



The home of Dorothy Penelton at 618 West Schwarz Street became a gathering place for family and friends as can be seen in this photograph circa 1956. Pictured from left are Dorothy Penelton, Jessie Brown, Nadine Bradshaw, Morris Bradshaw, Gerry Brown, George Penelton, Bimbo (the family's dog), Bill Penelton, Margie Brown, Tony Penelton, and Vivian Brown. (Terry Bradshaw)

WEST SCHWARZ STREET

A LOST NEIGHBORHOOD

by Cindy Reinhardt

Between Olive and West Streets, on the south side of the 600 block of West Schwarz Street in Edwardsville, Illinois, there is a green space between the street and the woods along Delaplaine Branch. By contrast, between 1923 and 1960, there was a row of houses in that space. Nestled among them was Pilgrim Baptist Church. These homes were adjacent to a larger Black neighborhood referred to as "The Hill" which stretched north from West Schwarz Street to Chestnut Street. It was a warm, close-knit community of family and friends.

The families on West Schwarz Street, like others on the Hill, were almost all related in some way so that it was more like a family enclave than a neighborhood. The children could go from house to house with no worries about safety. Families gathered on porches of one house or another as they exchanged the news of the day or related family stories. There was a public playground with a baseball field, referred to as Wolf's Pasture in the local newspaper. Parents could send their children on errands to "Willie's," the Chestnut Street confectionary owned by William and Ada Washington. On Sundays, and often other days as well, the two churches in the neighborhood, Pilgrim Baptist Church and Mt. Joy Baptist Church, hosted services, meetings, choir practices, Bible studies, and more.

Cont. on page 4

A REASON TO CELEBRATE!

In September, members of the MCHS Board met with Illinois State Representatives Katie Stuart and Jay Hoffman to accept a ceremonial check for a \$700,000 grant earmarked for new museum exhibits. On October 8, more than 100 MCHS members and friends gathered to celebrate and say "Thank you" at a reception.

Over the past year, the Museum Interpretive Committee, including staff and volunteers, has completed the first-floor design. They are currently selecting artifacts, documents, and pictures for the exhibits. They have also begun writing the labels, a process that involves meticulous research, thoughtful selection of material, and careful wording.

Once the grant dollars are released, the committee will be ready to write specifications for contractors to begin fabricating, building, and installing exhibits on the first floor. While this work progresses, the committee will complete exhibit designs for the second floor of the museum.



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Mon. - Fri., 9 a. m. - 4 p. m.
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**Madison County History Museum
and Library**
801 N. Main Street
Edwardsville, IL 62025

Contact us:
Library: 618-656-7569
Society: 618-656-1294
Email: info@madcohistory.org

BEHIND THE SCENES

AND NOW WE REST!

Since the last newsletter, MCHS has held a Family History Walk, hosted a three-day Living History Days weekend, held a reception at the museum, and celebrated another action-packed year at our Annual Dining in History and Annual Meeting.

Thank you to all who made these events such a wonderful success, especially the chairpersons for each event. We are grateful for Jeff Skoblow (Family History Walk), Stephen Hansen (Living History Days), Leslie Bednar (Reception), and Carol Manning (Dining in History), all of their committee members, dozens of volunteers, and, of course, those that attended our Fall events. It was a lot of fun, but there is a reason MCHS does not host events in December...we need to rest for the coming year! It's going to be a great one! A schedule for 2026 is on page 12.

ANNUAL REPORT AVAILABLE

The 2025 Annual Report was presented at the November 2 Dining in History and Annual Meeting. Among other things, the report contains lists of volunteers, donors, and accomplishments from 2025, and goals for 2026. The 2025 Annual Report is available on request through email, at the Archival Library at 801 N. Main St. in Edwardsville, or a copy can be mailed to you on request.

In his annual remarks, President Fred Faust said, "We owe much to our members, donors, and volunteers. We could not do what we do without your help." It is so true!

CHECKS! CHECKS! CHECKS!

During the same week when MCHS was presented with the "Big Check" from the State of Illinois, we posed with another "Big Check" from the Edwardsville Community Foundation. This one was for \$1,750 that will be used for exhibits showcasing Native American history. In addition, MCHS was presented with normal-sized (depositable) checks totaling \$581.50 from the Edwardsville Masonic Lodge. The Lodge hosted a breakfast fundraiser this summer. MCHS is grateful for these checks!

YOU COULD BE A WINNER!

Renewal information will arrive soon and this year we're offering a bribe...I mean an incentive... to those who renew before January 1. All new memberships and membership renewals received or postmarked before January 1 will be entered into a drawing to win dinner for two at an Edwardsville restaurant. Three lucky people will win a gift card at one of these fine participating restaurants:

Bella Milano, founded in 2003, is a contemporary Italian restaurant with old world charm. The food is always delicious which is why MCHS often uses them as a caterer. They are located at 1063 S. State Route 157. **(\$100 gift card)**

Stagger Inn...Again is a bar/restaurant with the authentic vibe of an old-fashioned pub. Located in the historic building at 104 E. Vandalia St., Stagger offers delicious food, generous portions, and a full (beautiful, antique) bar. They also have live music 5 days a week. **(\$50 gift certificate)**

Cleveland Heath is an award-winning restaurant that offers delicious American food with a sophisticated twist. Add a wonderful atmosphere and great service for a winning combination. It is located at 106 N. Main St. in the historic Bohm Building. **(\$100 gift card)**



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VOLUNTEERS

There are abundant and varied opportunities for volunteers at either the Museum or the Library. If interested, please call 618-656-7569.

MEMBERSHIPS

Several membership levels are available to those interested in supporting the work of preserving Madison County history through a MCHS membership. Memberships run on the calendar year, Jan 1-Dec 31. Applications are available on the MCHS website, or at the Library.

The Madison County Historical Society is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization.

The Madison County Historical Society presents



A Literary Salon

Last year, the first MCHS Literary Salon was such a hit that this year we are moving to a larger venue. On Thursday, January 15, at 7 p.m., join us at the Main Street Community Center, 1003 N. Main St. Edwardsville, for an evening featuring the works of Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson.

