

Invisible People, Untold Stories: A Historical Overview of the Black Community in Poughkeepsie

Lawrence H. Mamiya and Lorraine M. Roberts

Much of the history of the black community in Poughkeepsie is in fragmentary form or remains unwritten. In his history of Poughkeepsie Edmund Platt, for example, treats black people largely as slaves.¹ This present historical overview will focus primarily on the period since the mid-nineteenth century and on the topics of labor, education, religion and the attempts to establish some black organizations. We begin with a brief summary of slavery in the Poughkeepsie area, and especially some problems in Platt's treatment of slavery, and conclude with the phase of civil rights activism. Limitations of space, time, and sources prevent the authors from mentioning every person or organization that contributed to the development of local black history, especially in recent years.²

Slavery in the Mid-Hudson: The "Peculiar Institution" in the North

Slavery existed in New York throughout the colonial period. By the first Federal census of 1790 New York's black slave population of 21,324 was the largest of the slave holding northern states and only 7 thousand below Georgia's total of 29,264. About one third of New York's slaves lived and worked in the Hudson River Valley, from Westchester to Albany.³ The African slaves were brought to the Valley by the Dutch West India Company between 1625 and 1663; in 1664 the British captured New Netherlands, changed its name to New York, and allowed the Royal African Company to monopolize the slave trade. The first slaves probably arrived in the village of Poughkeepsie not long after its founding in 1687 by Dutch and English settlers. The first village census of 1714 showed 30 slaves among a population of 445. By 1771 there were 1,360 slaves in Dutchess County and 1,954 in Ulster, with much larger numbers in the upper and lower valley.⁴

Lawrence H. Mamiya, Ph.D. is Associate Professor of Religion and Africana Studies at Vassar College. He is the co-author of a previous volume of oral history interviews in Poughkeepsie's black community.

Lorraine Marie Pettie Roberts is Chairperson of the Occupational Education Department at Poughkeepsie High School. A graduate of Hampton Institute and Columbia University, she is a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and is listed in Outstanding Educators in America and Who's Who in Black America.

Platt's treatment of the history of slavery in Poughkeepsie and Dutchess County tends to look at the slaves from the point of view of the slave masters, as objects that are acted upon. Very rarely does Platt examine the slaves as actors, as subjects, as creators of their own history and as human beings with feelings of their own. Furthermore, Platt tends to emphasize the benign and benevolent side of slavery. He does not examine the brutality of the institution nor the general social and legal climate of the fear of retribution by the slaves for that harsh treatment, which was expressed in the "slave codes" of New York and in actual slave rebellions that took place in nearby areas like New York City, Albany and Kingston. Although he refers to the advertisements in the newspapers describing runaway slaves, Platt does not mention the fact that these acts of escaping and running away also represented the slaves' judgment about their own condition in physical and symbolic terms.

During slavery, there were a few recorded incidents where Negroes themselves owned slaves. Platt's account of slavery in Poughkeepsie gives an unexplained and somewhat misleading reference to "Toney Fox, a colored man" who manumitted a slave in 1804.⁵ It makes him appear as one of the few Negro slave owners. However, the records indicate that the slave Margaret Fox was actually owned by the "Overseers of Poor" and Toney Fox, a colored laborer, applied for his wife's manumission from them on October 29, 1804, which apparently was granted.⁶

There are several major lacunae in Platt's history of slavery. First, he does not mention the breaking up of slave families, which was perhaps the most painful and sorrowful act endured by slaves. For example, in 1715 on the Livingston Manor, a slave named Ben killed his owner John Dykeman for selling his daughter off the manor. In the hearings, presided over by Robert Livingston, Sr., it was determined that the murder was the sole act of a heartbroken and revengeful father. Second, Platt fails to examine the missionary and educational work of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel of the Anglican Church begun in New York in 1701 among the slaves and Indians, which intended not only to Christianize them but also to make them more docile and obedient. In 1750 there was an Anglican mission operating in Poughkeepsie and in 1773 the Christ Episcopal Church was founded.⁷

