



Arlington Historical Society | February 2022 Newsletter

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Arlington Historical Society

Executive Board Members

Geraldine Mills | Executive Director

Nancy Tice | President

Lydia Brosowsky | Secretary

Wanda Marshall | Treasurer

Contact Us

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Our Venues

Fielder House Museum

1616 W. Abram Street

Arlington, Texas 76013

www.facebook.com/FielderHouseMuseum

Knapp Heritage Park

201 W. Front Street

Arlington, Texas 76011

www.facebook.com/knapp.park

Arlington Heritage Memorial Grounds

600 W. Arkansas Lane

Arlington, Texas 76010

www.ahmgc.org

A note from the editor

This month's newsletter focuses on Black history in Arlington. It features an article about Ross Dee Hunt, a young Black man from Arlington killed during World War II, written by AHS Board Member Sabra Johnson.

And, speaking of Sabra, she will be presenting a genealogy class later this month. Check out the Upcoming Events section below for more information.

Much of Black history focuses on slavery, segregation, civil rights, or other hardships – which are undoubtedly significant aspects. But, it's much more than that. It should also celebrate the culture, contributions, accomplishments, and triumphs – past, present, and future.

Stop by the Fielder House Museum this month and see our Black History exhibit. The City of Arlington, Arlington Public Library, and area schools have many events planned. Check their websites and social media for more details.

A special thank you to Geraldine Mills, Sabra Johnson, Kris Rumans, Sarah Stubblefield, and Anthony Cisneros for their help on this newsletter.

Jason S. Sullivan, 02-15-22

Newsletter Editor

Arlington Historical Society

JasonSSullivan@gmail.com

Arlington Historical Society – Upcoming Events

- **February 22 – "Beginning African American Genealogy Research" class, presented by AHS Board Member Sabra Johnson**
 - Arlington Public Library (Southeast Branch)
900 SE Green Oaks Blvd, 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM
 - More info: www.arlingtonlibrary.org

- **February 26 – Black History Month Festival**
 - Arlington Public Library (Southeast Branch)
900 SE Green Oaks Blvd, 12:00 PM - 3:00 PM
 - More info: www.arlingtonlibrary.org

- **April 11 – AHS Board Meeting, Fielder House, 6:30 PM**
- **August 8 – AHS Board Meeting, Fielder House, 6:30 PM**
- **November 14 – AHS Board Meeting, Fielder House, 6:30 PM**



Black History Exhibit at Fielder House

In 1998, the Fielder House first featured an exhibit on Black history.

Our exhibit includes photos, mementos, stories, interviews, books, memoirs, oral histories, and more. Also part of our exhibit is a collection of 60-70 funeral programs, sometimes referred to as "Homegoing Programs."

Stop by to see the exhibit, and if you can, help us fill in the gaps – some photos are undated or don't have any names referenced. We also welcome additional photos, information, family histories, or stories.



Black History Exhibit at Fielder House

Arlington Black History Community Archive

The Arlington Public Library's "Arlington Black History Community Archive," is a digital collection of documents, photos, and resources for local Black history. The AHS contributed to this project, with significant contributions from Geraldine Mills.

Many of the photos at the Fielder House Black History exhibit are also included in the library's archives.

Visit the archive's website to learn more.
www.arlingtonlibrary.org/abhca

Historical Markers, Local Landmarks, and Other Historic Sites

Arlington has several sites honoring Black history, with each providing an opportunity to learn more about local history.

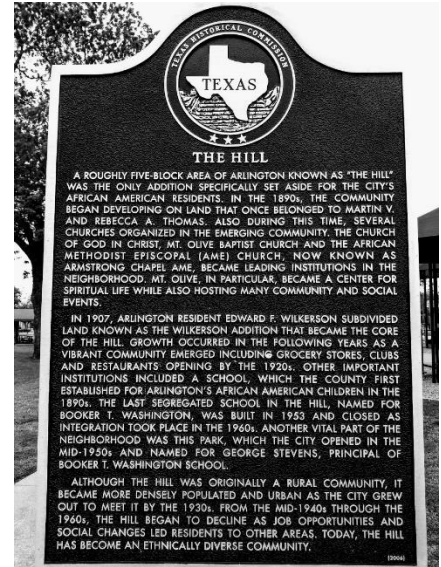
The Hill

Texas Historical Marker | [Marker Text](#)
Address: 400 W. Sanford Street

The Hill is a historic, five-block area of Arlington. Located northwest of the town's original boundaries, its area included Sanford, West, Prairie, and Taylor streets.

