

# Columbia's Historic Sharp End

By Rudi Keller



## SHARP END

From the early 1900s to the 1960s, the Sharp End business district was a city within a city for Columbia's black community. Stretching from Fifth to Sixth streets on both sides of Walnut Street, Sharp End was a robust business center with black-owned restaurants, meeting halls, barber shops, bars and more. In its prime, it was broadly known as the cultural heart of the black community, which included churches, schools, homes and social clubs. Sharp End was all business: children were not allowed there without parental supervision until they turned 18. Entering Sharp End without an adult was considered a rite of passage. Sharp End was a destination for visitors and the place for black adults to work, dine and socialize. It was demolished during urban renewal, which suddenly and dramatically removed the nucleus of this self-contained black business community.

MAY 19, 2015



With support from



University of Missouri

**T**COLUMBIA DAILY  
**TRIBUNE**

May 20, 2015

# THE PROFESSIONAL WORLD

\$1.50 Per Year In Advance.

Friday, November 1, 1901.

No. 1 No. 1.

**LINCOLN INSTITUTE**

**Is the Best Supported and Best Equipped Institution of Its Kind West of the Mississippi River.**

**Lincoln Institute, our State Normal at Jefferson City opened this year under very unfavorable circumstances.**

At the regular meeting of the Board of Regents in June, last Prof. L. E. Page of Langston, Oklahoma, was elected to the presidency of the institution, but tendered his resignation to the

**ITS PSYCHOLOGY.**

Why the Ninety-Eight Cent Bargain Is Such a Success.

"There is a curious bit of psychology in the bold merchants have of cutting prices," said a gentleman who keeps an account rates, according to the New Orleans Times-Herald. "And it is found in the influence these cuts in price have on the average man or woman. The shrewd merchant was quick to discern the effect of cutting a few cents off on the price of a certain article, and now, from end of the country to the other, the new window shopping with pleasure at tell of good things been cut down to the lowest possible figure. The effect has not been without a curious side. Take any article that has been selling regularly for one dollar in the

**A LETTER TO THEIR FRIENDS**

From the Missouri World's Fair Commissioners.

MISSOURI WORLD'S FAIR COMMISSIONERS  
500 N. 10th Street

St. Louis, Oct. 16, 1901.

To the Farmers and Fruit Growers of Missouri:

Our Legislature has provided very liberally for a presentation of the resources and products of our great State at the coming World's Fair, and it is the intention of this Commission that our Agricultural display be second to none. To accomplish this we must

**LOCATIONS WHERE**

Some of Our Teachers Are at Present Pleasantly situated.

Where Some of the Teachers Are Located.  
Miss Anna May Hulsey of the class of '08 of Western college is teaching at Wentzville.

Miss Edna H. Jones of the class of '08 of Lincoln Institute is teaching at Jefferson City.

Miss John R. Davis of the class of '08 of Lincoln Institute is teaching at the State.

Miss India K. Wilson of the class of '09 of Western college is teaching in that school.

Miss Alice Hulsey of Marion City is

**LOCAL AND PERSONAL.**

Mrs. J. Arlington Grant is on the sick list.

Columbia is surely in need of an opera house.

Prof. John Payne of Brunswick was in Columbia Saturday.

Miss Virgie Mose is attending school at George R. Smith's college.

Master George Caldwell is attending school at Fisk university.

Miss Leona Douglass is a member of the Senior class at Lincoln university.

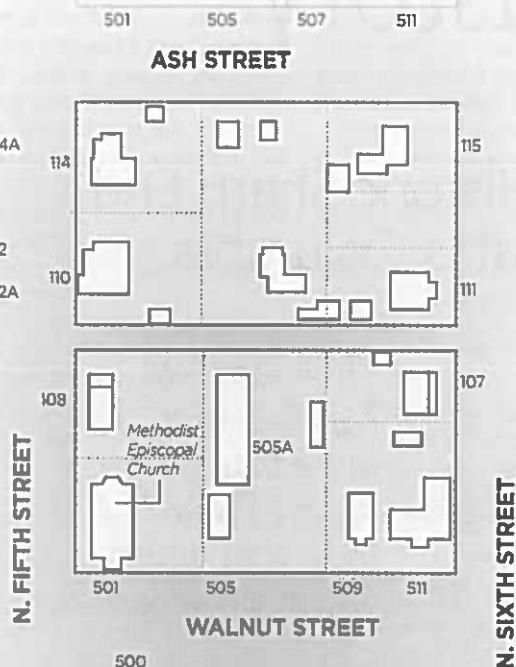
Rev. P. J. Crews arrived last

The Library of Congress

**The Professional World**, a newspaper targeting a black audience, debuted on Nov. 1, 1901, under the direction of editor Rufus Logan. It would be published for almost 20 years, but complete volumes survive only for the first two years. Read the Professional World online at the Library of Congress's Chronicling America page.

# BEFORE

# 1910



**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8**

On the north side, a brick church at Fifth and Walnut streets housed the Methodist Episcopal Church congregation, today known as St. Luke United Methodist Church. It is uncertain from available records whether the name was in use at the time. The Professional World, in 1903, listed the church only by its denomination.

Next door, a wood-frame building known as the "Blue Row" was home to 22 people.

On the south side of Walnut Street, the three original town lots, 142.5 feet by 80 feet, oriented north-south, were replatted in 1899 by H.H. Hill as six east-west lots. Five brick houses were constructed, three facing Sixth Street and two facing Fifth Street.

At 10 N. Fifth St., physician John Taylor, 39, lived with his wife, Carrie, 38, in one of those new houses. Charles Sutton, 32, a boarder, worked as a porter in a barbershop. Next door at 12 N. Fifth St., Steve Harris, a porter for the Wabash Railroad, lived with his wife, Maggie.

On the north side of Walnut, teacher John Bannister, 44, lived at 115 N. Sixth St. with his wife, Mamie, 26, and their daughter Mamie, 13, and step-daughter Bertha Freeman, 7. Next door, Sallie Gordon, 49, was a widow who worked as a wash woman and could neither read nor write.

Her three sons, Clay, 21, Dan, 19, and Sam, 10, lived with her. Clay Gordon and Dan Gordon worked as laborers, while Sam Gordon attended school.

"One of the things that made the segregated communities so strong was because there were people from all walks of life in them as a consequence of segregation, so you had doctors and lawyers and teachers and preachers living in the same neighborhood with common laborers and so forth," said Gary Kremer, executive director of the State Historical Society of Missouri and a scholar of black history in the state.

Logan's Professional World was one example of the growing size and sophistication of Columbia's black population. "The columns of the Professional World will be open to all for the discussion of all

A surveillance photograph showing a man in a black t-shirt and a woman in a red t-shirt in a kitchen. The man is on the left, facing a wall with a large mural of a person's head and shoulders. The woman is on the right, looking towards the man. In the background, there is a large grey refrigerator and a window with brown horizontal blinds. A clock is visible on the wall above the mural.

Rudi Keller/Tribune

**Bill Thompson, left, of the Columbia Parks and Recreation Department points out items on the 1901 Social and Economic Census to Cheryl Wright.**

subjects pertaining to the education and elevation of the negro," Logan wrote in his first edition. "The Professional World will doubtless come as a surprise to our many friends. Nevertheless we hope it will be made a welcome visitor and will receive an invitation to come every week."

White business owners, to sort out the new residents, commissioned a "Social and Economic Census of the Colored Population of Columbia Missouri" in 1901.

of Columbia Missouri in 1901. Pinckney Kelly, 30, in 1900, was a self-employed barber earning \$10 a week. He lived with his wife, Maggie, Benjamin Marshall, who was listed in the federal census as a houseboy, and Albert Whiteside, who earned \$1.65 a day as a railroad laborer. Kelly owned a three-room home worth \$250, furniture worth \$50 and two pigs.

The city economic census listed him as "unreliable."

Several prominent Columbia blacks were not included. No sheet was prepared for John Lange Jr., a contractor and son of John Lange, a butcher who moved to Columbia in 1850. Pianist J.W. Blind Boone, known nationally for his talent, was also missing from the record.

So was Annie Fisher, who was beginning to make herself known as a caterer and who had, by 1900,

SociaL and Economic Census of the Colored Population of Columbia, Missouri, 1901.			
FAMILY REPORT.			
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4. Name	John	5. Sex	Male
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Worrell		Social and Economic Census of the Colored Population of Columbia, Missouri, 1901.		?	
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Courtesy State Historical Society of Missouri

The creditworthiness of black households was rated in 1901 surveys of income, home ownership and expenses. The left sheet was for Robert Rummans, the first barber on Sharp End. The right was for Pinckney "Pink" Kelly, a longtime Sharp End barber.

purchased a house at Seventh Street and Park Avenue worth \$325.

The black population continued to expand in the first decade of the new century, and the city grew as well. Annexation in 1906 more than doubled the size of Columbia, which had existed within static borders since 1849. The western boundary moved from Edgewood Avenue to West Boulevard. The north boundary shifted from Worley and Rogers streets to include what is now Business Loop 70. To the east, the new city limits

extended to what is now Keene Street. Previously, the east city limit had been William Street.