Finally, Platt does not deal with the slaves' attempt to fuse African religious traditions in to Christian ones as it was exemplified in the Pinkster Festival. In a perceptive article, Williams-Myers has shown quite conclusively that the Pinkster Festival, which was celebrated for a week during Spring in the cities and towns of the Hudson Valley in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, was a syncretism of Dutch and African religious traditions. "Pinkster" probably was a Dutch corruption for "Pentecost."⁸ Africans, free and slave, looked forward to the festival and its carnival atmosphere. As long as the institution of slavery existed, the Negroes celebrated Pinkster.

Slavery in the Mid-Hudson Valley affected all areas of social and personal relationships between blacks and whites. Even with the end of slavery in New York State in 1827, the residential and social segregation of Negroes remained as an accepted social fact throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries.

Poughkeepsie's Black Community in the Nineteenth Century: Religion, Education and Labor

Towards the end of the eighteenth century and during the early decades of the

nineteenth century, a number of all black areas or settlements were gradually formed in Dutchess County. At first they were composed of the few free blacks and runaway slaves and later these residents were joined by the newly manumitted people who no longer wanted to live on their owner's farms and manor estates. The areas of Fishkill Landing and "Baxtertown" had the largest number of Negroes in the county prior to the emergence of Poughkeepsie as a city after 1854. Apparently there were two settlements, one in Fishkill Landing and one in the area of Baxtertown Road, since both became the locations of two A.M.E. Zion churches. Stories of Fishkill-Baxtertown recount its beginning in the intermarriage between freedmen and escaped slaves and the native Wappinger Indians who lived there.⁹ During the first half of the nineteenth century in the village of Poughkeepsie, the black population was located in several clusters: first, on the fringes of the central business district bounded by Washington and Market Streets where some working class whites and recently arrived German immigrants also resided; second, on "Long Row" by the Almshouse; third, in the area of Catharine, Cottage, and Pine Streets.¹⁰

Abolitionist activity and religion were closely tied together in most areas of the United States and this proved to be true in the Mid-Hudson as well. Although Christianity was used to justify slavery to produce docile and obedient slaves, it also became a major moral challenge to the institution and a spur to abolitionist activity. In the eighteenth century, Quakers were well known for their early support of abolition and for their courageous participation in the Underground Railroad to help escaped slaves move to Canada. A Dutchess Quaker, Alfred Moore and his wife used their mill as a station on the underground railroad.¹¹ From 1790 onward, the abolitionist movement was largely supported by Methodists and Congregationalists in the North and some Methodists and Baptists in the South. In the Mid-Hudson Freeborn Garretson, a Methodist circuit rider from Rhinebeck, not only helped to establish Methodism in the area, he also preached strongly against slavery.¹²

Bishop Asbury, who was the prime American figure in the establishment of Methodism, once said of Poughkeepsie in 1800, "This is no place for Methodism," after several futile attempts to introduce the faith.¹³ Ironically, a Methodist class was soon established in 1803 in a private home and by 1805 there were enough members in the village to found the Washington Street Methodist Episcopal Church. In Poughkeepsie and Dutchess County, Methodism also spread rapidly among the black population. Within a few decades of the abolition of slavery in New York State, three black Methodist churches were in existence, one in the village of Poughkeepsie, another on Baxtertown Road (Fishkill), and the other in Fishkill Landing (Beacon).

