



**CITY OF BIRMINGHAM
MUSEUM BOARD AGENDA
556 W MAPLE
Thursday, August 5, 2021
5:00 PM**

Mission Statement: *The Birmingham Museum will explore meaningful connections with our past, in order to enrich our community and enhance its character and sustainability. Our mission is to promote understanding of Birmingham's historical and cultural legacy through preservation and interpretation of its ongoing story.*

- 1. Election of Chair**
- 2. Call to Order**
- 3. Roll Call**
- 4. Approval of the Minutes**
 - A. Minutes of July 1, 2021
- 5. New Business**
 - A. Heritage Zone Community Garden Project-Spring, 2022
 - B. Museum Board Orientation and Review
- 6. Communication and Reports**
 - A. Director Report
 - B. Member comments
 - C. Public comments
- 7. Next Meeting: July 1, 2021 (Currently planned as a virtual meeting)**
- 8. Adjournment**

You are invited to attend the meeting in person or virtually through ZOOM:
Join Zoom Meeting <https://zoom.us/j/99524391376> Meeting ID: 995 2439 1376

NOTICE: Individuals with disabilities requiring accommodations for effective participation in this meeting should contact the city clerk's office at (248) 530-1880 (voice), or (248) 644-5115 (TDD) at least one day in advance to request mobility, visual, hearing or other assistance. *APPROVED MINUTES OF THE MUSEUM BOARD MEETINGS ARE AVAILABLE IN THE CITY CLERK'S OFFICE AND ON THE CITY WEBSITE AT www.bhamgov.org.* City of Birmingham, 151 Martin, Birmingham, MI 48009; 248.530.1800. Persons with disabilities that may require assistance for effective participation in this public meeting should contact the City Clerk's Office at the number (248) 530-1880, or (248) 644-5115 (for the hearing impaired) at least one day before the meeting to request help in mobility, visual, hearing, or other assistance.

Las personas con incapacidad que requieren algún tipo de ayuda para la participación en esta sesión pública deben ponerse en contacto con la oficina del escribano de la ciudad en el número (248) 530-1800 o al (248) 644-5115 (para las personas con incapacidad auditiva) por lo menos un día antes de la reunión para solicitar ayuda a la movilidad, visual, auditiva, o de otras asistencias. (Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964).



**CITY OF BIRMINGHAM
MUSEUM BOARD MEETING
556 W. Maple
Thursday, July 1, 2021
5:00 PM**

Members Present: Russ Dixon, Pat Hughes, Judith Keefer, Marty Logue, Jacquie Patt
Caitlin Rosso

Members Absent: Tina Krizanic

Student Members: None

Administration: Museum Director Leslie Pielack

Guests: Bev Erickson, Alexandra Harris

Chair Krizanic being absent, member Russ Dixon suggested that the meeting be called to order at 5:02 PM. A temporary Chair was elected for the meeting.

MOTION: by Dixon, seconded by Keefer:

To appoint Marty Logue as temporary Chair.

VOTE: Yeas, 6
Nays, 0

**Approval of the Minutes
Minutes of June 3, 2021**

MOTION: by Dixon, seconded by Keefer:

To approve the minutes of June 3, 2021.

VOTE: Yeas, 6
Nays, 0

Unfinished Business

None.

New Business

Director Pielack reviewed the need to re-open the museum due to recent changes and updates in state and city COVID policies and practices. The museum will have a phased re-opening: June 15-30, it was open Tues-Wed-Thu 1 to 4 PM, with Friday's Porch Pop Up exhibits from 1 to 4 PM. Beginning July 1, the museum will also be open to visitors

on Fridays from 1 to 4, and the pop ups will continue through September 30. After Labor Day, the museum will return to its full public schedule, which includes the first Thursday of the month until 8 and adds Saturdays from 1 to 4 PM. Regular admission is being charged for the museum, but the pop ups are free. Since June 15, the museum has seen steady interest and visitation, which is about twice the usual visitation for this time of the summer. Visitors are staying longer and very upbeat and enthusiastic. Director Pielack provided an update to the board member recruitment process. Ms. Erickson has applied to the city for a regular board member position, and Ms. Harris has applied for the alternate board member position. A regular board member position remains open at this time. Appointments are anticipated at the July 26 meeting of the City Commission. Director Pielack also explained that the August Museum Board meeting would have an agenda item to elect a Chair for the remainder of the fiscal year, and briefly outlined the duties of the Chair.