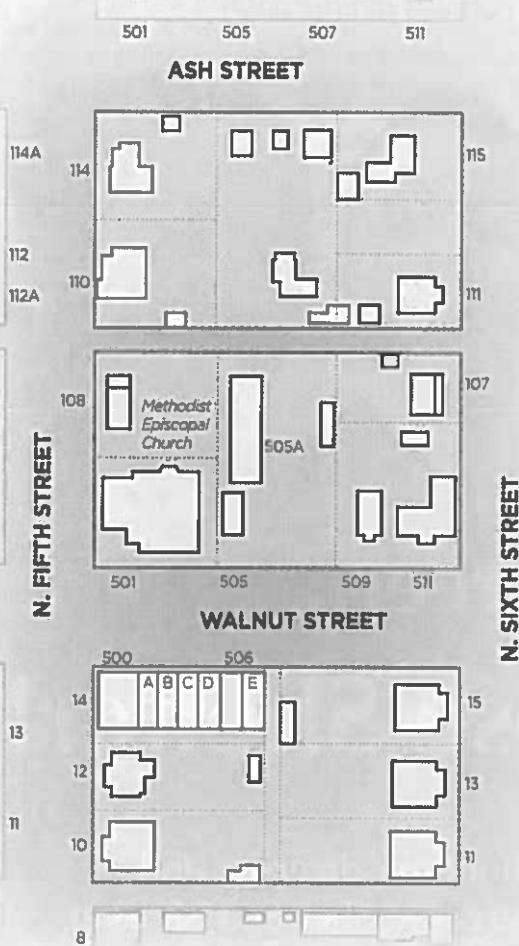
Change was coming on Sharp End as well. On the north side, St. Luke began rebuilding its church in 1909, constructing a stone edifice with entrances on Fifth Street and Walnut Street.

On the south side, a new brick commercial building was going up. Designed with seven store fronts, it included apartments on the second floor. When the decade closed, all that it needed was tenants.



Frederick Douglass School, seen in a circa-1910 photo, was built in 1885 for up to 300 black children. In 1916, the Columbia Board of Education issued bonds to demolish the structure and erect the building now at Providence Road and Park Avenue.

Courtesy State Historical Society of Missouri



# THE 1910s

The first businesses to take advantage of new storefronts on Sharp End were a pool hall owned by Preston Carter, a barbershop owned by Robert Rummans and restaurant opened by George Scott. Exactly when each opened its doors is lost in the fog of history. A 1911 city directory lists none of the businesses nor any residents on the southeast corner of Fifth and Walnut streets, including the people there when the census was taken the year before. Carter and Rummans are listed by 1915, with Scott following in the 1917 edition.

In the first 10 years of the century, the migration into Columbia from the countryside had accelerated. In 1910 for the first time, more than half of black Boone County residents lived within the city limits. The population of rural blacks fell by one-fourth, and the number of black owned and operated farms fell by almost half.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

## 9,662

Number of people residing  
in Columbia in 1910

## 2,246

Number of black residents  
in Columbia in 1910

## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

In the second decade, outside pressures of war and the emergence of the white supremacist Ku Klux Klan as a national force shifted that pattern. The black population of the county continued to decline. Between 1910 and 1920, for the first time since the census began counting the city separately, the black population of Columbia also waned.

The businesses that came first took care of black residents' personal needs with services that could not be obtained elsewhere in Columbia. Some blacks had begun developing food service for blacks before George Scott hired his widowed mother as the cook for his new restaurant, but the service had been provided out of private homes.

Similar districts were growing up across Missouri, Gary Kremer, executive director of the State Historical Society of Missouri, said. Kremer, a scholar of Missouri black history, said the segregated conditions pushed blacks together and created a demand that, in Columbia, would be met on Sharp End.

"Those service industries, restaurants, bars, barbershops, pool halls ... catered to an entirely African American community," Kremer said. "They were located in the very heart of the black community, a centralized location with the black community surrounding them in walking distance of all those businesses."

Scott was 24 and living with his parents, Charles and Annie Scott, at 15 N. Sixth St. when the 1910 census was taken. His father was a laborer, and his mother a boarding house proprietor. Scott was a porter in a grocery store, and his brother Andrew Scott, 25, was a teamster for Boone County Lum-

ber Co. His three other siblings, Henry, 22, Lola, 18, and Emma, 17, were not employed.

George Scott's father died during the decade, and by 1920 he was the head of the household at 15 N. Sixth St., sharing the home with his mother and his wife, 28-year-old Elizabeth.

Robert Rummans, 41 when the 1910 census was taken, was a veteran barber when he opened his shop. The 1901 economic census of Columbia blacks – a credit rating system for each black family – listed his income as \$9 for a six-day work week as a barber to support his wife, Tessie, 38, and their son Leon while living with his mother-in-law, Margaret Chapman, at 201 N. Tenth St.

The 1915 directory, which lists Rummans in Sharp End for the first time, also lists his address as 403 N. Fifth St., where he and his wife would live until his death in the 1930s.

The details gleaned from the 1910 census portray the differences in the working conditions of blacks compared to whites. The Crisis, the NAACP's national publication, reported in 1915 that 84.7 percent of black males and 54.7 percent of black females ages 10 and older were gainfully employed.

The comparable figures for the white population were 77.9 percent for men and 19.2 percent for women.

Sharp End remained a primarily residential area during the second decade of the century. The blocks now used for the post office and parking garage were home to nearly 100 people. The "Blue Row," old wood-frame tenements on the north side of Walnut Street, was home to 27 people ranging in age from 7 to 67 in 1910.

Only four older than 10 were not working, with the oldest, Alex Gray, 67, toiling as a laborer. Seven

## SHARP END BUSINESSES 1910-1919

**500 Walnut—Scott's Restaurant:** Operated by George Scott, who resided with his wife, Elizabeth, and mother, Annie Scott, at 15 N. Sixth St.

**500/502 Walnut—Carter Pool Hall:** Operated by Preston Carter, who resided with his wife, Amelia, at 403 Oak St.

**501 Walnut—Methodist Episcopal Church (St. Luke):** Pastors during this period include Beriah McCain, H. Thomas Reeves and Daniel J. Mitchell.

**506 Walnut—Barbershop:** Operated by Robert Rummans, who resided with his wife, Tessie, at 403 N. Fifth St.

Sources: City directories, U.S. Census Bureau

men listed their occupations as laborer, and 11 of those employed were working in private homes. The youngest workers were Everline Snell, 10, a cook in a private home, Douglass Scott, 15, a hotel dishwasher, and George Shanks, also 15, a servant in a private home.

Snell reported attending school for at least part of the time since Sept. 1, 1909, while Scott and Shanks did not. They were among three of eight children 16 or younger, including one age 7, who did not go to school.

In 1910, black children in Columbia attended 25-year-old Douglass School, built to accommodate about 300 students. With almost 1,000 more black residents to serve than in the 1880s, in 1916 the Columbia Board of Education won approval for a bond issue to replace the aging school.

A two-story school, with 15 rooms and a library, was constructed on the same lot where the old school stood at Third Street and Park Avenue. It would remain the home of black education in Columbia for the next 45 years.

Preston Carter and his wife, Amelia, were the oldest of the pioneer entrepreneurs on Sharp End. Carter served 18 months in the Missouri State Penitentiary for

burglary from 1896 to 1897 and was listed in the 1900 census as a transfer company driver living in rented quarters at 610 N. Seventh St. He was 30 at the time, and Amelia, who reported she could neither read nor write, was 31.

On the 1920 census, Carter was listed as 59 and Amelia 41, and they owned their home at 403 Oak St.

What became known as the Great Migration was also reported for the first time on the 1920 census. Nationally, about 500,000 blacks had moved from rural areas, mostly in the South, to industrial cities of the North. The lure of jobs to fill war orders for Europe after 1914, the demand for manpower that enlisted 350,000 black men in the armed forces and fear helped drive the movement.