Mutual aid societies and churches were among the first social institutions created by black people. They existed in a symbiotic relationship; sometimes mutual aid societies gave rise to black churches and at other times churches helped to create mutual aid societies.¹⁴ In a period before the creation of a federal welfare system, black people banded together to pool their meager resources to provide for their own sick, widows and orphans, and decent burials. Although the reasons are not fully known, the 47 colored members of the predominantly white Washington Street Methodist Church withdrew en masse and on November 12, 1837 formed the United Society, a mutual aid group that met for worship services for several years in the old Lancaster School (now Germania Hall).¹⁵ Whether the withdrawal was sparked by a racial incident in the church,

by a more widespread feeling of second class treatment within worship services or by the desire for independence is not known. In 1840 the United Society purchased a one-story frame building at 102 Catharine Street and also voted to affiliate with the newly-formed independent black denomination, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. The Poughkeepsie church was organized under the name of the "Catharine Street" African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. The first elected trustees were Ezekiel Pine, Uriah Boston, and Peter Lee.¹⁶ The name of the founding pastor is not known for certain, although his name is given as the Rev. Jacob Thomas or Jacob Thompson in different documents.¹⁷

The Zion denomination, which was organized in July 1822 in New York City, illustrated the close linkage between religion and abolitionism among black people. Although many black churches served as stations for the underground railroad for escaped slaves and other black denominations were active in abolitionism during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it was the Zion denomination that became the church base for a number of legendary black abolitionists who were either preachers or staunch church members: the Rev. Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, and the Rev. Jermain Louguen, Catherine Harris, Eliza Ann Gardner and the Rev. Thomas James.¹⁸

Soon after its founding, the denomination expanded rapidly in New York State, organizing black churches along the path of the underground railroad and transportation routes up the Hudson Valley and northward into Canada. Besides the Catharine Street Church in Poughkeepsie, the St. James A.M.E. Zion Church (now in Beacon) was established in 1844 and the Baxtertown A.M.E. Zion Church was also founded during the nineteenth century.¹⁹ One can usually assume that wherever large concentrations of black people existed, escaped slaves and underground railroad stations would be found there too, since the slaves could mingle and be less noticeable. However, the role which these three black Methodist churches played in the abolitionist period can only be speculated about since there is no extant documentary evidence. In his study *Blithe Dutchess*, Henry MacCracken does speak about the "vigorous church life" that arose in Fishkill-Baxtertown and the fact that the settlement was a station on the underground railroad, "probably working with Quaker groups." MacCracken's example may well apply to Poughkeepsie too.²⁰

Even with the abolition of slavery in New York State, the Dred Scott decision of 1847 and the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 still made it dangerous for escaped slaves to be in northern cities like Poughkeepsie as the story of John Bolding in 1851 illustrated. As a former runaway slave from South Carolina, Bolding finally settled in Poughkeepsie as a tailor. Unfortunately, he was recognized by his former owner Mrs. Dickinson and eventually arrested by the United States Marshall's office, which had to enforce the law. The Dutchess County Anti-Slavery Society and leading Poughkeepsie citizens raised \$1700 to purchase his freedom.²¹

During the decade of the 1840s and through the Civil War years, abolitionist activity also stirred intense opposition and overt hostility among some residents, especially among the newly arrived Irish immigrants. At times mobs of whites disrupted anti-slavery meetings in churches.²² There also were a number of riots and fights between whites and blacks from 1847 to 1850. There were several dimensions to this ethnic conflict. First, the Irish saw Negro laborers as a threat to their own jobs, especially when Negroes were used by employers as "strike breakers" during labor negotiations at the brickyards, railroads, and other

places.²³ Second, even though the Irish were oppressed and discriminated against because of their Catholicism, the racism of the larger society rendered the Negro even more vulnerable and thus a convenient scapegoat for mounting frustrations. Finally, the anti-draft riots of the 1860s in New York City, Poughkeepsie and elsewhere were caused largely by newly-arrived immigrants and other whites who saw the Civil War as a conflict on behalf of the Negro and not in their own interests. In Dutchess County in 1863, the Governor of New York called in the Vermont Volunteers to keep order²⁴ and the black men of the Catharine Street Church had to stand guard with rifles in order to prevent their church from being burned down during the mob frenzy.²³

