion.<sup>40</sup>

### **African American**

As resort towns developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, African Americans were part of the social mixture as year-round residents, service workers and entrepreneurs. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, after the dismantling of slavery, a small but growing upwardly mobile African American middle class could afford to travel for vacations at spas, seaside and mountain resorts, and occasionally in Europe. This group of Colored folk throughout the United States more or less mirrored the resort-based leisure consumption of White middle and upper class Americans at the time.<sup>41</sup>

Between the 1910s and 1930s, a greater variety of people — working class whites, immigrants, middle class and working class African Americans — outside of the White American middle and upper classes were able to take more than a day excursion to the beach, a lake or an amusement park. By the end of 1940, paid vacations were institutionalized as part of employee compensation and as part of “the American way of life” for all working people.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 94-95, 98, 100; Nelson, 26, 28; and Aron, 110.

<sup>41</sup> Armstead, 18-22; and Gatewood, 7, 200-201, 248.

<sup>42</sup> Aron, 10, 184, 207, 238, 248; and Lofguen, 109-110.



The resorts at Saratoga Springs, Newport, Cape May, Martha's Vineyard, and several other locations throughout America, attracted a Negro clientele for summer vacations, along with White patrons. Those resort towns that the Colored middle class visited had sizable Negro populations with establishments that catered to their accommodation needs. As early as 1894, "distinctly Black resorts emerged as the most trouble free vacation option" during the era of segregation, when African Americans tourists began to experience restrictions at mainstream resorts. There were several vacation sites throughout the United States that catered to a Negro clientele during this period, with varying degrees of success and longevity. Hillside Inn in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania, and Highland Beach, Maryland, were open for business in the Atlantic coastal states. Idlewild, Michigan, was one of several retreats in the Midwest. The south featured more than one beach area that served Negro vacationers, including American Beach at Amelia Island, in Florida, and the Gulfside Resort outside of Biloxi, Mississippi.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Armstead, 18-22, 36; Aron, 213-216; Gatewood, 7, 45; Shirlee Taylor Haizlip, "The Black Resorts." *American Legacy Magazine*, Summer 1996, 12, 14. Haizlip calls to our attention the fact that of the popular Eastern seaboard vacation spots which historically served the African American upper classes, three continue to thrive in contemporary times: Highland Beach (MD), Sag Harbor on Long Island (NY) and Oak Bluffs on Martha's Vineyard (MA); Stephen Birmingham, *Certain People: America's Black Elite*, (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1977), 94; Jill Nelson, Nanine Alexander and Pamela Douglas, "A Summer Place: Black resorts are havens, communities of neighbors and real property," *Black Enterprise Magazine*, August 1981, 57; Foster, 136-144; F.R. Washington, "Recreational Facilities for Negroes," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 140 (Nov. 1928), 279-280; Gulfport was a Negro Chautaugua (self-improvement) resort begun in the 1920s by Rev. Robert E. Jones, one of the first African American bishops in the Methodist Episcopal denomination; Richard Bardolph, *The Negro Vanguard*, (New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1959), 108; and "Methodist Churches and Landmarks in Mississippi," From the Internet: <http://library.millsaps.edu/index.php/archives/jb-cain-archives-of-mississippi-methodism/exhibits/historic-methodist-churches-and-landmarks-in-mississippi/complete-list/>.

Jews also faced exclusion and discrimination at many mainstream vacation places as early as the 1870s, and through the Depression years of the 1930s. The Jewish press published information about lodgings and other facilities where they were not welcome. Word of mouth also helped both Jewish and Black travelers to know where they were welcome, and where they were not. Vacation places they built for themselves, and Jewish heritage sites, were also featured in the press and guidebooks. Jewish resorts flourished in the Catskill Mountains in New York; Atlantic City, New Jersey; South Haven, Michigan; the Pocono Mountains in Pennsylvania; and in Florida's Miami Beach.<sup>44</sup>

As Negro mobility and yearning for leisure travel increased in spite of the possible inconveniences, special travel guides were created to inform African Americans about services and facilities available to them as travelers on the road. One such guide published from 1936 to 1963, *The Negro Motorist Green Book*, promised "to give the Negro traveler information that will keep him from running into difficulties, embarrassments and to make his trips more enjoyable." Many Black resorts were regularly listed in *The Green Book*. During this era, the United States Department of the Interior even published "A Directory of Negro Hotels and Guest Houses." In addition to guidebooks and word of mouth, African American

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<sup>44</sup> Aron, 218; Lofguen, 106; *The Negro Motorist Green Book*, (New York: Victor H. Green & Co., 1949), From the Internet: [http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R\\_Casestudy/Negro\\_motorist\\_green\\_bk.htm](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Casestudy/Negro_motorist_green_bk.htm), 1; Avi Y. Decter and Melissa Martens, eds., *The Other Promised Land: Vacationing, Identity, and the Jewish American Dream*, (Baltimore: The Jewish Museum of Maryland, Inc., 2005), 5; Judith Endelman, "Vacation: Days: Jews in the American Landscape, in ed. Decter and Martens, 18, 20-21; Sutton, 42; Price M. Cobbs, *My American Life: From Rage to Entitlement*, (New York: Atria Books/Simon & Schuster, Inc., 2005), 27; and Walker and Wilson, 119.

newspapers, mass-circulation magazines and city directories advertised hotels and other services available to Negro travelers in various regions of the country.<sup>45</sup> (See Figure 1.)

Although there were some commercial accommodations throughout the United States where Negro travelers could find lodging and meals, these establishments were not common. Until the end of legal segregation in the 1960s, Negroes mostly traveled to places where they could “[stay] in private homes with friends, or friends of friends, relatives, colleagues..., or church people [they] knew or who had been told of [them]. Sometimes they would be asked to pay, sometimes not.”<sup>46</sup>

### **Saratoga Springs, New York and Newport, Rhode Island**

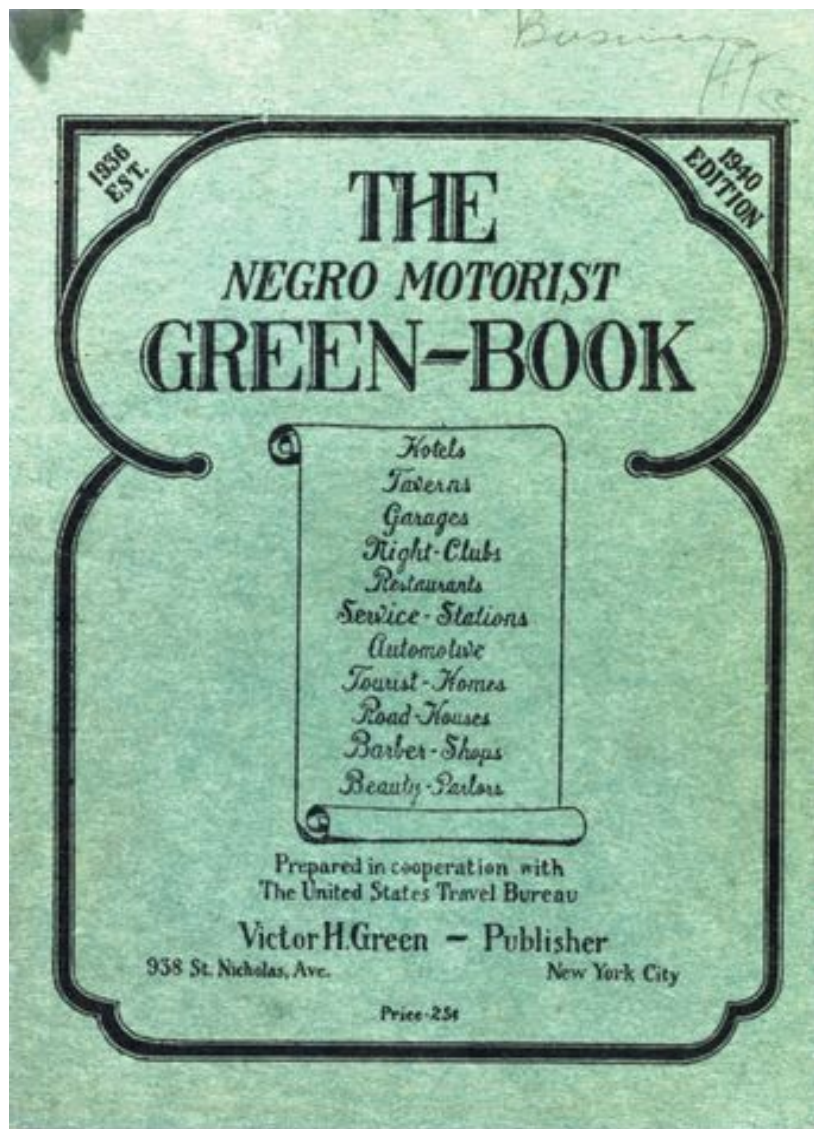
Negroes were household slaves on rural estates in Saratoga Springs from the time of the earliest American settlements. The 1790 census also listed a number of free Negroes. From 1785 to 1827, several laws were passed in the state of New York to give African Americans their freedom, and to end slavery in the state. With freedom post-1827, Negroes were only allowed to work in the lower strata of resort employment, as domestic and unskilled labor, and had little opportunities beyond that. A few Negroes obtained work as entertainers.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Armstead, 18; *The Green Book*, 1; Endelman, in eds. Decter and Martens, 20-21; Foster 136-137; “America on the Move,” Exhibit, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, From the Internet: [http://americanhistory.si.edu/ONTHEMOVE/collection/object\\_583.html](http://americanhistory.si.edu/ONTHEMOVE/collection/object_583.html); and Sarah Allaback, ed., *Resorts & Recreation: A Historic Theme Study of the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route*, 1995, From the Internet: [http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online\\_books/nj1/chap4.htm](http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/nj1/chap4.htm).

<sup>46</sup> Cobbs, 27; and Gatewood, 202.

<sup>47</sup> Corbett, 146-148, 150-151, 154; and Armstead, 21-22.



**Figure 1.** Cover of the 1940 edition of the *Negro Motorist Green Book*, published from 1936 to 1963. The guide listed accommodation that would serve African American travelers throughout the United States during the Jim Crow era, before civil rights laws made racial discrimination and segregation illegal. Most Negro travelers stayed at both friends and Black-owned establishments because of discriminatory practices that were encountered at facilities while traveling on the open road. Prepared in conjunction with the United States Travel Bureau, the 1940 edition cost 25 cents and listed “Hotels, Taverns, Garages, Night Clubs, Restaurants, Service-Stations, Automobiles, Tourist-Homes, Road-Houses, Barber-Shops, Beauty-Parlors.”<sup>48</sup>

<sup>48</sup> “America on the Move” Exhibit, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, From the Internet: [http://americanhistory.si.edu/ONTHEMOVE/collection/object\\_583.html](http://americanhistory.si.edu/ONTHEMOVE/collection/object_583.html).

Until the 1840s, Negro women made up the majority of the workforce at many U.S. resorts. Many males of African American descent worked as waiters. As resort work was seasonal, most workers held down a series of jobs to patch together their year-round income. Well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century there was a strong job information and recruitment network in the Negro community, which was especially enticing to students and teachers who could utilize their vacation time by working at the resorts.<sup>49</sup>

As the 19<sup>th</sup> century went on, Negroes were permanently pushed out of many of the better domestic service jobs and skilled trades they had previously held at Saratoga Springs, by White competition. This preference for hiring White, European immigrant domestics increased across the country as the century advanced. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, many respectable Negro women — like Euro-American women — used their housewifery skills to operate lodging facilities and other businesses that catered to summer visitors. At Saratoga Springs and other early resorts, some of these facilities served African American seasonal workers and tourists, others served Whites, and some served a mixed clientele. Some seasonal and year-round businesses included laundry services, nightclubs, restaurants, barbershops, dressmaking and tailoring, transportation, and spas or bathhouses.<sup>50</sup>

Although Negroes may have been part of the social mix in resort towns since their early days, in accordance with the customs of the day throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century they faced discrimination and prejudice. Separate

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<sup>49</sup> Corbett, 144-145, 150; and Armstead, 73-77, 93-94

<sup>50</sup> Corbett, 5, 144-145, 150; and Armstead, 21-22, 73-75, 83.

African American institutions, such as churches and voluntary associations, were built to accommodate Negro exclusion from similar Anglo American organizations. After the Civil War, and during the American era of segregation, Negro tourists were barred from staying in White hotels. At Saratoga Springs they stayed with friends, or rented rooms or cottages from African American proprietors in the “Quarter de Africaine.” They also suffered other restrictions: at many resorts during this period, Negroes were only welcome if they were employed at a particular establishment.<sup>51</sup>

In the region of Newport, Rhode Island, during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the majority of slaves and free African descendents worked in domestic service, agricultural goods production, and services associated with rum production, ship-building, wharf warehousing and marine trades. Many slaves also labored in the trades of furniture and cabinet makers, silver/goldsmiths, local builders and stonemasons. As early as the mid-1700s, leading church figures and their associates denounced the practice of slavery, and created religious and educational programs for Negroes. With encouragement from vocal anti-slavery activists, many Negroes were granted or purchased their freedom in the years of foment preceding and during the Revolutionary War. The oldest African American mutual aid society in the United States, the African Union Society, was established by the Negro community of Newport in the early 1780s.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Armstead, 18, 28-29, 74; Gatewood, 200-202; Lofguen, 106; and Gretchen Sullivan Sorin and Jane W. Rehl, *Honorable Work: African Americans in the Resort Community of Saratoga Springs, 1870-1970*, (Saratoga Springs, NY: Historical Society of Saratoga Springs, 1992), 22-31.

<sup>52</sup> Armstead, 30; and Youngken, 11-12, 18-20.

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, many free Negroes continued to be employed in domestic service and the marine trades. Some continued their pre-manumission living arrangement with their former owners. Others settled into neighborhoods where they continued as domestic employees or were independent service-related entrepreneurs such as teamsters, laborers, coopers, cordwainers, caterers, blacksmiths, house painters and gardeners. Both classes of these workers participated in and supported the development of the resort-based economy of Newport.<sup>53</sup>

Prior to the decade of the Civil War, and through at least 1900, there were a few flourishing African American businesses in both Saratoga Springs and Newport, some of which were of service to European American seasonal visitors. George Crum was a successful chef and later independent restaurateur in Saratoga Springs, who is purported to have (with his sister) invented the potato chip.

Restaurant owner, caterer and real estate developer, George T. Downing, first opened establishments catering to White summer visitors at Newport in 1846. Already a successful restaurateur in New York City, Washington, D.C. and Providence, Rhode Island, with a clientele made up of many of the social elites, Downing's Newport establishments were patronized by his high society friends who began to summer on the Rhode Island coast. In 1854 he built the Sea Grit Hotel, which was described as "sumptuously furnished for a resort for the wealthy." After

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<sup>53</sup> Youngken , 23.

the hotel was destroyed suspiciously by fire in 1860, the entrepreneur constructed the Downing Block on the site, the first commercial retail project in Newport.

After accumulating substantial capital out west during the California Gold Rush, Benjamin J. Burton returned to Newport to launch a transportation business that included baggage transfer services for the summer resort crowd. Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century his business also included taxi and bus services, “the latter providing Newport with its first mass transit operation.”<sup>54</sup>

In the 1890s, brothers David B. and John T. Allen began a restaurant and catering business; their Hygeia Spa was a well-known cafe at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century at Newport’s Easton’s Beach. The widowed mother of Stanley Beaumont Braithwaite established a “tourist home” on the city’s DeBlois Street in the 1890s. In the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, Braithwaite, a nationally-known African American poet and literary critic “...was a distinguished college professor for 10 years at Atlanta University and a personal and literary friend of major American poets Robert Frost, Edgar Arlington Robinson, Amy Lowell, James Weldon Johnson, Counter Cullen and Black nationalist / scholar W.E.B. DuBois, among others.”<sup>55</sup>

At Saratoga Springs in the 20<sup>th</sup> century there were successful clubs and restaurants in the heart of the Black neighborhood which served an interracial clientele of both tourists and workers. Patrons went to places like Jack’s Cabaret (c.1916-1962) to see a show, or to Hattie’s Chicken Shack (1939-present) for fried chicken. As in the White community, during the prohibition era of the 1920s there

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 31, 33, 51; Armstead, 22-23, 77; and Sorin, 22-27.

<sup>55</sup> Youngken, 42, 51-52; and Armstead, 74.



were speakeasies and illegal gambling establishments situated in the African American business community.<sup>56</sup>

### **Cape May, New Jersey**

Although their movements were very restricted, some free Negroes began settling in the city of Cape May, New Jersey, in the first half of the 1800s, for employment in the fishing and resort industries. In 1846, African American Stephen Smith, a lumber and coal merchant as well as real estate entrepreneur, built a family vacation home at Cape May out of materials from his lumber yard. This was the same year slavery was permanently abolished in New Jersey, although this economic institution did linger in the state until the Civil War. A resident of Philadelphia who was born a slave in Columbia, Pennsylvania, in 1795, Smith purchased his freedom and was set up in business by his former owner, Revolutionary War General Thomas Boude. Smith was said to have been the wealthiest Negro American of his era.<sup>57</sup>

In oral histories passed down by African American families living in Cape May from the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it is said that abolitionist Harriet Tubman worked in the local hotels under an assumed name, while hiding from bounty hunters, to earn money to assist in the funding of the Underground Railroad. As early as the late 1870s, the Banneker Hotel at Cape May, New Jersey, catered to

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<sup>56</sup> Armstead, 73, 86, 132-133; and Sorin, 23-24.

<sup>57</sup> *Stephen Smith House*, brochure published by the Center for Community Arts, Cape May, New Jersey, 1996; Kim Mulford, "A Proud Past at the Shore," *Courier Post*, August 7, 2006, From the Internet:

<http://www.courierpostonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060807/LIVING/608070316/-1/ARCHIVES>; and Douglas Harper, "Slavery In the North," From the Internet: <http://www.slavenorth.com/newjersey.htm>; and Birmingham, 116.

upper class Negro vacationers. Many from Washington, D.C., Baltimore and Philadelphia spent a portion of each summer at this resort. By 1911, the Hotel Dale, a Cape May African American establishment, was providing hospitality and fine amenities to such distinguished guests as W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington.<sup>58</sup>

### **Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts**

Like other places in the United States, Negroes came to Martha's Vineyard as part of the slave trade with the earliest European settlers or shortly thereafter. Slavery was legal in Massachusetts until 1783, but there is documentation reporting Negro indentured servitude well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. During the first half of the 1800s, Blacks represented skilled workers, laborers, and at least one whaling captain. People of color were allowed to participate in the Methodist camp meetings from their beginnings in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Some participated as occasional preachers, but few were permanent residents of Wesleyan Grove. The African American community of the Vineyard was small throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Those Negroes arriving at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century sought work and residential opportunities in the more hospitable northern environment.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> *Stephen Smith House*, brochure; Gatewood, 45; *Hotel Dale*, brochure, published by the Center for Community Arts, Cape May, New Jersey, 1993; Avon, 213; Salvini, 16; and Mulford, *Courier Post*, August 7, 2006.

<sup>59</sup> Nelson, 17, 19, 23; Jacqueline L. Holland, "The African-American Presence On Martha's Vineyard in Arthur Railton, ed., *African Americans on Martha's Vineyard: A Special Edition of The Dukes Count Intelligencer*, (Published by the Martha's Vineyard Historical Society, October 1997), 1-5; and Adelaide M. Cromwell, "The History of Oak Bluffs As a Popular Resort for Blacks," in Railton, 48-52.

During the transitional years between the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, an increasing number of African Americans came to Martha's Vineyard to work as servants in the summer homes of Euro-American families from Boston and other Eastern cities. As the transitional years passed, some Negroes became year-round homeowners and small business owners. These entrepreneurs operated guest houses for Negroes, such as Thayer Cottage and the Promenade Hotel. Its doors still open today, Shearer Cottage was opened around 1917, the longest-lived and best-known of these establishments. Other early businesses run by African Americans included a guest house that serviced only White European descendents, a dining hall, a gas station, a barbershop, a laundry, and a shoe shine and cobbler establishment.<sup>60</sup>

During the time when accommodations were segregated, the guest houses — run for the most part by African American women entrepreneurs — introduced the Vineyard to a class of Negroes who were government workers, teachers, doctors, lawyers, artists and small business owners with disposable income to spend on summer vacations. Many of these early guests bought summer homes that continue today to be passed down through the generations of those early Negro families. Some of the homeowners also “quietly took in guests” for extra income.<sup>61</sup>

As award-winning filmmaker and MacArthur Fellow Stanley Nelson notes in his documentary film *A Place of Our Own*, about his family's experiences on the island of Martha's Vineyard at Oak Bluffs, starting in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century more

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<sup>60</sup> Cromwell, 52, 56; and Nelson, 28-29.

<sup>61</sup> Nelson, 31-33; and Cromwell, “The History of Oak Bluffs As a Popular Resort for Blacks,” in Railton, 56, 58-60.

affluent African Americans in the eastern half of the United States built summer communities to rest, socialize, and expose their children to a positive vision of Black life.

Post-World War II, an increasing number of African Americans began to come for a summer respite on the Vineyard from cities such as Boston, New York and Washington, D.C. Many cottages were available to rent or buy at prices that were within the budgets of the burgeoning class of Black strivers who wanted this type of rustic, seaside retreat. The 1950s and 1960s saw a period on the island where, in Oak Bluffs and other towns, more than a few houses were empty and boarded up for many years. As late as the early 1970s, one could “...purchase a large cottage for four or five figures.” In recent times, Oak Bluffs continues to serve a predominately African American community of summer and year-round residents and visitors.<sup>62</sup>

Nowadays, class and financial ability for the most part supersede race in property transactions on the island of Martha’s Vineyard, and vacationers — Black as well as White — come from all over the United States to partake in the region’s leisure offerings. African Americans purchase and build more expensive homes all around the island. In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, the cottage lots that were purchased for prices in the low five figures a few decades ago are worth hundreds of thousands, and in some cases millions of dollars. Prominent African Americans who have spent part of their summer there, or purchased a vacation home, from the time of

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<sup>62</sup> Nelson, 33-34.

segregation to the present, include activist singer and actor Paul Robeson and his wife, Eslanda; singer Ethel Waters; composer Henry T. Burleigh; Rev. Adam Clayton Powell, Sr. and his son, Adam, Jr., who eventually became a powerful Congressman from New York City; Massachusetts U.S. Senator Edward W. Brooke; singer Lionel Richie and the Commodores; film auteur Spike Lee and his family; and writer B.B. Moore Campbell and her family.<sup>63</sup>

### **Highland Beach, Maryland**

With freedom, the new wealth of the emerging urban, Negro middle class and elite, and the rigid enforcement of racial separation by Jim Crow laws and custom, some African American vacationers chose during the segregation era to patronize resort destinations specifically developed for them, usually in the vicinity of White resorts. Some of these properties were in less desirable areas not coveted by Whites, but they allowed Negroes to feel safe and welcome, and they would not be exposed to racist incidents and inferior segregated facilities. Formed in the 1890s by Major Charles Douglass, Civil War veteran and son of abolitionist Fredrick Douglass, Highland Beach, on the Chesapeake Bay near Annapolis, Maryland, was the first of the consciously planned Negro resorts. The community consisted of private residences, although some owners built their cottages with the idea of “taking in guests.”<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 31-34, 80-84, 238-243; and Cromwell, “The History of Oak Bluffs As a Popular Resort for Blacks,” in Railton, 59-60, 68.

<sup>64</sup> Armstead, 18; S. Foster, 136, 140; Gatewood, 45; Haizlip, 12, 14, 16; Carroll Greene, “Summertime—In the Highland Beach Tradition,” *American Visions* V. 1, No. 10 (May/June 1986): 46-48; and Birmingham, 57.

Although he died before its construction was finished and he could enjoy it, Fredrick Douglass would have been a resident at the vacation home at Highland Beach that he named “Twin Oaks.” Residents and guests of the area have included Tuskegee educator Booker T. Washington, Paul Robeson, poets Paul Lawrence Dunbar and Langston Hughes, educator Dr. Mary Church Terrell and her husband, Washington, D.C. municipal court judge Robert Terrell, author Alex Haley, comedian Bill Cosby and tennis player Arthur Ashe. The streets are named after African American political and clerical figures of the Reconstruction era, including Douglass. By World War I, Highland Beach was the most popular vacation destination in the Washington-Baltimore area for the Negro educated and professional classes; others came from Virginia and Pennsylvania to partake of the social and outdoor recreational offerings. In 1922, when the town was incorporated, it became the first African American municipality in the state of Maryland.<sup>65</sup>

Other Black, Chesapeake Bay vacation communities — Arundel-on-the-Bay, Venice Beach and Oyster Harbor — were eventually built around Highland Beach. Today, Douglass’s Twin Oaks is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and is maintained as a private house museum featuring exhibits related to the history of the Douglass family and the Highland Beach area. The town is now part of the Annapolis metropolitan area. It has remained a small community of mostly single

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<sup>65</sup> Birmingham, 46, 50; Gatewood, 77; and Haizlip, 14, 16.

family homes with no hotels or stores, and is now made up of year-round residents, many of whom are descendents of the original settlers.<sup>66</sup>

### **Idlewild, Michigan**

The period from the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the inter-war years hosted a Great Migration of southern, rural African Americans to the industrial cities in the Northeast, Midwest and West. Some shrewd entrepreneurs saw an emerging opportunity to provide places where more affluent Negroes could spend their disposable income to escape the pressures of the urban environment and the summer heat at health retreats and other Black resorts. These resort promoters generally found real estate to develop that was remote in location, or in areas that were less desirable and not coveted by Whites. One of the most successful Black resorts, at least for a time, was founded at Idlewild, Michigan.<sup>67</sup>

Located about 70 miles north of Grand Rapids in “the heart of the Great Resort Section of [northwest] Michigan,” this Lake County site became one of the most popular African American resorts in the Midwest. This rustic retreat was advertised by Idlewild promoters in marketing pamphlets, promotional films in Black movie houses, and featured in stories and print ads in the Black press all over the country. Although Negroes from all over the United States did visit, the majority

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<sup>66</sup> Highland Beach, Maryland website, From the Internet: <http://www.mdmunicipal.org/cities/index.cfm?townname=HighlandBeach&page=home>; Nelson, *Black Enterprise Magazine*, August 1981, 57; and the *African American Heritage* brochure, published by the Annapolis and Anne Arundel County Conference & Visitors Bureau and the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority.