Communication and Reports

Director Pielack reviewed the Director Report and added a few updates. The museum now has a listing with Pure Michigan, which includes a slideshow and captions as well as updated content. The Friends have purchased another 10 issues of CREEM Magazine to help fill in some of the blanks in the museum's collection, especially noteworthy are two Prince covers from 1985 and 1986 and a "Mr. Dream Whip" cover from 1971 by R. Crumb. Also of note, the museum received a request to donate two of the three elm trees scheduled to go in with the Phase I Heritage Zone project. This is a very generous donation in the amount of \$1500. The donor is from out of state but found the project through searching online, as the family grew up here and loves Birmingham.

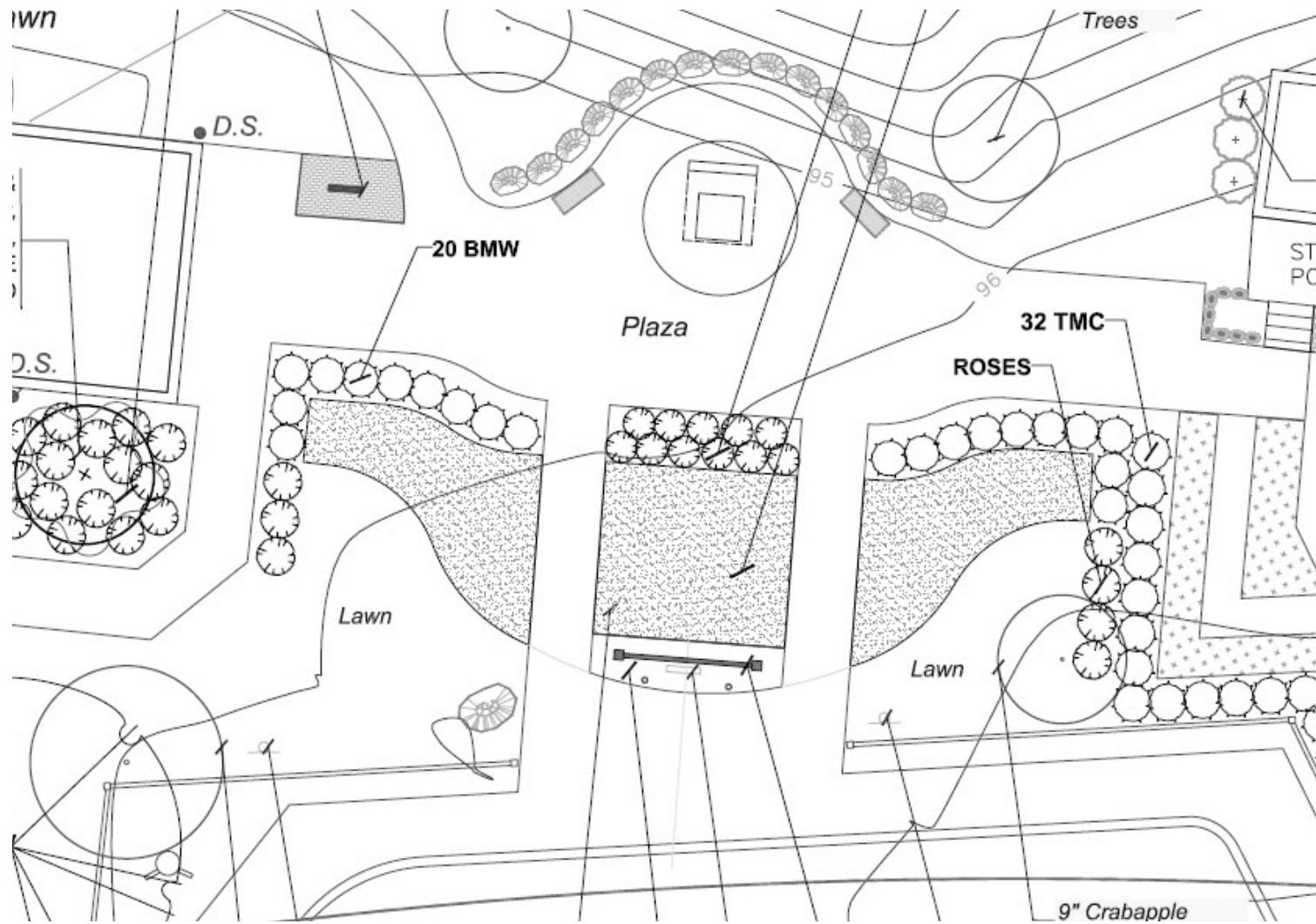
Mr. Hughes suggested that there may be an opportunity to generate interest in the museum and also additional funding by holding a competition of sorts based on residents submitting their vintage photos with a donation of cash to the museum. This could result in active engagement as well as physical materials for the museum. Board members agreed that this would be a great project. Director Pielack suggested that timing will make this project most successful and will get input from museum staff about the best way to approach this type of project.