The Civil War was largely welcomed by Poughkeepsie's black community. While President Abraham Lincoln initially saw the war only as a means to "preserve the Union," his Emancipation Proclamation of January 1, 1863 and his Second Inaugural address made clear that the war was also fought to abolish the evils of slavery. On January 7, 1863 one week after a group of intoxicated soldiers attacked the Catharine Street Church and did a "good deal of damage" to its property,²⁶ members of the church held a special meeting to commemorate and celebrate the Emancipation Proclamation. Isaac Deyo, a long time Poughkeepsie resident, church member and community leader, presided over the meeting. The major address was given by James DeGarmo of the City Council, congratulating the colored members.²⁷ From that day on until the Civil Rights period, black churches in Poughkeepsie celebrated the first Sunday in January as "Emancipation Sunday." Even prior to the proclamation, the colored people of Poughkeepsie supported the war effort by sending Victor Hugo as a delegate to Washington, D.C. on 5 March 1862, "offering ten thousand men of color, to be called the Fremont Legion."²⁸ Although that legion never materialized, by 1863 President Lincoln was persuaded by black leaders like Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman to allow colored soldiers to fight in the war in order to help turn the tide. In December 1863 and throughout the following year, articles in the *Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle* reported on the recruitment of colored soldiers, whose total probably reached several hundred in Dutchess County.²⁹ Although they had to serve in segregated units commanded by a white officer, they signed up eagerly because they also received some of the cash bounty paid to new recruits. At a time when most of the black community was impoverished, the military was quite appealing to young men. These squads of colored troops were often given a parade by proud members of their own community. As they marched off to the trains, a martial band composed of colored musicians led by Mr. J. H. Jaycox accompanied them, sometimes playing "Dixie."³⁰

The white community was divided on the war with the majority supporting the Union's side. Some sympathetic whites in Poughkeepsie's churches also rallied to the cause of aiding the newly emancipated slaves in Southern states. There were appeals in the *Eagle* regarding fund raising benefits and also ads soliciting "cast off clothing for the Freedmen."³¹

The Reconstruction years from 1866 to 1876 witnessed a meteoric rise in political activity by black people across the country as they exercised their right to vote, guaranteed by the Fifteenth amendment. President Lincoln's association with the Republican Party inspired most blacks to become members of that party. In Poughkeepsie a "Colored Men's Republican Club" was formed in the late 1860's and it continued to be active in the early twentieth century.³² In May 1870 the colored community held a celebration of the Fifteenth Amendment and

among the invited distinguished guests were nationally known figures such as the abolitionist Frederick Douglass, the clergyman-politician and first black elected to Congress, United States Senator Hiram Revels of Georgia, and the writer Horace Greeley.³³

While blacks gained a new political prominence after the war, they continued to be described by others in pre-war stereotypes, notably in the minstrel show, the most popular form of stage entertainment during the mid-nineteenth century. The minstrel shows, where white actors painted on black faces and impersonated Negro characters in comic fashion in song and dance, were very important culturally because they helped to form the major stereotypes and perceptions of whites about black people. In Poughkeepsie during the Civil War years, various touring minstrel companies visited the city almost monthly. Names like Sharpe's Minstrels, Campbell's Minstrels, Newcomb's Minstrels, Tony Pastor's Minstrels, and Dupree and Green's Minstrels appeared in the *Eagle's* announcements. The *Eagle* said the following about the Dupree and Green's Minstrels: "Their position among the negro delineators of the present time is first class. Whoever witnesses their performance once is sure to go again."³⁴

Apparently, the *Eagle's* editorial writer was also influenced by the minstrel shows as evidenced by the numerous supposedly humorous incidents using Negro dialect which are interspersed throughout the paper. One example of this is entitled "Not A City Darkey," which tells of the arrest of a black man during the night. It concludes, "He was a farm hand and not a 'city niggah.'"³⁵ The influence of minstrelsy stereotypes was increased by the unofficial segregation in northern cities in places of residence and schools and by the taboos against social contact which prevented most other forms of communication.