<sup>67</sup> Foster, 138-140; Lewis Walker and Ben C. Wilson, *Black Eden: The Idlewild Community*, (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2002), xi, 1, 4, 6, 21-22; and Armstead, 19.

of the vacationers to this Arcadian playground arrived from the leading cities of the region, such as Grand Rapids, Detroit, Chicago, Cleveland, Fort Wayne and Gary in Michigan, Illinois, Ohio and Indiana.<sup>68</sup>

Initially, White promoters purchased 2,700 acres of cutover timberland, which included Lake Idlewild, to subdivide. The land was acquired from lumber companies and from the Michigan Railroad, which was in receivership for back taxes. Through African American salespersons, the developers sold lots for the explicit purpose of creating a Negro vacation community. The community's growth accelerated, especially after improvements were made, including the building of "a Club House, a hotel with modern laundry facilities, some twenty guest cottages, ice houses, an electric plant, a dancing pavilion, a barbershop, a billiard hall, a superintendent's cottage, improved roads, an athletic field, tennis courts, baseball fields, an athletic track, a railroad station, a post office, telephone service, a school, and a tabernacle."<sup>69</sup>

Promotional materials and newspapers that enticed the Negro professional class to purchase lots in the 1920s described Idlewild as:

...an Eden-like playground for blacks [with] sandy beaches, new hotel accommodations, unpolluted water, boating, swimming, golf and tennis, horseback riding and nightclubbing.<sup>70</sup>

In addition to a place of beauty and relaxation, purchasing land at Idlewild also represented Negro progress and achievement, just as this economic act did in other

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 19; Walker and Wilson, 1, 21-22, 48; Foster, 136-137; and Washington, 280.

<sup>69</sup> Walker and Wilson, 6-7, 21, 23-25.

<sup>70</sup> Walker and Wilson, 21.



parts of the country. At the end of the 1920s the White promoters sold their interests in the resort to the Idlewild Lot Owners Association (ILOA). Lot ownership brought automatic membership in the ILOA, and a board of managers was created to govern the resort. As a result, African Americans would control the later development of the location.<sup>71</sup>

Dr. Daniel Hale Williams, the first doctor to successfully perform open heart surgery in the United States, and founder of Provident Hospital in Chicago, was a draw for the blooming Idlewild resort. He bought a large portion of land, subdivided and sold much of it to friends and other Negro professionals who resided in Midwestern cities. These friends included Madam C.J. Walker, cosmetology millionaire and patron of the arts, Charles W. Chesnutt, lawyer and author of several books including the *Conjure Woman*, and Chicago elected officials. W.E.B. DuBois purchased lots and wrote about Idlewild in the *Crisis* magazine, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) mouthpiece. In the early days of the resort, the presence of and endorsement by people like these assisted in attracting a broader audience of African American professionals: small business people, blue collar workers and sporting persons. The heyday of the Idlewild resort was in the years between 1940 and 1965.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 6-8, 27-28, 64-65.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 27, 39-40, 51; and Benjamin C. Wilson, "Idlewild: a Black Eden in Michigan," *Michigan History* 65:5 (September/October, 1981): 36. DuBois also wrote about vacation and other destination places on a regular basis in the magazine *Crisis* to inform his readership of the conditions of and opportunities for Negroes throughout the United States.

Hotels, motels, cottages, nightclubs and restaurants were built to service the growing crowds of African Americans looking for “an attractive weekend getaway” and summer retreat. The resort’s night spots became an important stop on “the chittlin circuit,” where many up-and-coming Negro entertainers honed their acts before they became famous. Entertainment venues at Idlewild functioned for them much as as the “Borscht Belt” of the Catskill Mountains in New York functioned for up-and-coming Jewish performers between the 1930s and 1960s. During the summer months, many Black entertainers who were denied access to White audiences had a place to showcase their talent. Many established entertainers also came to perform at Idlewild: Louie Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Della Reese, Sammy Davis, Jr., Bill Cosby, Aretha Franklin and B.B. King are a few of the entertainers who were featured at Idlewild nightclubs.<sup>73</sup>

Idlewild began to decline with the end of segregation in the 1960s, as African Americans chose to go to new places that had excluded them in the past. The entertainers stopped coming, because they were now able to obtain jobs in many venues across the country, where both Blacks and Whites could see them perform. Further, the leaders of the resort were “[unprepared] or [unwilling] to build the infrastructures needed to position the community to compete successfully with any challenges that might come from the outside world, race notwithstanding.” Because

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<sup>73</sup> Walker and Wilson, 48-50, 70-71, 69-119; and Armstead, 19.

of their lack of vision, they were unable to make the changes necessary to keep the crowds coming, and to maintain the vitality of the resort.<sup>74</sup>

### **American Beach, Amelia Island, Florida**

American Beach, on Florida's Amelia Island, was established in 1935, during the Depression, as "a Black ocean side heaven." Founded in 1901, the Afro-American Insurance Company (known as 'the Afro') purchased 216 contiguous acres with one half mile of ocean front through its Pension Bureau, to develop as a Black beach resort. Although at the time it was purchased this Amelia Island location was considered remote, it features the finest beaches and tallest dunes on the island. The Afro offered lots for sale to friends, relatives, employees, and customers. While many of the beaches in Florida were publicly owned during this era, most of them either forbade or limited Negroes' use of them. When the Afro first proposed the idea to develop the site for Negroes, the Ku Klux Klan held demonstrations in Jacksonville.<sup>75</sup>

Abraham Lincoln Lewis, the visionary leader of the Afro for almost 30 years, began investing in Florida real estate in Nassau County, where Amelia Island is located, as early as 1919. Lewis and the company were headquartered in the city of Jacksonville, about 40 miles south of Amelia Island, and Lewis had some familiarity with the area before the company's real estate investment, as his wife's family had roots on the island. For many Negroes during the earlier years of the resort,

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<sup>74</sup> Walker and Wilson, 65-66, 139-140.

<sup>75</sup> Armstead, 19; Alan Huffman, "An American Beach," *Preservation Magazine*, July/August 2005, 34-36; Marsha Dean Phelts, *An American Beach for African Americans*, (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1997), 1, 12, 28, 38.

“American Beach was the equivalent of going to Disney World today, in terms of its popularity and prestige.” During the heyday of American Beach from the 1930s to the 1970s, busloads of excursion groups came from all over the southeast.<sup>76</sup>

Lewis and company were involved in several historic building projects before the American Beach development, including the construction of the 36-acre, Jacksonville Lincoln Golf and Country Club, in 1929. This was the first Negro country club in northeast Florida. It featured a stream with a fishing spot, open to the public, that contained catfish and bream. The club amenities the members and their guests could choose from included: “a nine-hole golf course, dining room, club house, swimming pool, shooting range, two clay tennis courts, picnic facilities, and a recreational playground for children.”<sup>77</sup>

In addition to being the site of a very successful Black seaside resort, American Beach was located at the site of Franklin Town, where a community of African Americans had resided since 1862. Earlier settlers made a living through farming, ranching and fishing, and some owned “huge acreages.” Town members were originally ex-slaves from a nearby plantation, and some descendents of those families continued to live in Franklin Town at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. One of the barrier islands, Amelia Island is the only location in the United States where eight different countries have raised their flags in claim to the area: the French, Spanish,

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<sup>76</sup> Phelts, 25-30, 34, 38, 64, 74.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 35; and Huffman, 36.

English and Patriots flags; the Green Cross of Florida; and the flags of Mexico, the Confederacy, and the United States.<sup>78</sup>

The slave trade existed on the island from 1781 until Union soldiers occupied the port city of Fernandina on the north side of the island during the Civil War. The United States legally banned the importation of slaves in 1808. As Florida was not acquired by the United States until 1821, however, Amelia Island became an illegal trade site, where slaves from Africa and the Caribbean could be smuggled to the mainland and illegally sold across the border of Florida to Georgia and onto other southern states.<sup>79</sup>

During the early years of the American Beach resort, beachfront and near-beachfront lots were marketed to Negro professionals. Many of these more affluent families would spend the entire summer at the vacation homes they built at the beach. By the 1940s, in order to sell more lots, the American Beach developers decided to sell smaller parcels so that the cost of purchasing land would be more affordable to a broader audience of potential buyers. Blue collar workers could now have access to building a cottage at the beach. During the 1940s and 1950s, many affordable inns and motels sprang up to accommodate visitors during summer days. When the crowds overflowed at these establishments, lodging proprietors asked homeowners to take people in. By the 1950s, business was wonderful for the

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<sup>78</sup> Phelts, 12-16, 18.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

entrepreneurs at American Beach, especially for the owners of lodging and restaurant establishments.<sup>80</sup>

With the abolishment of legal segregation in the 1960s, American Beach — like the resort town of Idlewild and Black business districts across the U.S. — fell into decline. These types of entities could not compete with White service providers and facilities, as their previously-captive African American consumers now explored the broader array of choices that had previously been unavailable to them. Whites did not choose to patronize these sites either. In the 1970s, new developers, who had a different idea about what a beach community should look like, came knocking on the doors of older African American homeowners, and some of these homeowners sold their properties. These days the year-round community at American Beach is small, the buildings are weather-beaten, many of the stores and businesses are abandoned, and there are many empty lots.<sup>81</sup>

Today, American Beach is surrounded by two upscale, manicured and gated communities — the Ritz-Carlton Amelia Island, and Amelia Island Plantation. These properties look like many of the new Southern Atlantic coastal residential developments. Some American Beach landholders sold out, and their lots became part of these new developments. Lobbying efforts have helped to preserve the beach's dunes and remnant forests, protect the remaining buildings, keep properties together, and establish an American Beach Museum.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 63, 65, 74.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 120-121; Armstead, 19; Huffman, 35-36

<sup>82</sup> Huffman, 36; and Phelts, 120-124.

There is other renewed interest in the area. Baby boomers, who are descendents of longtime stakeholders and others newly acquainted with the area, are purchasing multiple unwanted properties for their own use and to develop for others in this quaint community with a “hodgepodge of unconstrained architectural styles.” In 1992, American Beach became the first site named to the *Florida Black Heritage Trail*. The whole community was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2002, and in 2004 the National Park Service created Timucuan Ecological Historic Preserve from land that came in part from the nouveau, gated community of Amelia Island Plantation, which included eight and half acres of dunes.<sup>83</sup>

The Northeast Florida office of the conservation group, the Trust for Public Land, is working with Nassau County to acquire and develop the abandoned Evans’ Rendezvous eatery and club, and adjacent property, to create a new cultural center with parking to accommodate weddings, family reunions and other such events, and an information kiosk and interpretative signage for visitors. Nassau County will also create space for the American Beach Museum in a new office building going up a few blocks from the new cultural center at Evans’ Rendezvous.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Huffman, 35-36; and Phelts, 12, 121-125.

<sup>84</sup> Huffman, 35-37.

## Chapter 2

### Far West Leisure and Entrepreneurial Pursuits in Lake Elsinore, a Southern California Resort Town

California was “founded on expectation and hope.” Throughout its Native American, Spanish, Mexican and American history, a diverse group of people from around the world have been attracted to the state “for opportunity and success, sunshine and beauty, health and long life and freedom...”<sup>85</sup> During California’s evolution, however, after it became an American possession in 1850 and well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, ethnic groups (of African Americans, Chinese, Japanese, Mexicans, Native American and Jews) were restricted by the Anglo majority population from fully taking advantage of the state’s opportunities and amenities.

Very influential in the development of the region was the idea that “California offered leisure as a way of life.” Charles Lummis, a writer and Southern California booster, popularized this notion in books and articles in the magazines *Land of Sunshine* and *Out West*. He and other boosters extolled “Southern California as the playground of the world, a place where Americans would finally learn to embrace leisure.” On occasion, local residents, including minorities, would have the opportunity to take a vacation in “the playground of the world.”<sup>86</sup>

For Negroes in the later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century — while there were more meaningful opportunities and lucrative

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<sup>85</sup> James J. Rawls and Walton Bean, *California: An Interpretive History* (Boston: Mc Graw Hill Higher Education, 1973; reprint 2003), xiii.

<sup>86</sup> Culver, 35, 61, 86-88.



employment than they had seen in the “south under economic exploitation barely one step removed from slavery” — pursuing their versions of the “California dream” meant coping with racially restrictive legislation, bigotry and discrimination in employment, housing, education, civil rights, and recreation. As Anglo American power became more entrenched in California, and the African American population increased, so too did the institutionalized restrictions and racism they experienced.<sup>87</sup>

Prior to 1910, Negroes had been able to rent and buy property in various parts of the city of Los Angeles. Some African American Angelenos, like Bidly Mason and Robert C. Owens, had been able to acquire substantial real estate holdings and became leaders of the Negro and greater Los Angeles community. In the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the ability of Negroes to buy homes and other property began to be threatened by restrictive city ordinances and covenants which constrained various races from buying property in certain areas. Some of the racially discriminatory measures that came into practice at this time continued until the 1960s.<sup>88</sup>

In the 1920s, the city’s African American population was expanding — as was the Anglo population — and this increase in the African American population resulted in more of the city’s public and commercial services becoming exclusively for Anglos. For recreation activities this meant that Negro Angelenos could only visit certain beach areas, swim at municipal pools on the day before the facility was

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<sup>87</sup> Lonnie Bunch, “The Great State for the Negro,” in *Seeking El Dorado: African Americans In California*, ed. Lawrence De Graaf, Kevin Mulroy and Quintard Taylor (Autry Museum of Western Heritage and University of Washington Press: Seattle and London, 2001), 138.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 132-133; and “Five Views: An Ethnic Historic Site Survey of California,” California Department of Park & Recreation, Office of Historic Preservation, December 1988, From the Internet: [http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online\\_books/5views/5views.htm](http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/5views/5views.htm).

to be cleaned, or attend movies, concerts and thespian presentations at selective theatres — or be relegated to sit in segregated seats.<sup>89</sup>

Negro Southern Californians were able to locate some vacation and relaxation spots from the 1920s to the 1960s, where they were mostly free from bigotry and could enjoy themselves and take pleasure in the sunshine and picturesque outdoor offerings of California, when discrimination and restrictive real estate covenants prevented them from buying property in certain areas and using various public or private facilities. In Southern California, African American professionals, entertainers, entrepreneurs and their families were able to rent cottages at certain locations, and in some cases were able to buy homes for weekend outings and summer vacations. Other African American economic classes made day trips to or camped at these same areas for weekends and shorter vacations.<sup>90</sup> (See Figures 2 & 3.)

### **Lake Elsinore Valley History**

Lake Elsinore, in Riverside County, has long been known for its natural attractions. Situated in the Santa Ana Ortega Mountain range, along the interior route between the cities of Riverside and San Diego, 90 miles from Los Angeles, and inland from the Pacific coastal town of Laguna Beach, the valley has been appreciated for its beautiful vistas, climate, water, mineral deposits, adaptable soil and natural hot springs. The Pai-an-che Indians, the earliest settlers, named the

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<sup>89</sup> Bunch, “The Great State for the Negro,” 142.

<sup>90</sup> Cathy Naro, “A Page From History, How Green Was My Valley: Southland African Americans Remember Hayrides and Golf Games In Val Verde,” *Westways Magazine*, February 1995, 71.

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Figure 2. California Eagle Newspaper, Summer 1925. Note in these advertisements establishments at three different resorts that were popular with Negroes during the Jim Crow era: Lake Elsinore, Love Nest Inn/Strider and Sons; Val Verde, Eureka Villa; and Santa Monica, La Bonita Hotel. In the upper left corner The Walter L. Gordon Co. is advertising insurance and real estate services for Lake Elsinore, Los Angeles, Watts, Monrovia and Riverside.

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Los Angeles, Calif.  
W. H. Jarman, Realty Manager

Figure 3. *California Eagle* Newspaper, Summer 1925. Detail of advertisements in Figure 2.

valley “Etengova Wumona,” which means “Hot Springs by the Little Sea.” The lake and the hot springs were very important to the spiritual traditions and subsistence of the tribe.<sup>91</sup> (See Map 1.)

In 1797, Franciscan Padre Juan Santiago was the first Spaniard to see Lake Elsinore. Assigned to Mission San Juan Capistrano, he entered the Valley from the ancient trail used by the Indians to traverse the Santa Ana Ortega Mountains from the Pacific Ocean side. In the earlier part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century few non-Whites used this trail, but as the century progressed the trail became more frequently used. It became a favorite camping location for American trappers, due to the shade trees along the shores of the “Laguna Grande,” as Lake Elsinore was known at that time. A Mexican land grant was issued to Julian Manriquez in 1844 for Rancho La Laguna, which included “Laguna Grande” and 20,000-acres surrounding it.<sup>92</sup>

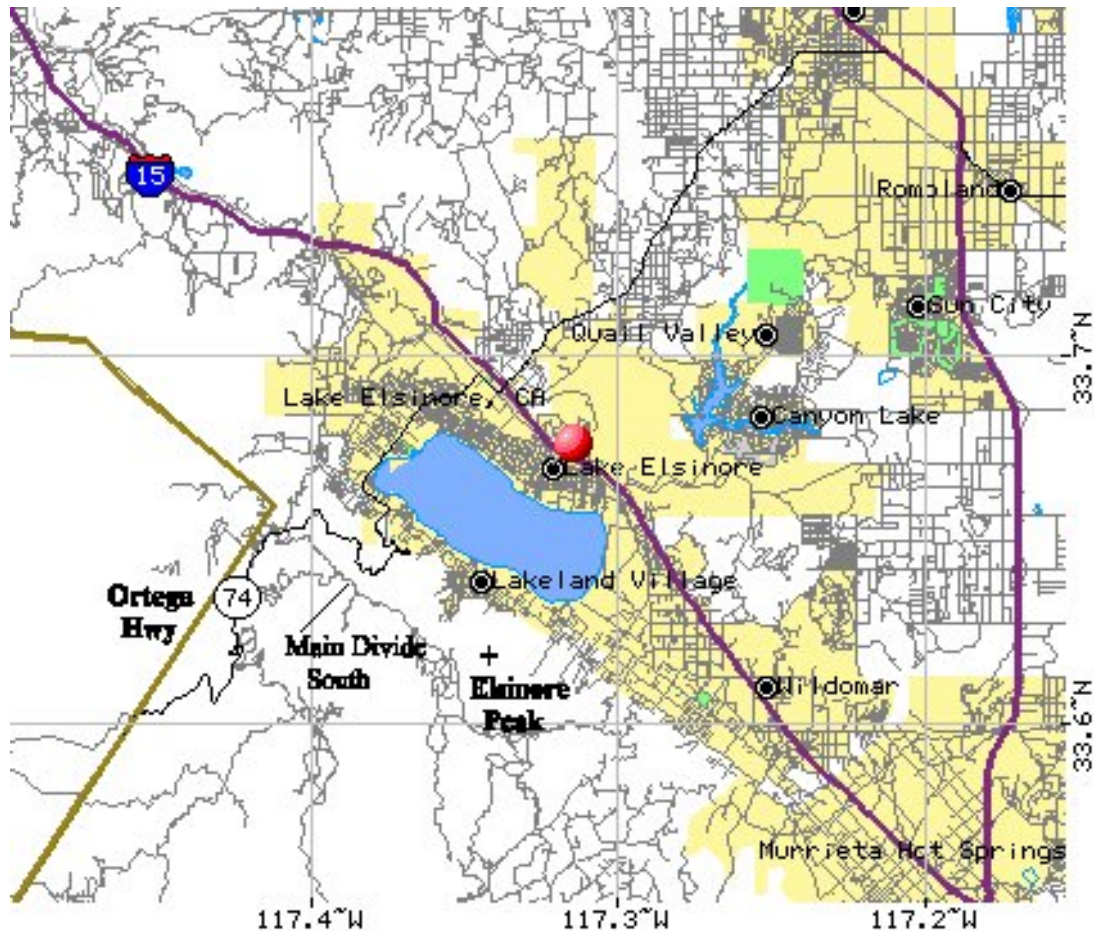
When California became part of the United States in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, many new travelers of the courier and adventurer type rode through the Elsinore Valley along the old trail and stopped to refresh at the lake. On one of his scouting expeditions, John C. Fremont and his men are said to have traveled along the south lake trail. Kit Carson, along with other scouts, and stagecoaches like the Butterfield Stage mail and passenger line, used the valley passage as part of the overland trail

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<sup>91</sup> In 1972 the town of ‘Elsinore’ was officially named ‘Lake Elsinore.’ Tom Hudson, *Lake Elsinore Valley: Its Story, 1776 – 1977*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Printing, (Lake Elsinore, California: Mayhall Print Shop, 2001), 3-5, 142; Dorothy Georgia Zimmerman, *The History of the Elsinore Region, Riverside, County, California*, (Master’s Thesis, University of Southern California, 1934), 1-2; and “Elsinore: A New Colony in Southern California,” (Los Angeles: Times-Mirror Book & Job Printing Office, 1884), from the Riverside File, Seaver Center for Western History Research, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, Los Angeles, California, 12-13.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-7.





**Map 1.** Lake Elsinore and environs, Riverside County, California. *Lake Elsinore, California data, 2004, From the internet: [www.city-data.com/city/Lake-Elsinore-California.html](http://www.city-data.com/city/Lake-Elsinore-California.html)*

that connected California to the rest of the United States. After a succession of ownerships, including Mexican Augustin Machado and American Abel Stearns, who both also owned rancho land in the Santa Monica Bay region of Los Angeles County, Rancho Laguna was purchased by Franklin Heald, William Collier and Donald Graham in 1883. They established a town on the north side of the lake, called Elsinore, and began to sell lots. By 1885, Lake Elsinore was on the Santa Fe transcontinental railroad line which came through San Diego.<sup>93</sup>

Heald recognized the potential of the hot springs, along with the Elsinore Valley's beauty, to attract "seekers of health, recreation and rest." By the 1900s various entrepreneurs had developed numerous hotels, apartments and cottages, as well as several sanatoriums, to meet the needs of visitors from around the world at what had become a popular vacation site for "health and pleasure, combined." The Valley contained a number of different types of hot and cold mineral water wells that were said to cure various ills, such as rheumatism, gallstones, indigestion, kidney and liver trouble, eruptions and constipation. Various social and recreation activities were available on land and in Lake Elsinore, including hunting, hiking, fishing, picnicking, swimming, boating, and dancing on summer nights.

The hot springs and mineral waters brought visitors from all over, the Southern California land boom lured eager buyers to Elsinore and the arrival of the railroad added to the prosperity.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 7-9 and 23.

<sup>94</sup> "Lakes of California: Lake Elsinore," *PG&E Progress*, February 1972, Elsinore File, San Diego Historical Society.

Real estate speculators like Heald were aware that tourists were prospective residents. Originally from Iowa, Franklin Heald was the one of the developers of the Elsinore town site and region who had the most to do with the growth of the place. He already had some familiarity with California when he arrived in Pasadena in the 1870s, as his uncle was a founder of Healdsburg in Sonoma County, near San Francisco. Heald was one of the regions's late-19<sup>th</sup> century pioneers that California historian Carey McWilliams saw as coming to build a new land, instead of retire — one who was a part of the progressive, enterprising, venturesome spirit that so impressed visitors to the region at that time.<sup>95</sup>

Heald was a descendent of Thomas Macy through his mother Sarah Macy Heald. Macy had been one of the English Quakers who came to America to escape persecution in England. As a member of the Society of Friends, Heald's Quaker background was probably a strong influence on the way he and his partners chose to develop their "Elsinore Colony." From the start, the Elsinore community was viewed as progressive. The founding pioneers were interested in "families of limited means" being able to afford a "...place that promised to equal Pasadena and Riverside at about one-fifth of the prices obtain[ed] at those places." The town founders created small lots for settlers in the town site, around the valuable hot springs, as they wanted to "form a dense community, where a mutual and neighborly

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<sup>95</sup> Zimmerman, 59; "Lakes of California: Lake Elsinore," San Diego Historical Society; *An Illustrated History of Southern California*, (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1890), 132; Carey McWilliams, *Southern California: An Island on the Land*, (Layton, Utah: Gibbs Smith, Publisher/ Peregrine Smith Books, 1946, 1973), 156; Culver, 127.



interest [would] act as a stimulant and encouragement.” Early buyers of land to farm bought an average of about 35 acres.<sup>96</sup>

Pasadena started as an agricultural outpost and grew into a charming town that sought the emblematically genteel as residents. Located northeast of the city of Los Angeles, in the San Gabriel Valley between the San Gabriel Mountains and the Arroyo Seco, the deep ravine that allowed water to pass from those mountains westward to the sea, it began forming in 1875 and was incorporated as a city in 1896. Initially the area was an agricultural cooperative owned by the San Gabriel Orange Grove Association. The balmy climate, and the wilderness of the lower lying areas of the Arroyo Seco, with its sycamores and other trees, wild grape vines, flowering plants and other vegetation, cultivated its growth as a health resort and retirement community.<sup>97</sup>

In 1886, the Hotel Raymond was the first of the lavish, large resort hotels to open in Pasadena for wealthy Easterners looking for a place to escape the cold and snow of the Atlantic coast winter. Many of the visitors to these hotels returned to Pasadena as permanent residents. These new Pasadena residents built large homes in the various fashionable architectural styles of the day, including the elegant craftsman designs by the architects Charles Sumner Greene and Henry Mather Greene, and Mediterranean Revival styles. In addition to building stately homes,

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<sup>96</sup> “Elsinore: A New Colony in Southern California,” from the Riverside File, Seaver Center for Western History Research, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, Los Angeles, California, 3-4; and *An Illustrated History of Southern California*, (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1890) 61, 132-133.