It was the only area designated for the city's Black residents when racially segregated neighborhoods were the norm. During 1890-1950, The Hill experienced its most significant growth and prosperity. In 1907, Arlington resident Edward F. Wilkerson subdivided land that became a major part of The Hill, an area known as the Wilkerson Addition. As Arlington's population grew, so did the Black community. A vibrant community emerged in the years to follow. Homes, schools, and churches led to grocery stores, clubs, and restaurants. While The Hill was Arlington's largest and most significant Black community, it wasn't the only one. Others included Roger's Pasture and To'liver's Acres.

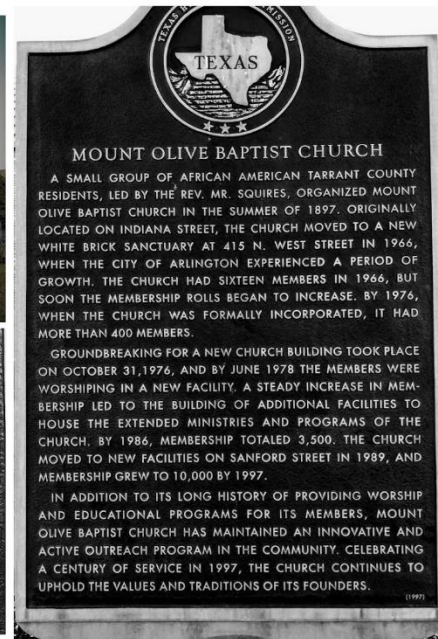
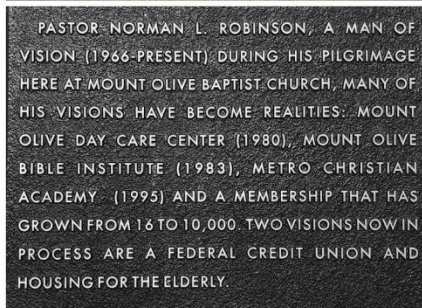
The Hill was similar to other Black communities in North Texas: Mosier Valley (Euless), Bear Creek (Irving), Stop Six and Como (Fort Worth), South Dalworth Park (Grand Prairie), and many others. These communities were interconnected, and often depended on each other for support and resources.



Mount Olive Baptist Church

Texas Historical Marker | [Marker Text](#)
Address: 301 W. Sanford Street

Mount Olive Baptist Church started in July 1897 on Indiana Street. It moved to West Street during a period of growth for Arlington and would later occupy another building on the same street. Reverend Norman L. Robinson joined the church in 1966 and served its ministry until 2016; more on him later in the newsletter. Mount Olive was often considered the community church because of its size. The church would continue to grow and move to larger facilities through the decades. The first service in its current facility on W. Sanford Street was held in 1989. The church now has several buildings, many with cornerstones and plaques honoring its history. The church has prided itself on an active outreach program in the community.



Emmanuel Church of God in Christ

Texas Historical Marker | [Marker Text](#)

Address: 513 Indiana Street

Emmanuel Church of God in Christ dates back to 1895. It's had several names over the years, but today, it's known as the Arlington Church of God in Christ. The church grew in The Hill's commercial district. According to the Texas Historical Marker on-site: "Elders Garrett and E.W. Battle served as early church leaders of the congregation, which held regular camp meetings for area worshipers. The Holiness philosophy of the church includes an emphasis on Bible-based education, as well as the roles of two spiritual leaders: the pastor and the church mother, who serves as guide and teacher of children and new members."

