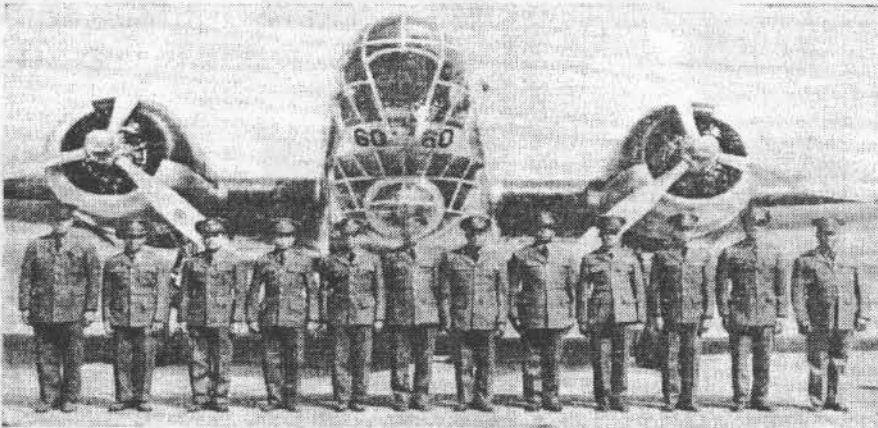


THROUGH THE YEARS

AFRICAN - AMERICAN HISTORY IN CHAMPAIGN COUNTY

SPRING 1998

Illinois Men In Colored Squadron At Chanute



A group of Illinois colored men are included with the more than 240 recruits who are members of the newly created 99th pursuit squadron, the Army Air Corp's only colored unit, and now in training at

Chanute Field. In the group are, left to right, James Reed, Atlanta, Ga., Myron Wilson, Danville, Quentin Draper, Chicago, Ernest Nelson, Champaign, Harold McFerrin, Chicago, Concord Turner, Danville, Rob-

ert Wilson, Alton, James Webb, Champaign, Alfred Scott, Chicago, Leonard Nelson, Champaign, Elsworth Dansby, Decatur, and Anthony Ridley, Douglas, Ariz. (Army Air Corps photo.)

Photograph is circa 1941

Chanute Museum Exhibit Tribute to 99th Pursuit Squadron Technical Command

By Estelle Merrifield

An exhibit featuring the 99th Pursuit Squadron and the technical forces trained at Chanute Air Force Base will open in February 1998 at the Aerospace Museum in Rantoul.

The 99th Pursuit Squadron began as an experiment by the Armed Forces in March of 1941, prior to the American entry into World War II to support the black pilots who were simultaneously being trained at Tuskegee, Alabama. "Keep 'em Flying" was a motto of the ground crews trained at Chanute Air Force Base. Upon completion of their training at Chanute in October of 1941, the men were transferred to Tuskegee for active duty specialists and mechanics

supporting the 33 pilots in training at that time.

Afro-Americans in the Armed Services have proven themselves with dignity and valor in the defense of the United States of America in the Revolutionary War and in every conflict that followed: the Civil War, The War of 1812, World War 1 and World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the Conflict in the Middle East.

The Armed Services were not integrated until President Harry S. Truman issued an Executive Order of Integration of the Army, Navy, and Air Force. Until the issuance of the Order

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THE COTILLION

By Doris Hoskins

On Sunday, May 21, 1972, the first Cotillion Ball was held at the Ramada Inn in Champaign, Illinois. It was the culmination of the efforts of the Epsilon Mu Chapter of the Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc. and the Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. at the University of Illinois.

These young men and women reached out to the Champaign-Urbana community to recruit truly fine examples of Black womanhood to participate in a Cotillion, an event that would capture the interest and support of the communities.

In the beginning, there were six young women candidates who were chosen, based on their outstanding scholastic record and their community and school involvement. They in turn were generously supported by their devoted sponsors. Those original six ladies and their sponsors were: Roslyn Carol Council sponsored by Mr. & Mrs. Alvin Griggs; Sharon Creighton, Linda Jackson and Sandra Patterson sponsored by Bradley Park Apartments; Regina Montgomery sponsored by Dr. & Mrs. Paul D. Webb; and Deborah Jean Roberts sponsored by Mr. & Mrs. J. Daniel Raybon.

As a reward for their efforts, each young woman received a scholarship to attend the college or university of her choice.

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Based on the success of the 1972 Cotillion Ball, the committee members decided to sponsor another one in 1973, and proceeded to recruit young women to participate. Meanwhile, community interest had increased to the extent that Mrs. Kathryn Humphrey volunteered to work with the Cotillion Committee as a consultant.

Five more outstanding young woman were selected to participate based on their scholastic record, and their school and community involvement. These young ladies and their sponsors were: Jessica Bennett sponsored by Mr. & Mrs. Willie Sumerville; Yolantha Harrison sponsored by Mr. & Mrs. Richard Cathey; Flourine Kent sponsored by Mr. & Mrs. Alvin Griggs; Priscilla Nash sponsored by Dorothy Jordan; Diane Weatherspoon sponsored by The Ambassador's Club. These five young women were also awarded scholarships.