Jeff Skoblow will return, this time with friends, and will read aloud poems and prose of these two foundational American poets: poems of independence and freedom in honor of the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, as well as poems of the spirit and the flesh to honor universal human being. The event is free and open to the public.

CHANGES TO MCHS BOARD

After 20 years on the MCHS Board, Jeff Pauk is moving to Emeritus status where he will remain on the board as a non-voting member. Jeff owns his own surveying business and teaches surveying at SIUE. Due to his expanded schedule, it has been difficult for him to attend meetings in recent years, although he continues to contribute in other ways. Jeff recently authored an article on the Madison County Railroad for the last issue of the MCHS News, and is scheduled to research another article in 2026. His knowledge of local history and expertise in surveying have made him a valuable member of the Board. This is the first time since the 1950s that the Emeritus status has been implemented.

Penny May was recently welcomed to the Board. Penny May is a native of Edwardsville who grew up a few blocks from the Madison County History Museum. Penny attended SIUE, graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree in Accountancy. She is a lifelong member of Immanuel Methodist Church where she serves as President of the United Women of Faith, chair of the Finance Committee and coordinator of the Community Lunch Program. She also volunteers for the Glen-Ed Food Pantry's Brown Bag Buddies summer lunch program. She lives with her husband Tom in the historic Leclaire neighborhood.

Tallin Curan, Granite City, retired from the MCHS Board after 10 years of service. Tallin was our IT person, but due to many commitments in Granite City, including serving as president of the School Board, he felt he needed to step down. We are sorry to see him go, but appreciate the years he served on the MCHS Board.



At left: State Representative Katie Stuart at "Thank You" reception.
(Donna Bisset)
Below: General U. S. Grant at Living History Days
(Scott Oliva)



Below: One of three groups gather at the Hadley House to hear Julia Hadley Griffin tell about her childhood home during the MCHS Family History Walk in September.
(Donna Bisset)



NEWSLETTER SPONSORS THANK YOU!

From Mike Reinhardt
IN APPRECIATION
for 25 wonderful years of marriage
to his wife Cindy

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WEST SCHWARZ STREET - LOST NEIGHBORHOOD

Most of the houses were small and almost all were built by some of Edwardsville's most prominent contractors. Rare photographs show clapboard houses with tidy front porches. Many of the homes had chickens or other farm animals in the backyard. At the time, the south side of West Schwarz Street was outside the city limits.

Houses were built close to the street, which was a narrow dirt road when most of the houses were erected in the 1920s-1940s. The terrain was on a slope leading down to the creek, so some of the houses had walkout basements or only a few steps up to go outdoors. The lots had 50-75 foot frontage, but the depth varied greatly, following the bends of Delaplaine Branch.

In May 1958, after discussing it for nearly 40 years, the City of Edwardsville recommended improving West Schwarz Street so that it would be a 24-ft. wide concrete street with gutters. Hoping to obtain some state funding, plans were sent to the State for approval. The State returned plans in February 1959 with a recommendation to straighten the street and expand it to 36 feet wide instead of 24 feet which would necessitate the removal of several homes on the south side of the street. The State plan also extended the reach of the plan eastward to South Buchanan Street.

In April 1959, the city authorized several realtors to make appraisals and obtain options to purchase the homes on West Schwarz Street. In the end, the street was widened to just 24 feet.

The City's decision to improve West Schwarz Street caused the displacement of a dozen families. The residents of the Black neighborhood on West Schwarz Street naturally did not want to move but were given no choice in the matter. Although they were able to create community in other locations in Edwardsville and received financial compensa-

tion for their homes, the move was an emotional and financial burden for many.

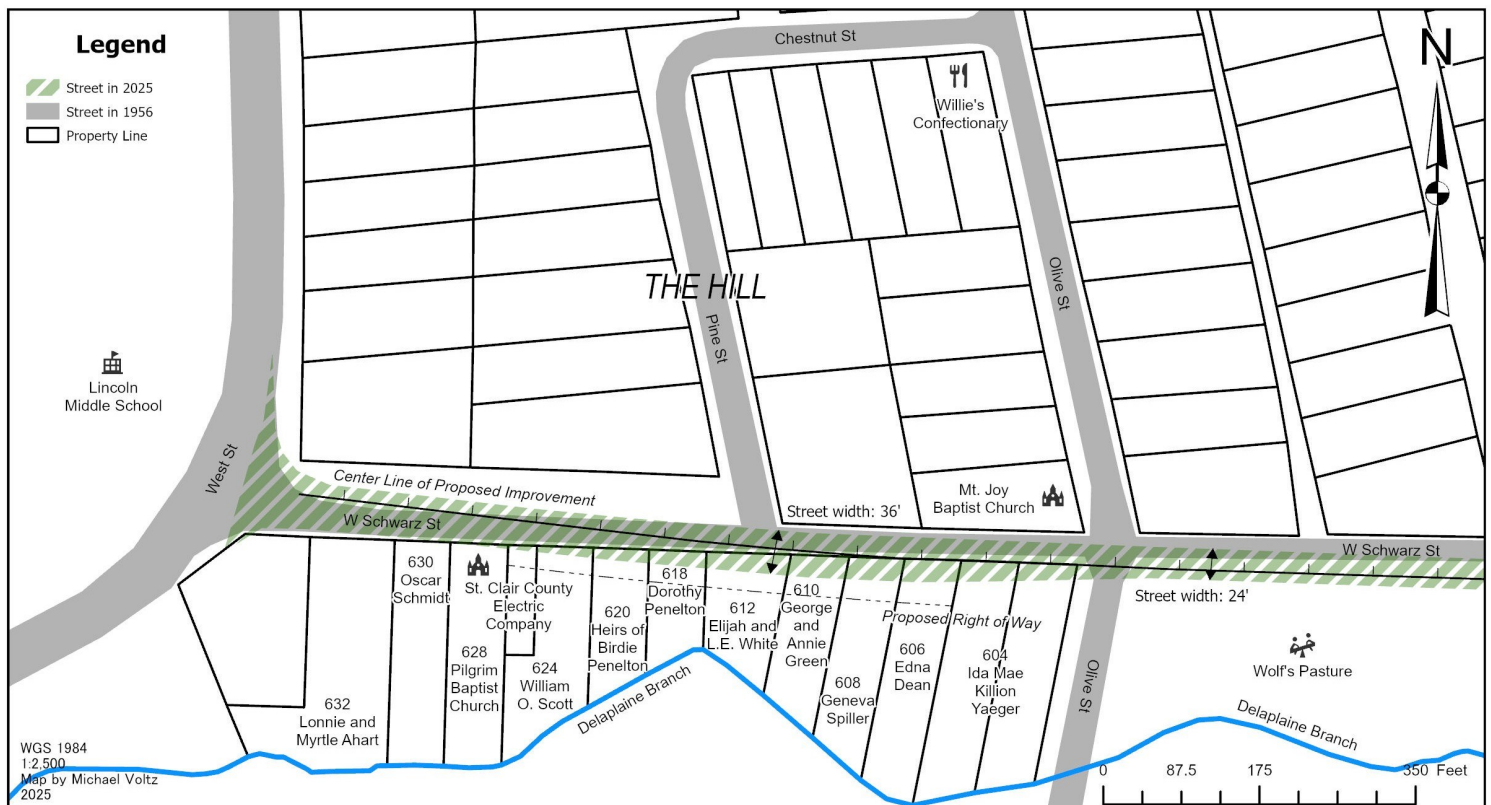
Two years after moving, William O. Scott, a former resident of West Schwarz Street known as the Soldier Poet, submitted a poem to the *Edwardsville Intelligencer's* Opinion Page. Here is an excerpt:

