

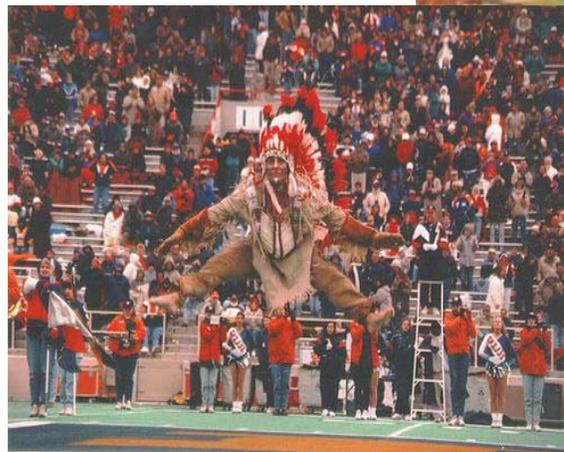
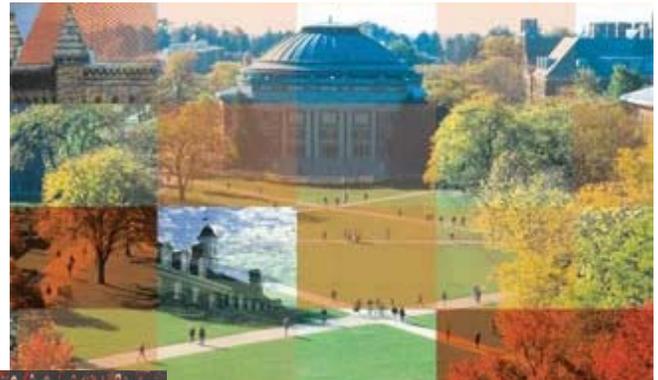


Introduction

From their founding to present day, the cities of Champaign-Urbana have been host to many things, most notably the founding of the University of Illinois, the Illinois Central Railroad, the Civil Rights movement, and the expulsion of the Native American population. In researching the historical formation of these sister cities, we were able to break down the historical events that were most influential in developing the place that Champaign-Urbana is today. The histories of these two cities parallel one another thus we focused our research more closely on the city of Champaign. In doing so we discovered that there were three key elements that are most notable in discussing what this area represents today. The original founding of the cities along with the founding of the University of Illinois, the strife that was caused by racial discrimination and the civil rights movements, and the removal of the native American people from the land that was originally theirs. By researching historical documents and records and by reading oral histories of actual residents of years past, we were able to see the occurrences that changed the lives of so many different people from so many different walks of life.

Methodology

In conducting our research on Native Americans, the founding of the University of Illinois, and segregation of African Americans we consulted the archives at the University of Illinois as well as the Urbana Free Library. In addition we contacted the Native American House in order to guide our research about early Native Americans in Champaign Urbana. Other research sources we used included the University of Illinois Library Gateway and other academic books and journals. We used these sources to synthesize the history of the area and break it down into three key parts. The key parts are as follows: “Native Americans in Champaign Illinois”, “The Founding of the University and the City of Champaign”, and “Segregation In Champaign Urbana.”



Traditional Native American Hunting



Photo Courtesy of www.cr.nps.gov

Native Americans in Champaign-Urbana

When looking at the historical formation of Champaign-Urbana, one must look deep into the past. Before the lands of Champaign-Urbana were ever found and even before Champaign-Urbana ever existed Native American Tribes ruled the prairies of the Midwest. Although it was later on that white settlers came to the area, now known as Champaign-Urbana, to settle the land and lay out townships, it was the various tribes of Native Americans that first came to these lands and called them home. Furthermore, these tribes that lived in the central Midwest years and years ago are now represented by a prestigious college university that lies in the same lands that these Native Americans once called home.

In regards to the Midwest prairies, the best known tribes that ruled this region were those of the Kickapoo and the Illinois whose various tribes included the Cahokia, Kaskaskia, and Peoria. The Illinois Indians, which were part of a bigger family known as the Algonquin family, were one of the largest tribes in the central prairies and woodland region. The Illinois Indians were actually called Illiniwek, which means, “men” or “people” (Bial, 1993). Although Native Americans lived all over what we now

call the continental United States, it wasn't until the 1600's that the majority of the Illinois Indians covered what is now northern and central Illinois. Since the Illinois Indians were such a large tribe, they needed a vast and rich area to support them, and the Illinois River country was just the place. The Illinois River country was located in western central part of what is now Illinois. This location allowed them to be near the central Illinois plains, which were covered with herds of Bison upon which were the Illini's favorite food source. At the same time this location allowed them to live near the river which was better suited for habitation than that of the central plains located farther eastward which were marshy. “The Illinois also enjoyed annual buffalo hunts in which they lit the prairies on fire”. “In lighting the prairies on fire the Illinois allowed for the prairies to remain open and forest free, thus keeping the bison, elk, and deer from wanting to leave the region.” (Lowery & Moore, Par. 1) Since the central part of Illinois, near the Illinois River, was so bountiful and its climate was better suited than that of the Great Lakes and Wisconsin to the north, the desirability for the area was great. With the Illinois Indians now living throughout the northern and central parts of Illinois, it was only a matter of time before wars would arise with other tribes that called parts of this region home as well. When other tribes heard of how attractive and plentiful this area was, they waged war with the Illinois to claim right to this great land. The Illinois Indians waged war with various numbers of tribes such as the Winnebago, Iroquois, Fox, and the Sac. A series of wars with the Iroquois left the Illinois weakened and disadvantaged in maintaining the land of Illinois and thus the Illinois Indians allied themselves with the French. The wars following the newly developed friendship with the French were not much better for either side, for it was the “Chickasaw wars with the Sac and Fox that pushed the Illinois Indians out of the northern Midwest territories.” (Hasse, Par. 4)