Through the first three quarters of the nineteenth century black people in Poughkeepsie faced numerous struggles and many disappointments in obtaining public education. Early forms of education for blacks consisted of denominational catechetical schools for the few free blacks and learning from the nightly devotions of the master's family for most slaves. However, the earliest record of any type of formal education for blacks was the African School which operated in Poughkeepsie in 1829. The African School was probably a private school set up by the New York Manumission Society; its schoolmaster was the Rev. Isaac Woodland, a black minister from Baltimore.³⁶ Woodland was followed by Nathan Blount in 1830. Blount was a black abolitionist and an active member of the Dutchess County Antislavery Society.³⁷ During the latter half of the 1830s, Blount's school was taken over by the Lancaster School Society, Inc. which operated a school for white children on the first floor of a Church Street building that also housed Blount's school in an upstairs room. Throughout these early years there was a strong preference that the teacher be a "teacher of letters and of gospel precepts."³⁸

After Blount, the Rev. Samuel R. Ward, who was educated in the black school of the Manumission Society of New York City, came to Poughkeepsie to teach at the black Lancaster school in 1839. Like his predecessor, he also was an abolitionist and served on the executive committee of the principally white Antislavery Society. Ward probably remained with the black school until it closed in 1844. After leaving Poughkeepsie he became a nationally known abolitionist and a prominent church pastor.

In 1843 the unified public schools of Poughkeepsie were established, providing educational opportunities for the city's white children. As a part of Pough-

keepsie's common school district, the Board of Education created a separate school for black children in 1844. The school was called the Poughkeepsie Colored School No. 1. During the thirty year life of the Colored School, it was an elementary, one-room facility. The school was first housed in the Primitive Methodist Church on Church Street from 1844-1855. Then, it was moved to Cottage Street where it remained until 1863. For three years, 1863-1866, the school was conducted in the old A.M.E. Zion Church building on Catharine Street. Its final home was in another building on Catharine Street.

Pupil attendance averaged about 20 students at the Colored School, although the registration reached as high as 70 children in some years. The first teacher was Thomas Brower, a white man. Jane A. Williams was probably the first black teacher; she taught from 1853 to 1856. She was followed by other black and white teachers who taught singly in ensuing years at the school from one to three years. Each teacher was also appointed as a principal by the Board of Education. A Committee on Teachers report to the Board of Education, dated November 1, 1870, gave an indication of what teachers were paid: "Miss Thayer is unwilling to leave her place in the 4th ward and take the Principalship of the Colored School for less than \$450 [per year]." ³⁹

Hostility toward the meager education available to Negro children surfaced around the late 1860s and early 1870s. These children in Poughkeepsie had no educational opportunities beyond elementary schooling. Before 1870 there is no record of a Negro student attending Poughkeepsie High School and both Vassar College and the Eastman Business College did not admit Negroes.

Isaac Deyo, an active member of the local A.M.E. Zion Church, called a Mid-Hudson area educational convention in Poughkeepsie in September, 1870. The purpose of the meeting was to address the educational concerns of the colored population. Mr. Deyo was elected president of the convention. Out of this meeting came the proposed idea to establish a Negro college in Poughkeepsie. This idea was in keeping with the times, especially in the South where the recently freed slaves' deep desire for education led to the establishment of several prominent Negro colleges like Fisk, Howard, and Hampton. Five black men from neighboring counties along with three from Poughkeepsie (Abram Bolin, Charles Cooley and Isaac Deyo) and Samuel Jones of Fishkill were the original trustees. This group named the proposed school Toussaint L'Ouverture College in honor of the famous leader of the Haitian Revolution. In 1871 the trustees were instrumental in getting state Assemblyman Stewart to introduce a bill in the New York State Legislature to incorporate the college. It is said that Bolin, Rhodes, West and Deyo walked to Albany lobbying for the passage of the bill.