We received a rough deal on West Schwarz Street
Forced to sell the homes
we worked for years and years.
We were confronted with problems we could not meet,
Yet today some are still shedding tears.

Our present Mayor, Mr. Straube, told me face to face
Don't you worry one bit, Bill, I myself will see
That you will get enough for your home
to buy another place
And you know you can depend on me.

But that is in the past so we will let it lay
Yet I have one thing I really do regret
We bought another house, a nice place to stay
But we had to go very deeply in debt.

So far as is known, none of the houses went through an official condemnation process. The residents sold their properties to the City of Edwardsville knowing that fighting City Hall would be a useless and expensive exercise.



WEST SCHWARZ STREET PROPERTIES

Beginning at Main Street and moving west, the first parcel needed by the city was part of the former Madison County Home. West of that was what was called "Wolf's Pasture," after an early owner. By the 1940s, it was owned by the Harold West family, but the name, Wolf's Pasture, remained. This piece of property is where the Edwardsville Dog Park is located today.

West, who lived in the old Otto Wolf house on top of the hill overlooking Delaplaine Branch, had an agreement with the city for the pasture to be used as a playground for Black children. The former pasture was well used, and many of those interviewed, former boys and girls from the neighborhood, remembered it being a favorite place for the children to play. The extent of playground amenities provided by the city appeared to be that it was mowed regularly. There was

no playground equipment as was available at "white playgrounds."

In the 1930s when the playground was established, discrimination was not hidden. The newspapers openly referred to the "white" playgrounds and the playgrounds for "Negro children." There was a second playground for Blacks at Springer Woods, but there was no ballfield there. Black children from all over town came to West Schwarz Street to play ball.

In late 1959, the city paid \$3,280 for the West acreage which stretched roughly from just west of the entrance to the new Grandview Subdivision to Olive Street and south to Delaplaine Branch. After the sale, there was no longer a ballfield for Black children.

FAMILIES OF WEST SCHWARZ STREET - THE LOWRY FAMILY

By the 1950s, the first two lots west of Olive Street had the same owner. There were three houses on the property, two small houses facing Olive Street, and the "main" house, west of the little houses, facing West Schwarz Street. The three houses all had the same address, 604 (or 604R, for rear) West Schwarz Street.

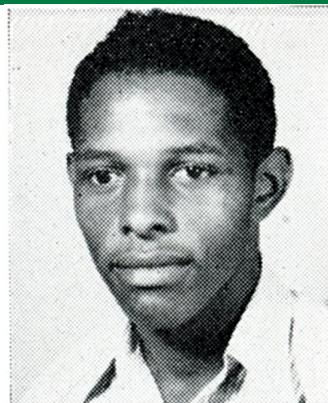
The smaller houses had approximately 600 square feet of living space combined on two floors. The walkout basement had a kitchen, furnace room, and living room. The upper floor had three small bedrooms, another living room, and a bath. There was a shared outhouse in the backyard, and they had to port in water, but the houses had electricity. These small houses were built in the 1950s as rental property.

The main house, built circa 1925, was first owner-occupied by John Ernest and Rebecca (Jason) Lowry who were both native to Edwardsville. Ernest, as he was known, was a teamster, first with horses and later mechanical vehicles. The couple and their four children lived in the neighborhood, at 321 Olive St., prior to purchasing the house on West Schwarz Street.

By the 1940 U.S. Federal Census, Ernest had died (1938) and the house was occupied by his widow, Rebecca, their daughter Berniece Lowry Brown (also a widow), a grandson, Houston

At left is Ida Mae Lowry Thomas Killion Yeager. Documentation of the name of her first husband cannot be found, but Houston Lowry remembers being told it was Thomas. Ida's first marriage was short-lived, and nearly 20 years before Houston was born. (Houston Lowry)

"Dubie" Lowry Jr., and Rebecca's brother Frank Jason. When Rebecca died in 1941, another daughter, Ida Mae Lowry Killion (a widow), took young Houston Lowry to live with her in Alton, Illinois. When Ida's sister Berniece died the following year, Ida moved back to Edwardsville with Houston and became the owner of 604 W. Schwarz St., the Lowry family's home place.



Houston Lowry from 1952 EHS Yearbook

Ida was unlucky in love in that she outlived three husbands. She never had children of her own, but she had a big heart. Her second husband, Charles Killion, had custody of his children from a previous marriage, so she became stepmother to two teenagers when they married. Her sister Berniece's son, Thomas Brown, would also consider the house his home since both of his parents were gone. Thomas, older than his cousin Houston, was serving in WW II when his mother Berniece died.

Like many homes on the block, this one had a walkout basement. The kitchen was on the lower level as well as a bedroom often leased to lodgers. The living room and bedrooms were upstairs. Ida was one of the few residents on West Schwarz Street to own a car, so there was a two-stall garage behind the house.