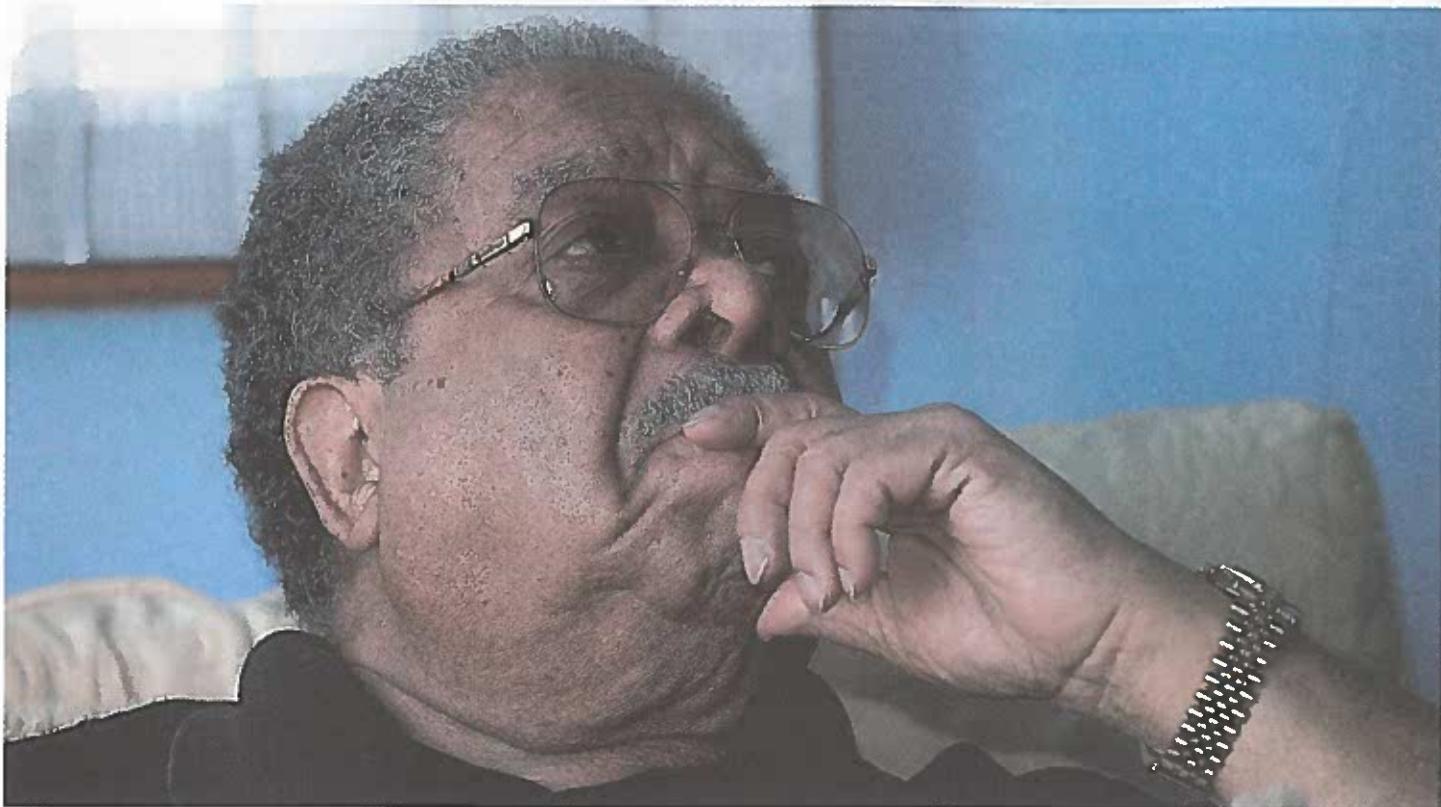
In Missouri, the black population of St. Louis and Kansas City grew by 33,000, while the overall black population of the state grew by fewer than 21,000. The black population of Columbia fell by 327, and blacks made up less than 20 percent of the city population for the first time.

That did not slow the development of Sharp End in the coming decade, as new businesses moved in and new construction expanded opportunities.

*With special thanks to...*

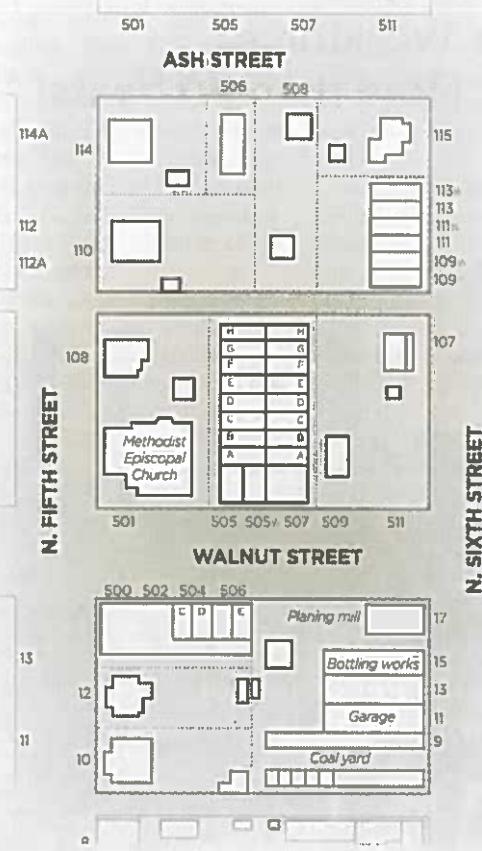
Mary Beth Brown, Bill Thompson, the staff of the State Historical Society of Missouri and members of the Sharp End Heritage Committee for their assistance in researching information for this publication.

**T** COLUMBIA DAILY  
**TRIBUNE**



**Sehon Williams, 92, talks about the Sharp End neighborhood of Columbia where he once played the trumpet with other band members at the Green Tree Tavern.**

Don Shrubshell/Tribune



# THE 1920s

**S**ometime in the mid-1920s, Herbert Phillips, who was a barber, and Arch Williams, who was not, formed a partnership that became the longest-lived business on Sharp End.

The Phillips & Williams Barber Shop had four chairs, "a bunch of seats" and "guys who would just sit around in the barber shop," Sehon Williams, 92, recalled. "And you also had some white guys that would sit around in the back of it."

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 18**

10,392

**Number of people residing  
in Columbia in 1920**

1,919

**Number of black residents  
in Columbia in 1920**

## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

Both men were about 30 when they formed their partnership. Williams, born in 1895, grew up in town where his father, Curtis Williams, was a coachman and a janitor in a shoe factory. Phillips was born in 1894 near Rocheport to George and Martha Phillips.

When the decade opened, Williams was living with his parents at 400 Hickman Ave., working as a janitor at a fraternity. The 1920 census does not record Phillips or

his family. By 1930, Phillips was able to marry Gertrude Phillips and move to 113 W. Worley St. She worked as a cook in a café.

Phillips & Williams barber shop moved into space used by George D. Washington for part of the decade. Washington used the shop as his home address for the city directory.

It was a time of growth on Sharp End, with new construction on the north side of Walnut Street, and new businesses filling those constructed a decade earlier.

On the north side of Walnut, on land owned by white farmer John M. Herndon, a two-story brick building offered commercial and residential space.

There were 16 small apartments and an open second floor used by Elks Turner Lodge 370. City directories published in 1923 and 1925 document the arrival of the building and the new businesses.

Maggie Brown opened the Dreamland Café. Charles and Paul Givens opened a tailor shop.

It was becoming an adult space where children or women were not allowed except for specific reasons, Williams recalled.

"I went there to get a haircut from a little kid on up," he said. "But generally, kids was not allowed. They wouldn't even let kids pass through there going downtown."

Williams was born in 1922, the second son of Sehon Williams Sr. and Effie Williams. The family rented a home at 3 W. Lyon St. for \$9 per month. His father was the chauffeur for James Wood, president of Stephens College.

Pinckney "Pink" Kelly cut Wil-

liams' hair every other Friday until he graduated from Douglass School, Williams said.

"He was short, bald-headed man, very nice," Williams said.

Prohibition in the 1920s meant alcohol was underground. "You had, in most communities, what was known as bootleggers," said Larry Monroe, who worked in Phillips & Williams Barber Shop in the final years of Sharp End.

Asked who would go to Sharp End, Williams answered: "People that liked to drink. Drink and shoot pool. If you liked to drink, you go on Sharp End."

From the men who had worked in the barber shop, including Herbert Phillips, Monroe heard the stories of Sharp End and the black experience in Columbia that he fears is being lost.

"All of this stuff they talked about, they never let it die," Monroe said.

Dozens of people continued to live on or near Sharp End.

The apartments above Carter's Pool Hall and the Phillips & Williams Barber Shop were home to

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27 people, according to the 1920 census.

Sixth Street, however, began to change. Facing east, south of Walnut, a planing mill serving Nu-Way Lumber Co. was constructed and a garage and coal yard opened. On the north side, banker William Conley secured a judgment for adverse possession of a lot with 80 feet of frontage on Walnut Street and 142.5 feet of Sixth Street.

Two small rental homes faced Sixth Street on the lot, with regular turnover as reflected in census and city directory records. The lot was used primarily by Nu-Way for lumber storage.

Conley sued the original founders of Columbia in an action that drew no opposition to his claim that he had been in "open, notorious use" of the property for more than 10 years.

The final city directory published during the 1920s listed three pool halls, three restaurants and two barber shops on Sharp End by the end of the decade.

New buildings, and new entrepreneurs, would soon join them.

## SHARP END BUSINESSES 1920-1929

**500 Walnut—Scott's Restaurant:** Operated by George Scott, who resided with his wife, Elizabeth, and mother, Annie Scott, at 15 N. Sixth St. when the decade began and at 422 N. Third St. when it ended.

**501 Walnut—St. Luke Methodist Episcopal Church:** Pastors during the 1920s included William Ellis and Frederick Bowles.

**502/504 Walnut—Carter Pool Hall:** Operated by Amelia Carter after the death of Preston Carter on March 4, 1924. She resided at 302 Oak St.

**506 Walnut—Barber Shop:** In the 1923 and 1925 city directories, George Washington was listed as the proprietor. In 1923 he resided at the same address. For the 1925 directory, he was joined by a wife, Katherine Washington.

**Phillips & Williams Barbershop:** A Sharp End fixture until the end, opened about 1926 by Herbert Phillips and Arch Williams. Phillips lived with his wife, Getrude, at 113 W. Worley St. Williams lived at 506 E. Walnut St.