Since land was highly coveted by different tribes and European settlements, wars were the only



way to take claim to certain parts of land. Those that lost the wars were forced to move else where in search of a new home. In doing so, groups of Indians that lived in northern part of the Midwest traveled south to the central region of what is now Illinois. In moving south to central Illinois, Native Americans were exposed to two areas. The area to the west, near the Illinois River and Mississippi River, was seen as better locations for living where as the area to the east was seen as good camping and hunting grounds. The area to the west was known as the Illinois River country and the area to the east is what is known currently as Champaign-Urbana. Much of the land in which Champaign-Urbana is built came from the frozen stretches of Wisconsin and Canada. Through the melting of the glaciers up north, trees, rocks, soil, and other sediment were deposited throughout central Illinois allowing the land of Champaign-Urbana to obtain its flat character. In time this land developed into a prairie that contained woods, mostly along streams, and acres upon acres of green grass. Although the land was quite marshy and perhaps unfit for habitation, it was only a matter of time before a tribe of Native Americans or European Settlers made this area their home.

The first people to set foot on the ground around Champaign-Urbana were Native Americans. Regardless, "It is difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain exactly what tribes frequented the region. French Explorers of the 17th century did refer to the tribes of the Illinois Indians: Cahokia, Kaskaskia, Peoria, as well as the Kickapoo and Potawatomis as those that most frequented." (Bial, 1993) As stated earlier the Cahokia, Kaskaskia, and Peoria tribes of the Illinois maintained their villages primarily along the banks of the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers for it was believed that, "the eastern part of central Illinois was a good place to visit on hunting expeditions, but not for a permanent residence." (Bial, 1993) The Illinois Indians eventually left the area of central Illinois by the early 1800's for the only surviving tribes left were the Kaskaskia and the Peoria. The remaining Illinois Indian Tribes sold their remaining lands and moved west of the Mississipp-

pi River. However, it was believed that up to the year 1819, the land of Champaign-Urbana was occupied by what was known as the Kickapoo tribe of Indians. It is said that, "the Kickapoo Indians were frequent occupiers of this land for more than fifty years, and their ownership was recognized by contemporaneous tribes of Indians and military authorities, French, English, and American." (Champaign-Urbana, Par. 3) "It so continued until the year 1819, when a treaty entered into at Edwardsville, Illinois, on the thirtieth day of July, between the United States and the Kickapoo Indian tribe, represented by its chiefs, ceded territory to the whites. The language of this treaty recites that, "said Kickapoo tribe claims a large portion by descent from their ancestors, and the balance by conquest from the Illinois nation and undisputed possession for more than half a century." (Champaign-Urbana Par. 4-5) Through this treaty, the Kickapoo Indians had to leave the area at once and travel to their new home beyond the Mississippi like the other Tribes of the Illinois.

During this time, the area from the Great Lakes to the Ohio River became known as the Northwest Territory. Through the Articles of Confederation settlers were invited into this region, which further helped to displace the remaining Native Americans in this region. "Through the arrival of these new settlers the demise of the Indians, already weakened by disease, was assured." (Bial, 1993) The resistance of the Indians could not stand up to those of new settlers for so many of the natives had already gone west leaving very few to defend what was rightfully theirs. Despite the downfall of Native American Tribes in the region of Champaign-Urbana as well as throughout Illinois, "Potawatomis and other Indians continued to visit Champaign County, for the area around Urbana was considered to be a favorite camping place." (Bial, 1993) Nonetheless, by the late 1830's the last of the Indians had been forced west of the Mississippi River. This last voyage came to be known as the, "The Trail of Death" in which the last Potawatomis that were removed from northern Indiana to eastern Kansas passed through southern Champaign County in 1838." (Bial,

1993)

It is clear that when looking back at the days of the Native Americans in the region of central Illinois, especially in the lands of Champaign-Urbana, that they have not been forgotten. Through the development of Champaign-Urbana, one of the most prestigious universities has been founded, along with a great history. The University of Illinois, founded in 1867, “conceived the idea of having a Native American war dance performed during half-time of Illinois football games.” “The first performance occurred on October 30, 1926 during the half-time of a game against the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia.” (Chief, Par. 1) In performing the dance, the Chief, would be met by the fellow schools mascot, offered a peace pipe, and walk off the field arm in arm. The football team and head coach Bob Zuppke first used the idea of the “Chief”, “to refer to the Illiniwek Confederation of Native Americans who had historically inhabited much of present-day Illinois.” (Chief, Par. 2) However, the actual costume is made from those of the Oglala Sioux (a nation unrelated to the Illiniwek).

When coming up with the idea of the “Chief”, it was not meant to be harmful or signify racial stereotypes. The main purpose of the “Chief” at that time of its arrival was a way to unite the University during athletic events. The “Chief” was seen as a way to bring pride to the school and the descendants that lived on these same lands before us. In doing so, however, much controversy has taken place. Descendants of the Illiniwek do not support the “Chief” for the dance and the outfit is not authentic. “Chief Illiniwek’s dance was derived from “Indian Lore” studies done by university students who had been Boy Scouts.” (Chief, Par. 4) The descendants of the Illiniwek and others in favor of retiring the “Chief” feel it brings a negative image to the University and gives an inaccurate image of Native Americans rather than promoting pride for the Native Americans. The Peoria Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma, the closest living descendants of the Illiniwek have had mixed views over the years. One Chief, Don Giles, was quoted as saying, “We are proud. We’re proud that the University of Illinois, the flagship university of the

state, a seat of learning, is drawing on that background of our having been there. And what more honor could they pay us?” (Chief, Par. 7) However, Rob Forman, elected Chief after Don Giles did not have the same mindset regarding the Chief. After speaking with American Indian students, Rob Forman stated, “I don’t know what the origination was, or what the reason was for the university to create Chief Illiniwek. I don’t think it was to honor us, because, hell, they ran our (butts) out of Illinois.” (Chief, Par.8) Thus the “Chief” is still under the watchful eye of the executive committee and has been banned from any postseason games regarding athletics. However, the executive committee and NCAA has allowed the University to continue using the nicknames “Illini” and “Fighting Illini” because they are based on the name of the state and not of Native American descent.