<sup>97</sup> Kevin Starr, *Inventing the Dream: California Through the Progressive Era*, (New York: Oxford Press, 1985), 99, 102.

some bought large estates at the outskirts of the city, where orchards continued to be extant, and developed various types of gardens around their newly-built homes. In addition to wealthy Anglos, by the earlier decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the population of Pasadena included Chinese and Mexicans, who had been brought in to work on the railroad, and Negroes, who moved to the area to start small businesses and work as servants in the big homes and hotels.<sup>98</sup>

Riverside was originally founded as a colony in 1870 by the California Silk Center Association, whose efforts to develop a silk industry collapsed when their organizer died. At the time, the old rancho land was being sold off to land speculators. Other, more successful Riverside settlements were started during this era, such as the Southern California Colony Association, the New England Colony, and the English Colony, made up of English and Canadian migrants. The city was incorporated in 1883, and the county of the same name, Riverside, was created in 1893. The original settlement included a town site and land for farming. After Mathew Gage brought irrigation from the eastern part of San Bernardino Valley to Riverside through what became known as the “Gage Canal,” and lots of agricultural experiments were tried, the area eventually became the center of the orange industry in California.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 100-101; and “Heritage: A Short History of Pasadena - Pasadena Becomes a City: 1886-1920,” Pasadena History website, From the Internet: <http://www.ci.pasadena.ca.us/History/1886-1920.asp>.

<sup>99</sup> Ruth Austen, *Riverside: The Heritage, The People, The Vision*, (Montgomery, AL: Community Communications, 1996), 12-17; and William Wilcox Robinson, *The Story of Riverside County*, (Los Angeles: Title Insurance Co. & Trust, 1957), 25, 33-35.

By the time the new county was formed in 1893, Riverside was becoming known for “its gracious lifestyle and outstanding fruit production.” The well-to-do Riverside English and Canadian investors built the first golf course and polo field in Southern California. By 1895, Riverside was the wealthiest city per capita in the nation, due to the development of refrigerated railroad cars (that could transport the orange crops throughout the United States), and innovative irrigation systems that created the water supply for the area. The first Negro families came to the city with transplanted Anglo families between 1870 and 1900, and worked as farm laborers, particularly in the citrus industry and as road builders. They competed with Japanese and Mexicans for the jobs that were available to minority groups. A few African American entrepreneurs developed impressive grocery store and trash collection businesses.<sup>100</sup>

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Beyond the town site, citrus, walnut, apricot and olive groves alternated with groves of eucalyptus trees and open spaces where rabbits and coveys of quail made their homes. Beyond the fringe of development, coyotes barked and yapped when the moon rose. The mountains and hills brooded unchanged as if the white man had never come.

In the center of it all Lake Elsinore sparkled in the sun, or reflected the silver path of the moon, or flung its waters about in fury when strong winds blew from the ocean or desert.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Austen, 17; Lake Elsinore was originally part of San Diego County. “History of Riverside,” City of Riverside, California, From the Internet: <http://www.riversideca.gov/visiting-aboutriv.asp>; Richard R. Esparza and H. Vincent Moses, “Westward To Canaan: African American Heritage in Riverside, 1890 to 1950,” Prepared for the Riverside Municipal Museum by Riverside Museum Associates, 1996, 1-2, 7-8; and “Our Families, Our Stories: From the African American Community, Riverside, California, 1870-1960,” Prepared by the Riverside Municipal Museum, 1997, 3.

<sup>101</sup> Hudson, 59.

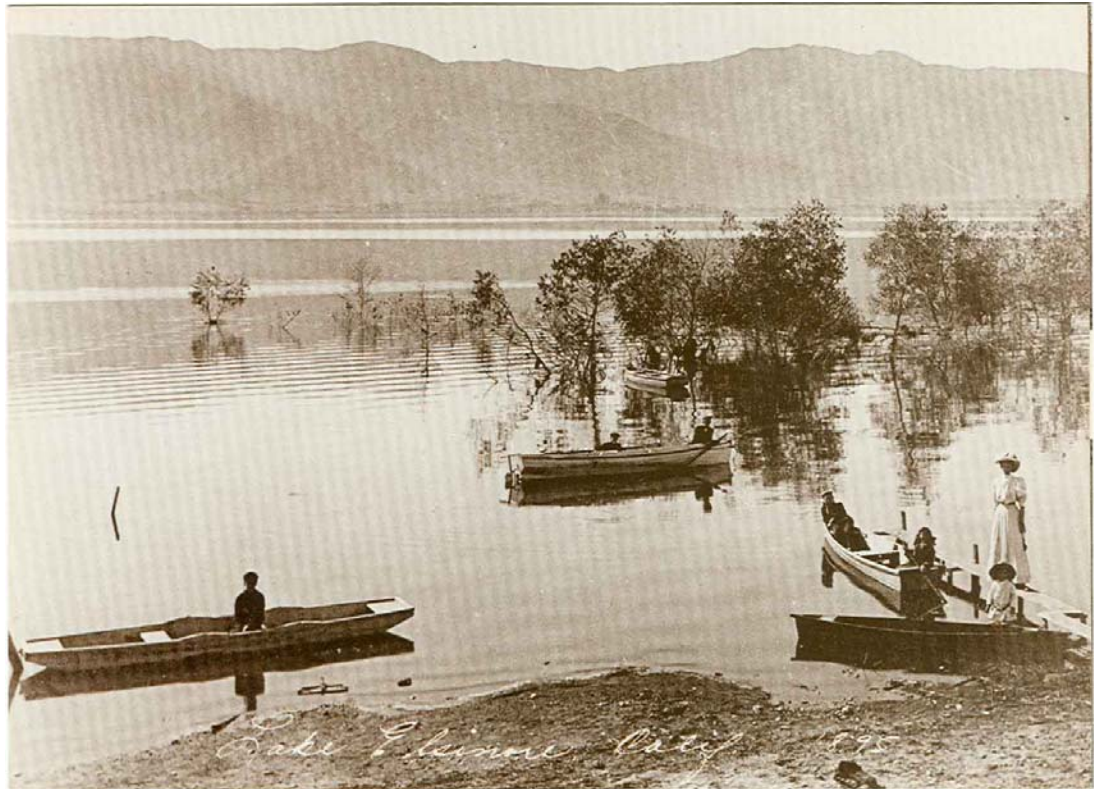
The above description of the valley of the early 1920s, by Tom Hudson in his book *Lake Elsinore Valley: Its Story, 1776 – 1977*, continued to be a more or less representative view of the place to the 1970s. At a later date, *Los Angeles Times* writer Dave Smith called the valley a “California Shangri-La.”<sup>102</sup> (See Figure 4.)

Although in the earlier decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Lake Elsinore Valley was popular for its beauty- and health-giving attributes, and the adaptability of its soil for agricultural production, the lake was “once described as ‘one of the most perverse, unruly and unpredictable bodies of water in California.’” When full it was the largest freshwater lake in Southern California, at about seven miles long, two miles wide, and 40 feet at its deepest point; when it was dry, it could be a dust bowl. Although the Colorado River aqueduct began delivering water to Southern California in 1941, Lake Elsinore was not stabilized until 1964, with water flowing from the Colorado River/Lakeview aqueducts, the San Jacinto River through Canyon Lake, and local watershed runoff. Prior to this time the lake had regular cycles of wet and dry years. Throughout the years the effect of natural incidence of low rainfall — and, hence, no run off from the mountains — reduced the amount of water flow into the lake. Later, manmade events, such as various dams installed on the San Jacinto River, and huge amounts of water pumped from underground to develop the region’s farms and cities, further adversely affected the lake’s water level.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 59-60.

<sup>103</sup> “Lakes of California: Lake Elsinore,” San Diego Historical Society; Zimmerman, 62-63; “Celebrating 50 Years of Water History,” Prepared by Mary Brown for the Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District, 2000; James J. Rawls and Walton Bean, *California: An Interpretive History*, (Boston: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 1968; reprint 2003), 319; and Hudson 24, 55, 154-158.



**Figure 4.** View of Lake Elsinore from Lakeshore Drive in Southern California, 1895. *Lake Elsinore Historical Society, Photo courtesy of Lilah Knight.*

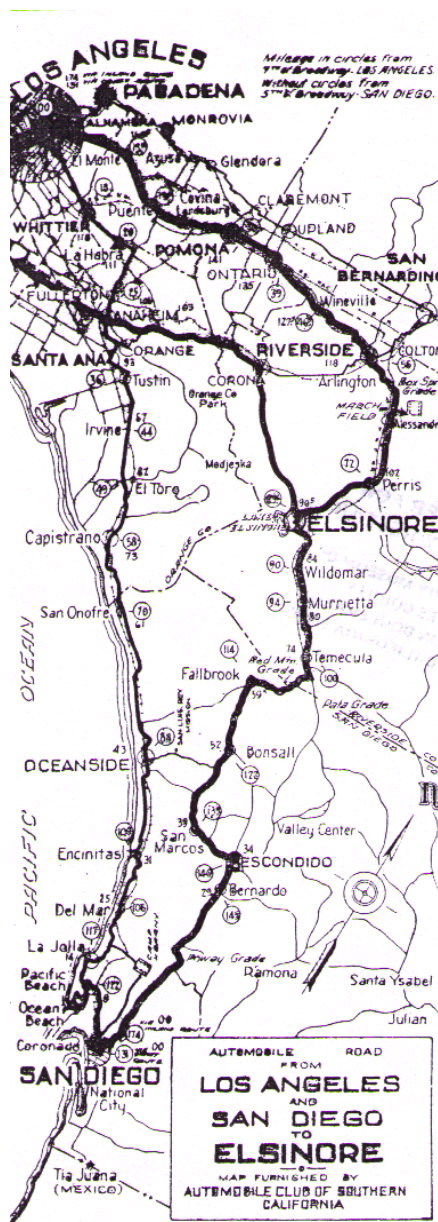
Even with the capriciousness of the water level, during its wet years Lake Elsinore remained an attraction for Californians, and particularly fashionable Angelenos who arrived by train and then by automobile. The community's economic development over the 20<sup>th</sup> century waxed and waned with the level of the lake. In spite of this the town survived, the citizens of the region moved ahead, sustained by faith in the future, and made tremendous strides to overcome difficulties.<sup>104</sup> (See Map 2.)

The 1920s were a prime era for new real estate development in Lake Elsinore Valley. New buildings were constructed for local businesses, social organizations and country clubs, and tourist lodging and other facilities, including a golf course and campgrounds. Residential structures, including palatial homes, were built in different places around the lake. Improved transportation infrastructure was installed, making it possible to drive on paved roads north to Corona, and south to San Diego. The many attractions of the Valley and California were extensively promoted in a variety of publications. People came from all over to visit the area, buy property and spend their money. An assortment of boosters and promoters were lured, just as the town's founders had been, by visions of an opportunity they viewed as reserved just for them; they continued their attempts to develop Lake Elsinore into a "health and recreation center with the additional advantage of ideal home and business districts."<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Hudson, 78, 116-117; and "Lakes of California: Lake Elsinore," San Diego Historical Society.

<sup>105</sup> Hudson, 61, 65, 68, 71, 73; and "Lake Elsinore Healthy Place," *Los Angeles Times*, June 27, 1928, ProQuest Historical Newspapers Los Angeles Times (1881-1987), A12.



## How to Reach the Lake Elsinore Valley

**FROM LOS ANGELES:** Go out Ninth Street and Mines Avenue through Santa Fe Springs, Buena Park, Fullerton, Placentia, Santa Ana Canyon and Corona to Elsinore. The distance is 72 miles. Pickwick Stages and the new Santa Fe Short Line will also take you directly to this famous playground.

**FROM SAN DIEGO:** Follow the Inland Route across the Old Town Bridge, through Escondido, Vista, Fallbrook, historic Temecula, and into the Valley of the Lake.

You may return to Los Angeles by way of Riverside, by either the Valley or Foothill Boulevard, through the Orange Empire. Coming into the Elsinore valley, as you reach the summit of the Temescal grade, (a very gradual rise) a vista of lake and mountains will be spread before you, than which there is no more beautiful in the world. A trip to Elsinore will reveal beautiful scenery you never knew existed in California.

### Housing Facilities and Rates

When you come to Elsinore, rest assured that your particular type of housing may be found here. Beautiful bungalow court or modest cottage; two hotels of the finest, and several others less pretentious; auto camps, or you may camp on the beach. Every comfort has been provided for the visitor.

Hotel rates run from \$2.50 per day and up. Rooms from \$1.00 daily up; bungalows from \$8.00 per week upward, and by the month from \$25.00 up.

Hot sulphur water baths, heated by nature and fresh from the wells, are here, and range in price from 35 cents up. Three excellent bath houses are here, a plunge, masseurs and masseuse: in fact, nothing has been forgotten.

Printed by Lake Elsinore Valley News and Elsinore Leader-Press

**Map 2.** *Lake Elsinore Hot Springs Brochure.* Printed by Lake Elsinore Valley News and Elsinore Leader-Press with a map from the Southern California Auto Club, date unknown. In addition to directions and accommodations information and resort pictures, the brochure offered text about the city's civic and utility infrastructure, health and recreation features, industry and mineral waters under the banner of "Pertinent Facts About the Southland's Most Scenic Health and Recreational Resort." *Seaver Center for Western History Research Collection, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County*

Successful businessman Ernest Pickering, one of the developers of the Ocean Park section of the city of Santa Monica, bought the entire block where the Lake View Inn and the Crescent Bath House stood around Spring and Limited, along with a substantial parcel of lakefront land nearby. Pickering also worked with the Abbot Kinney Company, which developed the residential community and amusements of Venice, California. Clevelin Realty became Elsinore's biggest real estate promoter, selling lots on the lake's north and south shores, including at Country Club Heights (also known as Clevelin Heights) on the north shore. The company also constructed on the north shore what became known as the Aloha (Pleasure) Pier in 1926, and Clevelin Country Club, near the edge of the town site.<sup>106</sup>

In 1924 the *Los Angeles Times* noted that one of the largest real estate syndicate operations in the state of California was being undertaken by the Elsinore Land Trusts. The owners of this 9000-acre parcel of land, the Southern California Athletic and Country Club, planned to build a clubhouse, golf links, polo grounds and water sports facilities on their property on the south shore of Lake Elsinore. Their development plans also included making available tracts for independent subdivisions of country club estates; mountain cabin sites; and three, five and ten-acre farms. By 1925, construction of the club house was completed, but it was never used as intended, as the developers ran into financial difficulties.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>106</sup>“Lake Elsinore Healthy Place,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 27, 1928; and Hudson, 55-56, 71, 72, 76.

<sup>107</sup> Hudson, 61-62, 68; and “Subdivisions and Subdividers,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 9, 1924, ProQuest Historical Newspapers Los Angeles Times (1881-1987), D1.



### The Burgess Family and the Rieves Inn

By the 1920s there were also establishments catering to Negroes seeking recreational opportunities in Lake Elsinore Valley. In 1887, when the town of Lake Elsinore was first being settled, African Americans William Charles Burgess (1842-1913) and his wife Hannah (1852-1947) came to work as servants for the household of Franklin Heald, the “father of Lake Elsinore.” The Burgesses bought property in Lake Elsinore off Pottery and Main, a location then at the outskirts of the town center. They also bought property a little further out, off Pottery and Kellogg, where they raised oranges and olives. Eventually, Pottery Street became the main thoroughfare of the Negro vacation and year-round community at Lake Elsinore.<sup>108</sup>

In a history of Lake Elsinore compiled by the town’s first librarian, Altha Merrifield, using newspaper accounts, William Charles Burgess is noted for his civic activities and employment situations. Accounts describe the senior Burgess as having worked as a cook for various individuals, and on work details such as crews constructing roads. Born into slavery, and a Civil War veteran who served in the Union Army, he was at one time a color-bearer and treasurer of the Elsinore Grand Army of the Republic Post with other Civil War veterans.<sup>109</sup> (See Figure 5.)

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<sup>108</sup> Sandy Stokes, “Elsinore lacked the look of hatred: Black family going north paused, then settled down,” *The Press Enterprise*, February 13, 1996, B-2 and Lake Elsinore Cemetery Records.

<sup>109</sup> Sandy Stokes, “Elsinore lacked the look of hatred: Black family going north paused, then settled down,” *The Press Enterprise*, 13 February 1996, B-2; and History of Lake Elsinore compiled from newspaper stories by Altha Merrifield Cauch, 1956, Lake Elsinore Historical Society Collection, 307.



**Figure 5.** Davie and Merrifield Building, Lake Elsinore, 1906. From left to right: standing, Peck, Merrifield and William Charles Burgess. Mr. Burgess (1842-1913) and his wife Hannah (1852-1947) came in 1887 to work as servants for the household of Franklin Heald, the “father of Lake Elsinore.” The establishment housed a blacksmith shop, a construction business and it served as the first town library from 1908-1909. The building burned down in 1909. The Burgesses brought property in Lake Elsinore off Pottery and Main Streets, then at the outskirts of the town center. Eventually Pottery became the main thoroughfare of the Negro community at Lake Elsinore. The Burgesses also brought property a little further out off Pottery and Kellogg Streets, where they raised oranges and olives. Mrs. Burgess and her son, William Lafayette Burgess (1875-1948), ran a hotel until 1927 called the Rieves Inn that was built at the family farm near Pottery and Kellogg, and which catered to the Negro leisure and health seekers. Their lodging facilities began in a private residence, and expanded to the larger hotel facility. *Lake Elsinore Public Library Collection.*

Until 1927, Mrs. Burgess and her son, William Lafayette Burgess (1875-1948), ran a hotel known as Rieves Inn, which was built at the family farm near Pottery and Kellogg. Catering to the Negro leisure and health seekers, their lodging facilities began in a private residence, and had expanded to a larger hotel structure when they were sold to Mr. and Mrs. Kruse from San Diego. The Kruses had previously worked as managers of the café at the Douglas Hotel, a hugely successful Negro establishment located in downtown San Diego, which had been founded in 1924.<sup>110</sup>

Other early African American families in the Lake Elsinore environs survived in the local economy in agriculture, construction and other manual labor jobs. A few worked in support jobs for the (Anglo and Negro) resort infrastructure as masseurs, cooks, housekeepers, property caretakers and small lodging proprietors serving both Negroes and Anglos.

A 1921 article in the *California Eagle* Newspaper, entitled “Elsinore Notes,” speaks of the Rieves Inn as being a “popular resort for health and recreation.” The article describes a scene of a successful party with guests dressed in their finery. Hotel guests from Oakland, California are noted as being participants in the merriment that went on past midnight on September 21 — a Wednesday evening no less. Robert C. Owens, the prosperous Negro Angeleno real estate mogul and descendent of Los Angeles pioneer Bidy Mason, is noted as being a guest at the

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 309-310; and Richard L. Carrico and Stacey Jordan, PhD, *Centre City Development Corporation Downtown San Diego African-American Heritage Study*, Prepared by Mooney & Associates, San Diego, California, June 2004, V/40-V/46.

party and as a good player of the Whist card game. The *California Eagle* featured news particular to the Negro community, and the description of the soiree and the well-to-do and socially prominent vacationers reads like others that would have appeared in any city newspaper of the day; the *Los Angeles Times* often featured articles discussing similar experiences of well-to-do and socially prominent Anglos enjoying parties, and their vacations at popular resort hotels. (See Figure 6.)

A letter dated May 20, 1924, written on Rieves Inn stationery, from Miss A'Leia Walker (1885-1931) to a Mr. Ransom — along with the *California Eagle* newspaper article, which notes visitors from Oakland — indicate that the Burgess's Lake Elsinore hotel was known to Negroes outside of Southern California. Miss Walker's letter to Mr. Ransom informs him she is feeling much better, and that she has been following her doctor's orders, for the most part. (See Figure 7.)

Miss Walker was the only daughter and heir to the cosmetics business and fortune created by her mother, Madame C.J. Walker (1867–1919), the first self-made American and Negro woman millionaire. Although Miss Walker owned property in Los Angeles, she lived in New York. She inherited the lavish family estate, Villa Lewaro, in Irvington-on-the-Hudson, New York, near the home of John D. Rockefeller, and entertained Harlem Renaissance elites such as Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston and others in a fabulous Manhattan townhouse she called the “Dark Tower.” She was a businesswoman, patron of the arts, and a muse who

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## ELSINORE NOTES.

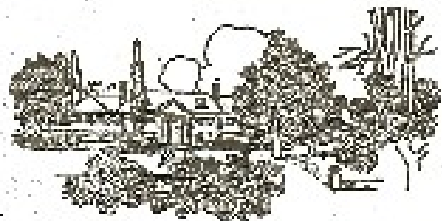
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"Rieves' Jam" that deservedly popular resort for health and recreation, owned by Mrs. H. C. Burgiss, was the scene on Wednesday evening, September 21st, of a brilliant reception complimentary to Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Hunter, who left for their Oakland home after having spent a fortnight of restful pleasure. The costumes worn by the ladies savored more of class worn Easter Sunday than at a mountain resort. The evening was happily spent in progressive whist and dancing. The winners of the first prize in whist were Mrs. N. Walters; gentleman's prize was jointly won by W. H. Young and R. C. Owens, but on the draw-off Mr. Young was victor. Refreshments of various kinds were served, after which dancing was in order till past the midnight hour, at which time the guests departed for their respective apartments and homes.

**Figure 6.** *California Eagle* Newspaper, October 1, 1921. "Elsinore Notes" feature regarding the "popular resort for health and recreation" owned by Mrs. Hannah Burgess on Pottery and Kellogg. The article notes The Hunters were visitors from Oakland participating in the merriment at the resort. Robert C. Owens, the prosperous Negro Angeleno real estate mogul and descendent of Los Angeles pioneer Biddy Mason, is noted as being a guest at the party and that night at the resort as a good player of the Whist card game.

Persons with Tuberculosis or other Contagious Diseases not received

## Rieves Inn



LAKE EL SINORE HOT SPRINGS

P. O. Box 96 Phone 532  
Popular Prices Meals a la Carte

Elsinore, Riverside County, Cal.

THE water of this famous Health Resort is unsurpassed for Nervous Disorders of all kinds, Rheumatism, Liver, Kidney and Stomach Troubles. Temperature of water 110°. Altitude 1350 feet.

Passengers from Los Angeles take Pickwick Auto stages at Union Stage Depot, Fifth and Los Angeles Streets, or the Santa Fe Railroad.

For further information write or phone

W. L. Burgess, Manager.

May 20, 1924

Dear Mr. Ransom,  
Your letter received - ever  
glad to hear from you.

**Figure 7.** Rieves Inn stationery with a letter from A'Leia Walker to Mr. Ransom, 1924. The text on the letterhead about the resort reads: "The water of this famous Health Resort is unsurpassed for Nervous Disorders of all kinds, Rheumatism, Liver, Kidney and Stomach Troubles. Temperature of water 110 [degrees]. Altitude 1350 feet. Passengers from Los Angeles take Pickwick Auto stages at Union Stage Depot, Fifth and Los Angeles Streets, or the Santa Fe Railroad." *Walker Collection of A'Leia Bundles.*

inspired many singers, poets and sculptors. Langston Hughes called her the “joy goddess of Harlem’s 1920s.”<sup>111</sup> (See Figure 8.)

The letterhead of the Rieves Inn stationery provides much information about the establishment, and is reminiscent of an advertisement one might see in a magazine or newspaper. Along with the name and location of the hotel, there is a small line drawing of what the resort hotel and its setting might have looked like at one time, a list of ailments the Lake Elsinore Hot Springs water “is unsurpassed” in treating, transportation options to reach the resort, and the proprietor’s contact information. Hotel rates are also mentioned as being “Popular Prices,” with food served described as available on an “a la Carte” basis.

Some of the guests at the Burgess establishment may have also seen entrepreneurial opportunities to provide accommodation for Negroes who sought a rustic, health respite from the Southern California metropolitan areas of Los Angeles, San Diego and Riverside. Several prominent Negro Angelenos purchased their own vacation homes. A few entrepreneurs from the City of the Angels also invested in resort and recreation spaces for their own and their Negro compatriots’ use at Lake Elsinore. (See Map 3 & Key, and Figures 2, 3, 9 & 10.)

As in other parts of the United States, because they were barred in Southern California from employment with better wages and in managerial positions in

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<sup>111</sup> “A’Lelia Walker, Harlem business woman,” The African American Registry, From the Internet: [http://www.aaregistry.com/african\\_american\\_history/923/ALelia\\_Walker\\_Harlem\\_businesswoman](http://www.aaregistry.com/african_american_history/923/ALelia_Walker_Harlem_businesswoman;); “A’Lelia McWilliams Walker,” *ChickenBones: A Journal for Literary and Artistic African American Themes*, From the Internet: <http://www.nathanielturner.com/aleliawalker.htm>; and A’Lelia Bundles, biographer and descendent of A’Lelia Walker, interview by author, Los Angeles, California, Via telephone, April 8, 2007.



**Figure 8.** A'Lelia Walker (1885-1931). Miss Walker was the only daughter and heir to the cosmetics business and fortune created by her mother, Madame C.J. Walker (1867 – 1919), the first self-made American and Negro woman millionaire. By the letter on Rieves Inn stationery she is known to have visited the resort in 1924. *From the Internet: [www.nathanielturner.com/aleliawalker.htm](http://www.nathanielturner.com/aleliawalker.htm).*





**Map 3.** Lake Elsinore African American Resort Community, selective sites. Key to map follows.  
 From the Internet: [www.mapquest.com](http://www.mapquest.com).