**507 Walnut—Givens & Givens tailors:** Operated by Charles Givens and Paul Givens, who also owned the Harmony Café at 17 N. Sixth St. In the 1927 directory, Paul Givens was listed as the sole proprietor and lived with Mamie Givens at 106 N. Third St.

**507 Walnut—Elks Hall:** Home to Turner Lodge 370. The 1927 directory listed the Exalted Ruler as David Clark, a driver for Renie Hardware, who lived with his wife, Clotellia, at 104 Hill St. The secretary was Isadore Pipes, janitor at the University of Missouri, who lived with his wife, Fannie, at 403 E. Walnut St.

**507A Walnut—Barbershop:** Operated by Charles Berry, who lived with his wife, Macie, at 102 Allen St.

**508 Walnut—541 Taxi:** Driver Jacob Foster was listed as living at the business address in the 1923 city directory. George Campbell, who lived with his wife, Myrtle, at 10 N. Fifth St., was listed as the owner in the 1925 directory.

**Pool Hall:** Operated by William Diggs, it was listed in the 1927 directory. Diggs listed his address with wife Carolyn Diggs as 508-A E. Walnut St.

**Restaurant:** Operated by Paul Givens.

**509 Walnut—Dreamland Café:** Operated by Maggie Brown, who listed her residence as 4 Allen St., rear, in the 1925 directory and 13 W. Allen St. in the 1927 edition.

**511 Walnut—Billiards:** Listed in the 1925 directory. Operated by George Washington, who had the barber shop at 506 Walnut St.

Source: City directories, U.S. Census Bureau

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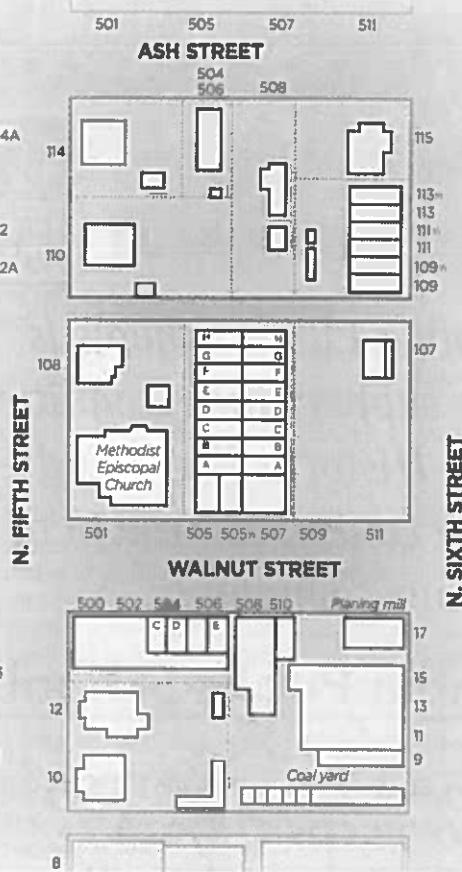
301 W. Sexton Road, Suite B  
Columbia, MO 65203

PROUD TO BE A MINORITY OWNED BUSINESS



Photo courtesy of Barbra Horrell

This photo shows some of the business operators who became fixtures on Sharp End. From left, foreground: Anderson Logan, barber Herbert Phillips of the Phillips & Williams Barber Shop and club owner Edward "Dick" Tibbs. Middle row, from left: Gene Co-chran, David Hughes, Walter Patrice and Ellis Tibbs. Back row: Samuel Boone, left. The final man is unidentified.



# THE 1930s

**N**ew faces, new buildings and new opportunities helped Sharp End weather the Great Depression, as the end of Prohibition brought taverns and music to Walnut Street.

The young business owners brought a mix of skills and resources to their operations, some legitimate and some not. Alvin Coleman, Ed "Dick" Tibbs and David "Pig" Emory would become fixtures on Sharp End, joining Herbert Phillips of the Phillips & Williams Barber Shop, opened a decade earlier.

**14,967**

Number of people residing  
in Columbia in 1930

**2,301**

Number of black residents  
in Columbia in 1930

Coleman was 31, living with his parents at 401 Park Ave. and driving a truck for the family laundry business when the decade opened. James and Julia Coleman had been school-teachers, first in Moberly and later at Douglass School, before going into business.

"Alvin Coleman was one of our rich men," said Rev. Raymond Hayes of St. Luke United Methodist Church.

Coleman owned a salvage yard, a coal yard, a pool hall and a liquor store. His first investment on Sharp End was listed as the Arcade Pool Hall at 510 Walnut St. in the 1932 city directory.

By the 1936 edition of the directory, Coleman was in business with Ed "Dick" Tibbs in a business they called Central Marketing. Tibbs' first business on Sharp End was called the Kingfish Smoke Shop, which also offered shoe shining.

In 1930, Tibbs was 25 and living with his mother Eva Williams and three other adult siblings ages 19 to 30 at 209 N. Garth Ave. Tibbs was working as a presser in a tailor shop.

"I think he just had a sixth grade education," son Ed Tibbs said. "He was a self-made man, just God was on his side. He was a smart man. He didn't have a degree but he had a Ph.D. in business. To have what he had in those days ... to keep it and to be able to pass it on the way he did, it took some intelligence."

Coleman, by contrast, was a college graduate. He and his wife, Julia, whom he married in the 1930s, had no children.

"They were like an uncle and aunt to me," said Mary Patton Nelson, daughter of Alton Patton, who operated a pool hall on Sharp End in the 1950s. Nelson knew the Colemans in the late 1940s and 1950s. "He was always busy, but he would ask about school and stuff. Vivian, she helped me grow up."

The new construction on Sharp End added the Arcade Building, 40 feet of storefront on the south side of Walnut Street that extended 77 feet deep along a north-south alley 10 feet wide.

The exact date when the Arcade Building was constructed is uncertain. The 1931 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map shows the structure where there had been nothing in 1925.

It was built on property owned by Earl and May Morris, owners of Booche's. On Feb. 18, 1935, they sold the property to John and Ola McMullan. John McMullan was the manager of Taylor's Garage.

Along with Tibbs and Coleman, Edward O'Neal, with his wife, Eddie, were among the first to move into the Arcade Building. The O'Neals opened a pool hall in one space and a restaurant in another. The O'Neals, spelled various ways including O'Neill on the 1930 census, also lived on Sharp End.

The new businesses opening on Sharp End were a contrast to almost every other corner of the United States in the 1930s, where businesses were closing and throwing people out of work. The homeless and unemployed added their

ranks to farmers driven from the land by Dust Bowl conditions on the Great Plains and drought in Missouri. Millions looked for work.

The Depression either came late to Missouri or the state was slow to react and take advantage of relief programs. By October 1933, when 10.3 percent of the nation was receiving aid through New Deal relief programs, only 5.5 percent of Missouri residents were signed up.

In Boone County, 174 people were on relief in October 1933, 52 in Columbia and 122 in the rural sections. Only two of the city dwellers and 10 of the rural residents on relief were black.

Soon, 15 times those numbers would be receiving aid. From July 1934 to June 1935, the average number of Boone County residents on relief each month was 2,676. No racial breakdown is available for that figure.

The final report of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration put the cost of New Deal public assistance in the county at \$237,921 from April 1933 to December 1935. Local taxpayers contributed \$29,331.

While the Depression was speeding up migration for many Americans, it slowed for blacks in Boone County. The loss of black population, unchecked since 1880, stopped in the 1930s, although rural sections continued to lose population to Columbia. Columbia was also a destination for whites as city population overall

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26

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## SHARP END BUSINESSES 1930-1939

**500 Walnut—Scott & Johnson taxi service:** Owners George Scott and Harry Johnson; George Scott and his wife, Elizabeth, resided at 422 N. Third St., today's Providence Road. Johnson and his wife, Gussie, resided at 506 N. Third St.

**Coleman's Cafè:** Operated by Harry Coleman, who is listed in the 1932 directory with his wife, Margaret, at 309A Oak St.

**Estes Smoke House:** Operated by James Estes, who resides with his wife, Dorothy, at 202 N. Garth Ave.

**501 Walnut—St. Luke Methodist Episcopal Church:** Pastors during the 1930s included the Rev. William H. Smith and the Rev. C.C. Reynolds.

**502 Walnut—Kingfish Smoke Shop, shoe shining:** Owner Edward Tibbs resided at the business.

**Central Marketing:** Owners Alvin Coleman and Edward Tibbs. Coleman married during the decade, living with wife Vivian at 401 Park Ave., a home inherited from his parents.

**504 Walnut—Billiards:** Owner David Emory, listed as David Emery in the 1930 census, resided at 203 N. Fourth St.

**506 Walnut—Phillips & Williams Barbershop:** Owners Herbert Phillips lived with wife, Gertrude, at 213 W. Worley St.; Arch Williams resided at 400 Hickman Ave.

**506A Walnut—Rooming House:** Managed by Paul Givens, who also operated a cigar store.

**507 Walnut—Cigar store:** Owner Paul Givens lived with his wife, Mamie, at this address.

**507 Walnut Rear—Edmonston Flats:** Sixteen-unit apartments behind storefronts.

**507-1/2 Walnut—Elks Hall, Turner Lodge 370:** The 1930 city directory listed J.S. Carter as Exalted Ruler and Clyde Buckner as secretary.