A recent interview with Houston "Dubie" Lowry, Jr. gave wonderful insights into not just this property, but the entire neighborhood. In 1934, Houston was born in the house at 604 W. Schwarz St. and continued to live there until 1961. There are few in a position to remember such intimate details. Houston says he thinks he is the oldest native-born Black person in Edwardsville.

Houston related how the family grew a lot of their own food. They had a chicken coop and sometimes raised ducks to sell. When he was in high school, Houston raised rabbits which he sold to neighbors. Each year they raised four hogs which would be butchered on a Saturday in the fall. The meat would be sold to friends and neighbors, including Mayor Straube. The day they butchered was not a favorite of Houston's because while his friends were playing in the



THE LOWRY FAMILY (CONT.)

pasture, he was stirring the large pot used to make lye soap.

Ida was a very practical person so didn't spend lavishly, but Houston said if he really wanted something, a jacket or a new pair of shoes, she always saw that he would get it.

When he was young, his favorite place to play was at Wolf's Pasture. He said the neighborhood kids played ball after school and summers, sometimes on Saturday, but never on Sunday. It must have been a good training ground since Houston played a year of minor league baseball for the New York Giants. Another fellow who played there as a youngster, was Morris Bradshaw, who was on two NFL teams that took home Super Bowl rings.

The neighborhood children sledded on Pine or Olive Streets in the winter, and "swam" in Delaplaine Branch in the summer. Houston said their swimming was just wading because it wasn't deep enough to swim. They always did their swimming east of Olive Street to avoid the run-off from the hog lot on the south side of the stream. Before Grandview was built in the 1950s, Houston would hunt squirrels in the woods there.

The children in the neighborhood attended Lincoln School. At that time, Lincoln School was on North Main Street in Edwardsville, a long walk for the youngest children. Houston said it was not lost on him that there was a school only a block

away from his house, but until 1952, the Black children were not allowed to attend classes there.

After Houston's marriage to Shirley Tabron in 1954, the newlyweds lived on the lower level of Ida's house. As their children came along, they moved to one of the two small houses on the property. Three of their six children were born on West Schwarz Street. Houston and Shirley were married for 69 years.

Houston's memories describe the essence of life in this special neighborhood. Like others, his family was interconnected. His Aunt Ernestine, Ida's older sister, lived with her husband Albert Richardson, at 610 W. Schwarz Street until her death in 1939. His grandmother's sister, Jessie Jason, married Daniel Scott and there were numerous Scotts in the neighborhood. His cousin, Thomas Brown, who also lived on the property after his service years, married the daughter of George and Anna Greene who purchased the Richardson house. Relations, both close and distant, were throughout the neighborhood. Children who were thinking of being naughty didn't have a chance. They were surrounded by a loving, watchful family.

Ida Mae (Lowry) Thomas Killion Yeager held out longer than any of the other West Schwarz Street property owners. She received \$15,000 for the three houses. She bought a bungalow on Kiowa Street and an empty lot across the street for her nephew Houston to build a house for his family.



The championship Saints softball team, in August 1956, consisted almost entirely of residents of West Schwarz Street and the Hill who grew up playing in Wolf's pasture. From left, kneeling, Sam Johnson, William Washington, Manager Brister Donald, Paul K. Smith, Preston Robinson, Houston Lowry, and Bill Penelton. Standing are Asst. Manager Leo Martin, Taylor Vaughn, LeRoy Hornsbarger, Harry Penelton, Buddy Crump, Richard Bowens and Wesley McMurray. Seated in front is batboy Harry Penelton III. (Rhonda Penelton)

THE PENELTONS ON WEST SCHWARZ STREET

In 1959, when the City vacated West Schwarz Street properties, the Penelton family owned three houses on the block. The patriarch of the family, Gabriel Penelton Sr., was originally from Turkey Hill in St. Clair County, Illinois. In 1892, he married Birdie Johnson, a native of Edwardsville, and settled on the Hill where they raised their family of ten children.

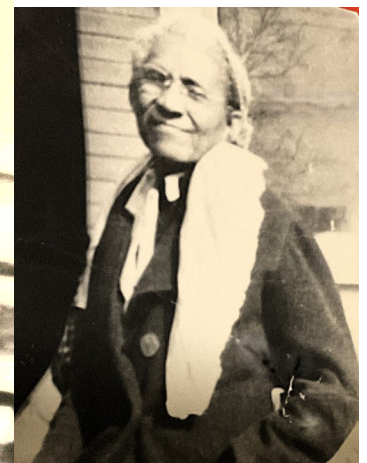
In the mid-1920s, Gabriel and Birdie moved from their home at 305 Pine Street to a new house at 620 W. Schwarz Street. Soon after, their eldest son, Harry, who lived next door to his parents on Pine Street, moved to a new house at 618 W. Schwarz St., again, next door to his parents.

Harry was a WWI veteran who fought in several European campaigns. In 1919 he returned from service, and two years later, he married a local girl, Dorothy P. Smith. Harry, who worked for many years as a plumber's helper for G. A. Gent, died of tuberculosis in 1944. He was only 50 years old.

Harry and Dorothy had eight children, seven boys and a girl, aged 2-22 when Harry died. However, she did not face the challenge alone.



Gabriel Reilly Penelton (1863-1941 and his wife Birdie Virginia Johnson Penelton (1874-1948) on West Schwarz Street. (Terry Bradshaw)



THE PENELTONS ON SCHWARZ STREET (CONT.)



Above, the beautiful portrait of Dorothy Smith Penelton was likely taken about the time of her wedding to Harry Penelton in 1921. Below is Dorothy with Harry circa 1940. Although Harry died young, Dorothy never remarried.

(Terry Bradshaw)



Dorothy was a woman of strong faith and had the support of a large circle of family and friends, including her church family at Wesley Chapel A.M.E. church.

Her house at 618 W. Schwarz St. became a gathering place for neighborhood activities including dinners for family and friends, game nights, and visiting relatives, as well as church and club meetings. Sports was always a topic of conversation since the Penelton boys competed at championship levels in church, school, and community leagues. Dorothy's daughter Nadine was her mother's more than capable assistant in running a predominately male household.