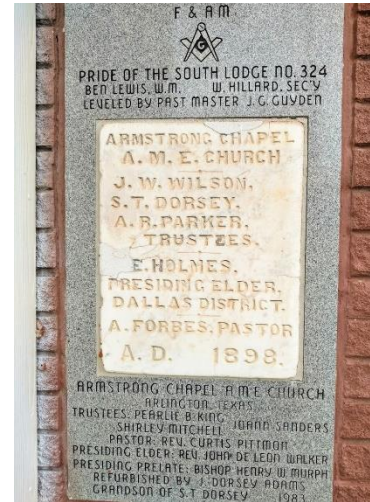


Armstrong Chapel AME

Cornerstone dating back to 1898

Address: 401 W. North Street

Armstrong African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church is known today as Armstrong Chapel AME. It's a smaller church dating back to 1898 and associated with the Masonic Lodge. While there isn't a Texas Historical Marker on site, the building has a cornerstone engraved with names of prominent people and the year 1898. Surrounding the cornerstone is a plaque referencing F & AM (Free and Accepted Masons) and "Pride of the South Lodge No. 324."

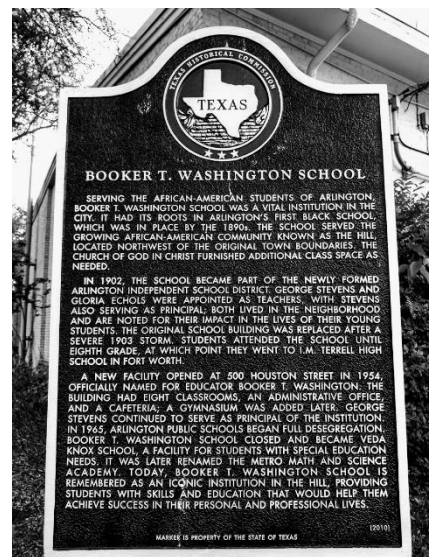


Booker T. Washington School

Texas Historical Marker | [Marker Text](#)

Address: 500 Houston Street

The last segregated school in The Hill was built in 1953 and opened the following year. The school was named for Booker T. Washington and evolved from Arlington's previous Black schools – one of which was built on the same site as the 1953 school. The school initially had eight classrooms, an administrative office, and a cafeteria, later adding a gymnasium. It was for students in first through eighth grades. AISD did not provide secondary education for its Black students until laws made it mandatory, which resulted in fewer students continuing their education past the eighth grade. However, some students went to I.M. Terrell High School in Fort Worth to finish their studies. Today, the former Booker T. Washington School building still stands at 500 Houston Street, although it's undergone a few name changes over the years. Notable educators at the school include George Stevens, Richard Simpson, and Gloria Echols. The school was a vital institution in the city.

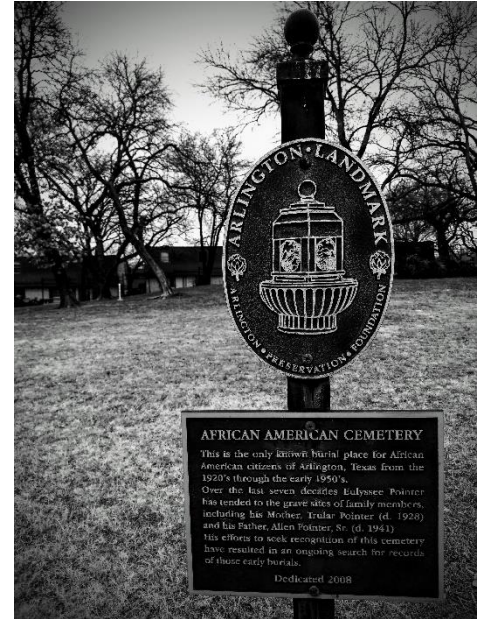


Arlington Heritage Memorial Grounds

Local Landmark

Address: 600 W. Arkansas Lane

The Arlington Heritage Memorial Grounds are a Local Landmark. The area consists of three small historic cemeteries, including the only place in Arlington where Black residents could be buried until the 1950s. Colonel Middleton Tate Johnson – the Father of Tarrant County, yet the namesake of Johnson County – is buried here and recognized with a Historical Marker. Recent renovations have improved the grounds with new fencing, gravestone restoration, and deeper historical research. A future project involving QR Codes will allow visitors to learn more through self-guided tours. The Arlington Historical Society manages the site.