Nonetheless, one can see that the historical formation of Champaign-Urbana dates back to the days before the European settlers. Although the European settlers were first to draw up the lots of the area, it was the Native Americans that first set foot on the land we now call Champaign-Urbana. Not only were the Native Americans the first to set foot on the area known as Champaign-Urbana and call it home, but it was the Illinois Indians that the University of Illinois decided to base their mascot off of. Although controversy has arisen over the issue, the history of the University, the “Chief”, and the land itself will always be known as the first home to the Native American tribes.

Works Cited

1. Bial, Raymond. Champaign - a Pictorial History. St. Louis, MI: G. Bradley, 1993. 1-2.
2. “Champaign-Urbana Area History.” CU-Today.Com. 19 Nov. 2006 <.” (CU-Today.com/history.html)>.
3. “Chief Illiniwek.” Wikipedia the Free Encyclopedia. 16 Nov. 2006. 19 Nov. 2006 < (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chief_Illiniwek)>.
4. Haase, Virginia. “Illinois.” Chief Illiniwek Educational Foundation. 19 Nov. 2006 < (<http://www.mnsu.edu/emuseum/cultural/northamerica/illinois>)>.

html)>.

5. Lowery, Debbie, and Dawn Moore. "The Illinois." Illinois Chicago Student Resources. 15 Feb.-Mar. 2006. 19 Nov. 2006 <http://www.museum.state.il.us/muslink/nat_amer/post/htmls/il.html>.

The Original Law Building at U of I

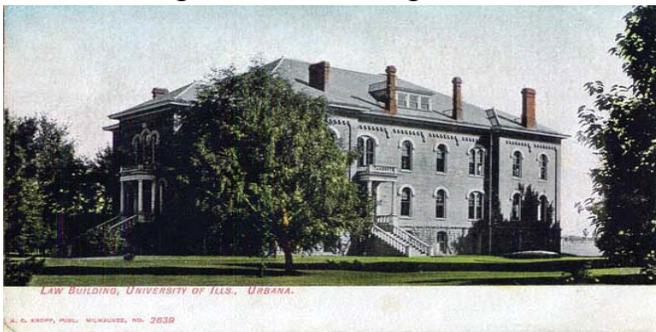


Photo Courtesy of Rootsweb.com

The Two Foundings

Many years after the glaciers had pushed through the Midwest, giving it its distinctively flat land and rich soil and the Native Americans had established themselves in this area, white settlers began to push their way into the area that was at this time around 80% prairie and about 20% forest. The forests were the first parts of the land to be cleared while the prairies would later become mostly farmland. As more and more land was taken away from the Native American people, more settlers were invited to come and begin making the area their prosperous homes. By the late 1830's there were hardly any Indians left in the area at all.

Between 1826 and 1832 at least a dozen families, mostly from Kentucky, assumed their residences in the woods that used to occupy the Champaign area. Many of them never sought legal deeds for this area but were more of a group of "squatters" that lived off the land. In 1833, Senator John Vance, who was the representative in near by Vermillion County and the other unorganized areas surround-

ing it introduced a bill into the Illinois Legislature that would create a new county that would be named after Urbana, in Champaign County, Ohio. This had been Vance's boyhood home which is why he chose these names for the new county and town. It was approved and Isaac Busey, Jacob Bartley, and George Akers were the first county commissioners. It is most notable that Busey would become a very prominent name in Champaign. A bank was named after him and is still in business today. There is also a Busey street in Urbana today.

For the first twenty years the population grew rather slowly in Champaign county. Settlers were still clearing the wooded areas for their homes because the timbers were necessary in the building of the homes and the tough prairie sod proved very difficult to bring a plow blade through. The soil at the time was also believed to be infertile because no trees grew there. It was not until much later that it was found that the soil under the prairie could support crops. President Millard Fillmore approved a grant in 1850 for the Illinois Central Railroad. This would amount to about 2.5 million acres and consisted of four possible routes. One was through Homer, two through Urbana, and another two miles west of Urbana. The western route was chosen, and in 1854 the first train stopped at the small depot in what was known as "West Urbana" at the time. As the railroad grew so did the town, population, and eventually business. The growth began around the train depot and continued outward. It is not known what exactly was the first business, but the first store was opened by a man named John Baddeley in 1855. By 1858 there were thirty businesses, three mills, a plow factory, and a newspaper that was serving the ever growing population that amounted to about 3,285 people at the time (Bial 44). Much of the business district including the Cattle Bank, which is still in existence, was located on the east side of the tracks around First Street and University Avenue. Two other notable buildings at the time were the first church, Goose Pond Church, and the Doane House, which served as a hotel for railroad passengers until



it burnt to the ground in 1898. The church was named for the nearby pond which attracted many geese until it was filled in by the railroad in the late 1850's. With the continuous growth there needed to be a dividing line between the two communities. The dividing line was the depot and from that point there was a division between Urbana and West Urbana. In 1861 West Urbana officially became what is now Champaign as to not lead to any confusion between the two towns at the County Seat.

The presence of the University of Illinois has been very important to the cities of Champaign and Urbana. Due to the fact that the university property occupies land in both cities and that all the students and many faculty members reside in these two cities means that there is an incredibly large impact on the area due to the school. "The history of the University of Illinois is one of over a quarter of a million people who have studied, taught, and worked at the University and several million Illinois taxpayers who make annual investments in higher education. A democratic, land-grant institution, the University of Illinois is one of the largest state universities in the United States (Brichford, 1)." John Milton Gregory could easily be considered the most important "founding father" of the university. He came to Illinois in 1867 to organize what was originally called the Illinois Industrial University. He was very idealistic in his plans for the type of education that would be offered here deeming the University of Illinois to be the "West Point of the Working World" (Powell, 126). For thirteen years Gregory fought to make this school well rounded so that it could offer a different type of education to many different types of students with many different desires of study. Most notably, Gregory tried to make popular a curriculum of liberal arts and sciences. This proved extremely difficult given that the main focuses of study at this time were agricultural education, engineering, and business. Because these were the early days of the university and a very premature time in the implementation of higher education, the first students were mainly from nearby counties and all wanted to study the same things. This lack of diversity

and results lead to clashes with state legislators and Gregory resigned in 1880.