**507A Walnut—Barber Shop:** Owner Charles Berry lived with wife Macie at 102 Allen St.

**508 Walnut—Billiards:** Owner Edward O'Neal, whose wife operated an adjacent restaurant, resided at this address.

**Red Bird Inn:** Operated by Richard Benton.

**508A Walnut—Restaurant:** Owner Addie O'Neal lived at business address.

**509 Walnut—Restaurant:** Owner Beulah King, listed as a widow, residing at 209 E. Park Ave. in the 1930 census.

**510 Walnut—Arcade Billiard Parlor:** Operated by Alvin B. Coleman in 1932. See Central Marketing entry.

**511 Walnut—Barbershop and billiards:** Operated by Thomas A. McQuitty, who resided in 1930 with his wife, Georgia, and three children at 224 Lynn St.

**512 Walnut—O'Neal's Lunch:** This 1932 directory listing might represent a renumbering of the street. Operated by Addie O'Neal.

**Northwest Corner, 6th & Walnut—Nu-Way Lumber Co.: Storage lot.**

Source: City directories, U.S. Census Bureau



"My dad, I had never seen my dad without a tie on. My dad almost always had a tie on, white shirt and tie, throughout my entire life. I just thought that is the way you are supposed to be dressed."

— Ed Tibbs, son of Sharp End businessman

## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25

grew by more than one-fifth.

Sehon Williams, born in 1922, got his first job taking tickets at the Boone Theater when he was 16. His father was the chauffeur for James Woods, president of Stephens College.

"I wore Jimmy Woods clothes until I was in the ninth grade," Williams recalled.

Williams' experience explains why one of the first businesses in the Arcade Building was Ed Tibbs' shoe shining and cigar shop. After he worked at Boone Theater, Williams took a job shining shoes at Davis Cleaner's on Broadway, a job he kept after he entered Lincoln University. He could make \$20 to \$25 on a Saturday, he said. "That was really good money, especially from Stephens College girls," Williams recalled. "Nobody wore tennis shoe in them days."

In the 1930s, the Sharp End of living memory emerged. Thomas McQuitty opened a barbershop he would operate until urban renewal forced him out. Emory would take over the pool hall at 504 Walnut and would be in business

through the 1940s.

In all, city directories from the 1930s, the best, albeit incomplete, source of information, shows 16 different people, including two women, operating businesses on Sharp End during the decade. There were pool halls at four addresses and four addresses with restaurants. A taxi company, shoe shining and smoke shops fill out the list.

The directories took months to complete for the entire city, meaning they were often out of date. The 1940 directory lists the Green Tree Tavern, operated by Coleman and Tibbs, where jazz bands entertained on weekends and patrons drank 3.2 percent beer, the strongest beverage legally available.

Columbia did not allow liquor by the drink until 1968.

The 1930s might have been when Sharp End came to mean well-dressed. "When you came there you had to be dressed," Ed Tibbs said. "My dad, I had never seen my dad without a tie on. My dad almost always had a tie on, white shirt and tie, throughout my entire life. I just thought that is the way you are supposed to be dressed."

**A child who reads will be an adult who thinks.**

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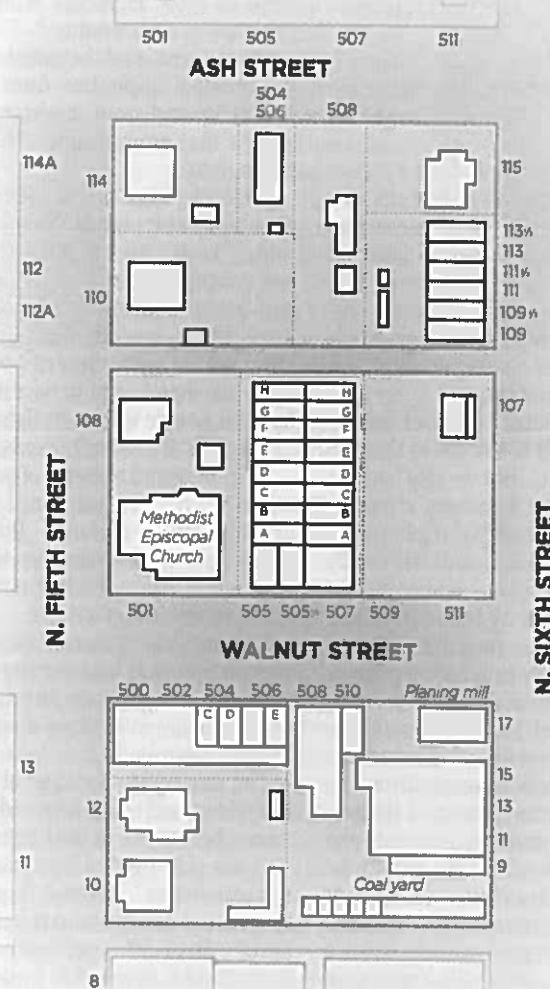
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Courtesy State Historical Society of Missouri

Edna Harris, left, operated the Elite Café at 520 E. Walnut St. from the late 1940s until the mid-1950s, when it was taken over by Lawrence Lee. David "Pig" Emory, far right, operated the Deluxe Pool Hall at 511 E. Walnut St. until his death in November 1950.



# THE 1940s

Black Americans traditionally have had a number of ways of celebrating their emancipation from slavery.

In some communities, a weekend in June called Juneteenth celebrates the date the Emancipation Proclamation was made the law of occupied Texas during the Civil War, freeing the last slaves of the rebellious states.

In Columbia, the traditional date was Aug. 4, timed one month after Independence Day to symbolize the delay between the promise and delivery of freedom for all.

"There would be one, well, it would be, I guess, two days, because one day they would close off Sharp End from Fifth to Sixth Street," Sehon Williams said in a 2006 oral history interview with Gary Kremer, executive director of the State Historical Society of Missouri. "Be open gambling, dancing, drinking, whatever you wanted to do. Even some of the white policemen would come down and join in."

**18,399**

Number of people residing  
in Columbia in 1940

**2,404**

Number of black residents  
in Columbia in 1940

The second day of the celebration, a picnic and dance on the grounds of Douglass School, was more geared to families because children were not welcome on Sharp End. But when things were lively, they were listening.

As a boy growing up on Park Avenue in the 1940s, the Rev. Raymond Hayes recalls sitting outside with his friends waiting for some exciting sounds to filter down from Sharp End two blocks away.

"We would sit out back and listen to all the stuff that was going on uptown at Sharp End," Hayes said. "I was never afraid of it. And fights were exciting, and killings were something to talk about."

The trends that created Sharp End — the migration of blacks from the countryside to a segregated city where most bars, restaurants and other service businesses were closed to their patronage — had abated but not stopped during the 1930s. But after pausing for a decade, the decline in the county's overall black population resumed and almost half of those remaining outside city limits moved or died.

Because of population shifts, by the end of the 1940s more than 80 percent of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 32

## Recognizing Columbia's Cultural Heritage

Columbia has always been full of incredible history, and the historic Sharp End area is no exception. The city is proud to welcome you to a place of great historical significance, a place where culture and entertainment thrived, a place that deserves to be recognized for its place in Columbia's business history.

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Courtesy Suzette Miller

Hand-drawn ads in the 1949 Douglass School yearbook "The Meteor" advertised the Phillips & Williams Barber Shop on Sharp End and the Brown & Freeman Funeral Home occupying the Park Avenue mansion of Annie Fisher.

# WELCOME TO COLUMBIA

CO  
MO  
COLUMBIA, MO  
WHAT YOU UNEXPECT

COLUMBIA, MO  
WHAT YOU UNEXPECT

## SHARP END BUSINESSES 1940-1949

**500 Walnut—Central Market-Ing:** Operated by Alvin Coleman and Ed "Dick" Tibbs.

**Scott's Taxi:** Operated by Alvin Coleman.

**Furnished Rooms:** Managed by Cordelia Walker, 42 in 1940, who also lived in one of the flats. Eight tenants paid \$5 per month for their rooms.

**501 Walnut—St. Luke Methodist Episcopal Church:** Pastor Edgar T. Anderson. St. Luke was demolished 1941 and the congregation moved to a new brick church on North Second Street.

**Cigars and shoe shining:** Operated by Lawrence Marshall, who lived at 502 E. Park Ave.

**502 Walnut—Green Tree Tavern:** Operated by Alvin Coleman and Ed "Dick" Tibbs.

**504 Walnut—Restaurant:** Operated by Eugene Gordon and listed only in the 1940 city directory. Gordon, 21, and his wife, Margaret Gordon, 19, lived at 114 S. Third St. when the census was taken.

**T&T Smoke Shop:** Operated by Edward Tibbs.

**505 Walnut—Restaurant:** Owner C.W. Kelly resided with wife Hester at same address.

**506 Walnut—Phillips & Williams Barber Shop:** Owned by Herbert Phillips and Arch Williams. The shop is also listed at 512 Walnut in some city directories.

**507 Walnut—Edmonston Flats:** These apartments, called "The Cut," rented for \$7 a month and were home to 25 people in the 1940 census.