In 1974, a group of interested Champaign-Urbana women offered their assistance to the Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, and shared the responsibilities for the 1974 Cotillion. By 1975, the women had organized themselves as a unit, and adopted the official title of the Gamma Upsilon Psi Society and remained as such until the 1978 Cotillion Ball. This was so noted in the Annual Cotillion programs.

Beginning with the 1978 Cotillion Ball, the sponsorship became the sole responsibility of the Gamma Upsilon Society and continues to be so as of this date.

The original members of the Gamma Upsilon Society were:

Kathryn Humphrey, President
Henrine Casey
Jean Davis
Maudie Edwards
Elaine Harrison
Willine Howard
Daisy Jackson
Mae Ola Nash
Margaret Smith



Roslyn Carol Council



Sharon Creighton



Linda Jackson



Regina Montgomery



Deborah Jean Roberts



Sandra Patterson



MEMBERS OF ZETA PHI BETA SORORITY AND PHI BETA SIGMA FRATERNITY
CHAMPAIGN - URBANA, ILLINOIS

SITTING (LEFT TO RIGHT): ARCHONIAN (Pledge Club), D. Harrington, C. Howard, P. Jackson, G. Lang, V. Allison, L. Jamison and B. Laderson. SECOND ROW (LEFT TO RIGHT): Brothers R. Wilson and E. Lawrence, Sorors T. Robinson, B. Johnson, L. Hughes, A. Johnson, S. Walker, I. Johnson, P. Patterson, M. Neal and A. Wilson, Brothers W. Sumerville and A. Griggs. THIRD ROW (LEFT TO RIGHT): CARRIAGES (Pledge Club), L. Kendrick, L. Gary, V. Wilson, J. Vonner, M. Cannon, T. Williams, S. Montgomery, W. Gartrell, D. Stittian, V. Jacques, P. Sorey, N. Cain and D. Morgan.

(Pictures of 1973 Cotillion Ball Debutantes on page 4)

DID YOU KNOW: PICTURES OF DAYS GONE BY

By Hester Suggs

Many persons and artifacts rekindle our recollections and reflections of events and people that have played a role in shaping our local African American community. Some are big, glaring, sensational. They demand recognition in local media; others are small, but are equally important and significant in the understanding and the appreciation of our rich heritage. These are the everyday happenings that invoke nostalgic memories in the elderly and challenging exploration of the past in the young and the young at heart.

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Salem Baptist Church Tot Lot under the direction of Helen Johnson. Champaign-Urbana. The kindergarten and early childhood experiences were provided through our neighborhood groups and organizations prior to their presence in the public school systems.



Many youths received positive exposure in the Boy Scouts. Early scout troops were sponsored by American Legion Post 559. This is a picture of a later scout troop and their scout master, Charles Phillips.



In 1915, these nine young ladies of Gamma Chapter of Alpha Kappa are shown on the steps of Altgeld Hall on the U of I campus. The national organization was founded in 1908. The local chapter chartered in Champaign in 1914 is still in existence fostering educational excellence and community service.



The Royalties and one of those memorable "Christmas in July" formal galas held in the Champaign Armory. The decorations were beautiful and the participants decked out in their finest attire.



The War Mothers of World War II, a unit of the national organization was organized to support their sons in service. These women were very active in the war effort as well as civic and defense and war related activities

1973 COTILLION BALL DEBUTANTES



Jessica Bennett



Priscilla Nash



Diane Weatherspoon



Flourine Kent



Yolantha Harrison

CHANUTE

Continued from page 1

of Integration in 1948, everything was separate and unequal except the fighting spirit of our American troops. The Experiment of 1941, the establishment of the 99th Pursuit Squadron and all supporting elements thereof, complete within the Unit, was a success far beyond the belief of many in Congress who had opposed the experiment. All men are created equal.

We encourage everyone to visit the Octave Chanute Aerospace Museum located in Rantoul, Illinois. The exhibit will run from February 1998 through December 1998.

DID YOU KNOW

Continued from page 3

Early man utilized drawings and pictures to preserve accounts of their existence. We still continue this form of historical preservation of memorable occasions and events. **Remember that box of old photos stacked and stored in attics, basements, under the bed and other out of the way places** - most families have them.

Each photo shows a location, event or person that provides a small piece of our history, our past, our perceptions. Each photo captures a quantity of information and is a valuable resource concerning the history and culture that has shaped our community.

The Champaign County African-American History Committee is continually searching for photos help them fulfill their mission "to gather, chronicle, and preserve the heritage" - to pass on our history so that it will never be forgotten. **We encourage our readers to share their photos with us.**

The selected photos shown here are courtesy of Gene Suggs, Photography. For over 50 years, Suggs has used photography both as a hobby and a profession. Some older photos have been collected and accumulated from other sources. Some of these we share with you.



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WHO WE ARE...

*The Champaign County African-American History Committee is a volunteer committee under the sponsorship of the Early American Museum and the Champaign Park District. It is the committee's mission to gather, chronicle, and preserve the heritage that has been such an integral part of the establishment and growth of Champaign County. Please help us pass on your history to the children so it will never be forgotten. If you have information you would like to share with the committee, please contact Estelle Merrifield, *Through the Years* editor, at 217/367-4585.*