**Map 3 Key.** Selective sites in the Lake Elsinore African American Resort Community, 1920s-1960s. Locations on the map were identified from interviews, census records, African American newspaper ads, and travel and business directories.

	<b>Property</b>	<b>Address</b>
1	Rieves Inn, 1920 By 1930 the Rieves Inn would be called L.C. Malanda's Burgess Hotel and Health Resort	Pottery & Kellogg
2	Lake Shore Beach 1921-1940s	On Lakeshore Drive going towards the northeastern corner of the lake about 1.6 miles from Main Street in historic downtown Lake Elsinore.
3	Mrs. Mildred Sterling cottage rentals business, 1920s-1970s	311 N. Kellogg
4	Love Nest Inn Strider & Sons, 1925 (faded sign may still be there at private home)	N. Kellogg Across from Lake Elsinore Inn
5	Lake Elsinore Inn, 1930s-1960s	416 N. Kellogg
6	George Moore Motel & Café (Chicken Inn) In Los Angeles, he also owned a service station & tire shop @ 46 <sup>th</sup> Street & Central Avenue	Pottery & Spring
7	Martinez Bathhouse	Riley & Sumner, across from Hensley Court
8	Mundy's Court	NE corner of Pottery & Langstaff
9	Coleman DeLuxe Hotel, 1930	Pottery & Lowell
10	LaBonita Motel, 1930 First owner: Jim and Inez Anderson Later owner: Wyman & Rita Burney, also had a lamp shop in the Hermitz Bldg. on Graham. Extant as apartments, but modified.	Pottery & Riley
11	Brooks Health Baths and Spa and Café, 1930s, Al Brooks, proprietor	Pottery & Poe
12	Hensley Court Horace C. Hensley, owner, 1940s Tom Yarborough owned property before Hensley. Extant as apartment.	Riley & Sumner
13	Pottery Lunchett, 1930	415 Pottery
14	Smith's Grocery Store, 1930 A. Smith, proprietor	419 Langstaff
15	Mr. Daniels' Court cottages	Riley
16	Hendrix's Court, 1930s William & Gussie Hendrix, proprietors Served family style meals. She was the mother of the Independence Church.	309 Lowell

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|----|--|---|
| 17 | Clarence Muse<br>Muse-O-Lot Ranch  | Perris, CA  |
| 18 | Henry's, 1940s   | Pottery, b/t Langstaff & Poe  |
| 19 | Miller's Café, 1945-1980s<br>Andrew J. and Elizabeth Miller, proprietors<br>Rubin "Buddy" Brown's family lived next door<br>on Pottery.  | SE corner Pottery & Langstaff   |
| 20 | Thomas and Kathryn Yarborough Residence,<br>1920s-1960s  |   |
| 21 | Judge David Williams Residence   | Silver, south of Sumner   |
| 22 | Paul R Williams Residence  | 16908 Grand Ave. @ Buena Vista Street -<br>across the lake from the historic town<br>center |
| 23 | Douglas and Mary Henderson Residence<br>In Los Angeles, he was a pharmacist @<br>Washington Blvd. & Central Central Ave.<br>His wife Mary Broyles worked at the soda<br>foundation in the Clark Hotel. | Poe b/t Pottery & Sumner  |
| 24 | The (Leon & Ruth) Washington Family ranch –<br>30 acres<br>LA Sentinel Newspaper, owners   |   |
| 25 | Dr. Curtis King's Ranch  | Flint, off Chaney   |
| 26 | H. Claude Hudson Family Residence<br>Also rented a house on Lowell before they built<br>on Lewis. Barbara Anderson owns the house<br>today.  | 304 N. Lewis Street<br>Lewis & Sumner   |
| 27 | Dr. Elvin and Olive Neal Residence   | Scrivener & Pottery   |
| 28 | Thomas and Portia Griffith, II Residence   | 214 Lewis Street  |
| 29 | Thomas & Judy Rutherford Residence   | On Lewis Street   |
| 30 | Paul Payne Family Residence  | On Lewis Street   |
| 31 | The Oggs Residence   | Near M. Sterling on Kellogg   |
| 32 | Rev. Hampton and Gertrude Hawes, Sr. Family<br>Residence, 1930s  | Lowell & Scrivener  |
| 33 | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Baptist Church of Los Angeles Retreat  | 1548 Lakeshore @ Elsinore City limits   |
| 34 | Charlotta A. Bass Residence, 1950s-1960s   | 709 West Heald Ave.<br>b/t Kellogg & Lowell   |
| 35 | Hill Top Club, 1950s-60s   |   |
| 36 | Barbershop, 1940s<br>One owner: Sterling Jackson   | Pottery   |
| 37 | Beauty Salon, started in 1953<br>Miriam Hutchinson, owner<br>- came to LE in 1920s   | Pottery & Lowell  |
| 38 | Jones Fish & Tackle Repair Shop<br>Dollene Jones   | Langstaff   |

39	Rev. and Mrs. Jones	Lewis, b/t Pottery & Sumner
40	Dr. Wilbur and Desdemona Gordon	Pottery, east of Main include parcels across the highway
41	Independent Church (African American congregation, begun 1920s-present)	Kellogg b/t Pottery & Sumner

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**Figure 9.** African Americans at Lake Elsinore, circa 1921. Left to right: Eddie DeQuir, Pearl Rozier DeQuir, Carolina Rozier-Harrison, Sarah Rozier-Bryant. Note the concession sign in this and the photograph with the Miller sisters. *Shades of L.A. Collection / Los Angeles Public Photo Database Online.*

# Why Pay Rent?

BETTER

## OWN YOUR OWN HOME

\$300 CASH Buys a NEW Modern 4-room house with 6 pieces of plumbing high and dry on a paved street. You will like it when you see it. Bal. 23 months --Better Hurry.

\$200 CASH Buys 3-room new Modern House on paved street; bal. \$30 per mo., including interest.

\$25 CASH and \$10 monthly buys lots on paved street. Why wait?

SUBDIVIDERS Attention! 250 acres in Elsinore mountains near other subdivisions; for a Quick Sale, \$50 an acre. A dandy location for Cabin Sites. No Restrictions --Terms.

\$6000 Buys one acre and large house, centrally located on paved street, one block to car line. \$1500 down, balance terms.

\$500.00 Down Buys a large 5-room modern house north of main on a paved street; large porch, big yard. You will like this one when you see it.

Remember that any property you buy between Los Angeles and the ocean will make you money.

--DON'T FORGET THE NAME--

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210 So. Compton Ave.

WATTS

Figure 10. *California Eagle* Newspaper, August 7, 1925. A realtor located in Watts offers opportunities for purchase of property to Negroes at locations that include Lake Elsinore.

corporate America, “ambitious African Americans gravitated toward entrepreneurial ventures, especially those that catered to the group population of [Negro] Angelenos.” The “nationalist surge” of the early 1920s, when Pan Africanist Marcus Garvey would speak at organized meetings in Los Angeles about promoting Negro pride and political and economic self reliance, strengthened this entrepreneurial trend. It was a theme that had carried over from earlier decades, with Negro journalists, entrepreneurs, club women and ministers preaching race progress through enterprise.<sup>112</sup>

### **Lake Shore Beach**

One such real estate venture was known as Lake Shore Beach, located on the north shore of Lake Elsinore. In 1921 the Lake Shore Beach Company purchased a little less than fifty acres of land in order to build a Black resort development at the northeastern corner of Lake Elsinore, edging the town site just below the Clevelin Heights area. The real estate investment was valued at \$35,000, with each of the five directors’ shares valued equally. This real estate investment group included several leading Negro Angelenos. The original officers and members of the company’s Board of Directors included Dr. Wilbur C. Gordon as president, Charles Darden as vice president and attorney, Arthur L. Reese as secretary, A.C. Richardson as treasurer and business manager (his wife, Sallie T. Richardson, replaced him as a

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<sup>112</sup> Douglas Flammig, *Bound For Freedom: Black Los Angeles in Jim Crow America*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005), 227, 231-232; and Delores Nason McBroom, “Harvest of Gold: African American Boosterism, Agriculture, and Investment In Allensworth and Little Liberia” in Lawrence DeGraaf, Kevin Mulroy and Quintard Taylor, ed. *Seeking El Dorado: African American Experiences in California*. Seattle and London: Autry Museum of Western Heritage and University of Washington Press, 2001.



board member after his death in 1922), and Mrs. Anna Josephine Jones.<sup>113</sup> (See Figure 11.)

The members of the Lake Shore Beach investment group were all people civically active and highly regarded in the Negro Angeleno community. We can infer they knew one another through their business, social and church affiliations. These associates were part of the segment of the Negro population that had prospered after the end of slavery, despite the obstacles and prejudice they faced. During the segregation era, successful, affluent Negroes developed resorts like Lake Shore Beach at Lake Elsinore all over the country, so they could relax away from Anglos, and insulate themselves and their children from embarrassing or unpleasant confrontation with Whites. The fact that several of these individuals and some of their accomplishments are noted in Delilah Beasley's ground-breaking 1918 book, *The Negro Trail Blazers of California*, is noteworthy, as it informs us the author viewed them as distinguished citizens of their day in the state of California.<sup>114</sup> (See Figures 10 to 12.)

Born in 1880, Dr. Wilbur Clarence Gordon hailed from Ohio. He graduated from Howard University Medical School in 1904, and had a successful practice in his home state of Ohio until 1912, when he moved to California. From the beginning of his tenure in Southern California, Gordon was a leader on matters of racial social

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<sup>113</sup> Lake Shore Beach Company, Board of Directors meeting notes, Arthur L. Reese Family Archives, Los Angeles, California, Sept. 30, Nov. 1 and Dec. 13, 1921, July 2 and Oct. 16, 1922; Milton Anderson, Los Angeles and Lake Elsinore, California resident, interview by author, Los Angeles, California, via telephone, November 15, 2004; and Florence Keeney Robinson, *Problems In Training Adult Negroes In Los Angeles*, (Masters Thesis, University of Southern California, 1929), 71-72.

<sup>114</sup> Foster, 131, 135.





**Figure 11.** Board of Directors of the Lake Shore Beach Company. The company began its Lake Elsinore resort that catered to Negroes in 1921. From left to right: Top, Dr. Wilbur Clarence Gordon, president and Charles Darden, Esq., vice president; and Bottom, Mrs. Sallie Richardson, Treasurer and Arthur L. Reese, Secretary. *Negro Trail Blazers of California* by Delilah Beasley and *Courtesy of Sonya Reese-Davis, Arthur L. Reese Family Archives.*



**Figure 12.** Text on photo page reads: “At Lake Elsinore, April 1931, Mrs. Dorothy Stevenson, wife of the famous movie star, ‘Step-‘n-Fetch-It.’” The actor’s birth name was Theodore Monroe Andrew Perry (1902-1985). Stepin Fetchit is one of the most controversial movie actors in American history, even today. A very talented physical comedian who achieved superstar status in the 1930s and also became a millionaire. He was a pioneering Negro actor, but was ostracized for a time by the African American community for his portrayal of the lazy, shiftless black character he created. Prior to that he was so popular that he became the first African American star. He was tall and lanky and initially had a shaved head, a whiny, slow-talking voice and a sad looking, perplexed demeanor. This was the character that audiences loved, but the Negro community felt it an awkward stereotypical role.<sup>115</sup> *LaVera White Collection/Arthur and Elizabeth Lewis Collection.*

<sup>115</sup> Stepin Fetchit biography, Great Character Actors website, From the Internet: [http://www.dougmacauley.com/kingspud/sel\\_by\\_actor\\_index\\_2.php?actor\\_first=Stepin&actor\\_last=Fetchit](http://www.dougmacauley.com/kingspud/sel_by_actor_index_2.php?actor_first=Stepin&actor_last=Fetchit).

progress, medical and dental professional associations, and Black business development. He was instrumental in organizing the Doctors, Dentists and Pharmacists Association for Southern California, and the Ohio State Social Society. He was the chorister of Second Baptist Church, one of the oldest African American churches in the city of Los Angeles. He was already familiar with Lake Elsinore at the time the Lake Shore Beach Company was forming, as he and his wife, Desdemona, had purchased a 130-acre ranch there in the latter part of the second decade of the 1900s. After he moved to California from Ohio, his father and mother, Calvin and Arabelle Gordon, operated the ranch for him. His mother was a Spanish scholar and his father had been a mechanic.<sup>116</sup> (See Map 3.)

Later, in 1949, Dr. Gordon's church home, Second Baptist, would purchase a house at Lake Elsinore on Lake Shore Drive, not far from the Lake Shore Beach establishment. Just at the Lake Elsinore city limits, the lakefront house was available for church members, their friends and the general public for vacation at a nominal fee. The house could accommodate 20 people, at a price of one dollar a person per night. An article in the *California Eagle* announcing Second Baptist's new resort venture noted:

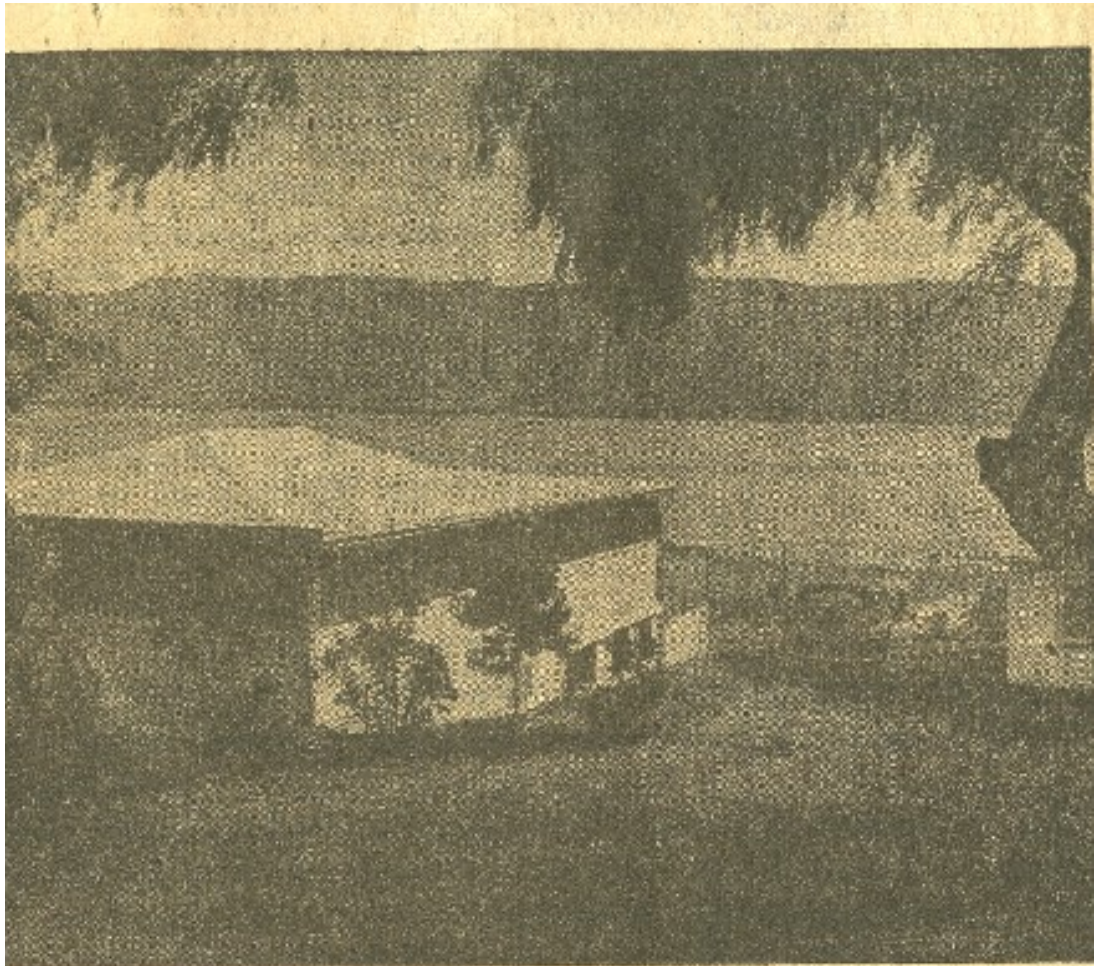
Buses stop in front of the door. If motoring, a sign saying "Elsinore City Limit" is in front of the property. Second Baptist is not selfish...the beach house... is open to the public at large.<sup>117</sup> (See Figure 13.)

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<sup>116</sup> Beasley, Delilah, *Negro Trail Blazers of California*, (Fairfield, CA: John Stevenson Publisher, reprint 2004), 246-247; and 1920 United States Federal Census.

<sup>117</sup> "Second Baptist Operates Own Beach House on Lake Elsinore," The *California Eagle* newspaper, August 11, 1949; and *A Treasury of Tradition, Innovation and Hope: History of Second Baptist Church, Los Angeles, California*, 1975, publication created for the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration for the institution, 16.





**PRIVATE BEACH HOUSE** owned and operated by the Second Baptist Church on Lake Elsinore, available to all with cooking privileges for a modest rental. The Beach House accommodates twenty persons and reservations can be made at the Second Baptist Church offices.

**Figure 13.** "Second Baptist Operates Own Beach House on Lake Elsinore," *California Eagle* Newspaper, Thursday, August 11, 1949. Located at 1548 Lakeshore Drive. This news feature announced the operation of the first of two retreat properties that Second Baptist owned at Lake Elsinore during the Ministry of Dr. J. Raymond Henderson and Mrs. Harriette Henderson.

Concerned about creating more businesses owned and controlled by Negro Americans, Dr. Gordon was involved in a number of business and real estate development enterprises, in addition to his medical practice and the Lake Shore Beach Company. His base of operations in Los Angeles was located at Washington Boulevard and Griffith Avenue, a block west of Central Avenue. Delilah Beasley notes in her seminal tome about Negro pioneers in California that his property was “a centrally-located double corner lot, upon which he erected a handsome residence and suite of modern offices.” For many years the Lake Shore Beach Company was also headquartered at Gordon’s offices, and held their board meetings there.<sup>118</sup>

Dr. Gordon was also one of the founders of the Negro-owned Liberty Savings and Loan Association (the Liberty), and its first president in 1924.

The Association was organized...to promise thrift among [Negroes] by providing a safe and convenient method for people to save and invest money; and...to provide for the sound and economical financing of homes.<sup>119</sup>

The following year, Dr. Gordon was among the initial investors in the Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company (the Golden State), which sold life and health insurance policies to Negroes throughout California, and later mortgage loans for homes and businesses of varying sizes. At its height, the Golden State became one of the largest African American-owned businesses in the United States.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Flamming, 239-242, 256; and Lake Shore Beach Company, Board of Directors meeting notes, Sept. 30, 1921-1930s.

<sup>119</sup> *Negroes Who's Who In California*, 1948 Edition, 59; *Los Angeles Negro Directory and Who's Who, 1930-1931*, The California Eagle Publishing Company, 90-91; and Flamming, 240.

<sup>120</sup> Flamming, 255-258.

Also, in 1925, with backing from the Liberty and the Anglo-owned Commercial National Bank, Dr. Gordon and nine Negro realtors tried to create “a high class [and] restricted Negro residential subdivision” called Gordon Manor, in the city of Torrance, east of Manhattan Beach in the southwestern part of Los Angeles County. Plans for this 213-acre under-developed land were intended to be “posh,” and included luxury homes and a few more modest dwellings. A group of very wealthy Anglos, who owned mansions and sizeable ranchettes (or estates) several miles south of the Gordon Manor development in the hillsides of Palos Verdes, convinced the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors in 1926 to condemn the Gordon Manor land to build a park. Powerful Los Angeles lawyer Henry O’Melveny (of the major law firm which continues to exist today, O’Melveny and Meyers) and prominent landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., were among those who fought to keep out the “invading” Negroes.<sup>121</sup>

After protracted proceedings, the Gordon Manor interests received funds from bonds issued by the county of Los Angeles in the range of \$700,000 as payment under the condemnation proceedings. The payment barely covered the group’s expenses for the land and the infrastructure improvements they put into the development. The land stayed vacant for many years after the proceedings. As part of the settlement, the wealthy Anglos who had undermined the Gordon Manor project were legally bound to a 10,000-acre assessment district and its tax liability. In 1932, during the Depression, these rich Anglos asked the county supervisors for

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<sup>121</sup> Flamming, 239-242.

help, because they could not pay the taxes. Gordon Manor eventually became Alondra Park, El Camino College, and a public golf course. One Negro observer noted at the time that the creation of the park was “the most costly segregation measure ever passed in the West.”<sup>122</sup>

In order to stop another “Negro invasion,” the tactics of condemnation and eminent domain procedures were also used by Anglos in the 1920s to close a very successful African American beach recreation space in the South Bay, which had its beginnings in 1912. Not far from the Gordon Manor development in Manhattan Beach, owners Willa and Charles Bruce of the bath house and dining club Bruces’ Lodge (also known as Bruces’ Beach), along with other Negroes and Anglos with vacation homes, were evicted in 1924 under the banner campaign that the land between 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> Streets near the beach should be used for a public park.<sup>123</sup>

Another significant investor in the Lake Elsinore enterprise was Attorney Charles S. Darden, a noted land litigation specialist. He was from a large and prominent family in Wilson, North Carolina. His father was the first undertaker of the city of Wilson. Darden attended Wayland Seminar and went on to graduate in law from Howard University at Washington, D.C. in 1904. After graduating from

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 242-243.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 272-273; Robert Brigham, “Landownership and Occupancy By Negroes In Manhattan Beach,” (Masters Thesis, Fresno State University, 1956), 58-59; Jan Dennis, *A Walk Beside the Sea: A History of Manhattan Beach*, (Manhattan Beach, California: Janstan Studio, 1987), 109; and Lawrence B. DeGraaf, “The City of Black Angels: Emergence of the Los Angeles Ghetto, 1890-1930,” *Pacific Historical Review*, *Pacific Historical Review*, V. 39, No. 3 (August 1970): 348.

Howard University, and before he settled in Los Angeles, he made a grand tour of the mainland United States, the Hawaiian Islands and Asia.<sup>124</sup>

One of the early Negro lawyers admitted to the California bar, and the first of his race to take a case before the Supreme Court of California, Darden was the first African American lawyer to successfully challenge the legality of racially restrictive real estate covenants that appeared on deeds of sale. This 1915 court decision, by a local court in the city of Los Angeles, established a precedent, as it was the first decision obtained upon this question in a Court of Justice in the United States. Another important precedent-establishing decision Darden won in California was that a married woman could sell community property without the consent of her husband, especially when the title to the property was vested solely in her name. Practicing law in California for many years, Darden, like other Negro lawyers, worked on civil and criminal appeals before the California Superior and Supreme Courts. It is said that Darden was a reserved man, but socially popular. He was active with the Knights of Pythias, the Masons and the Elks.<sup>125</sup>

Originally from Louisiana, Arthur L. Reese came to Los Angeles as a Pullman porter in 1902, and decided to stay. Reese heard about Abbot Kinney and the building of Venice-of-America, just south of Ocean Park. In 1904 he rode the streetcar out to Venice to see what kind of economic opportunities might be available for him with the Kinney operation. He started a shoe shine business, then a

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<sup>124</sup> Beasley, 197.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 197-200; J. Clay Smith, Jr. *Emancipation: The Making of the Black Lawyer, 1844-1944*, (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 485-486.



maintenance service, which thrived. Reese acquired several parcels of Venice real estate that his descendents continue to own today.<sup>126</sup>

Reese eventually became the maintenance supervisor for the Kinney properties. Later, he also won the contracts for the Kinney facilities decorations and canal boat concession. He was also involved with other business ventures in Venice. Under his supervision was a workforce of a few dozen people, many of them family members he recruited and who moved to California to work with him. Members of the Reese and Tabor families, and other families who worked for Arthur Reese or Abbot Kinney's enterprises, were some of the first African Americans to live in Venice.<sup>127</sup>

Ernest Pickering, the successful Ocean Park and Venice amusements real estate developer, who also worked with Abbot Kinney, invested in Lake Elsinore property. His investment foray in the Valley, in the 1920s, was at the same time that Reese and his partners were beginning to develop the Lake Shore Beach Negro recreation area. It would be safe to speculate that it was encouraging for Reese to know someone like Pickering, whom he almost certainly had contact with, as they both worked with Kinney, and who was also investing in the Lake Elsinore resort area. It is unlikely that Pickering's Lake Elsinore project had any direct influence on the Lake Shore Beach Negro investment group as there was already an established

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<sup>126</sup> Alexander, Carolyn Elayne. *Abbot Kinney's Venice-of-America, The Golden Years: 1905-1920*, Volume 1, (Los Angeles: Westside Genealogical Society, 1991), 215; Flammig, 74; and Sonya Reese Davis, Arthur L. Reese Family Archives, interview by author, August 2006, Los Angeles, California.

<sup>127</sup> Alexander, 215.

tradition of Negroes owning property in the Valley by the 1920s. This is likely to have been more of an inspiration for the Lake Shore Beach investors to buy real estate in Lake Elsinore than Pickering's interests in the area.

Reese had other notable achievements in his business career and civic life. He was appointed to the Los Angeles County election board, and became a member of the Venice Chamber of Commerce in 1920. It was not common in America at this time for an African American businessman to be a member of an Anglo organization of this type. Another of Reese's civic accomplishments was as a founding member of the Crescent Bay Lodge Number 19, a Negro Masons Lodge in the city of Santa Monica, formed in 1910. He also served as the leader of this charitable and benevolent activities organization in the 1940s. The Lodge continues to exist today at a site on 18<sup>th</sup> Street and Broadway. Reese also sang in the choir at the first African American church in Santa Monica, Phillips Chapel, while his wife provided musical accompaniment on the piano. He was also active in leadership circles of the Republican Party in Southern California.<sup>128</sup>

Lake Shore Beach Company board member Sallie Taylor Richardson was a business woman, and active in the civic life of Negro Los Angeles. Raised and educated in Kentucky and Illinois, she moved to Los Angeles with her husband A.C. Richardson after living for a while in Indianapolis, Indiana. In Los Angeles, she studied to become a certified chiropodist (person who treats diseases of the feet and hands), and appears to have had a very successful practice. Delilah Beasley notes in

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 1-5; and "Arthur L. Reese For Republican County Central Committee," *California Eagle*, Friday, August 15, 1930, V-43, No. 10, 8.