The first building of what is now the University of Illinois began as the Goose Pond Church and later became what is known as the Elephant. In 1862, the Morrill Land Grant was enacted, providing federal lands to states establishing colleges. The city of Bloomington began what is now Illinois State University with the University of Illinois soon to follow suit. The old main hall, commonly known as the Elephant served as the place where all classes met and included dormitories and offices for the faculty. Tuition was \$15 and room rental \$4 per semester (Solberg, 245). After windstorm damage and common neglect the Elephant was demolished in 1881.

Unfortunately the 1880's brought incredible financial hardship to the institution. The Illinois Industrial University became the University of Illinois in 1885 with the wishes from faculty and alumni that anyone would confuse the school as a place for delinquents. In order to build the University's academic reputation academic standards were stiffly increased which brought many attacks from groups of students and the still developing alumni groups. The university's president at the time was Selim H. Peabody and he was a very staunch supporter of the increased academic standards. The controversy that surrounded the academic expectations eventually caused the board of trustees of the University to force him out of office in 1891. Thomas J. Burrill acted as president while a three year search ensued for a replacement. During this time, fraternities, athletics and the liberalization of regulations began to show around the campus. The enrollment and campus residential numbers also increased dramatically making the University, that had previously struggled, flourish in a noticeable fashion.

An outspoken New Yorker by the name of Andrew S. Draper came to power at the university later after Burrill stepped down and more changes came about at the University of Illinois. He hired more faculty members with broader educations and added the schools of law, library science, and medicine to the



curriculum. 1889 saw an even greater improvement in enrollment, classes, and academic standards-the University of Illinois was on the rise again. By 1909 the University Library was one of the largest out of any in the entire nation. The schools of agriculture and engineering began research and experimentation which in turn brought public attention and funding to the University. In 1899, Dean Eugene Davenport got a \$150,000 grant for a new building (Powell 324). With two new colleges firmly developed, the rest of the deans allied against Draper and he was forced out of office in 1904.

Following Draper was a very important man by the name of Edmund J. James. He held office of chancellor for a total of sixteen years during which time the university grew considerably due to his massive contributions. He sought to hire young, enthusiastic, and above all highly demanded faculty members to educate the growing number of students that were coming to the university at this time. Admissions were still on the rise along with government funding. Midwestern colleges were on the rise in general and James' time in office brought the University of Illinois to the forefront of all of these institutions. Around this time as well, the University of Illinois football team was enjoying numerous winning seasons that brought a new sense of school spirit and campus morale to student life.

The decade between 1920 and 1930 saw continuous prosperity here in Champaign-Urbana. The president at the time was a long time University administrator named David Kinley. He handled the increasing enrollments with exquisite expertise and was able to push for more land, money, and facilities to insure that the students would have the best possible education for their money. Tuition was increasing at this time as well, but due to the ever growing number of alumni and their special groups more scholarships were handed out each year. This made it possible for more and more students to afford higher education. Also at this time, the University was known as one of the strongest fraternity campuses in the country. Because of this and other reasons, student life was really at an all time high. More and more people wanted to enroll and the large

scale institution that the University is today was really beginning to take shape.

The economic depression and second world war made for some slower times at the University. All of the able bodied college aged men were off fighting either in Europe or on the Pacific front. Building construction halted for a short time and there was a slight period of staleness at the University. This all changed after the war was over, however, when the University saw completely unprecedented growth. Many soldiers returning from war were able to reap the benefits of the GI Bill, in which the federal government paid for their educations entirely. Because of this many people that otherwise would not have planned on going to college due to financial reasons were able to attend. This brought some growing pains to the University due to the fact that before the end of the war, federal and state budget cuts were considerable. This all worked out with time and the University continued to grow and prosper even after a brief time of panic.

The late 1950's and 1960's saw the reign of the very able and successful David Henry. He accelerated the building program, improved the existing conditions of the university facilities, and introduced the first graduate college. Admissions continued to increase into the 1970's especially because of the growing junior college systems. Before junior colleges typically offered associates degrees for people to complete within a year or two and then go on to work. At this time more students were earning their associates degrees and then gaining admission to 4 year universities all over the nation. The University of Illinois was no different and therefore numbers continued to grow.

The past 30 or 40 years have not marked any significant change around the University. The recent controversy of the Chief, the Illini mascot and the growing difficulty of admissions are really the only notable things that have happened in recent years. In the years following its founding the University of Illinois has emerged from its "sleeping giant" reputation and has become one of the nation's leaders in higher education. With such a large residential campus lo-

cated in a small city in rural America, this institution has played a major role in educating thousands from across the globe. “The History of the University of Illinois is that of students seeking emancipation, identity, qualifications for employment and knowledge; of staff seeking professional opportunity, a challenging role in dynamic institution and an understanding of the complex and perplexing business of educating the elites which must both manage and transform society” (Brichford, 3).

Works Cited

Bial, Raymond. Champaign A Pictorial History, G. Bradley Publishing St. Louis Missouri 1993

Brichford, Maynard. “A Brief History of the University of Illinois,” University of Illinois Press, Urbana, Illinois 1983

Powell, Burt. The Movement for Industrial Education and the Establishment of the University, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, Illinois 1918.