Simpson/Manning Home

Address: 500 Echols Street

Richard Simpson married Callie Manning in the 1890s. It's believed that their home at 500 Echols Street was built around 1910 – based on the materials used, the construction style, and deed records. Mr. Simpson was an accomplished educator in Arlington and Fort Worth. He was the Principal at Booker T. Washington School. Later, he became the first agriculture teacher in Texas and headed the Agricultural Department at the “Fort Worth Colored High School” – renamed I.M. Terrell High School with other name changes over the years. Mr. Simpson was also a founding member of the Colored Teacher’s Institute in Tarrant County and a founding officer of the Mosier Valley Lodge #103. The Simpson/Manning Home isn’t recognized as a local landmark yet, but efforts are in progress to make it happen. Mr. Simpson surely deserves recognition for his contributions to the community.

Influential People

It’s the people that make a community. These are a few of the people who impacted the lives of Black residents in Arlington.

George Stevens served as Principal of Booker T. Washington School (and its precursors) for more than 20 years, from 1941 to 1965. The school tripled in size during his tenure. He worked with the United Community Progress Association, the first Black neighborhood association of The Hill. He was active in his community, serving on boards and in various groups. As a tribute to his impact and leadership, George Stevens Park opened around 1957. A Texas Historical Marker stands there today for The Hill, along with information about George Stevens.

Gloria Echols (1923-1992) moved to Arlington in 1946. She taught school in Fort Worth and Arlington school districts for 39 years, with nearly 20 years teaching in The Hill. During her time working in Arlington, she was one of the few women professionals who lived and worked in The Hill – most lived in Fort Worth instead. Her contributions and teaching had a profound effect on the community. She lived on Watson Street, but the street was later renamed Echols Street in her honor. Mrs. Echols was also a Sunday school teacher and choir member of her church.

Reverend Dr. Norman L. Robinson (1921-2017) served the Mount Olive Baptist Church for more than 50 years. While he became pastor after The Hill's main period of prosperity, his impact is no less significant. His leadership after desegregation and through the Civil Rights movement cannot be understated. He became pastor of the church in 1966, serving its 16 members. Under his leadership, the congregation grew to more than 10,000 people in 30 years. The church grew – not only in numbers but also in the services it offered the community. A section of West Street near the church property was renamed N.L. Robinson Drive by the city in 1992. It's a testament to his impact on the community. There's a plaque at Mount Olive Baptist Church honoring Reverend Robinson.

Elzie Odom, born 1929, served as Mayor of Arlington from May 1997 to May 2003. His career began with the U.S. Postal Service, becoming U.S. Postal Inspector in 1967. Mr. Odom and his family moved to Arlington in 1979 as he continued his work with the U.S. Postal Inspection Service in Dallas. After retiring from the U.S. Postal Service in 1987, Mr. Odom pursued a bid for public office. He was elected to the Arlington City Council in 1990. He was elected mayor in 1997, becoming Arlington's first Black mayor. Mayor Odom worked to better city streets, increase diversity on city boards, and support Arlington's disabled, youth, and elderly. During his tenure, a revitalization began downtown, alongside talks with city leaders to help bring the Dallas Cowboys new stadium to Arlington.

Lou Henry Taylor opened a small grocery store out of her garage on Indiana Street in 1946. She later moved to a different house on Indiana Street and opened a new grocery store and a club next door. The club – known as Lou's Blue Lounge – was described as a watering hole, beer joint, pool hall, lounge, or a combination thereof. Lou Henry had a colorful personality, and her club was a lively addition to The Hill. She was seen as a savvy businesswoman ahead of her time and she also supported local programs and churches.

"Echoes from The Hill" documentary debuts this summer

In post-slavery America, Black people needed to go somewhere they felt safe. They were searching for a place to raise their families, live their lives, and have the fellowship of a community.

"It was a safe place."

Rev. Carl Pointer

"It just was a community of love."