*The Negro Trail Blazers of California* that Richardson “practiced [chiropody]...until she earned sufficient money to buy a large and valuable piece of property at Wilmington, near Los Angeles, which property, since the shipbuilding industry of the great World War [I], has greatly increased in value.”<sup>129</sup>

Richardson was a club woman and an active worker for the Sojourner Truth Club in Los Angeles. The Sojourner Truth Club was one of the early Negro Angeleno women’s clubs, and an early affiliate of the California Association of Colored Women’s Clubs (CWC), a branch of the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) which was the most important organization for Negro women in the state. CWC clubs provided social services to their local communities and encouraged women to achieve economic independence. Completed in 1914, the Sojourner Truth Industrial Home was the first major “institutional’ project undertaken by local club women. Later known as the Eastside Settlement House, the home provided living quarters, job training, lectures and other services to self-supporting women and girls. The Colored women’s groups “wove together cultural conservatism and women’s rights activism in ways that [were]...slightly disarming, but which made perfect sense given their precarious position in society.”<sup>130</sup>

The CWC/NACW structure offered women a source of power and an arena for service that was unrivaled by mixed-gender organizations. They supported the NAACP, and some club women became leaders in it. Richardson was a local NAACP stalwart: she was a speaker at the 1928 convention hosted by the Los

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<sup>129</sup> Beasley, 243.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 243; and Flamming, 135, 138-139, 141.

Angeles branch. Her convention session was on membership development and retention. By many accounts, including that of founder W.E.B. DuBois, the Los Angeles NAACP convention of 1928 was one of the finest the organization had held.<sup>131</sup>

Although Lake Shore Beach was open for business in the 1920s, some resistance and hostility from the Lake Elsinore Anglo community to the company's plan for a Negro resort is mentioned in the Board of Directors' meeting minutes dated August 24, 1922. The minutes indicate that some local citizens had influenced the Southern Sierra Light and Power Company to refuse to furnish electricity to the site. The resort group was in the planning stages for a big Labor Day picnic that September when they got this unfortunate news. The board minutes from one of the meetings a few months before the Labor Day event indicate that the group had earlier considered canceling the event, due to concerns about the greater community's lack of hospitality. However, the event was held, and after successfully organizing this Labor Day affair, Lake Shore Beach eventually got their power and light connection in December 1922.<sup>132</sup>

Minutes from the Lake Shore Beach Company Board of Directors' meetings during the 1920s indicate that the group had serious intentions early on to create a fine resort that would cater to the leisure needs of Negroes, and particularly those from Los Angeles. Various meeting minutes, beginning with an entry on January 20, 1922, and continuing into 1924, 1925, 1926 and 1928, note that the board hired the

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 141, 281, 288-289.

<sup>132</sup> Lake Shore Beach Company, Board of Directors meeting minutes, Jan.- Dec. 1922.

architect Paul R. Williams (1894-1980) to design plans for Lake Shore Beach, including landscaping, dining and dancing pavilions, a bath house, cottages and a fifty-room hotel. This was early in Williams' career, but by the late 1920s he became the most prominent African American architect in the United States, a status which he retained throughout his lifetime and in the years after his death. Williams became especially known for the luxury houses he designed for several Hollywood film industry and wealthy patrons, and his office building designs.<sup>133</sup>

Williams most likely obtained the Lake Shore Beach commission because the Negro resort investors personally knew him and his early success as an architect. He socialized with, or was involved with, civic and religious groups and activities in Los Angeles that included the company board members. At the time of writing of this thesis, Williams' drawings for this Lake Elsinore development have not been found. Although the design style of the Lake Shore Beach resort is not known, some assumptions can be made about how it might have looked if it had been built.<sup>134</sup>

It can be inferred from the buildings which are known that Williams designed during the 1920s that the Lake Shore Beach resort would have been in one of the popular Spanish Colonial, Moorish or English Tudor revival styles of the period. In the Lake Shore Beach Company meeting minutes dated April 13, 1926, it is noted that Williams' hotel building design was discussed. The Board of Directors appeared to be telling Williams they wanted additional space added to the hotel

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<sup>133</sup> Lake Shore Beach Company, Board of Directors meeting minutes, Sept. 30, 1921-1930s; Bardolph, 191; and Karen E. Hudson, *Paul R. Williams, Architect: A Legacy of Style*, with forward by David Gebhard, (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1993), 22.

<sup>134</sup> Karen E. Hudson, 104-105.

design in the form of a porch placed on three sides, at least twelve feet wide, and partially covered on its front sides so it could be used to extend the entry lobby and as additional lounging area for hotel guests.<sup>135</sup>

Just as Lake Elsinore had a building boom in the 1920s, so too did Los Angeles. It was during this time that Williams established his reputation by often managing the prejudices of potential Anglo clients with his talents, charm and business acumen. Before and after opening his own office in 1922, Williams acquired experience in residential, planning, landscape and commercial architecture, working for and collaborating with prominent Southern California architects Irving J. Gill, Reginald D. Johnson, Gordon B. Kaufmann, John C. Austin, Welton Beckett and others.<sup>136</sup>

Throughout his career, Williams built houses for mostly upper class and wealthy clients — and a few middle class patrons — across the country, and in Mexico, the Caribbean and Latin America. Lon Chaney, William “Bojangles” Robinson, Tyrone Power, Desi Arnaz and Lucille Ball, Frank Sinatra and Zsa Zsa Gabor were a few of the entertainers he designed houses for in Southern California. The architectural style that Williams is most remembered for is characterized by a careful abstraction of Anglo Colonial or Georgian and regency styles, that appears simultaneously traditional and modern.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 21, 31-51.

<sup>136</sup> Karen E. Hudson, 19-25.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 19-25.

He applied the details of these styles in an elegant and correct manner that was streamlined, horizontal and modern, but not archaeologically precise. The usually dramatically curved staircase is an element that has been recognized as an admired feature in many of Williams' designs. Never abandoning traditional concepts, many of the homes he designed in the later part of his career, including his own home, featured a modernist interpretation. The design style of these Williams buildings referenced the influence of the machine, with rectilinear forms and extensive use of glass to connect the interior open floor plans to gardens.<sup>138</sup>

The commercial buildings Williams designed were in both modernized traditional or modernist styles. Some of his more recognized non-residential projects in the Los Angeles environs include: the Music Corporation of America (1937) and Saks Fifth Avenue Department Store interiors (1939; 1945-50) both in Beverly Hills; Los Angeles County Hall of Administration and Courthouse, a collaboration (1955); Franz Hall (1956) and Botany (1961) Buildings, University of California, Los Angeles; and Theme Building, Los Angeles International Airport, a collaboration (1960s). In the 1930s and 1940s, he was involved in the design of several public housing projects, including Pueblo del Rio Defense Housing (1940), an important federally funded project in Los Angeles.

Throughout his 60-year career as an architect, Williams designed only a small number of mostly non-residential buildings in the African American community. In Los Angeles, the Hostsetter Street Elementary School (1924) and the

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 22, 24, 26-27, 230-235.

28<sup>th</sup> Street Young Men's Christian Association/YMCA (1925) were buildings he designed that were used by African Americans. The Second Baptist Church (1924), the Angelus Funeral Home, on West Jefferson Blvd. (1932), Golden State Mutual Life Insurance (1948), First African American Episcopal/FAME Church (1963), and the second Angelus Funeral Home, on Crenshaw Blvd. (1966), are better-known buildings designed by Williams that were commissioned and used by Negro Angelenos.

Los Angeles native Price Cobbs, a psychiatrist, management consultant, author and long time San Francisco resident, remembers that Paul Williams drove a Cord automobile up to Lake Elsinore one summer in the mid-1930s. A Cord was the successor to the Duisenberg automobile, and was considered very stylish at the time. In 1932, Williams built a house in Beverly Hills for E.L. Cord, the head of the automobile manufacturing company that bore his name. Architectural historian David Gebhard has described the Cord residence design as establishing Williams as "an eminent society architect in Southern California." For many summer vacations, the Williams family rented a house at Lake Elsinore, and eventually bought a vacation home there.<sup>139</sup>

According to the Lake Shore Beach Company meeting minutes, while the resort group worked on raising the money to build Williams' plan for the site, a series of interim structures were constructed from materials salvaged from other structures and from Army surplus. The first structures at Lake Shore Beach included

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<sup>139</sup> Karen E. Hudson, 17, 23, 58-67; and Edith Hawes Howard, interview by author, March 2, 2007, via telephone, Los Angeles California.



small wood-framed tent cabins, a dining pavilion, a dance platform, and temporary toilets. Additional clapboard-sided and simple stucco-sided housing was also built during the 1920s. (See Figures 14 to 16.)

As Lake Shore Beach struggled to raise the funds to construct its more grand building plan by Williams, another Riverside County Negro resort opened in Corona in 1928, the Park Ridge Country Club. A Negro investment group purchased from a White group “a fine club building with quite luxurious appointments,” that was intended to be an inter-racial recreation area. The 663-acre estate featured golf links, shooting ranges, a swimming pool, and tennis courts. The club facilities were said to be worth \$1,000,000. Although the Negro group was able to purchase the site, as visitors they faced the inconveniences of traffic tickets and racial harassment from the local Corona Police Department, intended to discourage their coming back. After a few years, the Park Ridge Club closed due to lack of patronage; this is a sign of what the Lake Shore Beach Company might have experienced if they had completed the grand facilities the owners envisioned.<sup>140</sup>

Milton Anderson, now in his early 90s, remembers the area owned by the Lake Shore Beach group. In 1925 his father signed the lease to operate the concession for the company for the summer season. “It was like a paradise to go out to [the lake],” he recalls about his visits to Lake Elsinore during the middle decades

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<sup>140</sup> Verna Williams Interview, “Shades of L.A.” Oral History Project, Photo Friends of the Los Angeles Public Library, 1996; DeGraaf, “The City of Black Angels...,” 348; Washington, “Recreational Facilities for Negroes,” 280; Robinson, 71-72; and “Negroes Buy Country Club,” *Los Angeles Times*, News of Southern Counties Section, April 21, 1928, ProQuest Historical Newspapers Los Angeles Times (1881-1987), A10.



**Figure 14.** Lake Shore Beach, Lake Elsinore, circa 1930. Early concession structure at Lake Shore Beach site. *Courtesy of Sonya Reese-Davis, Arthur L. Reese Family Archives.*



**Figure 15.** Lake Shore Beach Site, Lake Elsinore, circa 1930. Top: entry gate and site structure. Bottom: view from Lake looking back to the dike, Lake Shore Beach site and Clevelin Heights in the background. *Courtesy of Sonya Reese-Davis, Arthur L. Reese Family Archives.*



**Figure 16.** Lake Shore Beach, Lake Elsinore, circa 1930s. Top: dining and dancing Pavilion. Bottom: cabin structure with multiple units that were available for rent. *Courtesy of Sonya Reese-Davis, Arthur L. Reese Family Archives.*

of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. “Everyone would hang out at the lake for picnics, swimming and some boating.”<sup>141</sup> (See Figure 17.)

The resort plan design by architect Paul Williams was never fully implemented, due to the inability of the Lake Shore Beach Company to raise sufficient funds for its execution. In examining the Board’s meeting minutes, the Lake Shore Beach owners from the 1920s into the 1940s continued to renew and upgrade improvements to the site to accommodate the crowds that came out, and because of flood water damage from the lake to the property. The periods around the Independence Day and September Labor Day holidays were especially busy for the city of Lake Elsinore, as well as the Lake Shore Beach resort, with overnight rental visitors and day trippers. To encourage visitors who did not want to drive or did not have a car to make the journey, the various groups sponsoring affairs at Lake Shore Beach offered Hupmobile (a type of bus in the 1920s) transportation to bring visitors from Los Angeles to the Lake Elsinore recreation area.<sup>142</sup> (See Figures 18 to 20.)

Barbara Anderson, a retired librarian of African American lineage, grew up in San Diego. She reminisced in a 2004 interview that as a girl she thought it was quite an adventure to go to Lake Elsinore with her family, because it was a four-hour drive through winding roads around the mountains. Her family camped in a tent and a camper at Lake Shore Beach, or at the free public beach, for several weeks each summer for many years. She and her two siblings helped their mother pick and can

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<sup>141</sup> Lake Shore Beach Company, Board of Directors meeting minutes, April 28, 1925; and Milton Anderson, Los Angeles and Lake Elsinore, California resident, interview by author, November 15, 2004, Los Angeles, California, via telephone.

<sup>142</sup> Lake Shore Beach Company, Board of Directors meeting minutes, 1920s-1940s.

**LAKE SHORE BEACH-ELSINORE**  
**Opening June 1st**  
**Under New Management---Mr. and Mrs. C. C. Anderson, Managers**  
**PHONE 273---Lake Shore Beach, Elsinore**  
**“OPEN THE YEAR ROUND”**  
**MAKE RESERVATION NOW!**  
**Low Rates by Week or Month; Meals at All Hours.**  
**BATHING and DANCING. We Cater to the Public**

**Figure 17.** *California Eagle* Newspaper, May through June 1925 advertisement. In reviewing the Lake Shore Beach Company Board of Directors meeting minutes for the 1920s, Mr. and Mrs. C.C. Anderson were one of several management teams which operated the Lake Shore Beach resort for its owners.

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**PICNIC DeLUXE--ON TO  
E l s i n o r e  
Tuesday, July 4th**

One perfect day's outing--Plenty of shade trees--A beautiful lake, good pavilion to Dance on and famous Jazz music by Laretta Butler's Orchestra,

**Only \$3.50 Round Trip**

AUSPICES—IROQUOIS FRIDAY MORNING CLUB

Cars Leave 12th and Central Avenue at 5 A. M.—When it's nice and cool.

Tickets on Sale: Phone Bdwy. 3232 and So. 2539-J

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**Figure 18.** *California Eagle* Newspaper, June 24, 1922. The Iroquois Friday Morning Club sponsored an outing at Lake Elsinore and offered transportation to those who needed a ride to the event.





**Figure 19.** Memorial Day, Lake Elsinore, May 30, 1927. Standing, left to right: LaVera White, Edith Kaiser, Joe Allen and Anita Monroe. Seated, left to right: Pearlita Johnson and Lillian Middleton. *LaVera White Collection/Arthur and Elizabeth Lewis Collection.*



**WANTED:**—Refined working girl to share modern bungalow. All conveniences. Phone: AXridge 9572.

**HELLO BILL!** Elk Picnic, Rose Hill Park, Friday, June 19th.

New Dance Pavillion just completed. Good music from 11 a. m. to 9 p. m. Decoration Day at Lake Shore Beach Elsinore.

**“Alabama School Days”** will be one of the season's biggest drawing cards so don't miss seeing it at the Philharmonic Auditorium, June 1st, 1925.

Spend Decoration Day at Lake Shore Beach, Elsinore—Chicken dinner, Dancing and Bathing.

The Shriners will engage the entire show of **“Alabama School Days”** for a special engagement after it has played June 1st, at Philharmonic Auditorium. It is just a real good show that's all. Get your tickets now and be sure of getting in on that night.

**Figure 20.** *California Eagle* Newspaper, Friday, May 29, 1925. Celebrated on various days in different parts of the United States, Decoration Day was established to honor soldiers who served in the Civil War. In 1882, Decoration Day was changed to Memorial Day. In 1971, Memorial Day was officially declared a federal holiday. Memorial Day, on the last Monday in May, now honors all those who have died and served in wars in which American soldiers participated.

apricots as one of their summer activities. Like most fathers at the time who could afford a vacation for their family, her father stayed home at his job (with the city road crew) during the week, and joined the family on the weekends at their respective vacation locations. While at the lake, Anderson's father and uncle would catch a lot of fish and take them back to San Diego to sell. (See Figure 21.)

“There was a group of people who would come to the lake just after school let out for the summer,” said Anderson. She remembers how friendly the people were at Lake Shore: “You would walk by people on the sand and they would say hello.” Anderson now has a retirement home at Lake Elsinore that was formally owned by leading Negro Angeleno H. Claude Hudson (1887-1989). Originally from Louisiana, Hudson was a dentist, lawyer, civil rights activist, long time president of the NAACP Los Angeles Branch, and a founder of Broadway Federal Savings and Loan.<sup>143</sup>

At the same time African Americans were enjoying their segregated recreational and social activities at Lake Elsinore, Anglo community celebrities and notables such as Carole Lombard, Clark Gable, Andy Devine, Bela Lugosi, Will Rodgers, Harold Lloyd, Sir Guy Standing, Eddie Foy, James Jeffries and United States President Grover Cleveland were also gathering there. The Catalina Island

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<sup>143</sup> *Los Angeles Negro Directory and Who's Who, 1930-1931*, The California Eagle Publishing Company, 91; Flammig, 213-214, 273-275, 277-284, 281, 303, 373; “H. Claude Hudson, A Los Angeles Icon!,” The African American Registry, From the Internet: [http://www.aaregistry.com/african\\_american\\_history/2622/H\\_Claude\\_Hudson\\_A\\_Los\\_Angeles\\_Icon](http://www.aaregistry.com/african_american_history/2622/H_Claude_Hudson_A_Los_Angeles_Icon); “Historical Notes on the Los Angeles NAACP,” From the Internet: <http://www.naacp-losangeles.org/history.htm>; and “The History of Broadway Federal Bank,” From the Internet: <http://www.broadwayfederalbank.com/81513.html>.



**Figure 21.** View looking southwest over the Lake Elsinore Valley from the roof of Barbara Anderson's home, 2006. Her house formally was the H. Claude Hudson family vacation retreat from the 1930s-1970s. In the foreground on the right behind the telephone pole, we see the former vacation homes of the Payne family (with the swimming pool) and Judge Thomas L. Griffith, Jr. family. The Griffith vacation residence is now occupied year-round by his grandson and his family. *Photography by Alison R. Jefferson.*

Wrigleys, along with their baseball teams, the Los Angeles Angels and Chicago Cubs, came for the winter to the Elsinore Valley. Aimee Semple McPherson, one of the most popular evangelists of the period, conducted services at Lake Elsinore, and built a palatial home she called “Aimee’s Castle” in Clevelin Heights, which still stands today looking over the Valley. At the same time, the lake became a destination for record-setting boat races and Olympic swim team training.<sup>144</sup> (See Figures 22 & 23.)

### **Other Negro Enterprises**

Beyond Lake Shore Beach and the Rieves Inn, elsewhere in Lake Elsinore other Negro entrepreneurs offered visitor accommodations, and individual families bought vacation homes. The *California Eagle* newspaper featured an advertisement in 1925 for the Love Nest Inn, owned by Strider and Sons, which stated that the establishment rented rooms, served meals at all hours, and had dancing. Mildred Jackson Sterling (1890-1989) and her husband Aaron Joseph “A.J.” Sterling (d. 1935) first visited Lake Elsinore in 1919, and began their accommodations venture sometimes in the early 1920s.<sup>145</sup> (See Map 3 and Figures 2 & 3.)

The Sterlings owned a pool hall near 21<sup>st</sup> Street and Hooper Avenue in Los Angeles, and other real estate. A musician who sang and played guitar, Mrs. Sterling worked as a soloist for the Angelus Funeral Home, which was founded in 1922. They built a house and tried their hand at the restaurant business in the lake

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<sup>144</sup> Tom Hudson, 73-74; and Jeanie Corral, “Old Elsinore boasted the gracious days of hostelry and cultured elite,” *Lake Elsinore News*, June 10, 1992, 4.

<sup>145</sup> Halvor Miller, Esq., Los Angeles, California resident, interview by author, March 12, 2007, Los Angeles, California; and Lake Elsinore advertisement, The *California Eagle*, July-August 1925.



**Figure 22.** Aimee's Castle, Aimee Semple McPherson's home modeled after a Middle Eastern castle, Lake Elsinore, California, ca. 1930s. *Los Angeles Public Library On Line Collection.*



**Figure 23.** Boat Races on Lake Elsinore, 1937. Spectators park their cars Lake Shore Drive and beach to get a spot for the day's activities and festivities. *Lake Elsinore Public Library Collection.*



community. On Kellogg, near Pottery, and down the street from the Rieves Inn, they constructed a few cabins they rented to Negroes vacationers. Their extended family also stayed at the Sterling establishment on their trips, to visit and relax.<sup>146</sup> (See Figures 24 & 25.)

The extended family of Mildred Jackson Sterling, who lodged at her Lake Elsinore operation, included some noteworthy Negro citizens of Los Angeles. One of her relatives, activist Loren Miller, Esq. (1904-1967), worked on the legal team from Los Angeles that in 1948 won the United States Supreme Court case, *Shelley v. Kramer*, which declared race-based restrictive covenants on property deeds unconstitutional. Miller was also a journalist and editor for the *California Eagle* and the *Los Angeles Sentinel*, the longest surviving African American newspapers in Los Angeles. He also wrote for other publications, including the NAACP's *Crisis* magazine, and the *Nation* magazine.<sup>147</sup>

Miller was a regional counsel and national vice president of the NAACP, and was active with numerous other civil rights organizations. Following in the footsteps of his editor, Charlotta Bass, "a crusading journalist and extraordinary activist," he became publisher of the *California Eagle* in 1952. He sold this venerable newspaper

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<sup>146</sup> Nancy Griffith, Los Angeles, California resident, interview by author, July 19, 2006, Los Angeles, California; Halvor Miller, Esq., interview by author, March 12, 2007; Jane Miller Cerina, Orlando, Florida resident, interview by author, August 21, 2006, Los Angeles, California, via telephone; and still open in 2007, Angelus Funeral Home is one of the oldest operating African American owned businesses in Los Angeles and continues to be managed by a descendent of its founders.

<sup>147</sup> Jane Cerina interview, August 21, 2006; Flamming 302-303, 369; and Smith, 487, 489.



**Figure 24.** Sisters Mable and Ida Miller, circa 1922 at a Lake Elsinore beach area open to Negroes. Note the concession sign in this and the photograph with the DeQuir family. These are extended family members of Mildred Sterling, an early proprietress of accommodations for Negroes in the Lake Elsinore Valley. *Halvor Thomas Miller, Jr. Collection.*





**Figure 25.** Lake Elsinore, 1948. Friends Kerry Jackson, Kev Jackson and Halvor Miller playing in the medicinal mud. *Halvor Thomas Miller, Jr. Collection.*

— which had begun publication in 1879 — when he was appointed as a Los Angeles Municipal Court judge in 1964 by Gov. Edmund G. Brown, Sr.<sup>148</sup> (See Figure 26.)

Mrs. Sterling's other nephew who would come to visit was Leon "Wash" Washington, Jr., publisher of the *Los Angeles Sentinel*. He and his wife, Ruth, eventually owned their own property and had a pleasure boat at Lake Elsinore. The *Sentinel*, founded in 1933, "promised a 'Fearless — Independent — Free' newspaper and initially used the 'Don't Spend Where You Can't Work' slogan as its rallying cry." In the *Sentinel's* early years it was heavy with real news and was "the most sophisticated Race paper ever offered to the community." In 2007, the *Sentinel* remains the oldest, best-known and largest of the African American newspapers in Los Angeles.<sup>149</sup>

### 1930s

Jane Miller Cerina, Mrs. Sterling's grand niece, remembers from her childhood visits in the 1930s and 1940s that there were goats across the street from her aunt's property. According to Cerina, Mrs. Sterling took great pride in her vegetable and fruit garden, which included a grape arbor and watermelons. She and her brother, Halvor Miller, Esq., remember that there were always people from Los Angeles stopping by to visit the family during their summer stays at Lake

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<sup>148</sup> "L.A. Attorney Loren Miller Named Judge," *Los Angeles Times*, May 13, 1964, ProQuest Historical Newspapers Los Angeles Times (1881-1987), 22; "Rights Pending for Municipal Judge Miller," *Los Angeles Times*, July 16, 1967, ProQuest Historical Newspapers Los Angeles Times (1881-1987), G6; "Charlotta Bass and the California Eagle," From the Internet: <http://www.socallib.org/bass/story/index.html>; and *Negroes Who's Who In California* 1948 Edition, 46.

<sup>149</sup> Jane Cerina interview, August 21, 2006; Flammig, 302-303.



**Figure 26.** Charlotta Bass, second from right, and a group of her friends in a back yard, circa 1960s. The photograph could have been taken at Bass' home in Elsinore, California. Bass moved to Lake Elsinore in 1960 after living in Los Angeles for more than 40 years. *California Eagle Photograph Collection, Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research.*

Elsinore. Along with relaxation, many social patterns (organized and informal) which took place in Los Angeles also occurred at the lake, including family parties, picnics and barbeques, card games with the guys or women's sewing circles, discussions about the issues of the day, musical performances and religious services. More personal social interactions, like developing new friendships, courting and marriage celebrations, and learning how to swim, hunt or cook also took place.

Cerina recalls the Wednesday night game of Penuche that her Uncle "Wash" and Uncle Loren would have every week, whether in the city or at Lake Elsinore. When he lived in Southern California, the poet Langston Hughes was a friend of Loren Miller's, and regularly joined the Penuche group. In 1932, Miller and Hughes were part of the much-publicized and criticized group of young leftists of the New Negro Renaissance, who went to the Soviet Union to see Soviet life first-hand. At the time both men were active in the democratic socialist movement in Los Angeles. Though Miller eventually evolved into a "mainstream liberal democrat," his early radicalism probably prevented him from getting a federal judgeship.<sup>150</sup>

The 1930 United States Census count included fewer than 3000 Lake Elsinore residents, and fewer than 60 (or 2%) were Negroes. At the same time, the city of Los Angeles had a population of 1,238,048, and the Negro Angeleno population was 38,894, or around 3%. In Riverside County there were almost 81,000 people, of which 1,303 (less than 2%) were Negroes.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Flamming, 302, 369; and Jane Cerina interview, August 21, 2006.