Solberg, Winton. The University of Illinois the Shaping of the University, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, Illinois 2000

Civil Rights Protest in the 1960's



Photo Courtesy of www.law.seattleu.edu

Segregation of African Americans in Champaign-Urbana

In most American cities rapid industrial development in the 19th century has led to frequent changes in the ethnic and racial composition of the population. One immigrant group has followed another in rapid succession, each suffering pains of adjustment in its struggle to gain acceptance (Aberbach 1973:1).

The above mentioned quote is as true for Champaign and Urbana, two cities in central Illinois, as for any city in the United States. In the 1950's as a result of changes in agricultural production in the south many African Americans were forced to leave for other parts of the country to find work. Manufacturing jobs and railroad work drew people North to large industrial cities such as Chicago. On the way to Chicago many southern African Americans stopped

off in Champaign and settled finding jobs with the ICS railroad and the University of Illinois. Many left the south looking for a better life, however what awaited them was opposition in the form of racism and segregation (Aberbach 1973). Segregation became especially apparent in the 1960's with the beginning of the urban renewal movement which pushed many African Americans out of their homes. The paradox of history in these two cities is that the original settlers of the area, Native Americans, had a similar experience to that of African Americans hundreds of years later in the 1950's and 60's, of racism, segregation, and being forced out as a result of racist beliefs about their skin color.

Methodology

Segregation and racism can be particularly hard to learn about in history books, a lot can be lost in translation when one person is telling the story of another person's experience. The best source of information is the people affected by segregation, in this case African Americans living in Champaign Urbana in those turbulent times. The City of Urbana Free Library conducted an oral history project in 1983, interviewing African American residents asking them about their experience of racism and segregation in their community. Surely similar experiences of segregation were had throughout the United States in from the early 1900's up through the 1960's, but the oral history project allows us to look at the specific unique experiences of African Americans in Champaign-Urbana. As a result of the large volume of interviews in the Urbana Free Library oral history project it is most efficient to narrow our discussion down by focusing on the interviews of four individuals, whose experience are representative of the community as a whole.

Carrie Nelson, Erma Bridgewater, Henry Mears, and Bruce Nesbitt were all active residents living in Champaign during the most turbulent times of segregation in the 1920s through 60's. Their oral histories give personal accounts of the segregation that occurred, views on how the community evolved, and opinions on the introduction of urban renewal. In order to understand a little bit about these individuals per-

sonal history it is important to know their age, when they moved to Champaign-Urbana, and occupation. Carrie Nelson was born on June 4, 1900 in Homer Illinois. Ms. Nelson moved to Champaign in 1916 at the age of 16 because it was closer to her uncle's work, who she was living with at the time. Moving to Champaign was more convenient than traveling on the interurban, a now defunct transportation system connecting towns in central Illinois. Ms. Nelson did not speak of having any employment but her husband, Cecil, was a janitor at Lawhead School in the community. Erma Bridgewater was born in Champaign in 1913. Her first job was as a maid at the Newman Center, a Catholic residence hall on the University of Illinois campus. Later on in life Bridgewater worked as a director of the Fredrick Douglass Center, a type of community center popular with the African American youths. Bruce Nesbitt was born on Nov 14 1932 in Champaign. At the time of the interview Nesbitt was the director of the Afro American Cultural Center at the University of Illinois. Henry Mears was born in the early 1900's to a father who was an unskilled laborer and a mother who was a cook for a white family. He moved to Champaign in September of 1965 after being offered a teaching position at King School. At the time of the interview Mears was the associate principal of Urbana Senior High school in Urbana. After the interview he was named principal of the Urbana Junior High School (Champaign County Historical Archives Urbana Illinois 1995- 2001).

Segregation in the Workplace

As previously mentioned many people that came to Champaign Urbana worked in jobs related to the railroad industry or university. When asked about their experience of what kinds of jobs African Americans had in Champaign Ms. Nelson responded: I don't think they had many jobs. They had mostly the campus...the men were porters between the houses. And they had maids who cleaned, some that did all the...well they had men and women in the sororities too, because then heavy work, the men had to do. And they had cooks and mostly cleaning jobs or I don't



really know. Railroading, that was a big object. At the railroads they used to have lots of people (Champaign County Historical Archives Urbana Illinois 2000).

As Nelson says work opportunities for African Americans were limited and often hard to come by unless they were in the industrial sector or service industry. Even when people were qualified for a job as in the following case of Henry Mears they were passed up for a job because of the highly racialized segregated nature of the workplace.

Well, let me try to sum that up this way. Is that, there were not many job opportunities for blacks because there are certain positions that the local white community perceived that blacks should hold and shouldn't go any further, okay. And that still holds true. I'm not saying it's changed very much... When I first came in the community after the first two years, I was working on a masters degree, which I was to receive in August of 1968. The individual who was director of personnel at the time, we got into a casual conversation... he said "You're working on your masters, and I understand you're just about finished. I said yes. He said "What do you intend to do?"... I said, "I'm working getting my masters in elementary education, and I'm putting some emphasis on school administration. He said, "Well you know there isn't very much around in school administration."... But what he was telling me, there's not much for blacks (Champaign County Historical Archives Urbana Illinois 2001).

Opposition to Segregation

Along with the segregation during this time came the civil rights movement. Many African Americans refused to let segregation and discrimination continue without standing up. Erma Bridgewater spoke about when people in Champaign began to stand up against segregation in the workplace,

One of the things I do remember is the job thing, where the picketing was for jobs. You know Penneys was about to open Penneys store was about to open downtown and all the churches really got together...and picketed Penneys because they weren't going to hire

and blacks...and it paid off. they did hire some blacks (Champaign County Historical Archives Urbana Illinois 1995).

The picketing that occurred at Penneys was not an isolated incident; in the 1950's and 1960's there was a strong civil rights movement as in many other places across the country. At the time many businesses were still segregated having separate facilities for African Americans and whites or even completely excluding African Americans being a patron at certain businesses. In the oral history interview of Bruce Nesbitt he talks about some of the segregation in businesses in Champaign and what the civil rights movement did to battle this unequal treatment.