Beverly Jackson

Others echoed those feelings, describing The Hill as a place of love and appreciation, where folks were supportive of each other and worked together. It wasn't perfect, but people cared about each other – and most importantly, they felt safe.

Rev. Pointer and Beverly Jackson are two folks featured in the upcoming documentary, "Echoes from The Hill," which explores life for Black residents living in The Hill. Topics include segregation, community, schools, churches, businesses, entertainment, and many others.

The five-part documentary debuts in June 2022. Arlington's Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration Committee and the Arlington Tomorrow Foundation helped fund the project. The official trailer, which is nearly 9 minutes long, is available to watch now. AHS Executive Director Geraldine Mills is an associate producer of the documentary and appears on-screen in interviews.

For more info and to watch the trailer, visit:

www.arlingtontx.gov/news/my_arlington_tx/news_stories/echoes_from_the_hill_trailer

Ross Dee Hunt: "His life an ideal – his memory an inspiration"

By Sabra Johnson

Seaman 2c Ross Dee Hunt (1918-1944) was a young Black man from Arlington killed in World War II's Port Chicago military disaster. He received the World War II Victory Medal and the American Campaign Medal for his sacrifice and service. Mr. Hunt is honored at the Arlington World War II Memorial, with his name and rank inscribed on the In Memoriam plaque.

Ross Dee Hunt was born February 25, 1918, in Arlington, Texas, to Arthur and Alice Williams Hunt. Dr. F.L Harvey, a renowned local physician, delivered Ross, who would join brothers Horace and Morris. The birth certificate confirms that Ross was colored, or non-white, and legitimate – meaning his parents were married at the time of his birth.

Research supports that Ross' mother followed a common family nomenclature. Her son's name came from blending the names of two uncles. One of his maternal uncles is named Ross, while another uncle is named Dee Williams.

Ross' parents were native Texans employed in the service industry. Arthur was a general laborer, and Alice, a laundress.

Community involvement was meaningful to the Hunt family. The family attended Mount Olive Baptist Church. The church's 1968-69

yearbook listed Arthur Hunt as "an old and faithful church member," a deacon, and a church officer. Arthur, Morris, and Ross were members of Mason Lodge #103, located in Mosier Valley.

By 1930, the Hunt family lived at 103 Collins Street. (8) Arthur owned the family home, valued at \$200. All three boys attended Booker T. Washington School, located on Houston Street, the only elementary school for Black students.

By 1940, Ross was married to Curley Bee Hudson. The young parents, ages 22 and 18, would later have a daughter, Dixie Faye, born on September 27, 1941.

On September 16, 1940, the United States Congress passed the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940. Less than a month later, Ross registered for military service.

Ross' draft card described him as 5'7" and 164 pounds, with black hair, brown eyes, and a dark brown complexion. His mother, Alice, was listed as next of kin.

Ross enlistment commenced on January 12, 1942, when he began serving in the U.S. Navy as Seaman Apprentice (E-2). He spent his brief service time loading munitions at California's Port Chicago Naval Magazine. Two years later, Ross would be tragically killed in an accident.

SERIAL NUMBER 659	1. NAME (Print) Ross Dee Hunt		ORDER NUMBER 230
2. ADDRESS (Print) 105 Collins, Arlington Tarrant, Tex.			
3. TELEPHONE	4. AGE IN YEARS 22	5. PLACE OF BIRTH Arlington, Tex.	6. COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP America
7. NAME OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS Mrs. Alice Hunt		8. RELATIONSHIP OF THAT PERSON Mother	
9. ADDRESS OF THAT PERSON 105 Collins, Se. Arlington Tarrant, Tex.			
10. EMPLOYER'S NAME W. Division, Arlington Tarrant, Tex.			
11. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS W. Division, Arlington Tarrant, Tex.			
I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.			
REGISTRATION CARD D. S. S. FORM 1		18-1110 Ross Dee Hunt	

Ross Dee Hunt – Registration Card

Port Chicago accident -

"On the evening of July 17, 1944, at the Port Chicago Naval Munitions base located on San Francisco Bay, the largest state-side military disaster of World War II occurred, killing 320 men and injuring another 390 men on the base. Two transport ships, the E.A. Bryan and the Quinault Victory, were destroyed.