<sup>151</sup> 1930 United States Census.

The seasonal visitor count is not calculated in the United States Census, but it can be surmised that thousands of people visited the area, especially from the population centers of the region, by examining some of the advertisements for Lake Elsinore from Los Angeles. From the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, ads and stories about the beauty, resorts and natural (exploitable) resources of Lake Elsinore were regularly featured in the *Los Angeles Times* and other newspapers, including the Negro newspapers and their special publications. Booster and travel materials, from the Lake Elsinore and Riverside County Chambers of Commerce, the Automobile Club, the Santa Fe railroad and resort businesses, and other regional entities which had a stake in economic development, were distributed all over the United States.

Even during the Depression, beginning in 1929, visitors continued to come to Lake Elsinore Valley in record numbers from the regional metropolitan areas. Through the 1930s there was a lot more rain than dryness, mining and agriculture flourished, the lake was stocked with fish, speedboats set racing records which regularly garnered national attention, and the mineral baths remained popular. Paid vacations became institutionalized for most of the American industrial labor force. In the 1930s and 1940s, the Negro community of year-round and vacation residents grew in Lake Elsinore along Pottery, west of downtown at the edge of town near the Rieves Inn (which became known as the Burgess Hotel in the early 1930s after the Burgess family sold their interests in the property). During this time, some small hotels and court cottages sprang up that Negroes mostly from Los Angeles and San

Diego would rent for vacations. Lake Elsinore Negro residents would also rent space in their homes to visitors.<sup>152</sup> (See Map 3 and Figure 27.)

In the 1930 United States Census Enumeration Sheets, the live-in manager of the Burgess Hotel is listed as Cuban-born Fredrick E. Malandro, age 27 years old. Other Negroes were listed in the 1930 Census as Lake Elsinore business owners. Because of the nature of their establishments it can be assumed that their clients were predominantly Negroes.

Leon Daniels is listed in the same 1930 Census as a restaurant keeper and the owner of a multiple-unit dwelling on Riley. Gussie Hendrix is listed as the manager of a bungalow court on Scrivener. Gussie and husband William opened Hendrix's Motel, with a dining room serving family-style meals, on Lowell. Also in the 1930s, the Coleman Deluxe Hotel offered room and board at \$12 per week, and Al Brooks owned a health bath and spa with a café at the intersection of Poe and Pottery.<sup>153</sup> (See Map 3 and Figures 27 to 29.)

During this time the health resort's sulphur water also attracted a large, mostly working class, Jewish and European immigrant population. This community created several synagogues and temples, along with the Jewish Culture Club of Lake

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<sup>152</sup> Hudson, 78, 85, 91, 96; "Lakes of California: Lake Elsinore," San Diego Historical Society; George Brown, Lake Elsinore Valley and Alberhill resident and retired City of Riverside employee, interview by author, October 30, 2004, Alberhill, California; William Beverly, Eighth and Wall, interview by author, October 2004, Los Angeles, California, via telephone; Milton Anderson interview, November 15, 2004; Thomas Rutherford, Marina del Rey resident and retired mechanical/electrical engineer, interview by author, August 18, 2006, Los Angeles, California, via telephone; Aron, 238.

<sup>153</sup> "Highlights of Black History of Lake Elsinore, 1982," Prepared by Hilltop Community Center Program Bulletin, Lake Elsinore Historical Society Collection, 8; 1930 United States Census; and Lake Elsinore advertisement, *The California Eagle*, April-June 1930.



# Elsinore

WEST'S GREATEST RESORT  
For Health and Happiness Come to Elsinore !

## Pottery Lunchett

For  
SOFT DRINKS and  
REFRESHMENTS  
415 Pottery Street

## Smith's Grocery Store

419 Langstaff Street  
A. SMITH, Prop.

## Hendrick's Court

The Home of Rest  
309 Lowell Street  
Phone 926

## Coleman DeLuxe Hotel

ROOM and BOARD  
\$12.00 Per Week  
Cor. Pottery & Lowell  
Phone 1050

Violet Ray Treatments by  
Expert Masseur  
Moderate Rates—Efficient Service.  
**F. C. MALANDA'S  
BURGESS HOTEL AND  
HEALTH RESORT**  
PHONE 1040  
Excellent Cuisine  
Transient and Permanent  
Kellogg and Pottery Streets  
Elsinore, Calif.

**Figure 27.** An advertisement which ran in several issues in 1930 for Lake Elsinore (also known as Elsinore) establishments which catered to Negroes. From the African American owned and oriented *California Eagle* Newspaper.



**Figure 28.** Members of the Independent Church of Elsinore. Several of the people in this photograph taken circa 1940s-1952 were business proprietors who provided accommodations to Negro vacationers who visited Lake Elsinore. From left to right: Horace C. Hensley (Hensley Court on Riley & Sumner); Dan Wheeler; George Moore, Sr. (George Moore's Chicken Inn on Pottery & Spring, and the 1949 edition of the *Negro Traveler's Green Book* suggested George Moore's place on Scrivener for accommodations); Pastor Arthur A. Webb; John Craig; William Hendrix (Hendrix Motel on Lowell); George Moore, Jr.; Ms. Jennings; Gussie Hendrix, wife of William Hendrix; Viola Craig; Estella Hensley, wife of Horace C. Hensley; and Mildred Sterling (vacation guest cottage proprietress and owner of a bar in Los Angeles on 21<sup>st</sup> Street and Hooper Avenue). *Independent Church of Elsinore Collection.*





**Figure 29.** Members of the Independent Church of Elsinore, 1940s-1952. 1) George Moore, Jr.; 2) Horace C. Hensley; 3) Camille Arnacker; 4) Brother Brown; 5) Bessie Moore; 6) I.G. Watson; 7) Lettie James; 8) Mother Hendrix; 9) Minnie Brown; 10) Brother Hendrix; 11) Vennie Hudson; 12) Brother January; 13) Mother Jennings; 14) Sister West; 15) Sister Southard; 16) Sister January; 17) Sister Madie Washington; 18) Sister Betty Moore; 19) Sister Elzada Washington; 20) Sister Catherine Briggs; 21) Sister Webb; 22) Brother Hudson; 23) Estella Hensley; 24) Allison January; 25) Rev. Arthur A. Webb; 26) Harold Briggs; 27) Thomas R. Yarborough, standing far right in front with his arms behind his back; 28) Sister McLucas; 29) Moore boys; 30) Rev. Webb's grandchildren; 31) Moore boy; 32) Maria Brown (?). *Independent Church of Elsinore Collection.*

Elsinore, for their religious and social needs. Jews also enjoyed other health resorts in Riverside County. Highland Springs in Beaumont was popular among the more affluent set. Gilman Hot Springs in San Jacinto, and a few places in Hemet and Murrieta, also accepted the patronage of Jews.<sup>154</sup> (See Figure 30.)

Prior to the building of the freeway system, starting in the 1950s, for motorists or those riding the bus looking for a resort within easy driving distance of Los Angeles or San Diego, Lake Elsinore was considered to be delightful, but a bit far and somewhat “off the beaten path,” due to its location at the extreme western and southern part of Riverside County. One had to drive the streets to get there, and it could take four to five hours to drive to the lake from various population centers around the Southland. Most people who visited the Valley, Anglos, Jews or Negroes, planned to stay overnight. The distance of Lake Elsinore gave the place an air of exclusivity, especially among Negro Angelenos; no matter that it was one of the few resorts and recreational areas that allowed them to partake in its offerings without continuous unpleasant, overt incidences of harassment and/or discrimination. (See Map 2.)

Negro doctors, lawyers, government workers, ministers, teachers, newspaper editors and others with less social status from Los Angeles — but still prosperous enough — are known to have regularly visited Lake Elsinore, and to have bought

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<sup>154</sup> Sandy Stokes, “Elsinore Lacked that look of hatred: Black family going north, paused, then settled down,” *The Press Enterprise*, February 18, 1996, B1-B2; Steve Lech, *Resorts of Riverside County*, (San Francisco, CA: Arcadia Publishing, 9005), 52-57,74-83; August Muymudes, Los Angeles resident and retired pharmacist, interview by author, July 26, 2006, Los Angeles, California; and Jewish Cultural Club File, Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research. Los Angeles, California.

# Jewish Cultural Club of Elsinore

117 NORTH SPRING STREET • ELSINORE, CALIFORNIA • 674-3536



**Figure 30.** Top: Letterhead of the Jewish Cultural Club of Elsinore. Bottom: Entry door to the Jewish Cultural and Social Center which was owned by the club. Jewish people began to visit Lake Elsinore for the sulphur waters in the 1930s. Like African Americans they were excluded from many Anglo resorts before the Civic Rights era of the 1960s. After World War II a Jewish retirement community evolved, and the club was born to plan cultural and intellectual events. The organization flourished until the 1970s, providing activities for all citizens of Lake Elsinore.<sup>155</sup> Today the Jewish Center houses the organization, Familia del Nuevo Nacimiento. Jewish Cultural Club *Lake Elsinore File*, August Muymudes Collection, *Southern California for Social Studies and Research*.

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<sup>155</sup> *Gedanken: Memories of the Jewish Cultural Club of Elsinore*, Living Legacies and the Jewish Cultural Club of Elsinore, publishers, 1989, 3-4.

vacation homes in the Valley. Some of these people were leaders in their respective white and blue collar professions and in their community in Los Angeles. Many were middle class in values, lifestyle and aspirations, more than in wealth. Although economic racism blunted their financial ambitions, Negro Angelenos had faith in the promise of upward mobility, and they embraced the Anglo booster rhetoric of American West freedom and egalitarianism. Taking an extended vacation, and buying property like a second home, were certainly big components of American West idealism that middle class, Negro Angeleno boosters promoted.<sup>156</sup> (See Map 3 and Figures 10 & 31.)

Wallace Decuir recounted to me how he would ride out to Lake Elsinore in the Model T Ford of his friend Ballinger Kemp's grandmother, who had a vacation home at Lake Elsinore. "She called her car 'Henry.' Ballinger and I would have to get out of the car just before it got to a hill [to take some of the weight out of the car] and walk up so that the car could make it up the hill," said Decuir.

Decuir recalls that when he and Ballinger were playing by the lakeshore, they would sometimes collect mud at the request of old ladies sitting on the beach, for them to spread on their bodies for health treatments. "We didn't mind them interrupting our playing because they would give up 5 to 10 cents for the chore. We would have a little extra money to spend for cokes and candy," he laughingly shared with me.

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<sup>156</sup> Flamming, 5, 8, 58.

We are selling in the  
City, at Watts, Monrovia,  
Elsinore and Riverside.  
We won't refuse any rea-  
sonable offer; drop a card  
or come in.

House and Lot \$6500;  
\$1500 Down, Clear.

0—00—0

**FIRE INSURANCE**

**RENTALS**

**COLLECTIONS**

0—00—0

**THE WALTER L.**

**GORDON CO.**

**3617 Central Avenue**

**Humbolt 3230**

**Notary Public**

**LOS ANGELES CALIFORNIA**

**Figure 31.** *California Eagle* Newspaper, Summer 1925. Detail of advertisements in Figure 2. Gordon began his Los Angeles real estate business in 1923, after a series of other fruitful business ventures and jobs, including the Gordon Day Work Company in Santa Monica, a cleaning company, and a stint as a letter carrier with the U.S. Postal Service.<sup>157</sup>

<sup>157</sup>*Who's Who In Colored Los Angeles, California, 1930-1931*, Published by the California Eagle Publishing Company, 77.

### Lake Elsinore Hotel

The Lake Elsinore Hotel was the biggest of the Negro hotels in Lake Elsinore. Mrs. Mary Baker and her daughter, Hula Reeves, operated this Negro establishment on Kellogg between Pottery and Flint, which they acquired in 1931. In addition to its main building, the Lake Elsinore Hotel had several cottages and camping spaces available for summer rental, an area to play croquet, and a tennis court.<sup>158</sup>

The Lake Elsinore Hotel had a clientele of Anglos who patronized the dining room, along with Negroes who were overnight guests at the establishment, and otherwise visiting Lake Elsinore. One of the Anglo patrons was the local Sheriff, who regularly came by for lunch (that he paid for), and to visit with the owners and others he might know who were dining there at the time. Two full meals a day were served, family-style, and snacks were set out on a sideboard table all day. When required, Ms. Reeves' brother, Ted, would pick up visitors that needed a ride to the hotel from the nearby bus or train stations. During the winter months, Reeves closed the hotel and went to Palm Springs to work during the desert resort's high season.

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<sup>158</sup> *The Green Book*, 1959, 8; Edith Hawes Howard, Talare, California resident and retired chief, interview by author, March 2 & 5, 2007, via telephone, Los Angeles, California; and George Brown, Lake Elsinore Valley and Alberhill resident and retired City of Riverside employee, interview by author, October 30, 2004, Alberhill, California.

One year, while she was working in the Coachella Valley, she met her long-time boyfriend Connell Butler, whose specialty was preparing pastry.<sup>159</sup>

Betty Lucas Howard remembers that on her family's trips from Los Angeles to Lake Elsinore they would rent space behind Mrs. Baker's Negro establishment for the family trailer for the month of August during the 1930s and 1940s. Her father worked for the U.S. Post Office as a letter carrier, and her mother was a homemaker. Rupert and Beatrice Lucas bought land in Lake Elsinore in 1928, eventually building a home on it and retiring there in 1958. When it came time for Betty and her husband, Nathan Howard, to retire from their jobs as a hospital administrator and with Los Angeles County Facilities Security Department, respectively, they too decided to move to Lake Elsinore.<sup>160</sup> (See Map 3 and Figure 32.)

Lucas Howard has fond memories of childhood summers there, and relished the freedom and independence her parents allowed her at Lake Elsinore, that she did not have in the city. Her father would come on the weekends and Betty would sometimes go swimming, fishing and hunting for doves and rabbits with him. She remembers the Lake Elsinore Inn as being a big brick house, and that both proprietresses were good cooks and hostesses. On Sundays the lady innkeepers would make homemade ice cream and peach cobbler, and for the adults there was

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<sup>159</sup> Edith Hawes Howard, interview by author, March 2 & 5, 2007; and George Brown, interview, October 30, 2004.

<sup>160</sup> Betty Lucas Howard, Lake Elsinore resident, interview by author, March 16, 2006, Lake Elsinore, California.



**Figure 32.** The Lucas Family rented space for their trailer during August in the 1940s at the Lake Elsinore Hotel, which provided various price level accommodations for Negro vacationers. Top, 1940s: Betty Lucas Howard's mother, Beatrice, seated in the doorway of the family trailer with dog. Bottom, August 1951: the family car and trailer. Betty's parents retired to Lake Elsinore 1958. Her father, Rupert was a U.S. Post Office letter carrier and her mother was a homemaker who loved to sew. Betty relished the childhood freedom and independence she was allowed at the Lake that she did not get at home in Los Angeles. *Betty and Nathan Howard Collection.*



evening dancing in the parlor or on the dance platform, with music provided by a jukebox, especially on Sundays.<sup>161</sup>

Actress Hattie McDaniels (1895-1952), who won an Academy Award for her performance in the movie *Gone with the Wind*, vacationed at the Lake Elsinore Hotel one summer in the 1940s. As a teenager, Edith Hawes Howard worked for the hotel establishment that summer, and for Ms. McDaniels. At the Lake Elsinore Hotel she learned about working in the hospitality business, where she would later be employed most of her adult life. A retired chef, Hawes Howard worked several summers at the Lake Elsinore Hotel during her teenage years so she could have extra money for items she needed for school.

#### **Vacation Home Dwellers, Year-Round Residents and More Entrepreneurial Ventures**

The patriarch of the Hawes family was Rev. Hampton Hawes, Sr., the first minister installed at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Los Angeles, in 1904. The church, located near Jefferson Boulevard and Vermont Avenue, was the first African American church of the Presbyterian denomination in the city of Los Angeles. Hawes Howard's younger brother was jazz pianist Hampton Hawes (1928-1977), who was an important artist in the emerging "west coast" school of jazz, and recorded with Charlie Parker, Billie Holiday, Dexter Gordon, Art Pepper, Charlie

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

Mingus and others. His own band recordings in the mid-1950s established him as a major figure in jazz.<sup>162</sup>

Although one rarely hears of Hampton Hawes today he was a significant presence on the jazz scene in the mid-50s then again from the mid-60s on until his death in 1977...A direct descendant of bebop who had been variously classified as “West Coast” and “funk-jazz” or “rhythm school,” Hawes transcended all these categories. He was famous for his prodigious right hand, his deep groove, his very personal playing, his profound blues conceptions, and his versatility within a mainstream context. He remained anchored in chord-change based jazz with chord changes his whole career.<sup>163</sup>

In the early years of the Hawes family’s summer visits to Lake Elsinore they camped on the dike at Lake Shore Beach in carport and umbrella tents. Hawes Howard remembers big barbeques where people lined up to purchase their food at the concession area, and the adults danced at the pavilion. She has memories of lots of love and fun, going out on boat rides and watching the speedboat races on the lake.<sup>164</sup>

Later in the 1930s, the family built a house on Scrivener, a few blocks from the Lake Elsinore Hotel on Kellogg and Flint. Hawes Howard describes the house as being log cabin-like, with a big screened-in porch. She remembers that the house had a beautiful dining table, with benches instead of chairs, and that the dining furniture ensemble was held together by wood joinery instead of nails. The backyard of the Hawes residence faced that of Hendrix’s Court on Lowell. (See Map 3.)

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid.; and “Hampton Hawes, Jazz Pianist Icon of the 1950’s!,” The African American Registry, From the Internet: [http://www.aaregistry.com/african\\_american\\_history/2091/Hampton\\_Hawes\\_jazz\\_pianist\\_icon\\_of\\_the\\_1950s](http://www.aaregistry.com/african_american_history/2091/Hampton_Hawes_jazz_pianist_icon_of_the_1950s).

<sup>163</sup> “Who Was Hampton Hawes?,” Hampton Hawes at All About Jazz, From the Internet: <http://www.allaboutjazz.com/php/musician.php?id=7497>.

<sup>164</sup> Edith Hawes Howard, interview by author, March 2 & 5, 2007, via telephone.

During her summer vacations Hawes Howard enjoyed going hunting with her father for jack and cottontail rabbits. She would sell part of their catch from her wagon to various neighbors: jack rabbits sold for 50 cents a piece and cottontails for 35 cents a piece. With adult neighbors looking in on him, her brother, Wesley — who got relief from his asthma during his stays in the Lake Elsinore Valley — went to the local high school. The congenial weather conditions allowed him to thrive as a good academic student and a high school track athlete.<sup>165</sup>

For the Negro year-round and vacation communities, a happening place to go eat and hang out was Miller's Café and Pool Hall, which opened in 1945 at Langstaff and Pottery. The fact that Miller's had a big street light in front helped to entice night-time visitors for inside activities and street-front gossip gatherings. Other businesses that catered to Negroes in the late 1940s included a motel owned by the Hensleys, on Riley near Sumner. The LaBonita Motel was a fixture on Pottery near Riley for many years, and Mr. Leon Daniels also had court cottages he rented to vacationers, and also provided meal service.<sup>166</sup> (See Map 3 and Figures 27 & 33.)

The 1949 edition of the *Negro Traveler's Green Book* suggested George Moore's hotel on Scrivener for accommodations. Before this establishment, Moore had a motel and café, George Moore's Chicken Inn, on Pottery and Spring. The legendary entertainer Louis "Satchmo" Armstrong (1901-1971) was a visitor at this

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> George Brown, interview by author, October 30, 2004; Rubin "Buddy" Brown, Lake Elsinore Valley and Perris resident, interview by author, March 3, 2006, Perris, California; Hilltop Community Center Program Bulletin, Lake Elsinore Historical Society Collection, 9; 1930 United State Census; and Prince Cobbs, Las Vegas resident and retired law enforcement officer, interview by author, October 27, 2004, via telephone.



**Figure 33.** Miller's Café at Pottery and Langstaff, Lake Elsinore, circa 1950s. Standing, Arthur Durdin of Los Angeles. This café and pool hall offered barbecue, other food, a full bar, and dancing to locals and visitors, particularly if they were African American. Some times, especially in the summer time at night outside in front of Miller's, evening gatherings of people occurred to catch up on gossip and to tell tall tales. On Pottery, Miller's was the only spot with a bright light for many years. *Rubin "Buddy" Brown Collection.*

earlier establishment. Before Moore bought the Pottery and Spring location, it was owned by the Carriers and McLucas families. Prior to that, Earl Dancy, who was at one time married to Oscar-nominated blues singer and actress Ethel Waters (1896-1977), first leased the site and created the Chicken Inn that Moore took over. Moore also had a service station and tire shop in Los Angeles at 46<sup>th</sup> Street and Central Avenue.<sup>167</sup>

Long time Lake Elsinore and Perris resident Rubin “Buddy” Brown remembers as a boy that, in 1938, boxer Archie Moore (1913-1998) visited Lake Elsinore. According to Brown, Moore was acting as chauffeur of a Lincoln Zephyr for his passenger, a Negro lady from San Diego. When he was not working, Moore sometimes played ball out in the streets with the kids. Around this time he became a professional fighter, and boxed almost all of his bouts in San Diego, his adopted home. He became a light heavyweight world boxing champion, and set a record for knockouts during his career.<sup>168</sup>

The thespian, stage producer, songwriter, screenwriter and activist Clarence Muse, Esq. (1889-1979) owned a ranch in the hills of Perris, a short distance away from Lake Elsinore, which he called “Muse-A-While.” Muse’s ranch and the Lake

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<sup>167</sup> George Brown, interview by author, October 30, 2004; Rubin “Buddy” Brown, Lake Elsinore Valley and Perris resident, interview by author, March 3, 2006, Perris, California; and Hilltop Community Center Program Bulletin, Lake Elsinore Historical Society Collection, 9.

<sup>168</sup> Rubin “Buddy” Brown, Interview by author, March 3, 2006; Hilltop Community Center Program Bulletin, Lake Elsinore Historical Society Collection, 9; “Archie Moore biography,” From the Internet: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archie\\_Moore](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archie_Moore); “Archie Moore’s 1998 Death,” From the Internet: <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0771452.html>; and “Archie Moore was a colorful boxer,” The African American Registry, From the Internet: [http://www.aaregistry.com/african\\_american\\_history/1327/Archie\\_Moore\\_was\\_a\\_colorful\\_boxing\\_great](http://www.aaregistry.com/african_american_history/1327/Archie_Moore_was_a_colorful_boxing_great).

Elsinore Hotel were both listed as leisure destinations in the 1959 edition of the *Negro Traveler's Green Book*. Mildred Sterling was a friend of Muse and his wife, Ena. Sterling's nephew, Halvor Miller, recalls that his great aunt and Muse would help each other out when big parties visited their establishments. Some people who had lodgings in Lake Elsinore went to Muse's place to see him, or to go horseback riding, hiking and hunting.<sup>169</sup> (See Map 3 and Figure 34.)

Muse was the first African American to star in a film. He appeared in more than 200 films, including *Huckleberry Finn* (1931), *Porgy and Bess* (1959), *Buck and the Preacher* (1972) and *Car Wash* (1976). He was an advocate for better and more equitable treatment for African American performers. Muse was a steadfast supporter of the controversial television series *Amos N' Andy*, because he thought that, even with the caricatured leading characters, the show permitted Negro actors to play doctors, bankers, judges, professors and other parts that they could not in general get to play in Anglo series.<sup>170</sup>

Thomas R. Yarborough (1895-1969) and his wife, Kathryn, became year-round residents at Lake Elsinore in 1929, after living in Los Angeles for 10 years. At the South Riverside County resort he saw business and civic engagement opportunities, and he found relief from his asthma. Yarborough was born in

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<sup>169</sup> Halvor Miller, Esq., Interview by author, March 12, 2007.

<sup>170</sup> "Biography for Clarence Muse, Versatile Performer, Producer and Songwriter, Dies at 90," *Los Angeles Times*, October 16, 1979, ProQuest Historical Newspapers Los Angeles Times (1881-1987), C3; "Clarence Muse, a pioneer film actor," The African American Registry, From the Internet: [http://www.aaregistry.com/african\\_american\\_history/1194/Clarence\\_Muse\\_a\\_pioneer\\_film\\_actor](http://www.aaregistry.com/african_american_history/1194/Clarence_Muse_a_pioneer_film_actor); and "Clarence Muse," Biography, From the Internet: <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0615617/bio>. and "Clarence Muse," Filmography as an Actor, From the Internet: <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0615617/>



**Figure 34.** Left, actor Clarence Muse, his wife Ena; right, Mildred Saunders and unidentified man on her screened in porch sharing a meal at Lake Elsinore, circa 1937-1938. For many years both Mrs. Sterling and the Muses provided accommodations to Negro visitors to Lake Elsinore. *Halvor Thomas Miller, Jr. Collection.*

Arkansas, but he grew up in Greenville, Mississippi. He went to Strait University, a Negro college in New Orleans, from 1911 to 1912. His wife was a graduate of Oberlin College in Ohio.<sup>171</sup> (See Map 3 and Figures 29 & 35.)