In the 1950s, Nadine and her two sons, Morris and Terry Bradshaw, joined the family at 618 W. Schwarz. Her sons grew up in a household greatly influenced by the love and support of seven uncles.

In 1930, Harry's sister Edna (Penelton) Dean, bought 606 W. Schwarz St. (also a new house), just four doors down from Harry and Dorothy. Edna's close-knit family consisted of her three children, Gwendolyn, Dora, and Willard Sr., as well as their

children, Sandra (Pat), Phyllis (Nikki), and Willard Jr. (Bill). Edna, her daughters, and granddaughters all attended Mt. Joy Baptist Church where they participated in church programming, like Vacation Bible School, and junior choirs. Edna's son, Willard, was a career military man, a sergeant specializing in signal communications, his overseas duties included Japan and Korea. Edna's multigenerational household was not uncommon for the time.

Gabriel Penelton Jr., his wife Clara (Lewis) Penelton, and their eight children moved to 612 W. Schwarz St., in the early 1940s, to a house on the east side of his brother Harry. Their father Gabriel Sr. died in 1941, followed by their mother in 1948, leaving only their unmarried brother Elbert "Boots" Penelton at the home place, 620 W. Schwarz Street. About 1950, Gabriel and Clara moved from 612 to 620 W. Schwarz St. which they shared with Elbert.

Unfortunately, like his brother Harry, Elbert had tuberculosis. In 1956, he became a patient at the Madison County Tuberculosis Sanatorium where he died three years later.

Over the years, the Peneltons lived in other houses on West Schwarz, as well as on Pine and Olive Streets. Three of Gabriel and Birdie's daughters, Fannie, Willa Mae, and Mildred, lived across the road on Pine Street when the houses on West Schwarz were destroyed.

When the families had to move, the Peneltons received \$4,000 for the home place at 620 W. Schwarz St., \$6,000 for Edna Dean's house at 606 W. Schwarz, and \$6,100 for Dorothy's house at 618 W. Schwarz Street.

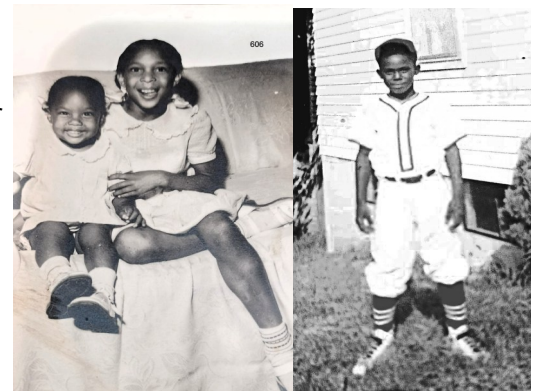
The Peneltons were fortunate to find a cluster of properties in the 200 block of West Union Street. Another daughter of Gabriel and Birdie, Dora (Penelton) Scott, was already living at 258 W. Union Street. Dorothy moved to 212, and Gabriel Jr. to 232. Edna had severe diabetes and was in ill health, so she didn't invest in another home. She moved in with her daughter, Gwendolyn (Dean) Washington, at 216 W. Union St. where Edna died in 1960.

Although the family enclave was not as extensive on West Union Street as on West Schwarz Street, the relocated Peneltons built a good life on West Union. The houses were more expensive, but they were larger and better able to accommodate the growing Penelton family. At Dorothy's new home, the tradition of providing a gathering place for family and friends continued.

For the Peneltons, as Dorothy's granddaughter Rhonda said, "Life was good, very good."



618 W. Schwarz St. was built for Harry and Dorothy (Smith) Penelton. (Terry Bradshaw)



Edna Penelton Dean's grandchildren, from left, Phyllis "Nikki" Hughes, Sandra "Pat" McMurray, and Bill Dean, all grew up in her house on West Schwarz Street. (Terry Bradshaw and Leatrice Rice Garrett)



Six of Harry and Dorothy Smith Penelton's sons served in the military. Shown here from left: Harry Jr. (1924-1974), Clement (1926-2010), L. George (1930-1981), Richard (1936-1972), C. William "Bill" (1937-2018), and Anthony "Tony" (1942-2001). All were born at 618 W. Schwarz St. (Terry Bradshaw)

THE SPILLER FAMILY

George and Geneva Spiller moved to 608 W. Schwarz St. in the late 1930s. George was one of 11 children born to Daniel and Rebecca Spiller, Southerners who relocated to Madison County sometime before 1870. George became the father of nine children by his first wife, Lucy, who died in 1916, just ten days after giving birth. He remarried in 1921, and had seven more children with his second wife, Mary Geneva (Stanley) Spiller. George's children were born between 1904 and 1938, so many were adults with their own households by the time George and Geneva moved to West Schwarz Street.

Given the number of in-laws from George's siblings and children, it is safe to say they had family connections with many Edwardsville families. One can only imagine all the comings and goings in the George Spiller household.

In 1938, a fire in the downstairs kitchen threatened to destroy the house, but firemen

arrived in time to put out the flames. Clothing and foodstuffs were destroyed, but the house was saved.

This large family was a very religious household. Both George and Geneva served in leadership capacities at Mt. Joy Baptist Church. When George died in 1949, eight ministers participated in his funeral service, including the State President of the Sunday School Congress.

Geneva continued to live in their home on West Schwarz Street after George's death. It was a full household. The 1950 U.S. Federal Census shows Geneva living with five of her children and three grandchildren.

The city of Edwardsville paid Geneva Spiller \$4,600 for her home. She moved to a house at 430 E. Schwarz St. where she lived with three of her daughters in a small cluster of Black-owned homes which included other families who previously lived on West Schwarz Street.



Geneva Spiller (left) and Edna (Penelton) Dean were described as "the church ladies." They were active in all the activities of Mt. Joy Baptist Church. Appropriately, the church can be seen behind them in this photo.

(Terry Bradshaw)

THE GREENE FAMILY

George "Tip" Greene and his wife Annie (Warren) Greene were both born in Arkansas where they married in 1918. George worked as a farm laborer in those early years. After the birth of their third child, they moved to Poplar Bluff, Missouri, where he found a job with a railroad. In 1943, they moved to Edwardsville when he found work at Granite City Steel. By then, they had seven children. Some of them were already adults who did not make the move to Edwardsville. When George and Annie arrived, they rented the house at 610 W. Schwarz St., then purchased it via contract for deed which was completed in 1958, not long before they were required to sell the house.