There were no public comments.

The next Regular Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, August 5 at 5:00 PM.

Ms. Logue adjourned the meeting at 5:28 PM.

Heritage Zone-Community Garden Planning





Director Report

DATE: August 4, 2021
TO: Museum Board
FROM: Leslie Pielack, Museum Director
SUBJECT: Director Report

Update—Sign Installation and Heritage Zone Work—Construction delays due to ongoing weather issues and contractor availability, plus materials availability have resulted in delays, but the project is in motion and the sign is in the process of being fabricated. We are hopeful for installation of the sign and lighting this month. We received donations of \$750 each for two of the elm trees.

Museum Visitors-Plus—The “plus” is for “more”—more than usual, more than we expected. We have had great response to our re-opening and our enhanced visibility seems to be leading the way. Our virtual content has also brought more visitors, and we have had people come from other communities—downriver, Dearborn, West Bloomfield, and Warren, to name a few.

Porch Pop Up Exhibits-July: ‘Summer Outdoor Eating in Birmingham’—July’s Pop Ups continued the steady flow of visitors to the Pop Ups, and brought many into the museum. Twice, the heavy rain brought the display into the lobby, which worked well. August will feature the theme, “Water and Transportation,” emphasizing the link between water and transportation in Birmingham’s history.

Oakland History Center Annual Ice Cream Social—Museum staff participated in a very successful two-day event at the Oakland History Center July 24 and 25. They shared information about Birmingham’s Black history and abolitionist Elijah Fish to approximately 300 people, and ran out of general museum brochures and handouts.

Interns—We have had two interns inquire about positions with us. One will be here about 20 hrs a week for the next month, helping with collections reorganization and visitor services. The other will likely be joining us on Saturdays and Thursday nights in the fall.

The Virtual Birmingham Museum—We continue to grow and attract more visitors to our YouTube video channel. We have not produced any new videos since we re-opened, but had planned to re-use/re-cycle them once we were open again, and that strategy has worked. We have 995 Instagram followers, 1046 Twitter followers, and are now “Verified,” a desirable designation for Twitter.

New Research: People of color in early Birmingham include more than the Taylors. Additional discoveries about the origin of the Farmer family of Wayne County (Joseph Farmer married Clara Taylor; Abbie Farmer married Abe Harris and is buried in Greenwood) show that they were a special ethnic/racial group in Delaware known as the ‘Delaware Moors.’ Find out more in the attached article.

Collection/Recent Donations—An exciting development is that Martha Baldwin’s diaries and notes are now in the Birmingham Museum’s permanent collection! These are the first, and probably most important, acquisitions for quite some time. We have purchased special enclosures and a museum-quality book scanner to digitize these and other historically valuable books and ledgers.

A Tale of Four Families: The Black History of Early Birmingham

Part II: Black but also Native American: The Farmer Family of Wayne County



by Leslie Pielack*

FOUR FAMILIES. A BROAD HERITAGE THAT INCLUDES ENSLAVEMENT IN KENTUCKY, GEORGIA, AND TENNESSEE; NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBAL ANCESTORS; AND PIONEER PROSPERITY IN EARLY MICHIGAN.

Brought together through a special connection in late 19th century, a not widely known but enduring Black history legacy developed in Oakland County. This three-part article series will highlight recent findings about the Taylor, Cason, Farmer, and Harris families, and how they contributed to the story of Birmingham.

Seeking the History of People of Color

When local historical societies and museums were being founded in America in the late 19th century, their focus was dominated by the European museum model. What was seen as historically important consisted of fine arts and culture, classical antiquities, scientific curiosities, and famous public figures.¹ Museums generally sought the unique, the special, and the influential for their displays and collections. The result is that most local history collections have preserved artifacts that tell the story of the settlement of a community and its male founders' prosperity. The stories of everyday people, women, minorities, immigrants, and other marginalized groups have historically not been of sufficient interest to receive museum resources.