The small town of Port Chicago, only 30 miles from San Francisco, also suffered tremendous damage. Chunks of smoldering metal weighing hundreds of pounds and even un-detonated bombs rained down upon the community, damaging over 300 structures and injuring over 100 people. Miraculously, none of the bombs exploded, and no residents of the town of Port Chicago were killed. By the sheer size of the blast, the Port Chicago explosion was as large as a 5-kiloton bomb." [Source www.nps.gov/poch]

Racial inequality -

"For reasons that can never be accurately determined, a cataclysmic series of explosions—the largest man-made detonation in history to that point—erupted with the force of 5,000 tons of TNT. Instantly, 320 men, two-thirds of them African American, were killed, and hundreds more were injured. The ships they were loading were nearly obliterated; a locomotive evaporated. The force of the blasts was felt 20 miles away in San Francisco." "The Port Chicago disaster highlighted systemic racial inequality in the Navy. A year before the disaster, the U.S. Navy had over 100,000 African Americans in service, but not one black officer." [Source https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Port_Chicago_disaster]

An inspiration to others -

On July 20, 1944, the Fort Worth Star-Telegram reported that Ross Dee Hunt was one of the fatalities. He was 26 years old. Ross was survived by his wife, Curley Bee, and their daughter, Dixie Faye; parents Arthur and Alice Hunt; brothers Horace and Morris; and various other family members and friends. He's buried at Mosier Valley Cemetery in Euless, Texas. His epitaph reads, "His life an ideal, his memory an inspiration."

Ross Dee Hunt –
Gravestone at Mosier Valley Cemetery



Port Chicago Naval Magazine National Memorial

The blast site is now known as The Port Chicago Naval Magazine National Memorial. It is located at the Concord Naval Weapons Station, near Concord, California. It was dedicated in 1994 and is now a part of the National Park System.



FORT WORTH, ARLINGTON NEGROES AMONG VICTIMS.

A Negro seaman from Fort Worth and another from Arlington Thursday were reported missing and presumably dead in the Monday night explosion of two ammunition ships at Port Chicago, Cal.

They are Silas Bell, seaman second class, whose wife, Matiline Lillian Bell, now of California, formerly lived at 704 New York, Fort Worth, and Ross Dee Hunt, seaman second class, whose wife, Curly Bee Hunt, lives at 105 S. Collins, Arlington.

Bell, born and reared in Arlington, entered the Navy last January. He leaves two children.

For more info, visit www.nps.gov/poch/index.htm

Newspaper clipping from Fort Worth Star-Telegram

Ross Dee Hunt is honored at the Arlington World War II Memorial near City Hall. His name and rank are listed on the plaque "In Memoriam | The World War II Casualties of Arlington, Texas."

Because of the sacrifices of men such as Ross Dee Hunt, we remember the price of freedom.

In Memory of Larry Barcroft (1956-2022)

Although not related to Black history, we wanted to include a short tribute to Larry Barcroft.

Larry was a longtime AHS Board Member and docent at the Knapp Heritage Park. He passed away on February 1, 2022. A memorial will be held at Knapp Heritage Park or Fielder House in his honor, with more details coming soon.

AHS Board Members offered the following words of condolence:

- Larry was a great tour guide for the Knapp and had his own way of telling the story of the park. He never met a stranger and could talk to a fence post. He could always be counted on. Please join me in prayers for his wife, Mayling, and his parents. Larry was my friend.
- So very thankful for the gifts Larry shared with the Arlington Historical Society and Knapp Heritage Park in particular. He will definitely be missed.
- Larry was smart, friendly, knowledgeable, and always ready to help.
- The loss of a local history champion is always such terrible news, with Larry certainly no exception. Prayers for Mayling and Larry's parents. May Larry rest in peace.
- So sorry to learn of Larry's passing. He was certainly one of AHS's most loyal supports. Prayers certainly for his family, Mayling especially.