Like the Lowrys, a family member, Leatrice "Leele" Rice Garrett, was able to give a wonderfully detailed description of life in the neighborhood. Leatrice was 5-6 years old when she was sent to live with her grandparents and an older half-sister, Sandra "Dutch" Powell, at 610 W. Schwarz Street.

The house they shared with her grandparents was a small, neat cottage with front and back porches. There were two rooms upstairs, a living room heated by a woodburning, potbelly stove and a bedroom with two beds, one for her grandparents and the other shared with her sister.

To go to the downstairs rooms, you had to go out to the back porch where there were stairs leading to the lower level. There were two rooms downstairs also, the primary room being the kitchen. There were also a coal bin and a room used for kitchen storage. Her grandmother cooked on a wood stove until the city installed a gas line and she was able to get a gas stove. By the late 1950s, she also had a freezer to preserve food.

The house had city water, but only a cold-water tap. When hot water was needed, they had to heat it on the stove. There was no indoor bathroom, but there was an out-



Sandra "Dutch" Powell and Leatrice Rice (on porch) in front of the Greene home at 610 W. Schwarz St.. At back is 608 W. Schwarz, the Spiller family home. (Leatrice Rice Garrett)

house. The south side of Schwarz Street was outside city limits, so city sewers were not available. Also in the yard was an enclosed chicken coop (with a few ducks also) so they always had fresh eggs and chickens to eat. They bought their chicks from Kriege Hatchery on Troy Road.

On the south side of Delaplaine Branch, they had a good-sized garden where they grew produce which her grandmother canned or froze. Leatrice especially disliked preparing greens for the freezer. They had to be rinsed and re-rinsed to make sure they were thoroughly clean, a tedious job. It was much worse than snapping beans and shelling peas.

Every fall, her grandparents would load them into the car with eight or nine wooden bushel baskets and drive down to Arkansas. They would come back with the baskets full of peaches and apples. When they got home, the peaches were canned or made into preserves, and the apples became applesauce or apple butter.

THE GREENE FAMILY (CONT.)



George and Annie Greene (Leatrice Rice Garrett)

Houston Lowry talked about playing ball with the boys in Wolf's Pasture on the east side of Olive Street. It turns out the girls also played there. Leatrice played fast-pitch softball for 13 years. She was also in a Girl Scout troop which was desegregated at the time, but she and another Black girl in the troop were not permitted to go skating with the others in Highland because Blacks weren't allowed.

Leatrice said she and her friends wandered all through the woods and fields south of their homes. One of the things they did was collect hickory nuts, then dig a small hole and get some coals burning, add the nuts and come back in a couple of hours for roasted hickory nuts. They also played in Delaplaine Branch, and because her grandparents loved fishing, they often went fishing near Silver Creek (before there was a lake).

Her grandmother, Annie, whom they called "Mama," was a religious woman who attended Mt. Joy Baptist

Church near their house. She wasn't shy about expressing her enthusiasm for the Word in church. She could be heard saying "Amen!" or "sho' nuff!" when agreeing with the preacher. She made sure her grandchildren were brought up along the "straight and narrow" as learned in Sunday School. Her favorite hymn was "Rest for the Weary."

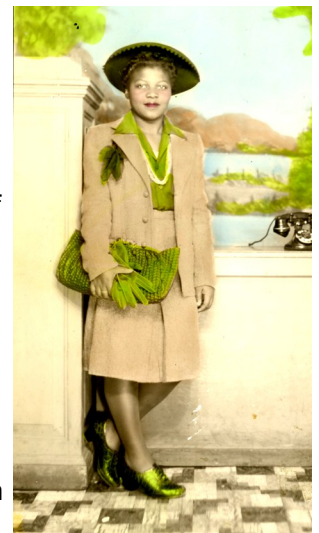
The front porch of their house was well off the ground and the kids in the neighborhood played house under it. Some of the houses, closest to Olive Street, were at street level, but the farther west, the more the ground sloped down from the road so the houses were back a little farther and they had to walk down steps to get to them.

Leatrice remembers a special camaraderie among the friends and neighbors on West Schwarz Street. They all played together or just hung out in groups. When a neighborhood boy, Bill Dean, wanted a baseball uniform he couldn't afford, her grandfather, George Greene, went out and bought it for him.

Leatrice always believed, and still does, that Edwardsville had an urgency to making the Black people on West Schwarz Street move because the highway (then Route 66) made West Street a major entryway to the city and the city wanted a more attractive entrance to the city. She feels that the city considered them an eyesore.

George and Anna's daughter Marie married Thomas Brown, Ida Lowry's nephew. They rented one of Ida's little houses, so she remained in the neighborhood. Unfortunately, Thomas and Marie were married only three years when Thomas was electrocuted in a terrible accident in 1954. Marie never remarried.

The city paid the Greene family \$4,000 for their little house. They relocated to a house at 211 E. Union St. about two blocks from their son Elmore and their daughter Anna Mae Bowens.



Marie Greene Brown, widow of Thomas Brown. (Leatrice Rice Garrett)

THE WHITE FAMILY

Before the Whites purchased 612 W. Schwarz St., there were several short-term renters. The exception was the family of Lillard and Ruth (Rice) McMurray who lived there with their six children for a decade. Bucking the trend of residents moving from Pine or Olive Streets to West Schwarz Street, the McMurrays did the opposite and left West Schwarz for a house on Pine Street about 1937.

Elijah and L. E. (Johnson) Rice bought the home at 612 W. Schwarz St. in 1953, but moved there from Pine Street at least six years prior to buying the house. Both were born in Mississippi and migrated to Hayti, Missouri, before moving to Edwardsville in the late 1930s. Elijah found work at Butler Chevrolet. Nearly a decade after moving to Edwardsville, Elijah's parents, Sarah and James White, came to live with their son.