In the past few decades though, museums have worked to be more inclusive, to tell stories of the bigger picture. More resources are going into telling the whole story of a community, not just the accomplishments of the privileged few. Now, when Americans visit Thomas Jefferson's Virginia home at Monticello, they will also see the real tragedy of enslavement that is part of that picture. Likewise, visitors can visit the Tenement Museum to immerse themselves in the historical experience of immigrants in New York City's Lower East Side. These are just a few examples of the shift in public interest and in the expanded role of the historical museum toward a broader brush that reflects a community's bigger truths.² But most local history

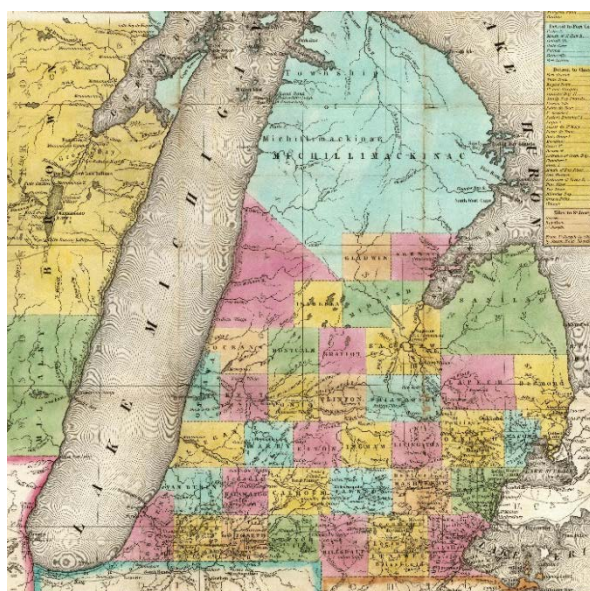
organizations have an uphill battle to try to gather information to tell a more inclusive story, since the materials are unlikely to have been preserved, and research can be quite difficult.

This was the situation we faced at the Birmingham Museum when we tried to fill in the blanks about local 19th century Black and Indigenous history in Oakland County. We knew we had merely scratched the surface in what we had discovered about **George (1823-1901) and Eliza Taylor (1827-1902)** (see *A Tale of Four Families: The Black History of Birmingham*, "Part I: The Taylors"). We desperately wanted to know more not only about the Taylors, but other people of color that had settled the area. We guessed that the Taylors, who lived in Birmingham for decades, might be more closely connected to similar families who had migrated here. We wondered about their connections to other local freedom-seekers and abolitionists and to the Underground Railroad in nearby Southfield and Farmington in Oakland County. As with our previous efforts with the Taylors, we had to backtrack and discover historical connections through a tedious process of elimination. But thankfully, we found excellent primary resources, publications, and personal history through our contact with the Harris Family. Linking this material together in a bigger picture led us to the Farmer family of Wayne County, who migrated from Delaware in the mid-19th century. A retrospective look at this family illuminates the key role they played in the Black and Indigenous history of early lower Michigan.³

**Significant research contributions were made by Donna Casaceli, George Getschman, John Marshall, and Jacquie Patt, with extensive Harris family research information courtesy of Sheryl Ross Jackson via Ancestry.com.*

New Horizons

It was a different world in Michigan in the middle of the 19th century, yet in some ways it was the same as we know today: individuals and families responded to economic and cultural pressure to relocate for better opportunities. At the time, Michigan had only recently become a state. Large tracts of land had been wrested away from the Native American Indigenous people, and the federal government was fully engaged in policies that encouraged migration and agriculture in former wilderness areas. Farms in the east, which had been cultivated for a century or more, were static or even



Michigan became a state in 1837, and thereafter, experienced dynamic growth in agriculture and industry, leading to increased migration from the East. (Mitchell, *Tourist's Pocket Map of Michigan*, Philadelphia, 1835)

declining, whereas the great western unknown of the country (Michigan, Ohio, Illinois, and beyond) held rich promise. Religiously and culturally, the close quarters and entrenched prejudice of the East chafed those with a different vision of the good life. Youthful and progressive attitudes of social equity for women and people of color were emerging across a wide spectrum of American society. New ideas and opportunities incited the dreams of whole communities of people in the east, who looked to the west and hoped for better lives for their families and descendants.⁴

It was in this environment that free people of color also began to seek other places to start new lives.