There was a section in the movies, and depending on which movie, the Rialto or the Orpheum Theater or the Park Theater where blacks sat. There were stores downtown where you was treated indifferent from the regular customer. So segregation existed long up into the 50's. It didn't stop in the 30's or 40's... In 1954-1955 J.C. Caroline dared to challenged the campus barbershop, and went in for a haircut because he was a popular athlete, you understand, and they refused to cut his hair...I spent a lot of time picketing the Steak and Shake on Green Street because they allowed the black customers to drive up and to use the facilities of the drive up window, but they could not go inside. And so we went and picketed and I was very much part of the movement to get Steak and Shake open. I spent some time in the early 60's with Jim Ransom and some other people in the community picketing downtown. I think it was the Sears and the Penney's stores, behind blacks, because blacks, was and boycotted those stores because blacks was spending money in those franchises....I can remember very vividly in my adolescent years when I was going to grade school, I had to go right past Meadow Gold Ice Cream Company which was located on the corner of 5th and University Ave. And they always has a sign posted in there, "We reserve the right to serve our customers" which was a selectivity thing. It was to say in a subtle manner that if you were black, we don't want to serve



you and come up to this (Champaign County Historical Archives Urbana Illinois 2001).

Segregation in Schools

In addition to the segregation in the workplace and business's in Champaign the school system in Champaign was highly segregated at the time. Schools were mainly segregated according to race and when they were integrated the opportunities were not equal for African American children as illustrated by the experience of Erma Bridgewater, ...When I got into high school (Edison graduated in 1931) there was a swimming pool there, but blacks weren't allowed to swim. And my parents and some of the other parent went to the principal and told them they wanted us to have swimming...What they did was let us swim after everybody else was out you know all the white kids had their day, and we were able to swim. That was bad except we did get to swim (Champaign County Historical Archives Urbana Illinois 1995).

Segregation in Housing

African Americans also experienced segregation in terms of their housing. Neighborhoods were separated according to race and there was a large stratification in conditions between the predominately white and African American neighborhoods. In general conditions in African Americans areas were poor and characterized by slums. With the Housing Act of 1949 urban renewal or slum clearance and redevelopment became a national program including Champaign Urbana. An official urban renewal program was not initiated until 1960 in Champaign (Albert 1963). The objective of the project was to,

Clear and redevelop the slum areas whose conditions are beyond the scope of the less drastic programs and to offer the assistance needed in areas which are becoming blighted, and need immediate attention to prevent further deterioration. (Albert 1963:10)

The area the program focused on was know as the Northeast Neighborhood, it encompassed 225 acres and had a population of approximately 930 families with about 900 being non-white. Several of the oral history participants lived in the Northeast Neighbor-

hood. Although the program was meant to improve the slum conditions it essentially displaced people living there and provided them little or no housing alternatives. Special interests groups in the area such as the Champaign Urbana Improvement Association felt the program would only increase the segregated character of housing in the community (Albert 1963).

The oral histories offer the perspective of those mostly closely affected by the urban renewal program. Their opinions about urban renewal are the most accurate judge of the programs success. The general consensus among those asked about urban renewal was that it had a negative impact on their lives and the community. When asked what she felt about urban renewal Carrie Nelson replied, "Oh, we thought that was something awful" (Champaign County Historical Archives Urbana Illinois 2000).

As evidenced by the statement of Carrie Nelson an individual affected by urban renewal, the program overall was unsuccessful rather than improve conditions the program resulted in the further segregation of housing in Champaign Urbana.

Conclusions

A lot has changed in Champaign Urbana since the 1960's in terms of segregation. Today there is no longer the same outright segregation although it may still occur on a smaller scale. One must wonder whether or the people of Champaign have learned from the mistakes in discrimination and segregation of Native Americans and African Americans or is the same process being repeated with foreign immigrants living at Orchard Downs. In order to avoid making the same mistakes as the past it is vital that projects like the Urbana Free Library Oral History Project are completed and made available to the public to increase awareness and avoid making the same mistakes.



Works Cited

- Aberbach, Joel & Walker, Jack. "Race in the City".
Little Brown and Company;
Boston: 1973.
- Albert, Frank. "The Initiation of Urban Renewal in a
Middle Size Community." Thesis University of
Illinois; Champaign: 1963.
- Urbana Free Library Oral Histories:
Erma Bridgewater
608 East Washington Street
Champaign, IL
July 26, 1983
Interviewed by Melinda Roundtree and Patrick Tyler
Champaign County Historical Archives Urbana, Illinois
1995
- Carrie Nelson
10002 N. 5th Street
Champaign, IL
August 24, 1982
Interviewed by Irma Bridgewater
Champaign County Historical Archives Urbana Illinois
2000
- Bruce Nesbitt
708 S. Matthews
Aug 4, 1983
Interviewed by Melissa Roundtree and Patrick Tyler
Champaign County Historical Archives Urbana, Illinois
2001
- Henry O. Mears
Urbana High School
1002 Race St. Urbana
July 13, 1983
Interviewed by Patrick Tyler and Melinda Roundtree
Champaign County Historical Archives Urbana IL 2001

Conclusion

Through our studies of the history of the Champaign-Urbana area, we have found that there have been a number of different occurrences that have changed the demographic make up. The fact that there were Native Americans living in the area prior to white settlement begins a rather vicious cycle of racial persecution that would continue well into the modern times. The white settlers arrived and expelled the indians where they settled the land and founded the cities. Soon after, the University of Illinois was founded where white males continued to dominate the area until the civil rights movement began and society began to work toward racial equality. The lesson here is that history seems to repeat itself throughout time. This is why it is so important that ethnographic research is done so that as planning students we can do our very best in our future careers to prevent such inequalities from taking place in the areas that we plan and design.



