

A HISTORY OF  
AFRICAN-AMERICANS  
IN  
MIDDLESEX COUNTY  
1646 - 1992

by

Tommy L. Bogger, Ph. D.

and

The Black Church  
Cultural Affairs Committee

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# LIST OF POEMS

The Black Church Cultural Affairs Committee was organized in 1980 under the leadership of Rev. Robert Brown for the purpose of presenting annual programs in recognition of the Black Church Month. From 1981 to 1990, our observances were based on the theme of Virginia History. The efforts of Virginia State University, St. Paul's College, Norfolk State University, Hampton University, Howard University, and Fayetteville State Teacher's College made appearances greatly added to the cultural enrichment of the occasions. Loyal to the cause of African-American education, the committee's members made a concerted effort to collect what data was available and write our own history. Oral history sources and written histories were consulted, and so were published and visited. Time was spent in the Middlesex County courthouse pouring over deed books, will books, order books, supervisors' minute books, and voting and tax records. Elderly residents, businesses, and the national archives also yielded useful historical information. In November 1990, three scholars, and representatives of the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and Public Policy (VFHPP) met with us at Norfolk State University to review the progress of our labor of several years. We hope that it will be of long life and interest in the history of the county. Hopefully, the book will help the young people in our county to develop more pride and self-esteem, for too many do not seem to know who they are, from the rich legacy of achievement which their forefathers have contributed. The Committee is grateful for the grant from the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and Public Policy, and wishes to thank all who helped to bring this work to completion.

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Easter Duster Holmes  
and Wilma J. Powell

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## THE FOREWORD

The Black Church Cultural Affairs Committee was organized in 1980 under the leadership of Rev. Robert Brown for the purpose of presenting annual programs in recognition of African-American History Month. From 1981 to 1990, our observances were based on the themes of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. The choirs of Virginia State University, Virginia Union University, St. Paul's College, Norfolk State University, Hampton University, Howard University, and Fayetteville State Teacher's College made appearances over the years and greatly added to the cultural enrichment of the occasions. Local talents performed also, as we proudly spotlighted some of our most gifted in a wide variety of roles.

Interwoven in the programs were tidbits of history depicting the achievements of local and nationally-known African-Americans. The enthusiastic response of the audiences made us realize that local citizens were hungry for more information on early blacks in Middlesex. Something had to be done; especially because African-Americans had been in the county for over three hundred years, and our institutions and elderly residents were gradually slipping away. Thus, we decided to collect what data was available and write our own history.

Oral history sources and written histories were consulted, and so were published and unpublished works as we strove to leave no stone unturned in our effort to identify all possible sources of information. The local library, and state and college libraries and archives were visited. Many days were spent in the Middlesex County courthouse pouring over deed books, will books, order books, supervisors' minute books, and voting and tax records. Elderly residents throughout the county were interviewed, and family histories identified and collected. Churches, cemeteries, local businesses, and the national archives also yielded useful historical data.

In November 1990, three scholars, and representatives of the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and Public Policy (VFHPP) met with our committee, and reviewed the work that we had done. Following that conference, Dr. Tommy Bogger of Norfolk State University was added to our committee as a consultant. We applied to the VFHPP for a grant, and we were funded.

This book is the fruit of our labor of several years. We hope that it will be of long lasting value to county residents, and those who have an interest in the history of the county's African-American population. Hopefully, the book will help the young people in our county to develop more pride and self-esteem, for too many do not seem to know who they are, from whence they came, or the rich legacy of achievement which their forefathers have contributed to the development of the county.

This book at times might evoke despair as it recalls the horrors of slavery and social and economic proscription, but it will also reflect hope and optimism, for the history of black Middlesaxons is a story of survival, overcoming great odds. It will show mankind at his very best. In spite of obstacles, we maintained our families, secured an education, improved ourselves politically, and learned to tolerate and work with others.

The Committee is grateful for the grant from the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and Public Policy, and wishes to thank all who helped to bring this work to completion.

Easter Duster Holmes  
and Wilma J. Powell

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Through oral history, we learned a wealth of information which would have been lost to future generations. We are grateful to the individuals who consented to be interviewed by Easter and Sherman Holmes. Major Elbert Green and Col. Calvin Green were interviewed by their sister, Katherine Green Amy.

Davelin T. Beslow	John R. Hodges
Willis Braxton, Sr.	Monroe Jarvis
Pearcie Foster Braxton	Willie Johnson
Raymond Burrell	Elsie Williams Johnson
Hallie Carr	Abraham King
William B. Dickerson	Irene Morgan
Ellen Byrd	Calvin Richardson
Indiana Banks Foster	Vernell Thornton
Major Elbert Green	McKinley Wilson
Col. Calvin Green	Capt. George A. Taylor
Joshua Holmes, Sr.	Benjamin F. Thornton
Joshua Holmes, Jr.	Carroll L. Holmes

To Mesdames Francis Wake, Elizabeth Anderson, Dorothy Latimore, and Wilnett Dawodu, we pay a special tribute. No expression of gratitude would be complete without our thanks to the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and Public Policy for their grant, the officers of Antioch Baptist Church for the use of their facility for public programs, and to the *Southside Sentinel* for its promotional assistance. Thanks to all, who, in any way, gave us help, for without that help, this book would not have become a reality.