Non-white and bi-racial people were present in significant numbers in the U.S. from earliest colonial settlement, although not often well documented in official records. This is not only because of economic and cultural bias, but also because this population had lower social status, less wealth, and were less likely to be landholders. They were rarely able to vote or hold public office. They may also have held occupations that made them more mobile, such as laborers, sailors, or itinerant tradesmen. Or, for political reasons, they were left out of records—simply not deemed worthy of being officially documented.

Free People of Color in the Eastern U.S.

Free people of color had formed isolated but stable communities in many parts of the eastern U.S. for generations. Intermarrying over time, they sometimes developed unique mixed-race cultural identities.⁵ These people were often found in former French and Spanish territories, and although having varied features, were often light-skinned individuals with part European ancestry whose mothers were free, or who had been freed by slaveholder fathers.⁶

Records of free people of color were kept in many slaveholding states in order to distinguish freed from enslaved people of African descent. These registers provide some records that assist researchers in identifying individual histories.⁷ However, these records do not account for those who escaped enslavement or were not actively recorded. Thus, significant numbers of mixed-race



Free Blacks in slaveholding states had to be registered to prove their free status. <https://essaydocs.org/2-11-free-black-communities-blacks-in-the-south.html>

free people continued to live in small and isolated communities, engaged in subsistence farming, and might not be reflected in official records of the time. The primary source of historical information for their histories is family-centric and less accessible to outside researchers.

Additional factors contribute to lack of documents for these individuals. First, obstacles to land ownership by people of color leave few property or tax records. Furthermore, marginalization kept many people from being recognized through other forms of documentation, such as newspaper accounts. Thus, the predominant transmission of



Indigenous people such as the Delaware Lenni-Lenape were considered 'foreigners' and not counted in early census records.
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lenape#/media/File:Lenape01.>

personal data and relationships was through family and church records, oral accounts, and photos.

Especially lacking is documentation for those of Indigenous descent, many of whom lived and died without being entered into official records. As disinherited and displaced native peoples, they were not considered American citizens until the 20th century; they were deemed "foreigners," and had few rights. In early census records, they were grouped as a total number, without distinction of name or gender, as "Indians," or were omitted entirely.⁸

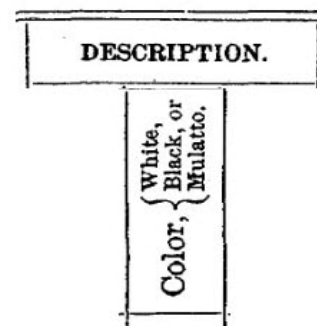
Multi-Racial People in the 19th Century

Native Americans had frequently been enslaved throughout colonial times, especially in territories controlled by the French, British, and Spanish.⁹ After the late 18th century, however, enslavement of Indigenous people was rare. However, successive waves of treaties left them without their traditional homelands and Indian Removal policies of the 19th century transplanted whole tribes to the far western frontier. This reduced their numbers and their presence in the east.

While native people diminished, enslaved Africans increased in number. People of African American descent (both free and those escaping enslavement) formed small communities with Indigenous people and other free people of color.¹⁰ Their social status was limited by their mixed heritage as well as lack of education, although free people of color might be employed in skilled trades such as carpentry, masonry, or smithing. Farming, however, was their primary occupation. When opportunities opened up in Michigan and other western territories, these skills were especially desirable, paving the way for migrating people of color to be successful in their new communities.¹¹

Census Inconsistency

By the mid-19th century, the federal census began to classify all people of apparent mixed racial and cultural backgrounds simply as "Mulatto," while classifying those of apparent African American ancestry as "Black" or "Negro."¹² The catchall "Mulatto" categorization makes no meaningful



In 1850, the U.S. Census instituted a category, "Mulatto" to indicate persons of mixed racial heritage.
https://www.census.gov/data-tools/demo/race/MREAD_1790_2010.html.

distinction about the people it was used to describe, providing little useful information to historians and genealogists. Census enumerators, who were from the local community and usually knew the people they were recording, subjectively interpreted its application and used it inconsistently. It is common to find census records across the decades in which the same family members are classified as “Black,” “Mulatto,” and “White.” Later, when family and individual names were recorded, it is possible to trace individuals and families. Their racial ancestry may be presumed to be Black based on later records, when the story is really much more complex than that. Such is the case with a particular extended free family of color who migrated from Delaware to western Wayne County: The Farmers.