Appendix
Exerpts From Oral History Interviews

Carrie Nelson
10002 N. 5th Street
Champaign, IL
August 24, 1982
Interviewed by Irma Bridgewater
Champaign County Historical Archives Urbana IL
2000

Nelson: ..I was born on June 4, 1900 and grew up in Homer Illinois

B: That's interesting. Then you came to Champaign when you were about 16

N: That was 1916

B: You were about 16 years old. How did you happen to come to Champaign?

N: Well My uncle Frank Ernest who was a few years older than I had graduated from highschool and he wanted to go to college. And they were trying to decide whether they should, he should, come back and forth on the interurban which went right by where we lived in the country, or move, and they decided they would move so they moved to Champaign.

N: We first lived on Water Street...

B: Where there very many people living around there on water street

N:No

B: then you moved to park St...It was a mixed neighborhood then wasn't it

N Yes it was all mixed, Park Street was

B: Were there very many blacks living, let's say south of Washington Street then?

N: South of Washington....yes there were quite a few

B Where did you go to High School?

N: Champaign High school...Helen Hines and Faye Hines. As I remember we were the only three blacks that graduated that year

B: Just three of you? How do you feel, looking back on it now, how do you feel you were treated then?

N: Well I think it was real nice. Of course it was a lot

of things we couldn't participate in like swimming, I don't think any touch sports

B: Do you remember any activities of the Ku Klux Klan in Champaign?

N: Well just burning crosses and marching up and down. They'd be on horses and have parades up and down University Avenue

B: Can you remember when that was

N: It must have been in the '18, 1918..

B: It was after the war then

N: Yes, it was after the war. It was when things were pretty tough during the depression and things. And they had the old Firestone building, I think that was the name of it. Over there in Urban, it burned down... it burned to the ground and I think that sort of dispersed the Ku Klux Klan.

B: Did they meet there?

N: Yes it was there headquarters

B: A lot of people don't believe that they were ever that active in Champaign

N: Oh they burned a fire cross right there (In he yard)...Cecil had gotten this job, you know the janitor had molested a child or something, a little girl, and they fired the white janitor and Cecil got the job. At the Lawhead School. And they burned one down (a cross) in the yard down there.

B: Well, can you think of anything you'd like to tell me about, one of those times back there about the city, about Champaign, as to how it developed? For one thing, you said that people moved out of here. Where do you feel the people came from that moved in? You know you said some of the whites were leaving and taking their children and moving to other areas. Where do you think the other people came from?

N: I don't know. I don't really know. There was a large group of people that moved in some place, I guess from the South. And I don't know why they came, I guess they were bettering their conditions or something because a lot of the housing was just standing around empty and they just moved into them..

B: I just happen to think too, during the ...lets see the sixties Urban Renewal came along, how do you feel

about that?

N: Oh, we thought that was something awful

B: What kind of jobs did they have when you first came here? What kind of jobs do you remember?

N: I don't think they had many jobs. They had mostly the campus...the men were porters between the houses. And they had maids who cleaned, some that did all the... well they had men and women in the sororities too, because then heavy work, the men had to do. And they had cooks and mostly cleaning jobs or I don't really know. Railroading, that was a big object. At the railroads they used to have lots of people

B: yes, what do you think would bring them to Champaign (people)/

N: Well I think it's a pretty good town to live in and there seems to be work here. now it seems that people who have lived here long time cant find any work, but the newcomers they can out to the university and find jobs, buy homes...

B: Some people have said they thought maybe one reason there were so many blacks that stopped off here, was because they were on their way to Chicago maybe, and just stopped here

N: A lot of them leaving Chicago come here..

B: The other questions I had for you was what changes have you seen for black people in your lifetime within Champaign?

N: well I have seen them come into better jobs, being more accepted, you know like they started taking them. I don't know what year it was when they started them teaching you know I think the Hursey girl, Mary Louise I think was the first black teacher wasn't she..at Law-head

B:Any social changes you have seen?

N: Well I've seen I don't know I guess the Negro women were accepted in you know the university social groups some of the things ...I thinks that's when they started singing in the University chorus this year

Erma Bridgewater

608 East Washington Street

Champaign, IL

July 26, 1983

Interviewed by Melinda Roundtree and Patrick Tyler
Champaign County Historical Archives Urbana, Illinois 1995

Mrs. Erma Bridgewater, once director of the Fredrick Douglass Center. Born in Champaign in 1913.

...When I got into high school (Edison graduated in 1931)there was a swimming pool there, but blacks weren't allowed to swim. And my parents and some of the other parent went to the principal and told them they wanted us to have swimming...What they did was let us swim after everybody else was out you know all the white kids had their day, and we were able to swim. That was bad except we did get to swim

Bridgewater went to the University of Illinois and graduated in 1937 with a degree in sociology.

R: What was the first job you had?

B: My first job when I finished the University of Illinois was at Newman hall as a maid because that was all I could find back then..I worked there for a year
Tyler: At the University, how was housing for blacks?

B: In those times students lived in the community, it want any place for them to live on campus. So they lived in the community, and there was no place to eat on campus so we usually boarded wherever we stayed...Now, then it changed of course when they put the dormitories on campus.

R: Mr. Stretton was part of the Urban Renewal wasn't he

B: Well one of the reasons I was able to do that job I think is because I saw people being moved from even basement apartments and real bad housing into some decent housing, and I felt it was an opportunity to help people live better...now the only thing that bothered me was the next program, the community develop-

ment having cleared that whole bit of land up there...

R: I was wondering like now the churches...did they do those kinds of things in the past, help with educational poor families?

B: One of the things I do remember is the job thing, where the picketing was for jobs. You know Penneys was about to open Penneys store was about to open downtown and all the churches really got together..and picketed penney's because they weren't going to hire and blacks...and it paid off. they did hire some blacks..