Carolyn Shaw Turner didn't live on the Hill, but her grandmother, Cora Aitch, lived with her Aunt Alma Aitch on Pine Street and often sent Carolyn to visit the Whites. She was told to go say "How do," first on the ground floor, where Sarah and James lived, then go upstairs to the flat above to say "How do" to Elijah and L. E. White. The Whites weren't related to Carolyn, and, unlike others in the neighborhood, they didn't appear to have any family in Edwardsville. Elijah and L. E. had no children. They were just neighborhood friends. Carolyn's grandmother probably thought they would enjoy a visit from her granddaughter.

L. E. White could usually be found sitting in her chair. She had a ruddy (reddish) complexion, with freckles or age spots. She wore her hair in two long braids. Carolyn thought she looked like she was Native American. She didn't see

THE WHITE FAMILY (CONT.)

L. E.'s husband, Elijah, as often, probably because he was at work when she came to visit. He was very dark-skinned with a wiry build. Carolyn's older brothers said he looked like his parents.

Carolyn went to say "How do?" fairly often, so was familiar with their house. There was only a step or so to get inside from street level, then there were first floor rooms and stairs leading to an upstairs apartment which may just have been one room.

L. E. (she used initials only) was known for her beautiful quilts. She was always quilting and, as far as Carolyn knows, gave away what she didn't need to others in the neighborhood.

After the city paid them \$5,000 for their house on West Schwarz Street, Elijah and L. E. White moved to a house at 227 Wyandotte St.. Elijah's father died in 1948, but his mother moved with them to the new neighborhood that the Lowry family also chose.

THE SCOTT FAMILY

There were several short-term residents of 624 W. Schwarz St. before William and Cora (Johnson) Scott. William was a native of Edwardsville and Cora was born in the South. When they married in August 1927, they were in their mid-30s. They never had children but always celebrated every anniversary as reported in the local newspaper.

William, a veteran of WWI, was known as the "Soldier Poet." His poetry was published periodically in the *Edwardsville Intelligencer* over the course of 35 years. Several of his poems, "The Armistice," and poems celebrating John F. Kennedy's election and another mourning his death, were sent to Washington and had very favorable responses. Part of one of his poems is on page one of this newsletter.

The Scotts provided a home for William's elderly father, Alex Scott. They moved from South Fillmore Street to West Schwarz Street circa 1937 and lost William's father the following year. Alex Scott was 93 when he died in 1937 and was considered one of the oldest Black residents in the area.

William worked for Richards Brick Company until his retirement in the early 1950s at the age of 70. When residents of West Schwarz Street moved, they were unable to find replacement houses at the same price paid to them by the city. The Scotts re-

tired with a paid mortgage but now had to make mortgage payments with a greatly reduced income. The move was a financial hardship for nearly everyone on the street, but it was especially difficult for retirees.

William and Cora were paid \$5,000 for their house. They moved to East Schwarz Street near some of their relatives.

William O. Scott of 624 West Schwartz street is shown reading a letter of thanks from President Dwight D. Eisenhower, for a commemorative poem "Armistice Day," Scott sent him prior to Veterans Day, Nov. 11. Scott, a member of Company A 365th Infantry 92nd Division, U. S. Army, World War I, who is known locally as the "Soldier Poet," stated that Murray Snyder, the President's assistant press secretary, also sent a letter thanking him in behalf of the President for the poem.

The headline in the December 12, 1956, Edwardsville Intelligencer, was "Soldier Poet." The photo in the newspaper was not well preserved, but the picture of William O. Scott at right was taken about 1920. (MCHS)



PILGRIM BAPTIST CHURCH

Pilgrim Baptist Church was organized on Dec. 12, 1939. Six months later, in May 1940, the Rev. Miles Woodside of St. Louis was called as the first regular pastor for the congregation. The church initially met on North Main Street, in second floor rooms of the old Wabash Hotel. Even before owning their own building, it was an active church with revivals, Sunday school, evening gatherings, prayer meetings, and an organized Mission Circle.

In August 1944, the congregation celebrated the purchase of their permanent home at 628 W. Schwarz St. by burning the mortgage.

Carl Jason's parents, Roy and Georgia (Scott) Jason, were prominent in the organization of the church. He re-

members being baptized at Leclair Lake with his father and youngest brother.

He describes the church as a former house with a large room, roughly 12 x 24 which ran parallel to Schwarz Street. The pastor stood on the east end of the long room facing the congregation. To the pastor's left was another room where the children often sat. There was a pot-bellied wood-burning stove between the rooms to provide heat. The church did not have indoor plumbing. The building was situated back a bit from the road, so to enter, the congregants had to go down several steps to get to the door. There was a round sign next to the door with the name, "Pilgrim Baptist Church."

PILGRIM BAPTIST CHURCH (CONT.)

There were two tragedies at the church. First, the Rev. George Poole, who replaced Rev. Miles Woodside, died in 1946 at the age of 49. The next pastor, Rev. Henry Townsend, died at the age 35 in December 1952. He was pastor at Pilgrim Baptist Church for seven years.

The church was a small building on a small lot, so when the property had to be vacated, the city only offered \$2,250. Carl was among the men who tore down the building for salvage circa 1960. The church never recovered and slipped into what for many is forgotten history.

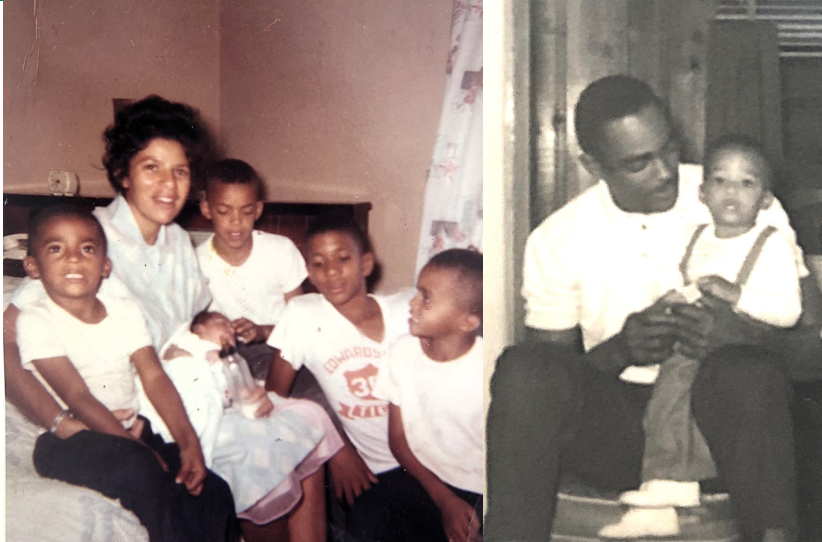
THE AHART FAMILY

The home of Lonnie and Myrtle (Moore) Ahart at 632 W. Schwarz St. had a different situation in that it was the only house on the street which would NOT be in the way of the expanded road construction.