The Farmer Family of Delaware

Abraham (Abel) Farmer (1795-c. 1830) and his wife **Mary Miller Farmer (1790-1881)** were from the area around Kent and Sussex County, Delaware, and married about 1820, according to family history. (It had to be after August, since the census for Dagsboro Hundred, Sussex County counts Abel as a



Abel Farmer lived in Dagsboro Hundred in Delaware during the 1820 census. Map, Pomeroy and Beers Atlas (1868), The Delaware Geological Survey, <https://www.dgs.udel.edu/delaware-1868-hundreds-maps>.

single man.) Abel and Mary had five children under the age of 10 when Abel died around 1830: **Henry (1820-1883)**, **Joseph (Josiah) (1823-1871)**, **John**

(1825-1903) **Catharine (1827-1850)** and **Nancy (1829-1882)**.¹³

Some family history notes that Abel was in Wayne County, Michigan when he died in 1830; however, it is more likely that his identity was confused with a descendant of the same name who died in Wayne County at a later date. Assuming Abel died in Delaware before the 1830 census, it is conceivable that his young family would be living in a relative's household at the time of the count. There were no Farmers noted in that census, but several with Mary's family name (Miller) in Kent County, where she was born. However, only one of them, **John Miller (n.d.)**, possibly a brother or cousin, was head of a large household of free people of color whose ages and gender match the range that correspond to Mary and her children. By the 1840 Delaware census, Mary was head of her own household and four of her children are with her. One family member was employed in agriculture, possibly her son Henry or John. By 1850, her son John was head of household, and she lived there with all her adult children.¹⁴

The Farmer family unit experienced significant change in the next few years. Some time after the 1850 census, Catharine died. Within just a few years, the remaining Farmers were joined by several other families of their community in a major migration from their traditional home to faraway southern Michigan. Led first by Joseph (Josiah) Farmer and his family in 1856, they were all established in Michigan by December of 1858, when John Farmer married **Margaret Durham (1825-1900)**. Soon afterward, Nancy Farmer married **William H. Dean (1835-1926)**, fellow Delaware migrant, in Wayne County in 1860.¹⁵

Mulatto, Black, or “Delaware Moor”

In the U.S. Census for 1820 in Dagsboro Hundred, Sussex, Delaware, Abel Farmer was marked as a ‘Foreigner’ (e.g., Native American). By contrast, in 1840, when Mary was identified as head of household, she and her children are categorized as ‘Free Persons of Color.’ And, in 1850, the family is categorized as “Mulatto.”¹⁶ But none of these records tell the real story of their ancestry very well. It happens that the Farmers and Millers were part

of a unique blended racial and cultural group known as the “Delaware Moors.”

The “Moors” traced their roots to the early 18th century, when the intermingling of Lenni-Lenape



An unknown family of Delaware Moors.

<https://bethelburyinggroundproject.files.wordpress.com/2015/02/moors.jpg>.

and/or Nanticoke Indigenous people, enslaved or freed African Americans, and Europeans resulted in communities of free persons of color in the area of central Delaware and near New Jersey. One tradition suggests that their European ancestry was from 18th century Spanish pirates evading authorities. This is said to be the origin of the name, “Moors.”¹⁷

People belonging to Delaware Moor communities remained in the same geographical area of Sussex and Kent Counties of Delaware for generations, intermarrying within large extended families. The Moors set themselves apart from other communities of color, and resisted efforts to group them with other people of mixed-race ancestry. In the early to mid-20th century, they received attention from anthropologists, who described the community as a kind of “clan” who valued their blended ancestry as special and distinctive. In 1914, the State of Delaware agreed, recognizing “Moor” as a special designation of race that was relevant to election rights and the voting process.¹⁸

Nowadays, the people formerly known as “Delaware Moors” are incorporated within the Nanticoke and Lenni-Lenape tribal confederation, underscoring the significance of the Native American component of their ancestry.¹⁹

The Melting Pot of Michigan

With their strong family affiliation as Delaware Moors, it makes sense that when the Farmers, Millers, and Deans migrated to Michigan, they would remain in close proximity. This is borne out by their relocation to the western Wayne County area in the 1850s and beyond. They continued to keep familial and cultural identity intact through intermarriage once they moved. But why did they leave Delaware, their ancestral home, when they did? Why not twenty years earlier, or later? Why Wayne County? Why Michigan?