**508 Walnut—Merrill-Slater Restaurant:** Operated by Gertrude Merrill, who is listed as Gertrude Slater in the 1940 city directory. She resided at 104 N. First St. Also listed at 514 Walnut in the 1949 city directory.

**Cigars and shoe shining:** Operated by Lawrence Marshall, who resided at 601 E. Park Ave.

**509 Walnut—Restaurant:** Operated by Arlene Brown, 28, who lived in a \$7 per month flat at 500 E. Walnut St.

**Restaurant:** Operated by

Leonard Smith, according to the 1947 city directory. Smith, 58, lived with Gertrude Smith, 57, at 305 N. Garth Ave. when the 1940 census was taken. He worked as a janitor for the city, and she worked as a seamstress.

**Walnut Grill:** Operated by David "Pig" Emory, according to the 1949 city directory. Emory listed his residence as 511 Walnut St.

**510 Walnut—Restaurant and billiards:** Operated by Robert Williams, 26 at the time of the 1940 census, when he reported his occupation as a laborer earning \$9 per week. Williams lived at 322 McBaine Ave. The pool hall is listed at 510 Walnut, rear, in 1947.

**Radio Cab Co.:** Operated by Isadore Washington, who lived at 609 Park Ave.

**511 Walnut—Barbershop:** Operated by Thomas A. McQuitty.

**Club Deluxe billiards:** Operated by David Emory and listed in the 1947 and 1949 directories.

**512 Walnut—Restaurant:** Operated by Edgar Griffin, 65 when 1940 census was taken, who lived at 3 Switzler St.

**Brown's Place beer tavern:** Operated by Victor Brown, 39 in the 1940 census and living at 1619 E. Broadway with his wife, Loretta, Sallie Gatewood, 72, and Dorothy Hays, 16.

**514 Walnut—Restaurant:** Operated by David Emory, according to an entry in the 1947 city directory.

**518 Walnut—Restaurant:** Operated by Victor Brown, according to the 1949 city directory.

**520 Walnut—Elite Café:** Operated by Robert and Edna Harris who lived 103 W. Park Ave. Robert Harris listed his age as 36 in the 1940 census, when he earned \$10 a week as a dishwasher at a women's college. Edna Harris, who was Edna McClanahan in 1940, worked as a laundress.

**Northwest Corner, 6th & Walnut—Nu-Way Lumber Co.:** Storage lot.

Sources: City directories, U.S. Census Bureau



But one misconception that people have. They seem to think that, I don't know how you figure it, that Sharp End was the black community, but it wasn't. Eighty percent of the people didn't even go on Sharp End. Of course, now Eighth Street was the white Sharp End, but most people didn't go down there. Same difference."

— SEHON WILLIAMS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

Boone County's black population lived within Columbia for the first time. Black residents, however, represented a rapidly diminishing portion of the city's overall population. The black population of Columbia grew by 3.5 percent in the 1940s, while the white population grew by 84 percent.

Columbia added 13,675 new residents in the 1940s, while the county as a whole grew by 13,441 people.

A large number of those new residents were veterans taking advantage of the GI Bill and its provisions supporting education and housing. Missouri sent 220,000 into the U.S. Army during World War II. Sehon Williams was one of them.

He was among 895,000 black men and women who entered the armed forces during the war. He found segregated conditions as bad or worse in many places as in Columbia, including Army post exchanges in Virginia.

Williams was drafted after his first year at Lincoln University in Jefferson City.

"When we were in Norfolk, Va., waiting to get on the bus, they had German soldiers with big POWs on the back of their coveralls," Williams said. "They were using them as custodians. They could walk in the PX and drink beer and lollygag with the white soldiers, but we couldn't go in there and buy a bottle of soda pop. And we were going overseas."

After serving in Italy, where he was a sergeant on quartermaster duty, Williams returned to find Columbia frozen in time as far as race relations were concerned.

"The first job I had was at Barth Clothing Co., and it only lasted two weeks," Williams said.

The manager had two sons working at the store who had recently graduated from Hickman. He thought Williams was not showing enough respect.

"He said, 'Don't you think you need to call Jimmy and Joe master?'" Williams said. "I said 'For what? I'm older than they are.' The next morning he had my check and handed it to me and said you won't work out."

In the 1940s, Sharp End, as it had since its inception, offered a refuge and opportunity for people to try being their own bosses. City directories published in the 1940s give the names of 19 people who operated businesses on Sharp End. The list would be longer except for the disruptions created by World War II.

No directory was published between 1940 and 1947. Familiar names remained and expanded their operations. One familiar sight on Sharp End disappeared in 1941 when the stone St. Luke Methodist Episcopal Church on the northeast corner of Fifth and

Walnut streets was demolished. The property was purchased by Nu-Way Lumber Corp., which also secured control over the property on the northwest corner under a long-term lease for an 11,400-square foot lot for \$25 a month.

Businesses that would become familiar names opened during the 1940s. The Green Tree Tavern, in the large space at Fifth and Walnut streets where Sharp End began, offered beer and jazz music on weekend nights from local players and traveling acts. It was one of three or four businesses operated jointly by Alvin Coleman and Edward "Dick" Tibbs, including a liquor store and taxi service.

The Elite Café, a name that would remain a fixture on Sharp End until urban renewal, was listed for the first time in the 1949 directory. Proprietors Robert and Edna Harris were 36 and 38 respectively when the 1940 census was taken. He was a dishwasher who earned \$360 for 36 weeks work 1939. Edna worked the entire year for \$500. They rented a home at 103 W. Park Ave. for \$10 a month.

The apartments on and adjacent to Sharp End were home to nearly 100 people when the 1940 census was taken. The furnished rooms above the tavern, managed by Cordelia Walker, cost \$5 to \$7 a month and included 14 tenants.

The pain of recovery from the Great Depression was evident on Sharp End – only one of the tenants had worked 52 weeks the previous year, and most labored for \$4 to \$10 per week when employed.

Arlene Brown, 28 and married, owned the restaurant at 509 Walnut St. in 1940 and lived in one of the \$7 rooms.

Not all Sharp End business owners lived in such meager circumstances. Victor Brown, owner of Brown's Place tavern at 512 E. Walnut St., was 39 in 1940, owned a \$3,000 home on at 1619 E. Broadway – across from Boone Hospital Center – and listed his occupation on the census as "beer salesman."

Brown was in the right place. Williams, asked in a recent interview who could be found on Sharp End, had a simple answer: "People that liked to drink. Drink and shoot pool. If you liked to drink,

you go on Sharp End. It's no different from now. If you want to have a drink you go out here to the bar."

Williams graduated from Douglass School in 1940 and played weekends in a jazz combo at the Green Tree.

"The place would be pretty well crowded," he said. "But one misconception that people have. They seem to think that, I don't know how you figure it, that Sharp End was the black community, but it wasn't. Eighty percent of the people didn't even go on Sharp End. Of course, now Eighth Street was the white Sharp End, but most people didn't go down there. Same difference."

Former Mayor Darwin Hindman, born in 1933, sold newspapers downtown in the 1940s. Downtown was crowded with farm families on Saturdays, and bars in black and white areas alike did a strong business.

"North of Broadway was a little bit seedy, even on Ninth Street, and as you went toward Sharp End it got seedier," Hindman said.

Under city ordinance at the time, only beer no stronger than

3.2 percent alcohol could be sold by the drink. "So when you went into a beer joint, if you wanted a drink you carried a half-pint," said Larry Monroe, describing a practice that continued until Columbia legalized liquor by the drink in 1968.

"And you would set there, and they would sell you bowl of ice and a pitcher of water set-up, and you sat there and you mixed your drink. And that's how you got around that."

The law, a holdover from prohibition, was not strongly enforced. "The mindset of enforcement was a little different then," Monroe said. "A lot of those guys that was driving that car, they would end up in there, too."

When the 1940s ended, Sharp End was fully developed and a place with enough turnover that people who wanted to try operating a business could find a chance.

That would continue in the coming decade, until an unexpected threat developed that made control of the property, not just the businesses operating there, the important issue.

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**The Arcade Building was constructed circa 1930 and housed restaurants, taverns, barber shops and pool rooms during its lifetime.**

# THE 1950s

In the late 1950s Vitilla Monroe rose early every morning in her home on Pendleton Street and roused her teenaged daughter Erma so both could be at her restaurant, Vi's Café, by 5:30 a.m. The doors at 509 E. Walnut St. opened at 6:30. Erma would work for the next hour before walking three blocks to Douglass School. At that time of day, black city employees on their way to work were regular customers. Others would follow as the city woke up.

"It was busy every hour my mother was open," Erma, now Erma Officer, said in a recent interview.

She would return in the afternoon, when she was finished with extracurricular activities. Erma would sit at a table doing homework or help out in the restaurant until it closed at 7 p.m. On weekends, Vi's Café stayed open late, serving customers until 1 a.m.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 40**

31,974

**Number of people residing  
in Columbia in 1950**

2,489

**Number of black residents  
in Columbia in 1950**

## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 39

Officer deflected a question about whether she was paid this way: "Her payment to me was to show me how as I grew to be businesslike. Her payment to me was how to treat others, not to expect any more than I was willing to give. Those were payments, those were life-learned lessons."

The date Monroe took over the restaurant is uncertain. Her son, Larry Monroe, said he believes it was 1957 or 1958. He was working in the Phillips & Williams Barber Shop across the street.