Yarborough became a successful “real estate operator” in the Lake Elsinore Valley. Before creating his own property management enterprise in Riverside County, Yarborough worked as a chauffeur, with building contractors, and in furniture making. He was a caretaker for the Lake Elsinore estate of the evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson when he arrived to take up residency in the Valley. His successful real estate strategy included buying property at tax sales in Riverside County for inexpensive prices, to sell later at better prices, or to develop for year-round and vacation rentals.<sup>172</sup>

As a civic leader Yarborough served as a member of the Elsinore Planning Commission, on the Board of Directors of the Elsinore Chamber of Commerce, and as a member of the Executive Board of the Property Owners Association. Traveling to Los Angeles for their meetings, he was an active supporter of the NAACP. He was also a founder of the Elsinore Progressive League’s Hilltop Community Center, which was a hub for social gatherings and charity work.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> *Negroes Who’s Who In California* 1948 Edition, 66; and Ken Overaker, “Elsinore Negro Mayor Retiring: Hopes to Work on Racial Peace,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 31, 1968, ProQuest Historical Newspapers Los Angeles Times (1881-1987), G1.

<sup>172</sup> Overaker, *Los Angeles Times*, March 31, 1968; *Negroes Who’s Who In California* 1948 Edition, 66; and Elbert Hudson, Esq., Los Angeles resident, interview by author, July 26, 2006, Los Angeles, California, via Telephone.

<sup>173</sup> *Negroes Who’s Who In California* 1948 Edition, 66; and Stokes, *The Press Enterprise*, February 18, 1996; and Lake Elsinore did not get a chapter of the NAACP until 1977. Hilltop Community Center Program Bulletin, Lake Elsinore Historical Society Collection, 14.





**Figure 35.** On the boat at Lake Elsinore circa 1946, a popular African American resort which began in the 1920s. From left to right: standing Thomas R. Yarborough, Lake Elsinore real estate entrepreneur, civic activist, and town city council member and from 1966-1968, mayor; seated, third from left is Dr. Herbert Fairs; third from right is Mrs. Towles. Her husband, Dr. H. H. Towles, is second from right. Dr. Towles loaned the use an office in his building at 14<sup>th</sup> and Central Avenue to William Nickerson in 1924 for the founding of the Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company and he was an early member of the company's board of directors. Standing, second from right is Floritta Ware. To the right of her is Leon Washington, owner and publisher of the *Los Angeles Sentinel* newspaper, who also owned property at Lake Elsinore. To his right is Kermit Brown, a retired Los Angeles Police Juvenile Division officer. *Walter L. Gordon, Jr. Collection, William Beverly, Jr. Collection, University of Southern California Special Collection.*

When the voters of Lake Elsinore elected Yarborough to the City Council in 1948, he was the first Negro to be elected to that office in California. He served his first term until 1952, but was defeated when he ran again in 1956. Yarborough was then appointed to fill a vacancy on the Council in 1959, and was reelected in 1960 and 1964. In both of the later contests he received the highest vote count of all the candidates. His fellow City Council members selected him as mayor in 1966, making him one of the three Negro mayors of California cities at the time. When he retired from public service in 1968, the citizens of Lake Elsinore named a city park in his honor, to recognize his contributions to their community. Today, the Thomas R. Yarborough Park remains at its original site, off Poe between Pottery and Flint, on the property where the Elsinore Progressive League's Hilltop Community Center used to stand.<sup>174</sup> (See Map 3 and Figure 36.)

The Yarborough home, like that of his former employer, evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson, was situated on top of a hill, though not as high as the one where the house of McPherson sat in Clevelin Heights. From the Yarboroughs' hill property on Pottery and Lewis, at the then edge of town and approaching Clevelin Heights, is a beautiful and inspiring panoramic view of Lake Elsinore to the west, and Quail Valley to the east. Despite the capriciousness of the lake level, the agency and hospitality of the various Negro proprietors at Lake Elsinore — entrepreneurs like the Burgesses and Yarborough — were in all likelihood the biggest factors in the

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<sup>174</sup> Overaker, *Los Angeles Times*, March 31, 1968; and Stokes, *The Press Enterprise*, February 18, 1996.



**Figure 36.** The Neal Family Reunion, Yarborough Park, Lake Elsinore, CA. Sat., August 13, 2005.  
*Photography by Alison R. Jefferson.*

ongoing inspiration to Negro Angelenos, and others throughout the Southern California region and from outside the locale, to visit the Valley.<sup>175</sup>

Dr. Curtis King developed King's Ranch, and a rest home, in Lake Elsinore, just down the hill from the Yarboroughs place at Davis and Chaney, going toward Quail Valley. Before coming to Los Angeles in 1929, Dr. King did his internship at Tuskegee Institute Hospital and practiced medicine in Georgia. This 1924 Meharry Medical School graduate was a distinguished medical professional, with a specialization in the prevention and cure of venereal diseases. He founded Rose Netta Hospital in Los Angeles at Vernon and Hooper Avenues. In 1942, King's Rose Netta was the first hospital where the Red Cross set up an interracial blood bank. When not assisting his patients, he pursued his hobbies of photography and raising palomino horses at his ranch.<sup>176</sup> (See Map 3.)

Up the hill from King's Ranch, to the south, the Lake Elsinore vacation home that dentist Dr. Elvin Neal and his wife Olive built continues to stand on Scrivener near Pottery. The Neals moved to Los Angeles in 1924, just after Dr. Neal finished dental school at Meharry. Raised and educated in Texas, Dr. Neal's extended family also bought property in Lake Elsinore. Some of the descendents of the elder Neals

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<sup>175</sup> Site visit by author, accompanied by George Brown, Lake Elsinore Valley and Alberhill resident (as tour guide), Spring 2006.

<sup>176</sup> *Negroes Who's Who In California* 1948 Edition, 32; and *Los Angeles Classified Buyers' Guide, 1942-1943*, 11; Meharry Medical School is located in Nashville, Tennessee. Founded in 1876, it has remained the largest private historically African American institution in the United States dedicated to educating healthcare professionals and scientists. Before it got its independent charter in 1915, Meharry was originally part of Central Tennessee College/Walden University, which was initially established by the Methodist Episcopal Church North; John Neal, Moreno Valley resident, interview by author, February 10, 2006, via telephone and in Lake Elsinore; and George Brown, interview by author, February 10, 2006, Lake Elsinore.

have retired to the Valley, and every summer other relatives return for a huge family reunion. In 2006, the reunion event was held under the shade trees at Yarborough Park.<sup>177</sup> (See Map 3 and Figure 36.)

Judge David W. Williams (1910-2000), the first African American federal judge west of the Mississippi, also had a vacation home in Lake Elsinore, on Silver Street, a short distance down the hill from the Yarborough home. Born in Atlanta, Georgia, Judge Williams grew up on 109<sup>th</sup> Street near Central Avenue in the Watts community of Los Angeles. He worked his way through Los Angeles Junior College, the University of California, Los Angeles, and the law school at University of Southern California. Being a founding member of the John M. Langston Bar Association — a black lawyer’s group that was established because Negro lawyers were not allowed to join the Los Angeles County Bar Association — was one of his many professional and civic activities and accomplishments.<sup>178</sup>

In the 1940s, Williams was one of the Negro lawyers from Los Angeles who, along with Loren Miller and Willis O. Tyler, worked on the legal cases with Thurgood Marshall, Esq., then the head of NAACP Legal Defense Funds efforts, to fight the restrictive covenants that barred minorities from living in many neighborhoods in the City of Angels. Negroes and other minorities continued to face

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<sup>177</sup> *Negroes Who's Who In California* 1948 Edition, 48; John Neal, interview by author, February 10, 2006; George Brown, interview by author, February 10, 2006; and Charles Neal, Lake Elsinore resident, interview by author, June 15, 2005 and Fall 2005, via telephone and in Lake Elsinore.

<sup>178</sup> *Negroes Who's Who In California* 1948 Edition, 50; Williams, a life long Republican, was appointed to the Federal Bench by President Richard Nixon in 1969. Elaine Woo, “David Williams Dies; Was First Black Federal Judge in West,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 10, 2000, Proquest Newspapers, B-1; Hilltop Community Center Program Bulletin, 11; Eric V. Copage, “David Williams, 90, Pioneering black Judge;” [Obituary (Obit)], *New York Times*, May 12, 2000, Proquest Newspapers, B-15.; and Thomas Rutherford, interview by author, August 18, 2006.

great difficulty buying property in Anglo neighborhoods, even after the covenants were declared illegal by the United States Supreme Court in 1948. In the mid-1950s, pretending to live out of town, then Municipal Court Judge Williams outwitted those who might discriminate against him when he brokered the sale of a vacant lot next door to the exclusive Bel-Air Country Club for \$20,000, through telephone calls. He ignored the neighbors who were outraged that a Negro had purchased the land, built a house for his family, and continued to live in it and the exclusive neighborhood until he died.<sup>179</sup> (See Map 3.)

During the years of World War II, the crowds who visited Lake Elsinore began a pattern of decline that would continue into future decades. The people that did come to the lake spent less money. There were many vacant houses in the community, which became home to the families of the men serving at Camp Haan, a few miles away in Perris, across the highway from March Army Air Field. During the war the lake and the surrounding area were used for army maneuvers, and new equipment was tested before it was sent overseas to be used by American soldiers.<sup>180</sup>

Even with the changing fortunes of Lake Elsinore, pivotal moments of life took place alongside relaxation. Ivan Houston, former head of Golden State Life Insurance Company, and son of the company's co-founder Norman O. Houston,

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<sup>179</sup> Williams was appointed to the Los Angeles County Municipal Court in 1956 by Gov. Goodwin J. Knight. He gained an appointment to the Superior Court in 1962 from Gov. Edmund G. Brown, Sr. Williams was a life long Republican and was elevated by President Richard Nixon to the federal bench in 1969. After the Watts Revolt of 1965, he volunteered to handle the 4,000 criminal cases that resulted from the uprising. Woo, *Los Angeles Times*, May 10, 2000, B-1; Copage, *New York Times*, May 12, 2000, B-15; and Betty Pleasant, "Legal Community Gathers to Mourn Judge David Williams," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, May 24, 2000, Proquest Newspapers, V. 66, Iss. 8, A-1.

<sup>180</sup> Hudson, 91-92; and "Historic California Posts – Camp Haan," The California State Military Museum, From the Internet: [www.militarymuseum.org/ephaan.html](http://www.militarymuseum.org/ephaan.html).

remembers his mother and father telling him they spent their honeymoon at Lake Elsinore. Jan Miller Cerina recalls that in the mid-1940s, when she was an early adolescent, Negro soldiers came to the north shore of Lake Elsinore one summer day on a big transport truck to watch singer Lena Horne perform. Cerina remembers the soldiers and others who came to hear the free show sitting on the beach at the lakeshore and standing around, while Ms. Horne entertained from a makeshift stage provided by a truck transport bed. “She [Horne] was a very pretty, unassuming woman who also brought her children for vacation with her at the lake,” recalls Cerina.

Los Angeles native Price Cobbs remembers on one of his family’s summer visits to the lake in the late 1930s, when he was about ten years old, seeing Dexter Gordon (1923-1990), who was about 17 at the time, driving his 1935 Ford Convertible around the lake. Gordon later became a renowned jazz musician, and was the first to translate the language of bebop to the tenor saxophone. “I remember thinking how cool Dexter must be,” said Cobbs. He would go for summer stays at Lake Shore Beach and at Mrs. Sterling’s place with his parents, Dr. Peter Price and Rosa Cobbs, and his siblings Prince and Marcelyn. The elder Dr. Cobbs graduated in 1919 from Howard University Medical School, and his wife was a graduate of Miles College in Alabama.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Price M. Cobbs, MD, (the younger) San Francisco resident, psychiatrist management consultant, and author, interview by author, October 30, 2004, Los Angeles, California; and *Negroes Who’s Who In California* 1948 Edition, 35. Miles College is a historically African American liberal arts college founded in 1905, near Birmingham, Alabama.



In 1925, Peter and Rosa Cobbs drove a new Dodge to Los Angeles from Montgomery, Alabama, where Dr. Cobbs had a successful medical practice. Like so many others before and after them, the young couple moved to Los Angeles to escape the discrimination of the South, to make a better place for themselves and their children, and for the California dream of freedom and opportunity. The medical office of Dr. Cobbs was on Central Avenue in Los Angeles, above Harris Pharmacy, and around the corner from the 28<sup>th</sup> Street YMCA. He also opened a sanitarium on North Hazard Street in the Boyle Heights section of Los Angeles. Several people I interviewed fondly remember Dr. Cobbs providing someone in their family with emergency care when they had situations which required a physician's assistance while at Lake Elsinore.<sup>182</sup> (See Figure 37.)

In the 1940s, Lake Elsinore began a slow death, due to the economy, and the impact of nature and humans on the source of its water. There was little rainfall for several years. Two dams were put into service upstream on the San Jacinto River, and there was escalating drainage of the underground water supply that would have fed into the river and eventually supplied the lake for use in the communities of San Jacinto, Perris and Lake Elsinore. In 1948, the combination of low water and over-population of fish caused there to be insufficient oxygen in the lake. Fish began to abruptly die in large numbers and washed up on the north shore due to the winds. Despite these events, the town population continued to grow. In 1950, Lake Elsinore

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<sup>182</sup> Price M. Cobbs, MD, San Francisco resident, author and management consultant, interview by author, October 30, 2004, Los Angeles, California; *Negroes Who's Who In California* 1948 Edition, 35; and Cobbs, 4.





**Figure 37.** A grand family outing after the water refurbishment of Lake Elsinore, 1964. Three generations of family, from left to right: seated Veronica Chen Cobbs; children standing Alison Rose Jefferson, Albert Jefferson, Jr., Renata Cobbs, Price P. Cobbs; seated on white car in back Price M. Cobbs, MD and Evadne Priester Cobbs; and standing next to them Marcelyn Cobbs Jefferson and matriarch Rosa M. Cobbs. Dr. Peter P. Cobbs and Rosa Mashaw Cobbs drove their new Dodge to Los Angeles in 1925 from Montgomery, Alabama. The elder Dr. Cobbs gave up a thriving medical practice in Montgomery to trek west with his wife for new opportunities and their version of the ‘California Dream.’ When the Cobbs children were growing up, the family would spend summer vacations at Lake Elsinore in the 1930s. Photographer: Prince R. Cobbs. *Cobbs Jefferson Family Collection.*

had a population of just over 2,000 people, and there were probably as many people living outside the city limits. At this time serious discussion also began with regard to bringing the lake under public ownership and creating a public entity which could have the power to deal with the lake's problems, but it would not be until the first half of the 1960s that the some of the major management issues of Lake Elsinore would be resolved.<sup>183</sup>

The problems and the optimism for future development of the community of Lake Elsinore in the 1940s continued into the 1950s. By 1955 the lake bed was dry and dust storms were a regular occurrence. Although many people left or did not visit the area because of these conditions, some stayed, a few visitors still came, and some even continued to buy property in the Valley. A few, like the Paynes and Rutherfords, who were related by marriage and who both owned homes on Lewis down the hill from the Yarboroughs, built swimming pools when the lake no longer provided its rehabilitating waters in the 1950s. Judge Thomas L. and Mrs. Portia Broyles Griffith, Jr., began building a weekend/vacation home for their family at Lake Elsinore in 1953, the same year he was appointed by Gov. Earl Warren to the Los Angeles Municipal Court.<sup>184</sup> (See Map 3 and Figures 38 to 40.)

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<sup>183</sup> Hudson, 102-103; and 1950 United States Census.

<sup>184</sup> Hudson, 123; Thomas Rutherford, interview by author, August 18, 2006; Liza Griffith Scruggs, Los Angeles resident and Assistant Superintendent-Secondary Instruction, Los Angeles Unified School District, Interview by author, August 8, 2006, via telephone, and October 7, 2006, Los Angeles, California; Nancy Scruggs Griffith, Los Angeles, California resident, interview by author, July 19, 2006, Los Angeles, California; Halvor Miller, Esq., interview by author, March 12, 2007; and Griffith was California's second Negro judge. "A New Judge in the Largest court in the World: Griffith Becomes 8<sup>th</sup> Negro Judge in U.S.," *Sepia USA Magazine*, August 1953, Liza Griffith Scruggs Collection.



**Figure 38.** West end of Lake Elsinore and Riverside Drive from the Ortega Highway circa 1950s. Today most of the area shown in this photograph has been converted from agricultural land to planned community subdivisions. The town center is in the background on the edge of the Lake towards the right. *Lake Elsinore Public Library Collection.*





**SCANNING** plans of home they are building in Elsinore, Calif., to include hobby woodwork shop.

**Figure 39.** *Sepia USA Magazine*, August 1952. On the cover one of the story titles features reads: “Negro Becomes Judge: In Largest Court in the World.” Inside the story title about the appointment of Thomas L. Griffith, Jr., Esq. reads, “Griffith Becomes 8<sup>th</sup> Negro Judge in U.S.” Before being appointed by Governor Earl Warren as California’s second Negro judge, Griffith had practiced law for 22 years and served as the president of the NAACP Los Angeles branch for 15 years. In the picture above, Judge Griffith and wife Portia are reviewing plans for their new vacation home at Lake Elsinore, which still stands today and has been occupied for 13 years by his grandson, Thomas L. Griffith, IV and his family. *Liza Griffith Scruggs and Gordon Scruggs Collection.*



**Figure 40.** At the backyard pool of the Rutherford home at Lake Elsinore on Lewis Street, circa 1950s. The Rutherfords knew many people who owned vacations homes in the Valley. Thomas Rutherford's brother-in-law, Paul Payne introduced him, his wife Judy and children to the area. The vacation homes of both were in the same vicinity on Lewis Street, with a few other families who came out from Los Angeles, like the (Judge Thomas L.) Griffiths, the (H. Claude) Hudsons and the (Judge David) Williams. Mr. Rutherford in a 2006 interview proudly recalled that Lake Elsinore resident, businessman and civic activist, Thomas R. Yarborough who lived up the street from his weekend home was "running the place" (meaning Lake Elsinore). From left to right: Liza Griffith (Scruggs), her mother Portia, school mate from Los Angeles Sandra Watson and Penny Rutherford. *Liza Griffith Scruggs and Gordon Scruggs Collection.*

Griffith was the first Negro admitted to the Los Angeles Bar Association, and the first to be named to the California Bar's Legislation Committee; Mrs. Griffith was an elementary school teacher. He served as president of the NAACP Los Angeles Branch for 15 years. In 1925, during the ministry of his parents, Rev. Thomas L. Griffith, Sr., and Mrs. Carrie L. Griffith, architect Paul R. Williams was hired to design the elegant Second Baptist Church, at 24<sup>th</sup> Street and Griffith Avenue in Los Angeles, a block west of Central Avenue. Today, Judge Griffith's grandson and his family reside year-round in the house he built for his family's leisure. The judge's daughter, Liza Griffith Scruggs, said in a recent interview, "I have many wonderful childhood memories of swimming in the Rutherfords' pool whose house was next door to ours, lots of barbeques and of the many people who stopped by to visit when we were at Lake Elsinore for the weekend."<sup>185</sup> (See Figures 41 & 42.)

The historic Lake Elsinore Negro resort community had much in common with other sites around the nation where successful American Africans were able to insulate themselves and their children from rude treatment and repeated affronts to their dignity from Whites, and to enjoy leisure in their own country. These particularly determined Negroes with disposable income eagerly pursued the finer things and enjoyment in life, in a similar manner to their affluent Anglo counterparts. Vacationing together at selected resorts also provided Negro families with the

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<sup>185</sup> "...Griffith Becomes 8<sup>th</sup> Negro Judge in U.S.," *Sepia USA Magazine*, August 1953, Liza Griffith Scruggs Collection; Liza Griffith Scruggs, Interview by author, August 8, 2006; and *Negroes Who's Who In California* 1948 Edition, 45.





**Figure 41.** Griffith family children and friend on a play date at Lake Elsinore, circa early 1960s.  
*Liza Griffith Scruggs and Gordon Scruggs Collection.*



**Figure 42.** Lake Elsinore circa 1950s/early 1960s. Top: Sisters Robin Chester and Portia Griffith. Bottom: Lloyd C. Griffith, Esq., the brother of Judge Thomas Griffith, and his wife Laura Harwell Griffith. *Liza Griffith Scruggs and Gordon Scruggs Collection.*



opportunity to reinforce their relationships, to make new acquaintances, and renew old ones.<sup>186</sup>

As was the case with Negro resort areas near eastern, mid-western and southern cities with relatively large African American populations that sprouted up in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Lake Elsinore Valley race-specific leisure space grew because there were Negro entrepreneurs and residents in the Valley who offered services and accommodations to Negro visitors. Relatively remote from the larger Southern California metropolitan areas, the city of Lake Elsinore included Negroes as part of the early American settlement in the late 1880s. This was a decisive factor in why an African American leisure community emerged in this area, and in many others around the United States.<sup>187</sup>

Although the Lake Elsinore resort was popular, it was not as coveted by Anglos as other Southern California resort areas, particularly those near the beach. The Negro (and Jewish) leisure retreat co-existed around the margins of the Anglo resort community, with few documented unpleasant confrontations between Negroes and Anglos.

In 1922, Santa Monica city council refused to allow construction of a proposed Negro bathhouse and amusement center, and the same year forced the closure of Caldwell's, a very successful African American-owned dancehall in the Ocean Park section of the city. Bruce's Beach (also known as Bruce's Lodge), which had provided oceanside recreation space for Negro Angelenos in the South

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<sup>186</sup> Foster, 131, 136, 143; and Gatewood, 202.

<sup>187</sup> Foster, 136-137.

Bay region of Los Angeles County beginning in 1912, was forced to close. In 1924, the Bruces, and other Negroes and Anglos with vacation homes and unimproved land in this north Manhattan Beach section, were evicted under the banner of a campaign that their land should be used for a public park. One of the uglier incidents intended to keep Negroes from enjoying the beach was the 1926 destruction of the nearly completed Pacific Beach Club, in Huntington Beach. Arsonists burned the beautiful new facility to the ground shortly before it was to open.<sup>188</sup>

With the onset of the Depression, World War II, federal legislation which made segregation illegal, and public places more or less open to all, many Negro vacation resorts began to suffer waning attendance and economic hardship, and the Lake Elsinore Negro retreat was no different in this regard. As Southern California Negroes were presented with a broader array of vacation options, they began to go to newly-accessible places, and stopped going to Lake Elsinore. African American vacation retreats that have faded, and those that continue to survive today, drew and still draw people because of their legacy of achievement, strong sense of place, and memories.<sup>189</sup>

Changing historical, sociological and cultural significance does not diminish the importance of Lake Elsinore and other Negro vacation retreats. On the contrary,

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid., 136-137, 140; Flammig 272-272; "Settlement of Negroes Is Opposed: Santa Monica and Ocean Park Block Plans for Colony of Colored Folks," *Los Angeles Times*, July 30, 1922, ProQuest Newspapers; "The Color Line At Santa Monica," *California Eagle* Newspaper, April 1, 1922, 1; DeGraaf, "City of Angels...", 348; Brigham, 31-34, 47, 84; and Dan Cady, "'Southern' California: White Southern Migrants in Greater Los Angeles, 1920-1930," (PhD diss., Claremont University, Claremont, California 2005), 194-198, 226-227.

<sup>189</sup> Haizlip, 21.

the societal changes only make these sites more intriguing, because of the “brave pioneers who persisted in pursuing the finer things in life in public, despite repeated rejection, hostile environments and even physical danger.” African American leadership has been associated with martyrdom, toil and sacrifice, and also with advancing obvious racial causes and civil rights. This recognition is appropriate. But determined African Americans with disposable income, who demonstrated by their own example that all people have the right to enjoy the fruits of their labor, when and where they choose, also advanced the universal search for human dignity.<sup>190</sup>

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By the 1960s, healing water resorts became less popular, and in Lake Elsinore the sulphur water baths became a relatively minor part of the local economy. Resort and leisure areas seem to have a certain lifespan, determined by cycles, moods, public fancy, transportation options and weather. If not for the Depression of the 1930s, and the unpredictability of the lake that enticed successive visionaries and boosters, Lake Elsinore would probably have grown into a sizable city surrounding the big pond. Even so, Elsinore Valley began to feel less rural, due to new residential community developments, which brought population centers nearer, and to the expansion of the influence of the three nearby metropolitan areas,

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 21; and Foster, 146.

due to the enlarged regional freeway system that came to envelop it.<sup>191</sup> (See Figure 38.)

The community of Lake Elsinore has gone through many transitions since the middle decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Final public acquisition of the lakebed lands in the Lake Elsinore Valley came in 1957. It is no longer the vacation site it once was, for any American. It is now a small, suburban, family community, a mix of the old town site, rural areas, and new master-planned communities of homes built on parcels of land that were once part of the lake, used for farming, or open land. Residents are for the most part retired, or commute to work locations around the southland in Riverside, San Bernardino, Orange, San Diego and Los Angeles counties. Today, the websites of the city of Lake Elsinore and its Chamber of Commerce promote the natural scenic and recreational attributes of the area, extreme sports venues, and advertise that the city has over 1100-acres of freeway frontage available for new commercial and industrial park development, lower housing and land costs, close proximity to skilled labor and universities, and a strategic location within the Southern California market. (See Figures 43 & 44.)

Nowadays, people can camp at the lake, but not currently at Lake Shore Beach. The city of Lake Elsinore maintains some public parks along the shoreline and throughout the city. Lake Elsinore water quality, wildlife habitats and improvements are managed today by the Lake Elsinore and San Jacinto Watersheds

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<sup>191</sup> Hudson, 61, 136, 141; and Sutton, 293.