However, they were told they had the same situation as the others. It can't be known for certain, but it is likely the family was already in the process of purchasing another house before they found out they didn't have to move.

Houston Lowry called this house the nicest one on the block. It was built for Allen Thomas in the late 1920s but circa 1940 was purchased by Arnold and Cora (Moore) Scott. Cora Scott was Myrtle Ahart's aunt, and the house remained in the Scott/Moore/Ahart family until it was destroyed.

Jerome Ahart remembers the one-story house as small, only about 900 square feet. From the front porch, visitors entered the living room. The first of two bedrooms was to the right of the living room (his room). Straight back from the



Lonnie and Myrtle (Moore) Ahart had seven sons and one daughter. It follows that life in their West Schwarz Street home was all about children, as can be seen from these mid-1950s era photos. At left, two of the boys are Myrtle's brothers (14 and 16 years younger than Myrtle), and the other three are her oldest sons. At right is Lonnie with his son Michael..

(Julian Ahart)

living room was the kitchen and beyond that a back porch, which his father later enclosed for another room.

There was a full basement, but it was unfinished and had only utilities and laundry facilities, which included a wringer washer. They had city water at their address. Due to the slope of the lot, they were able to walk out of the basement with only five steps.

In the end, the Aharts sold their house to a realtor who then sold it to Lizotte Sheet Metal which occupies virtually the same footprint as the Ahart home. The dollar amount is unknown since it was not listed in the abstract. Sales of the other houses to

the city made those prices public knowledge. The Ahart family moved to 215 Coventry Place, only a few blocks away.

Jerome believes one of the reasons the street was widened and the houses condemned was so the white kids in the newly-built Grandview Subdivision wouldn't have to walk through a Black neighborhood on their way to school. Grandview Subdivision was developed between 1953 and 1972.

REMEMBERING LIFE ON WEST SCHWARZ STREET

Carolyn Shaw Turner remembers the houses on West Schwarz Street all being different...not a "cookie cutter" street. She has fond memories of nights spent at her grandmother's house where she would wake up to roosters crowing and the sounds of trucks on old Route 66, just a block away. There was a bit of a rural feeling to the neighborhood.

Jerome Ahart called it "a wonderful neighborhood to live in." There were lots of neighborhood kids who got together for baseball and football. They set up a high jump and pole vault on the east side of Pine Street and organized bicycle and foot races which went around the block using Myrtle and Olive Streets.

Everyone interviewed had fond memories of the West Schwarz Street neighborhood. However, more than 65 years later, some bitterness remains about having to leave.

It was full of extended family, as many became close

with aunts, uncles, and cousins through close proximity. The neighborhood was full of patriots, too. There were many veterans of WWI, WWII, and the Korean War.

So, is the city the villain here? Perhaps, in the execution. Ideally, the City should have purchased the land in the early 20s before there were any houses built there. They were already discussing the need for it as early as 1922. With the hills, ravines, and railroads prevalent in Edwardsville, there were few places for east-west corridors, and this one was obvious 40 years before it became a reality.

By waiting, a difficult and painful situation was created which tore up a close-knit community and caused emotional and financial hardships for the families forced out of their homes. The houses on the south side of West Schwarz Street are gone, but precious memories remain in the hearts of all who remember that era in Edwardsville history.

SAVE THE DATES!

2026 CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS

JANUARY 15
LITERARY SALON

JANUARY 28
WINE AND CHEESE RECEPTION

FEBRUARY 1
CHICKEN DINNER FUNDRAISER

FEBRUARY 8
SPEAKER SERIES:
"AM I ON THE RIGHT BUS?"

APRIL 12
SPEAKER SERIES: "RAILROADS OF
ILLINOIS & MADISON COUNTY"

MAY 2
ARTIFACT ID DAY

JUNE 14
SPEAKER SERIES:
NEWSPAPERMAN IRVING DILLIARD

JUNE 27-JULY 4
CELEBRATE 250 WEEK

JULY 13-16
SUMMER HISTORY CAMP
CHILDREN AGED 9-12

AUGUST 9
SPEAKER SERIES:
"THE SEARCH FOR FORT RUSSELL"

AUGUST 22
MCHS TRIVIA NIGHT

SEPTEMBER 12
FAMILY HISTORY WALK

OCTOBER 2-4
LIVING HISTORY DAYS

NOVEMBER 1
DINING IN HISTORY &
ANNUAL MEETING

**DETAILS AND
ADDITIONAL EVENTS TO BE
ANNOUNCED SOON!**



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SPEAKERS AT "THANK YOU" RECEPTION



MCHS President Fred Faust, Illinois State Representative Katie Stuart, and Taylor Drew of Representative Jay Hoffman's office at October 8 reception. (Scott Oliva)

PHOTOGRAPHS AND STORIES: THANK YOU!

The story of the West Schwarz Street neighborhood would not have been possible without the assistance of Rhonda Penelton who shared her extensive research on Edwardsville Black families, collected photographs, organized interviews, and helped edit the final article. It was an honor, a privilege, and a joy to work with her.

I am also grateful for all those who sat down for interviews in person or by phone, including Houston Lowry, Leatrice Rice Garrett, Carl Jason, Jerome Ahart, and Carolyn Shaw Turner. Many of these also provided photographs. In addition, I congratulate Terry Bradshaw, Teri Penelton, and Julian Ahart on their efforts to preserve their family photographs, and am very grateful they were willing to share.

Although this particular story is complete, the work of archiving the stories, photographs, and genealogy of Black Madison County families will continue at the Madison County Archival Library.