By that time, the future was already in doubt for the property developed into Sharp End from 1910 to 1930.

The Land Clearance and Redevelopment Authority, created in 1956, drew the boundary for its first urban renewal plan through the alley south of Walnut behind Sharp End in a plan submitted for federal approval in 1958. Sharp End was at its peak both for the number of businesses in operation and for its reputation as a destination.

"It was a time of segregation and it was a hot spot for entertainment," say Rev. Raymond Hayes, also a teenager in the 1950s. "And it attracted people who were on the 'chitlin' circuit,'" a name given to venues hosting traveling black entertainers.

As its reputation grew, and transportation improved, out-of-town customers were more common, Hayes said. "The soldiers from Fort Leonard Wood would come up and that was a place to come and there was a lot of fighting and competition over local girls, as you would expect."

The 1950s were a time of rising expectations nationally and for blacks in particular. President Harry Truman ordered integration of the Armed Forces in 1948, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down school segregation in 1954 and Congress passed the first Civil Rights bill since the Civil War in 1957.

The vitality of Columbia's black community sparked the start of a black migration from outside Boone County. In the 1940s,



## 55 years later...



Above photo Courtesy State Historical Society of Missouri/Bottom photo Daniel Brenner of the Tribune  
The photo at top, taken during the late 1950s, shows Sharp End fully developed, with the 1910 building where Sharp End began in the foreground. The photo above, taken recently, shows the 11-deck parking garage that replaced the parking lot built when the Sharp End commercial buildings were demolished. REDI, the Small Business Technology and Development Center, a business incubator, a mortgage company and a restaurant occupy the storefronts at ground level.

## CONTINUED ON PAGE 41

## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 40

Columbia added 13,675 residents, but only 85 were black. In the 1950s, growth rates for whites and blacks became more balanced as the black population of 2,489 in 1950 grew by almost 300 people.

Rural sections of the county did not provide the increase. Only 521 of Boone County's 3,010 blacks remained living outside Columbia when the 1950s began, down from 2,648 in 1900. The rural population diminished by 18 in the 1950s. The growth in Columbia accounted for the first substantial boost in the county's total black population since the 1870s.

Detailed census rolls for 1950 will not be released until 2022. City directories published regularly attempted to record each address, whether it was a residence or a business and who lived or ran a business at that location. Those published in the 1950s show that, as in the past, Sharp End remained a residential as well as business location.

"The Cut" was apartments on the north side of Walnut Street, listed as the Edmondston Apartments in census reports and the directories. The rooms were behind the commercial space that housed Vi's Café, where the work area of the Columbia post office is today.

"Those apartments weren't very good," Hayes recalled. "It was good people who lived back there but conditions were terrible."

The directories for some years list the people living there when the survey was made. The Cut seemed to always be full and some tenants were long-term residents. The lists for apartments above the bar known in the 1950s as Club Twenty-One also have substantial lists of tenants.

Edith Prince and her family moved into one of the upstairs apartments in the late 1950s, after they arrived in town. It was a two-bedroom apartment with a living room and small kitchen shared by two adults and nine children. The adults took one bedroom she said, five girls took another and the boys slept in the living room.

"We used to sleep in one bed," she said. "We had no choice but to

sleep with each other."

On the street, the lineup of business owners continued to change, as it had since the inception of Sharp End. David "Pig" Emory died in November 1950. The Walnut Grill was taken over by Pearl Chandler, who also ran a pool hall on the south side of the street in the 1950s.

Chandler reputedly wouldn't let anyone curse in his pool hall, but other restrictions seemed to be loosening along Sharp End. Teenagers started coming into the businesses or passing through, when they would have been turned away in the past. Larry Monroe said he went into the Walnut Grill for the first time when he was 15.

"I remember the first time that I was able to go in the pool hall," he said. "I had to get written permission from my mom in order to shoot pool and I was 16 years old then."

Alton Patton, called "Mr. Heavy Patton" ran a typical pool hall on Sharp End, his daughter Mary Patton Nelson said. It was in the back of the Arcade Building, with an entrance through Brown's Place. She was never allowed inside, she said, but could go on Sharp End if she needed to talk to him.

He was generally holding court in the pool hall, and someone would retrieve him for her, she said. Nelson was in the first senior class that was required to attend Hickman High School in order to graduate, following the closing of the high school program at Douglass in 1960.

Her parents were older than most, Nelson said. Her father listed his birth as 1890 in Tennessee on the 1940 census and her mother Julia reported she was born in 1903.

They lived at 102 Allen Street. He reported he had not been employed for wages the previous year but that he had income of more than \$50 annually "from sources other than wages."

He made his money, Nelson said, "by gambling. I think when they got done shooting pool he would shoot dice. He was a hustler. He was a gambler. That is how he made his living."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 42



# HONORING THE BUSINESSMEN & WOMEN OF THE SHARP END HISTORIC DISTRICT



## SHARP END BUSINESSES 1950-1959

**500-506 Walnut—Ebony Club:** The club previously known as the Green Tree Tavern was listed under this name only in the 1951 city directory.

**500-502 Walnut—Club Twenty-One:** City directories published in the 1950s list a variety of proprietors. Billie Waers, who lived at 601 S. Glenwood, was named in 1954, and John Graves, with a residence in the county, was listed in 1956. The 1958 directory named Edward Griffin, who resided at 514 N. Fifth St.

**502 Walnut—Walnut Apartments:** This name was used in the 1951, 1954, 1956 and 1958 directories.

**504 Walnut—Walnut Street Sandwich Shop:** Listed for 1954, with operator Isadore Washington living at 2 W. Pendleton.

**506 Walnut—Phillips & Williams Barber Shop:** Herbert Phillips and Arch Williams remained partners in this venerable business that first opened in the 1920s. Phillips lived with his wife, Gertrude, at 213 W. Worley St.; Williams lived with his wife, Caroline, at 23 Worley St. The street might have been renumbered at some point because directories published in the 1950s also list the barber shop at 512 Walnut St.

**Herndon's Tap Room:** Operated by Roy "Shug" Herndon and listed in the 1956 and 1958 city directories. Herndon and his wife, Faye Herndon, lived at 501 E. Ash St.

**508 Walnut—Shoe shining:** Operated by Lawrence Marshall, according to 1951 and 1954 directories. Marshall lived at

601 Park Ave.

**Shoe shining:** Operated by Roy Herndon as listed in the 1956 directory.

**McQuilty Barber Shop:** Operated by Thomas A. McQuilty, who according to the 1958 directory lived with his wife, Hattie, at 227 Lynn St.

**509 Walnut—Walnut Grill:** Operated in the 1950s under a variety of owners. Pearl Chandler, who lived with his wife, May, at 207 N. Second St., is listed in the 1951 directory. Roy and Fay Herndon are the owners, according to the 1954 directory, and Faye Washington is running the restaurant in the 1956 edition. Washington gave her residence as 1413 Illinois Ave.

**Little Harlem Café:** Alonzo Rogers and his wife, Dora Rogers, were listed in the 1958 directory, with their residence at 21 W. Ash St.

**Vi's Café:** Vitilla Monroe, 40 in 1958, became the last tenant of this space on Sharp End.

**509-511 Walnut—Edmondston Apartments:** Also known as "The Cut."

**510 Walnut—Chandler's Pool Hall:** Operated by Pearl Chandler, who lived with his wife, May, at 207 N. Second St., according to the 1951 and 1954 directories.

**Confectionery:** Listed in the 1956 directory, operated by George A. Bradford, who lived with wife Ardella Bradford at 406 W. Davis St.

**Shoe Shine:** A 1958 listing for George Bradford.

**511 Walnut—Deluxe Billiards & Pool:** Operated by Ed "Dick" Tibbs after the death in 1950 of David "Pig" Emory.

**514 Walnut—Walnut Street Tobacco Store:** This is a 1951 listing operated by Isadore Washington.

**Economy Liquors:** Operated by Welfred Shock, who lived with his wife, Mary, at 104 N. West Boulevard, according to a 1954 directory.

**Bob's Tobacco Store:** Operated by Robert and Edna Harris, according to 1956 and 1958 listings. They lived at 106 E. Ash St.

**516 Walnut—Radio Cab Co.:** Operated by Isadore Washington and listed in a 1951 directory.

**516 Walnut Rear—Arcade Pool Hall:** Operated by Alton Patton, also known as "Mr. Heavy Patton." He lived with wife Julia at 102 E. Allen. Patton's business is listed as the Blue Shadow Pool Hall in the 1958 directory.

**518 Walnut—Brown's Place:** A restaurant listed with owner Perry Brown in every directory published in the 1950s. He and wife Pauline Brown lived at 519 E. Highway 40.

**520 Walnut—Elite Café:** Operated early in the decade by Robert and Edna Harris, according to listings in the 1951 and 1954 directories, then by Lawrence E. Lee, who lived at 406 Hickman Ave. with his wife, Stella, who is listed in the 1956 and 1958 editions.

**Northwest Corner, 6th & Walnut—Nu-Way Lumber Co. Storage lot:**

Sources: City directories, U.S. Census Bureau

### CONTINUED FROM PAGE 41

He was also a storyteller who could "talk to a hole in the wall" if no one was handy to listen, she said. "He was the kind of person who dressed nicely all the time, and people would mistake him for a minister."