Tyler: How has the civil rights movement helped Champaign Urbana in general

B: well I think we've gotten people into different kind of jobs and better jobs. I don't think we've change the minds of whites, so much....We see people in jobs that we had never thought we would see them them

Bruce Nesbitt

708 S. Matthews

Aug 4, 1883 interviewed by Melissa Roundtree and Patrick Tyler

Archives 2001

Nesbitt was at the time the director of the Afro American Cultural Center at the University of Illinois. He was born on Nov 14 1932 in Champaign

R: Okay during the I think it was 30's 40's or somewhere in there we've been talking to other people and they said that they remember the segregation in theaters. Were you too young to remember that?

N: The problem was that segregation continued on up through the 50's/ There was a section in the movies, and depending on which movie, the Rialto or the Orpheum Theater or the Park Theater where blacks sat.

There were stores downtown where you was treated indifferent from the regular customer. So segregation existed long up into the 50's. It didn't stop in the 30's or 40's...The experience was in 1954-1955 J>C. Caroline dared to challenged the campus barbershop, and went in for a haircut because he was a popular athlete, you understand, and they refused to cut his hair...I spent 2001 a lot of time picketing the Steak and Shake on Green

Street because they allowed the black customers to drive up and to use the facilities of the drive up window, but they could not go inside. And so we went and picketed and I was very much part of the movement to get Steak and Shake open. I spent some time in the early 60's with Jim Ransom and some other people in the community picketing downtown I think it was the Sears and the Penney's stores, behind blacks, because blacks, was and boycotted those stores because blacks was spending money in those franchises....

I can remember very vividly in my adolescent years when I was going to grade school, I had to go right past Meadow Gold Ice Cream Company which was located on the corner of 5th and University Ave. And they always has a sign posted in there, "We reserve the right to serve our customers" which was a selectivity thing. I t was to say in a subtle manner that if you were black, we don't want to serve you and come up to this r Later, during the 60's how did the civil rights movement affect Champaign, the black community?

N: The civil rights movement in the 60's started down with picketing downtown. That was very effective...one of the things that was happening during that movement was the reliance on the black church a place to convene a place for information to be disseminated to the congregation so they was to participate

R: How were the job opportunities in the early years for blacks

N: Until affirmative action set in there were jobs, but they were not very meaningful jobs. There weren't any high paying jobs. They was always in some kind of servitude capacity thing that the whites didn't necessarily want you know but there were jobs

Henry O. Mears

Urbana High School

1002 Race St. Urbana

July 13, 1983

Interviewed by Patrick Tyler and Melinda Roundtree
Champaign County Historical Archives Urbana IL

At the time of the interview Mears was the associate principal of Urbana Senior High school in Urbana. After the interview he was named principal of the Urbana Junior High School. He has been in the community since September 9, 1965

Mears: I was born into a family, I don't know if you want that information, born into a family of six kids, a father who was an unskilled laborer, and a mother who was a household cook and whose employment was cooking for a white family.

On growing up in North Carolina

"Life as a kid I had a unique experience. I think it was pleasant, while at the same time there were some unpleasanties. Keep in mind that in the early forties, okay, and also the fifties until I left the community to go on to school, is that North Carolina at the time was segregated. I mean, today we call it racism but it was a segregated community. I mean blacks on one side of the tracks, whites on the other side of the tracks, black went to one kind of school, whites went to another kind of school... There were a lot of unpleasanties for me simply because blacks at that time and particularly myself were denied many things that I thought I was capable of doing."

Tyler: What motivated you to come to the Champaign area?

Mears: I was, I learned about Champaign Urbana through a friend of mine who was in graduate school at the University of Illinois, and who came back to visit me and who continuously tried to influence me to go back to graduate school... I did come out and visit. I had an opportunity to talk at that time with the principal of King School... and to make a long story short after going through several formal interview sessions because Dr. Bustard(Principal) saw something in me that he wanted as part of his staff, I was offered a job to teach at King School.

Tyler: What year was it when you first came to Champaign?

Mears: September 9, 1965.

Tyler: How was things, well, people in the black community when you first came?

Mears: Well, it was, it was not as visible you know in 1965 as the black community is now and maybe so because the people as I saw was not as actively involved in what goes on around them. They did later become involved simply because of the social trends and the movements that happened across the country... There was little opportunities, at least from my standpoint, that had been available to blacks in some of the professional type jobs, such as teaching school.

Tyler: How about during, you know, the, like you was talking about when things has got kind of hot during the civil rights movement

Mears: Involvement was generated by the youth community because the youth began to form their own gangs...not actively involved in a civil rights movement as a collective group, fighting in behalf of the civil rights movement for the most part they reinforced the perception of whites you know, that we always fighting among ourselves and damaging ourselves instead, as opposed to fighting for the cause. But that was generated and then later it was redirected by some of the key concerned members of the black community, and redirected into a more constructive things.

Tyler: I was wondering about your involvement in the community, in the black community. Could you tell us if you have joined any organizations?

Mears: Well it's kind of strange on how one views involvement. Yes I've always been involved in the black community. I've always been part of black organizations. As a matter of fact, at a time I was involved in the first initial Concerned Citizens Group that existed at that time, which whites perceived as a radical group of blacks

Tyler: About the job opportunities, how were they when you first came here?

Mears: Well, let me try to sum that up this way. Is



that, there were not many job opportunities for blacks because there are certain positions that the local white community perceived that blacks should hold and shouldn't go any further, okay . And that still holds true. I'm not saying it's changed very much... When I first came in the community after the first two years, I was working on a masters degree, which I was to receive in August if 1968. The individual who was director of personnel at the time, we got into a casual conversation... he said "You're working on your masters, and I understand you're just about finished. I said yes. He said "What do you intend to do?"... I said, "I'm working getting my masters in elementary education, and I'm putting some emphasis on school administration. He said, "Well you know there isn't very much around in school administration."... But what he was telling me, there's not much for