These are questions we local historians sometimes forget to ask, when we can be so intent on just getting the facts right in the first place. But it can make all the difference in understanding the personal response to the forces behind these such disruptive life events. If we consider that the most common reason for migration is economic and/or socio-political, it helps us gain perspective by looking at the environment and precipitating events behind such upheaval. A more compelling reason likely exists for migration than simply “seeking a better opportunity.”

In the 1850s, it appears that free people of color were leaving Delaware and other states bordering



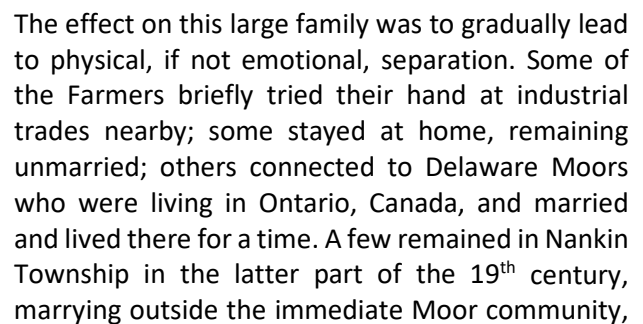
Farmer, John. *Map of Wayne County, exhibiting original land purchases...* (1855) Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2012593158/>.

slaveholding states due to intensifying racial pressure and social restriction. Mounting discrimination and Jim Crow laws were bringing multi-racial communities under increasing scrutiny in the years leading up to the Civil War. Even the well-established, law-abiding Delaware Moors had

Delaware Moor family and its descendants that figure into Birmingham's remarkable Black and Native American history.

Josiah and Eliza's family grew and prospered in their new community. Fellow Delaware Moors the Millers, Perkins, Counsellors and Deans also located in the vicinity. The Farmers worked hard, and by the 1870s, had acquired 30 acres of prime farm property in Nankin Township. Their relations likewise acquired property nearby, continuing their community's farming lifestyle and tradition.

The Moors of western Wayne County also continued their tradition of intermarriage. Millers, Deans, and Farmers married into each other's families when their children came of age in the 1860s and 1870s. But this lifestyle pattern was unsustainable; there was a finite amount of farmland available nearby for expanding families to remain in close proximity. Also, southern Michigan's economy was changing. Industry was the wave of the future, and the economy in and around Detroit was beginning to embrace it.



When Josiah and Eliza migrated to Michigan in late 1855 or very early in 1856, they settled in the farmland of Nankin Township in western Wayne County (now Westland). With six children under the age of 15, the couple soon had their 7th child in their new home in February of 1856. Eliza and Joseph had four more children in Michigan. It is this particular

but maintaining ties to their Delaware roots. The 1880 census shows the eldest brother, Abel, as head of household. As the century came to a close, John Farmer and his wife **Elizabeth Highgate Farmer (1852-1930)** ultimately settled in the Midland, Michigan area around 1880. At the time, small scale farming was still a major occupation in mid-Michigan and there were ample opportunities to continue the agricultural life they had known. They led the way for the later relocation of several other family members.²²

Brothers and Sisters

Elizabeth Abigail (“Abbie”) Farmer (1869-1903) was the last of the Farmers’ eleven children. She saw her parents and older siblings die as she grew up. But **Stephen (1863-1939)** **Eugene (1866-1936)**, and especially **Joseph Farmer (1861-1912)** kept an eye on their youngest sister. They continued to remain in touch, even though Stephen had relocated to Midland around 1880. But even beyond that, the connections of Joseph, Abbie, and Eugene also extended to their spouses, and to a place—the small village of Birmingham in Oakland County.



Abraham (Abe) Harris of Royal Oak, From the Harris-Jackson-Flagg family tree. Ancestry.com

Abbie was the central link that brought everyone together in Birmingham. First, she became acquainted with **Abraham “Abe” Harris (1863-1950)**, part of the large and prosperous Black and

Native American Harris family of Royal Oak, free Black pioneers who settled Oakland County in the 1830s. (The Harrises, their heritage, and their connection to Birmingham into the late 20th century will be the subject of *A Tale of Four Families: The Black History of Birmingham*, “Part III: The Harris Family: Black Pioneers of Royal Oak”).