As it had for more than 40 years, Sharp End continued to be a place where a black men or women could be their own bosses.

Little had changed outside, despite national advances for blacks.

Every time they ventured beyond Sharp End and the black residential areas nearby, they were met with constant reminders of white control.

One of Larry Monroe's first jobs

was setting pins at Dean's Bowling Alley at Hitt and Broadway. The crew of six, when work was over, would walk home together. His first night on the job he got a reminder of his place in Columbia.

"When we got to Tenth and Broadway there were two white policemen, Jim Smith and Dutch Smith," Monroe said.

"And Dutch told us, 'Alright you boys, it is time to cross over. You don't walk on this side of Broadway after dark,' — the south side of Broadway."

The police were there every night, he said.

In Vi's Café, the life lessons weren't confined to Erma. Vitilla Monroe's niece, Cheryl Ballenger Wright, said all the youngsters in

the family pitched in. "Sometimes she had me being a waitress, and I had tips," Wright said.

"And on occasion she would get so busy and she and I would be the only ones there at the time that she would let me ring customers up."

A counter with barstools, tables and a room set up for families was the setting, but the food was the attraction, Wright said, rattling off a list of standard fare: Cornbread, chicken, greens, dried beans, navy beans, brown beans, different pastries, pies, bread pudding, roast beef and "ham on occasion."

Columbia voters rejected urban renewal and the creation of a land clearance authority the first time it was on the ballot in 1952.

It was approved narrowly in

1956 and the city immediately imposed a moratorium on new building permits in the targeted area.

The businesses on Sharp End would begin learning before the decade was out that their future was limited.

Vitilla Monroe just kept working, Officer said.

"My mother was a very gentle person in the community and the café was a very, very vital part of the community. She served the people that came into the community, and the people who utilized sharp end."

And she did it with food, Officer said. "My mother was a fantastic cook, preparing meals fit for the president, or the court of England."



Courtesy State Historical Society of Missouri

Surveyors work in the block between Ash and Walnut streets during the 1960s urban renewal program that replaced Sharp End with a post office and parking lot.

# THE 1960s CLOSED

**T**he demise of Sharp End came swiftly. Larry Monroe was in the Army, stationed in Germany when his mother, Vitilla Monroe, was forced to shut down Vi's Café at 509 E. Walnut St. The land under the building was sold July 30, 1960, to the Land Clearance for Redevelopment Authority. A city directory published in 1961 listed only the Deluxe Pool Hall as still in operation out of more than a dozen businesses included in the 1958 edition.

Because of the delay between gathering and publishing the information, it is questionable whether Edward "Dick" Tibbs was still there when the directory was issued. Only six residents were listed, compared to 19

in the 1958 directory and almost 100 recorded by the 1940 census in the area now used for the post office and city parking garage.

A new Sharp End, dubbed "The Strip," opened on Ash Street between Fourth and Fifth streets.

It didn't last long as the housing in the area was removed, restrictions on the location of black-owned service and entertainment businesses relaxed and sit-ins forced integration in downtown restaurants.

"They built one big building right over here on Ash Street where the Tribune's printing room is," Monroe said. "And it had about eight or nine cubicles in there, ranging from 10-feet-by-22-feet, and that was to house all the buildings that were going to be displaced. My mom said it was not conducive for a good atmosphere, so she just went completely out of business."

Alvin Coleman built a theater, listed in the 1961 directory as the Princess Pam Art Theatre, at 111 N. Fifth St. to cater to blacks.

**36,650**

Number of people residing in Columbia in 1960

**2,765**

Number of black residents in Columbia in 1960

CONTINUED ON PAGE 46

## SHARP END LAND SALES

The Land Clearance for Redevelopment Authority began buying Sharp End properties in December 1959 as part of the Douglass School Urban Renewal Area project. By July 30, 1960, all the properties now occupied by a parking garage on the south side of Walnut Street had been acquired. On the north side, where the post office stands today, the only holdout was Harold Johnson, who owned Nu-Way Lumber Co. and about half of the total property in the block.

**Dec. 3, 1959:** Irene M. Hulett, co-owners with W. Roger and Marjorie E. Hulett, recorded the sale of lots comprising two-thirds of the frontage along Fifth Street north of the alley between Broadway and Walnut Street.

**Dec. 30, 1959:** Glyde and Edna Hinshaw recorded the sale of a lot with one-third of the frontage on Sixth Street, running north from the alley between Broadway and Walnut Street.

**Jan. 5, 1960:** Harold and Val Hinshaw recorded the sale of portions of two

lots comprising the remaining frontage on Sixth Street south of Walnut Street and 40 feet of frontage along Walnut Street itself.

**June 30, 1960:** Ola McMullan recorded the sale of a portion of the property that included the Arcade Building, home to longtime Sharp End businesses Brown's Place and the Elite Café.

**July 22, 1960:** John M. Herndon and his wife Alice K. recorded the transfer of a 142.5-foot-by-80-foot lot in the middle of the north side of Walnut Street. Developed in the 1920s, it had been home to the Deluxe Pool Room, Vi's Café and apartments known as "The Cut."

**July 30, 1960:** Ola McMullan completed the sale of the land beneath the Arcade Building.

**July 30, 1960:** Roy and Dorothy V. McMullen recorded the sale of the property on the southeast corner of Fifth and Walnut streets, the first lot developed with a brick commercial building about 50 years earlier. It was home to the longest-lasting Sharp End businesses,

including the Green Tree Tavern/Club Twenty-One barroom and the Phillips & Williams Barber Shop.

**Oct. 15, 1963:** Helen Conley Trice, on behalf of heirs to William T. Conley, recorded the transfer of the lot at the northwest corner of Sixth and Walnut streets, used for storage by Nu-Way Lumber Co. since 1941. The lot also contains one or two frame dwellings.

**May 22, 1964:** Harold E. Johnson, doing business as Nu Way Lumber, recorded the sale of about half the property bounded by Ash and Walnut streets on the north and south and Fifth and Sixth streets on the east and west. The property included the lot that hosted St. Luke Methodist Episcopal Church until 1941.

**June 7, 1965:** The Land Clearance for Redevelopment Authority recorded the sale of the full city block on the north side of Walnut Street to Ray Eckstein and Joseph Sieman for \$161,160 with a requirement that a post office be completed by July 31, 1966.

Source: Boone County Recorder of Deeds

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 44

Sehon Williams, who had his hair cut every other Friday at the Phillips & Williams Barber Shop, followed the business established in the 1920s to the new location. He noted that, like Vitilla Monroe, not every business owner stayed open.

"A couple of the guys, they didn't really have the resources to go anywhere else, really," he said. "The little restaurant that relied on black customers — suddenly you could go into any restaurant."

If Sharp End had survived, it would have found a rapidly growing customer base. The migration of blacks into Columbia from outside Boone County accelerated. The 1970 census recorded 998 new black residents in the city, a number that included births during the decade, and the total black population of Boone County exceeded 4,000 for the first time since 1910.

The already small black population outside the city shrank again during the decade, and when the 1970 count was made 90 percent of Boone County's black population lived within the city.



... Just to socialize, just eat out, just to get their hair cut. Just to dance. Sharp End was that place where many African Americans could go and feel comfortable that they weren't going to be harassed by whites, that they were not going to be treated any differently."

— ERMA OFFICER, graduate of Douglass School in 1960

Blacks represented less than 2 percent of the population outside Columbia, down from almost 12 percent in 1900.

Despite the fast growth — almost 40 percent during the decade — the white population grew even faster in the 1960s.

Part of the city's population growth was attributable to a large annexation program, but the county population topped 80,000 by 1970, growth of 46 percent over the decade.

Erma Officer, daughter of Vitilla Monroe, graduated from Douglass School in 1960. The newly built shop spaces on Fifth Street, known as The Strip, would not support

what her mother wanted to do with her restaurant.

"I believe her goal was to move her business out away from that area, period, to move it to an area that would serve a diverse population," Officer said.

She was unable to do that. Others did. Lawrence Lee, owner of the Elite Café in its final years, opened a music venue called Breezy Hill, and Ed Tibbs and Paul Britt opened Paradise Hill.

Both thrived by presenting touring acts that included Ike and Tina Turner, B.B. King, Ray Charles and others.

The loss of Sharp End, Erma Officer said, was like the loss of a

home. Her grandparents, Earnest and Mabel Ballenger, raised a family of five girls and two boys on a farm on Mount Celestial Road near McBaine.

In the summer, grandchildren would spend days at the farm and attend church with their grandparents.

Other times, Officer said, when her grandparents would drive to town, their destination would be Sharp End.

"I can remember my grandparents taking three or four of us who were much, much younger," Officer said. "And that would be a place where they would go and park just to be in the midst of people, just enjoy the laughter and the humor and that kind of thing."

Like the farm in McBaine, Sharp End was home.

"Sharp End was the comfort zone for African Americans," Officer said. "Just to socialize, just eat out, just to get their hair cut. Just to dance. Sharp End was that place where many African Americans could go and feel comfortable that they weren't going to be harassed by whites, that they were not going to be treated any differently."