**Figure 43.** Robbie and Colonel Harvey at their home in the Sedco Hills area of Lake Elsinore, 1980. Their retirement property included two houses, two acres of orange, lime and grapefruit groves, mulberries, apricots and row crops. Colonel Harvey managed the farm and Mrs. Harvey had a beauty salon on their property. Her son, William Slaton, his wife Nelle and their children visited the Lake from the 1950s until they sold the property in the early 1990s after his mother and Harvey both died. The whole family enjoyed the outdoors and offerings of the Lake Elsinore setting. Bill and his mother came to Los Angeles from Texas during World War II in 1944, and lived on the Eastside, off Central Avenue. His wife, Nellie Becker (her maiden name) grew up in New York City; Nellie's mother was a journalist and a school teacher, and her father was a lawyer and a postal worker. During her childhood, after her father died, Nelle and brothers Adolph and Leslie would accompany their mother to Martha's Vineyard for many of their summer vacations. While the children played, the elder Becker covered the social scene for various Negro news outlets for her summer income. When Nellie first moved to California she lived with Charlotta Bass, activist and editor of the *California Eagle* Newspaper, who also retired to Lake Elsinore in the late 1950s. *William and Nellie Slaton Collection.*



**Figure 44.** Lake Elsinore, 2006. Thomas “Tommy” L. Griffith, IV (on the right), his wife, Evelyn and his younger brother, Miles Griffith at the barbecue grill in the backyard of their year-round home, built by Tommy’s grandfather in the 1950s for his family’s leisure. Tommy sells automobiles in the Inland Empire and Evelyn takes care of the children and works part-time at the Lake Elsinore School District in Transportation. *Nancy Scruggs Griffith Collection.*

Authority. Lake Elsinore itself is maintained at 3000 acres, or 2.5 miles long and 1.5 miles wide, with 10 miles of shoreline. This is less than half its size in the years of abundant water flow early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A private company is contracted to manage the lake area campgrounds, boat launch and marina, day use areas, concessions, and other services.<sup>192</sup>

None of the Lake Elsinore hotels that served Anglo or African American visitors during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are open now. Many of the vacation homes and court cottages that were built during this period have been torn down, or dramatically altered for year-round use by residents. Descendents of some of the African American families who came to live in Lake Elsinore in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century continue to live in the Valley environs. A few Negro Angeleno descendents who vacationed at the lake when the place was popular as a healing water resort have taken over the second homes their ancestors occupied for their year-round residences. (See Figure 44.)

In the early part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, many recreational visitors to the Valley come for skydiving, hang-gliding and other aerial sports, as well as water sports of wakeboarding and windsurfing — not for the therapeutic waters. Pottery Street is no longer the hub for African Americans at Lake Elsinore, nor is any other street. The city of Lake Elsinore has grown in land mass, and from a majority Anglo population

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<sup>192</sup> Hudson, 120-121, 128, 154; “*Lake Elsinore 2003 State of the City Report*”; Lake Elsinore Valley Chamber of Commerce, From the Internet: <http://www.lakeelsinorechamber.com/>; Lake Elsinore Campground, From the Internet: <http://www.rockymountainrec.com/camp/elsinore.htm>; Lake Elsinore Valley Chamber of Commerce Community Map. San Diego, CA: Map Masters, 2003; and Lake Elsinore & San Jacinto Watershed Authority, From the Internet: <http://www.mywatersheds.com/home.htm>.

of about 3,000 people in 1930, to a population of 33,900 today. Hispanics make up the largest percentage (38%) of the residents, while African Americans make up only about 5%. Following many changes, the Lake Elsinore Valley continues to be a charming and beautiful place to visit and live, but with very different cultural nuances.<sup>193</sup> (See Figure 21.)

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<sup>193</sup> Hudson, 77; and Lake Elsinore, California data, 2004. From the internet: [www.city-data.com/city/Lake-Elsinore-California.html](http://www.city-data.com/city/Lake-Elsinore-California.html); Lake Elsinore Valley Chamber of Commerce Community Map. San Diego, CA: Map Masters, 2003; Lake Elsinore Visitors Bureau, From the Internet: <http://www.visitlakeelsinore.com/>; and “Population and Housing Background Report,” *Lake Elsinore General Plan Update*, 8-6.



### Chapter 3 Commemoration of Cultural Significance Resources When Integrity is Challenged

Commemoration of the African American resort community at Lake Elsinore presents difficult challenges and opportunities to preservation professionals.

Although there is documentation of the resort community, the majority of the resort facilities have been demolished. Today, more than the buildings which stood at Lake Elsinore, oral histories, stories and advertisements from mostly African American newspapers, photographs, pieces of ephemera, and a few architectural ruins, link us to the sentiments, tradition, and memory of the experiences that document this group's resort area presence and cultural significance. Their story speaks not only to African American history, but also the shared experiences of Lake Elsinore's development as a community.

Available for purchase at various locations, and review at Southern California libraries, the most comprehensive (and most referenced) published history, *Lake Elsinore Valley: Its Story, 1776 – 1977*, by Tom Hudson, does not mention the African American (or Jewish) communities with regard to recreation spaces or otherwise. The majority of the documentation for the study at hand was gathered from people in the African American community of Los Angeles with some connection to Lake Elsinore as visitors and/or vacation property owners during the Jim Crow era. Documentation of this community also came from long-time African

American residents of the Lake Elsinore area whose families arrived there in the 1920s.

Historic and cultural preservation efforts in the United States emphasize the tangible aspects of culture. The documentary value of a historic property is the primary factor in the reasoning to support its preservation. Properties or places are most often saved because of their historical associations or architectural significance. Local history recordation and monument designation at federal, state and/or local level recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of individuals in their communities, and their contributions to the history and heritage of their region and the nation. As a collective heritage, places also describe our identity as a society, and can provide emotional anchors to a community as a whole. It has been found that historic preservation touches more Americans than any other public history endeavor.<sup>194</sup>

The City of Lake Elsinore does not currently have an ordinance to preserve and interpret historic structures throughout the city, although it does have a ‘Historic Downtown Overlay District’ with design guidelines. Centered on Main Street downtown, and the older residential area, the district contains 148 historic

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<sup>194</sup> *Cultural Conservation: The Protection of Cultural Heritage in the United States*, Coordinated by Ormond H. Loomis for the American Folklife Center, Library of Congress and the National Park Service, Department of Interior, 1983, 13, 17; “Listing a Property in the National Register of Historic Places.” From the Internet: <http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/listing.htm>; Dirk H.R. Spennemann, “The Day The Mouse Could Roar: Considering the Role of the Silent Majority in Historic Preservation,” Paper presented at the International Luncheon, 30<sup>th</sup> Annual California Preservation Conference, Riverside, California, May 13, 2005, 6-7; Ned Kaufman, “Moving Forward: Futures for a Preservation Movement,” in *Giving Preservation a History: Histories of Historic Preservation in the United States*, ed. Max Page and Randall Mason, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004), 314-315; and Max Page and Randall Mason, “Rethinking the Roots of the Historic Preservation Movement,” *Giving Preservation a History...*, 6.

commercial and residential buildings, which were identified and documented in a 1981 cultural resource survey conducted as a part of the Riverside County Comprehensive General Plan recommendations.<sup>195</sup> (See Appendix A.)

A 2005 records search in the state of California database by the Eastern Information Center of the California Historical Resources Information System at the University of California, Riverside, found that cultural resources studies had previously been conducted, and cultural resources (buildings, structures, objects, and archaeological sites) had been recorded, in the Lake Elsinore Valley. During the period of research for this study, however, this author found no documentation of Lake Elsinore properties currently listed or found to be eligible for listing as significant historic resources in the National Register of Historic Places, the California Points of Historic Interests, or the Riverside County General Plan, in association with the African American experience in this community.<sup>196</sup>

Recognition of heritage in America through the landmark process, even in the always culturally-diverse Southern California region, has traditionally favored sites associated with city-leader narratives of Anglo upper class male landholders, bankers, business and political leaders, and their architects. The stories of many other groups associated with places that have played important roles in the history of

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<sup>195</sup> “Cultural, Historical and Paleontological Resources Background Report,” *City of Lake Elsinore General Plan Background Reports*, Prepared by Mooney Jones & Stokes, January 2006, From the Internet: <http://www.lake-elsinore.org/gp/docs.asp>, Ch. 7/3, 7/21-7/22; and “City of Lake Elsinore Civic Center Session Study,” February 22, 2007, From the Internet: <http://www.lake-elsinore.org/pdf/Civic%20Center%20Report.pdf>, 32-38.

<sup>196</sup> “Cultural, Historical and Paleontological Resources Background Report,” *City of Lake Elsinore General Plan Background Reports*, Prepared by Mooney Jones & Stokes, January 2006, From the Internet: <http://www.lake-elsinore.org/gp/docs.asp>, 7/3-7/5; and See Appendix A for a list of Lake Elsinore Built Cultural Resources.

the United States, and this region, have been benignly overlooked, or purposefully ignored. At the dawning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a gradual shift has begun across the United States, as history professionals try to include more expansive views of local histories than the biographies of the male Anglo establishment.<sup>197</sup>

Such expansive views may be more inclusive of everyday women, working people, and people of color with various origins. Although the numbers are still small, more landmarks are being developed to recognize these dispossessed groups. As more diverse groups are acknowledged as actors in the ongoing reevaluation of American heritage, more places are being recognized for cultural and social history significance — and not just architectural aesthetics. New generations of scholars, preservationists, civic leaders and ordinary citizens are connecting cultural history to spatial history in preserving and interpreting American places. Slowly, the memory of previously-unacknowledged groups' unique experiences — alongside larger themes associated with the citizenry in general, like migration experience, recreational interests, employment, family organization, or the search for a new sense of identity — are being infused into the collective memory of local and national public culture.<sup>198</sup>

Private and public agencies in communities all over the country are being challenged by their diverse citizens, who are taxpayers and potential audiences, to

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<sup>197</sup> Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History*, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1995), 85-86, 88.

<sup>198</sup> Max Page and Randall Mason, "Rethinking the Roots of the Historic Preservation Movement," *Giving Preservation a History...*, 14; Hayden, 8; and Arnold R. Alanen and Robert Z. Melnick, ed., with forward by Dolores Hayden, *Preserving Cultural Landscapes in America*, (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), vii.

come up with varied cultural programming, from exhibits or publications, to the preservation of historic buildings and landscapes, and the creation of public art projects that reflect their heritage. Heritage projects can strike a responsive chord with audiences, and straddle several worlds: academic urban and public history, urban planning, public art, preservation and urban design. Fostering a more inclusive cultural citizenship, sense of cultural being, cultural heritage and civic pride among diverse groups can lead to other kinds of community organization, around economic development, sustainability and environmental protection, affordable housing, and other community enhancement programs.<sup>199</sup>

How can a cultural landscape be memorialized under current preservation policy, when the significant built artifacts are not extant to commemorate a heritage area, as is the case at Lake Elsinore with the sites of the African American resort community? Beyond preservation in a museum, of a building as an object of art, or through the adaptive reuse of real estate, architectural traces of the past will become progressively more important in the future for preservationists looking at ways of working with physical and social history. The increasing complexity of the layers of heritage we are identifying in the cultural landscape of communities will require this evolution in thought by preservationists.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> Hayden, 7-9, 49, 61, 237; Dolores Hayden, "The Power of Place Project: Claiming Women's History in the Urban Landscape," in *Restoring Women's History through Historic Preservation*, ed. Gail Lee Dubrow and Jennifer B. Goodman, (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 212-213; and Page; Mason, 3, 14-15.

<sup>200</sup> Hayden, 53, 59-61.

An innovative way to recognize the historic African American resort community at Lake Elsinore would be to develop a heritage trail to connect historic sites. A trail would preserve, interpret the stories of, and promote the diverse history of this area. The “African American Heritage Trail of Lake Elsinore” would document the people and places that played noteworthy roles in the growth of the African American resort community, whether or not architecturally significant buildings survive which can be designated as official landmarks of the history of African Americans, or the city of Lake Elsinore.

Black Angeleno visitors who owned Lake Elsinore vacation property, and who in many cases were influential civic and professional leaders in Los Angeles, constitute another theme which might be included on this trail. Local themes common to the year-round residents’ experience, such as religion, education, employment, and sports, could also be incorporated into the sites on the trail. Although many of the sites that could be included on the African American Heritage Trail are demolished, their stories remain, even if physical traces do not.<sup>201</sup>

There exist several examples of heritage trails in the United States which were established to identify sites, buildings and other points of interest in the history of African American communities for the purpose of preservation and promotion as

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<sup>201</sup> The Lake Elsinore African American Heritage Trail for another theme could link with the African American heritage of the Cleveland National Forest. Stationed at the Cleveland National Forest (and later at Camp F-164 in Lake Elsinore) in the 1930s, was Civilian Conservation Corp Company 2923-C, one of four all African American units within the Los Angeles District. This all-Negro unit constructed many structures, trails and highways, campground developments and other improvements which are still in use today in Cleveland National Forest; they also had a distinguished firefighting record. History of the Cleveland National Forest - Recreation Development: The Civilian Conservation Corp on the Cleveland National Forest and Local African-American History, From the Internet: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/cleveland/about/ccchistory2.shtml>.

tourist attractions. Highlighted below are a few African American heritage trails the citizens of Lake Elsinore might take inspiration from in the planning of their own trail. (See Appendix B.)

Already mentioned in this thesis is the *Florida Black Heritage Trail*, which was established in 1992. This trail was an outgrowth of the Florida legislature and citizens' desire to increase public awareness of African American history and contribution to the state. The trail is considered to feature a representative sample of the African American landmarks and legacies from locations throughout the state. A trail publication has been produced, which provides information about Florida's African American heritage and historic sites. The state of Florida has also created trails which recognize the heritage of women, and the Cuban and Jewish communities.<sup>202</sup>

The *African American Heritage Trail of Martha's Vineyard* (Massachusetts) was begun in 1989. To date, 16 sites are included on the trail, which is "dedicated to formerly unrecognized contributions made by people of African descent to the history of the island." Featured local history includes information about sites associated with the African American vacation community at the Vineyard, discussed earlier in this thesis. Each site features a descriptive plaque. The African American Heritage Trail History Project, the non-profit organization which manages the trail, sees it "as a source of participative community education and celebration." The organization's

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<sup>202</sup> See page 47 of this thesis for the early reference to the *Florida Black Heritage Trail* and American Beach; *Florida Black Heritage Trail*, Published by Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources, 2002, 2; and Highlights from the *Florida Black Heritage Trail*, From the Internet: [www.flheritage.com/services/trails/bht/](http://www.flheritage.com/services/trails/bht/).

mission is to continue to research and make public previously undocumented history, and to involve the island's community in the identification and commemoration of contributions made by people of color to Martha's Vineyard. Students from Martha's Vineyard Regional High School are a major source of energy, research assistance, tour guides, site maintenance and website management for the trail. An *African American Heritage of Martha's Vineyard Trail* book and website present information about the trail and its programming, including guided tours.<sup>203</sup>

The city of Rockville, in the state of Maryland, has developed an African American heritage walking tour, which documents and celebrates the people and places around the town center that were important to the general development of the city and its shared growth as a community. The city of Rockville website features a narrative and map about 18 sites that have been demolished, and ones that are still extant. The tour explores themes common to the African American experience, such as slavery, emancipation, religion, education, commerce, and civil rights.<sup>204</sup>

The African American Heritage Trail of Lake Elsinore could also be a part of a larger trail network that capitalizes on unique historic and natural assets. Segments of the trail network could offer a variety of ways to experience cultural, historical and natural attractions, and scenic views whether one chooses to travel by foot, bike, car or boat. A number of sites within the Lake Elsinore Valley could intersect on

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<sup>203</sup> *African American Heritage Trail of Martha's Vineyard*, From the Internet: [www.mvheritagetrail.org](http://www.mvheritagetrail.org); and Elaine Cawley Weintraub, *Lighting the Trail: The African American Heritage Trail of Martha's Vineyard*, (Martha's Vineyard, MA: African American Heritage Trail History Project, 2005) viv.

<sup>204</sup> Historic Rockville African American Heritage Walking Tour, From the Internet: <http://www.rockvillemd.gov/historic/aahwalkingtour.html>.



more than one trail. Visitors could follow one trail at a time, visiting all locations, or jump from trail to trail to tour sites that are located close together or that are related to their specific interests. A series of wayside and other interpretative programs could be developed, including sign posts, displays, public education programs, maps, brochures and exhibits. Ongoing programming could organize commemorative events to promote the trail network.

The African American Heritage Trail of Lake Elsinore could be a pathway that celebrates the shared heritage of the Valley. Sites of people and places that shaped the Lake Elsinore Valley, other than those related to its African American heritage, could include the early resort hotels and hot springs, stagecoach and train stops, places where explorers and adventurers slept, homes of the early settlers and town founders, Jewish heritage sites, and Native American village and other locations.

Another trail segment theme could be the historic downtown Lake Elsinore corridor. Nature trail segments could be created. The Lake Elsinore Back Basin Wetlands, with its earth and levy system, could be included as a pathway under this trail segment theme. A trail at the edge of the lake has already been suggested in the Lake Elsinore General Plan Update; this pathway could feature sites with overlapping natural, cultural and historic themes, and could intersect with other segments of the Lake Elsinore trail network.

The African American Heritage Trail of Lake Elsinore could be a part of the city's revitalization plan, and be integrated into local and regional tourism and

recreational promotion efforts. The city might use the African American pathway and a general trail system in portraying the historic character of Lake Elsinore, and to encourage preservation and interpretation of historic buildings within the larger context of the development of the city of Lake Elsinore. A public and private partnership, and the engagement of volunteers to create and maintain the trail network, could be developed to celebrate the physical movement through the cultural and natural landscapes, to preserve stories, and to provide experiences unlike other land and landmark designation programs.

A collaborative effort to develop a Lake Elsinore African American pathway and trail network could include such organizations as: public entities at the local, state and federal levels; education institutions, from elementary school to college programs; historical societies and historical preservation organizations; nature conservation organizations; outdoor equipment vendors and other recreation-related businesses; real estate development companies and other businesses; local and regional tourism development entities; the local Chamber of Commerce; and other interested groups. (See Appendix B.)

The *Redwood Coast Heritage Trails*, five self-guided tours of historical and cultural sites throughout the Redwood Coast region of California, is a program the city of Lake Elsinore might look to for ideas about a trail network system. Visitors to the *Redwood Coast Heritage Trails* can follow one trail in order, or jump from trail to trail to tour sites that particularly interest them. Several of the locations can

be found on more than one of the trails, which revolve around the area's Native American, Pioneer, Timber, Rail, Maritime and Architectural heritage.<sup>205</sup>

Founded in 1997, the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area (ATHA), in the state of Maryland near Washington, D.C., is another trail system from which the city of Lake Elsinore and its neighboring municipalities might find inspiration. ATHA is a partnership between a wide range of public, private and non-profit organizations, which "encourage and promote heritage tourism to grow local economies, while preserving, developing, and promoting the area's natural, historical, and cultural resources." Themes of the diverse history of the area are showcased in the various sites and attractions, including African American heritage and architecture. The 84-mile area includes 14 municipalities and unincorporated portions of Prince George's County. Visitors can obtain information about the heritage of the area, sites and attractions in ATHA-produced maps and brochures, and a website.<sup>206</sup>

A thoughtfully-planned, successfully-developed and well-maintained trail network, which offers opportunities for visitors and residents alike to connect to local history, nature and recreation, can provide multiple social and economic benefits. A trail system would create new reasons for people to enjoy visiting and living in Lake Elsinore. According to the Travel Industry Association of America, visits to historic sites rank in the top five activities chosen by travelers. The National

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<sup>205</sup> Redwood Coast Heritage Trails. Humboldt County Convention and Visitor's Bureau, From the Internet: <http://www.redwoodvisitor.org/printrecord.asp?id=2432>.  
Statewide Trails Program and Planning. California State Parks. From the Internet: [http://www.parks.ca.gov/default.asp?page\\_id=1324](http://www.parks.ca.gov/default.asp?page_id=1324).

<sup>206</sup> Anacostia Heritage Trail Area, From the Internet: <http://www.anacostiatrials.org/site/>.

Trust for Historic Preservation indicates that visiting historic sites and museums is the third most popular vacation activity for travelers in the U.S., behind shopping and outdoor activities. The disappearance of open space in urban environments has increased public awareness of close-by places, such as Lake Elsinore, which allow them to quickly connect with nature and recreational opportunities. Studies have shown that a nature trail near a residential community contributes positively to property values. Further, active lifestyle sports, and unstructured recreational activities such as walking and biking, are some of the fastest growing sectors of recreation.<sup>207</sup>

Most importantly, a trail system which embraced its African American legacy, and other layers of the city's heritage, would help to create a more inclusive collective memory and history of Lake Elsinore, and to renew the community's sense of pride and identity.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> "Trail Towns: Capturing Trail Based Tourism, A Guide for Communities in Pennsylvania." Prepared by Allegheny Trail Alliance, 2005. From the Internet: <http://www.atatrail.org/pdf/1TTManual.pdf>, 3, 9, 28; "Cultural Heritage Visitor Profile," From the Internet: <http://www.culturalheritagetourism.org/resources/visitorProfile.htm>; and Bell, Roger, "Cinderella Comes of Age: Trails In Private Developments," From the Internet: <http://www.americantrails.org/resources/benefits/BellDevel07.html>.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Lake Elsinore Built Cultural Resources**

From “Cultural, Historical and Paleontological Resources Background Report,” *City of Lake Elsinore General Plan Background Reports*, Prepared by Mooney Jones & Stokes, January 2006. Retrieved from the Internet: <http://www.lake-elsinore.org/gp/docs.asp>; 7/3-7/5, 2005 records search by the Eastern Information Center of the California Historical Resources Information System at the University of California, Riverside.

#### **Currently listed in the National Register of Historic Places:**

- Crescent Bath House/Chimes Building (P33-6998)
- Grand Army of the Republic Armory Hall (RIV-070)

#### **Currently listed in the California Points of Historical Interest:**

- Grand Army of the Republic Armory Hall (RIV-070)
- Elsinore Women’s Club (RIV-071)
- Elsinore’s Hottest Sulphur Springs (RIV-023)

#### **Currently listed in the Riverside County General Plan as a significant historical resource:**

- Lake Elsinore Downtown Historic District (P33-7142)

In the 1980s, the Riverside County Historical Commission designated a local historic district, Historic Downtown Elsinore, which encompasses areas of early residential and commercial development within the City of Lake Elsinore. The majority of the district is focused in the areas around Main Street, Heald Avenue, and Graham Avenue, where some of the earliest development occurred. The city is working with the County of Riverside to protect its local cultural heritage and structures of merit, and the historic district has been officially recognized by the County of Riverside and the City of Lake Elsinore.

#### ○ Includes:

- Masonic Lodge (P33-6982)
- Train Depot (P33-6997)
- First Presbyterian Church (P33-7040)
- Pioneer Lumber Company, 127 West Graham Avenue (P33-6996)
- Lake Theatre, 310 West Graham Avenue (P33-7001)

**Unofficially recognized significant historical resources:**

According to the 1990 General Plan, the community unofficially recognizes several sites and structures as significant historical resources. Locally recognized historic resources in the Lake Elsinore area include:

- Delaney Estate, north of Lake Elsinore
- Aimee's Castle, Skyline Drive
- The Adobe Machado House and Butterfield Stage Stop, Riverside Drive, northwest of the lake
- Alberhill School, Lake Street
- Warm Springs Ranch, Walker Canyon Road
- The Cannery, Spring Street
- Elsinore Naval Military Academy, Grand Avenue

**Additional Lake Elsinore Historic Homes of Interest:**

*(Information provided by the Lake Elsinore Historical Society, December 2005)*

- 16919 Bell Street, 1930
- 219 Riley Street, 1920
- 29610 Hague Street, 1928
- 29444 Kalina Street
- 29431 Kalina Street
- 17912 Hamlet Circle, 1929, Bredlau Castle
- 17747 Skyline Drive, 1930, Village La Shell
- 16921 Holborow Avenue, Journeys End
- 17541 Barkshatt Drive
- 16685 McPhearson Circle, 1926
- 17271 Lakeview Avenue, 1929
- 226 East Franklin Street, 1924, Scotty's Castle
- 228 Spring Street, 1912, Gardner Home
- 257 Hill Street

## Appendix B Selected Heritage Trail Resources

African American Heritage Trail: Cambridge, Massachusetts. Prepared by the Cambridge African American Heritage Trail Advisory Committee and the Cambridge Historical Commission, City of Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2000.

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American Byways, National Scenic Byways Program. From the Internet: <http://www.byways.org/>.

American Hiking Society. From the Internet: <http://www.americanhiking.org/>.

American Trails. From the Internet: <http://americantrails.org/>.

Anacostia Heritage Trail Area. From the Internet: <http://www.anacostiatrials.org/site/>.

Black Heritage Trail. Museum of African American History: Boston and Nantucket, MA. From the Internet: <http://www.afroammuseum.org/trail.htm>.

Boston Main Streets: Building Vibrant Commercial Districts. From the Internet: <http://www.cityofboston.gov/mainstreets/default.asp>

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*Heritage Tourism Guidebook.* Prepared by the Texas Historical Commission. From the Internet: <http://www.thc.state.tx.us/publications/booklets/HTGuidebook.pdf>.

Heritage Trails New York. From the Internet: <http://www.heritageny.state.ny.us/home.cfm>.

Heritage Trails: Helping Communities Develop Walks. New Zealand Heritage Trail Foundation. From the Internet: <http://www.heritagetrails.org.nz/>.

Irish Heritage Trail. Boston Irish Tourism Association. From the Internet: <http://www.irishheritagetrail.com/>.

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National Trails System. National Park Service, U.S. Department of Interior. From the Internet: [http://www.nps.gov/nts/nts\\_faq.html](http://www.nps.gov/nts/nts_faq.html).

National Trails Training Partnership Program. From the Internet:  
<http://www.nttp.net/>.

National Trust Main Street Center. From the Internet: <http://www.mainstreet.org/>.

Rail-To-Trails Conservancy. From the Internet:  
<http://www.railstotrails.org/index.html>.

Redwood Coast Heritage Trails. Humboldt County Convention and Visitor's Bureau. From the Internet: <http://www.redwoodvisitor.org/printrecord.asp?id=2432>.

Rockville African American Heritage Trail. Rockville, Maryland Historic District Commission. From the Internet:  
<http://www.rockvillemd.gov/historic/AAHwalkingtour.html>.

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