How Abbie and Abe met is uncertain, since Abbie lived miles away in another county and it appears there were no extended relatives in common. But they were wed, first on November 14, 1893,



Abbie Farmer was the youngest of the twelve children of Josiah and Elizabeth. She married Abraham “Abe” Harris of Royal Oak, from a family of mixed racial ancestry, but not a Delaware Moor.

(officially) in Birmingham, and then the next day at the Farmer home in Nankin Township. Abbie was 24 and Abe, 30. They settled in Birmingham, initially renting, and later owning a house and property. In the census of 1900, they were categorized as Black.²³ And, as we shall see later, they were not the only people of color in the village at the time.

Within a few months, in April of 1894, Eugene was also getting married in Birmingham, perhaps to an acquaintance of Abbie’s from Pontiac—**Belle (Margaret) McCaughan (1866-1912)**. Born in Canada, Margaret was possibly affiliated with Ontario Delaware Moors. She was categorized as Black on the 1900 census, Mulatto on the 1910 census, and White on her death certificate.²⁴ Eugene and Belle did not have children. They continued to farm in Nankin Township for several

more decades, until Belle's death in 1912. After that time and other family deaths in southern Michigan, Eugene joined the remaining Farmers in Midland and died there in 1936. He never remarried.

Joseph, like Eugene, continued to farm in Nankin for a few more years. He remained single, and continued to run the family farm and support his older unmarried siblings as they aged. However, he also seemed to have a different view of his future. He kept in close contact with Abbie and Abe in Birmingham. As a result, he became acquainted with his future wife, **Clara Blevins Taylor (1876-1920)** some time before 1898. Clara had grown up in Birmingham with her adopted African American parents, George and Eliza Taylor, who had farmed in



Joseph Farmer married Clara Blevins Taylor of Birmingham in 1898. He and brothers Eugene and Stephen remained close with Abbie throughout their lives.

the area for decades. The Taylors had purchased property and built a home in Birmingham in 1893, around the time of Abbie's marriage to Abe. The Taylors and Farmers (and another Harris relative in town) were certainly acquainted and likely on friendly terms as the only people of color in town.

The ties between brother and sister Joseph and Abbie Farmer were the connection point that brought Birmingham into the picture. Although Abbie's life was short, she left a legacy that shaped the Black history of Birmingham. She and Abe had a daughter, **Lulu Mae Harris Jackson (1899-1975)**, who remained in the town of her birth and whose descendants bore witness to the experience of

being Black in Birmingham through the 20th century. Abbie died in 1903 and was buried in Birmingham's Greenwood Cemetery. Abe never remarried; he remained in the community until his death in 1950.

Joseph and Clara's life followed a different path, however. They lived in Birmingham from their marriage in 1898 through the early years of the new century. George and Eliza were quite elderly and Clara cared for them until their deaths in 1901 and 1902. Meanwhile, Joseph and Clara started a family, having three children by 1908. They also owned property in Birmingham. In 1909, after the sudden death of their young daughter, they left Birmingham for Midland, joining elder brothers John, Henry, and Stephen Farmer. A few years later, Eugene's wife also died, and he moved to Midland as well. The Farmer brothers were not reunited long, however, as Joseph died in mid-1912 also.

As the Harris family portrait history shows. Joseph and Clara's legacy continued in Midland, where Clara remarried in 1915 into the Proctor family (yet another family descended from the Delaware Moors). Clara, her children with Joseph, and her husband **David Proctor (1870-1930)** and his son from a previous marriage built a life together. In 1917, they had a child together, **Winona Proctor Harrison (1917-2009)**. Sadly, Clara died in Midland in 1920 of pneumonia as a complication of the Spanish Flu pandemic²⁵. The Farmer family farm in Midland continued in the family for a long period, and the farmhouse still stands today.

Through Clara Blevins Taylor's first marriage to Joseph and her second to David, the network of people of color in Birmingham, Royal Oak, Wayne County, and later, Midland, was solidified. In Birmingham, the story continued with the Harrises and Jacksons. They lived for decades in the same house in town, yet their story was not well known until recently. Who they were, and how they made a difference in Birmingham will be explored in Part III, *"The Harris Family: Black Pioneers of Royal Oak,"* soon to be published by the Birmingham Museum.

The Birmingham Museum wishes to extend its gratitude for the generosity of Sheryl (Jackson) Ross for sharing of the Jackson family story, about which more will be said in Part III.

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