Although L'Ouverture College was incorporated as an institution to be located in Poughkeepsie, "especially designed for the education of young men and women of African descent in science, art, language," it never became a reality. The lack of finances as well as moral support, coupled with the rising anti-segregation movement throughout New York State, doomed the project to failure. Even though local black Poughkeepsians were enthusiastically supportive of the college, the coup de grâce to the project ironically was administered at a meeting of the New York Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, which convened in Poughkeepsie at the Catharine Street Church in May 1871. The opposition was led by the Rev. William P. Butler of New York City, a powerful orator and former pastor of Zion

churches in Hudson and Poughkeepsie. Butler argued, "Let the colored people of the state stand together and ask for equal rights, and they would get it. They wanted no separate college."⁴⁰

Abraham Bolin, a gardener, janitor and community leader, spoke on behalf of the college plan but he could not prevail. In 1872 the project also ran into opposition from a state black convention and it died.⁴¹ The major thrust among Negroes in New York State became clear: to desegregate public education and not to set up separate schools. But this goal was not achieved in Poughkeepsie without further struggle and personal costs.

After the failure of the college project, the leadership of the black community focused their efforts on the task of desegregating Poughkeepsie schools. On September 1, 1873 Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Rhodes personally led the way by presenting a test case to the Board of Education of the federal civil rights law, which provided for no distinction on the basis of race. Rhodes, who ran his own Eagle Dyeing Establishment, attempted to enroll his two daughters, Josephine, 15, and Marietta, 9, in the Fourth Ward Primary School. Miss Carey, principal of the school, reluctantly seated the children. The youngest child Marietta was sent home after lunch by a teacher because someone had hit her. The Board of Education also decided that Josephine would be sent to the Second Ward Grammar School because of her age.⁴² Poughkeepsie's first major "civil rights question" sparked a long series of meetings and decisions by the Board of Education throughout the year.

At first, Judge Egbert Q. Eldridge, President of the Board, claimed that since the city was one school district, it had fulfilled the law by establishing the Colored School. Therefore, said Eldridge, the children were to refrain from attempting to attend any city school other than the Colored School until the Board reached a decision. He also said that the children were attending a school outside of their district.⁴³ However, Mrs. Rhodes squelched any delaying tactics of the Board by continuing to insist that her children would attend the city's public schools and that she didn't want to send her children to the colored school. On September 4, 1873 Marietta was sent to the Bayeaux Street School where she was warmly received, although all of the public attention had made her uncomfortable.⁴⁴

After visiting and inspecting the Colored School, Eldridge recommended to the Board on September 10 that the school should be closed because he found only 20 children in attendance out of the more than 70 that had been enrolled. He felt that this low level of attendance did not justify the \$750 annual budget which the city spent to support the school. The matter was tabled until a hearing could be held with the colored people.⁴⁵ During the period three more colored children entered the Fifth Ward School; they probably included Abraham Bolin's son Gaius. In May 1874 the Board ruled that the teachers should allow any students who lived outside of their school districts to remain in their schools until the end of the academic year.⁴⁶ Poughkeepsie's case was not an isolated one; all over the State colored students attempted to enter the all-white public school systems. In 1874 the New York State legislature made these civil rights cases moot. Under pressure from black groups, it passed the legislation to abolish segregation in public schools.

Although the Colored School continued for one more year, by 1875 the public schools in Poughkeepsie were completely desegregated. Josephine Rhodes became the first black graduate of Poughkeepsie High School in 1879. Four years

later Gaius Bolin, Sr. was the second colored student to graduate from the high school. After spending two more years studying Latin and Greek at Professor John R. Leslie's Select Classical School on Academy Street, Gaius was accepted at Williams College and became its first black graduate in 1889. In 1892 he passed the bar and practiced law in Poughkeepsie where he became part of a small group of leaders in the black community to bridge the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁴⁷

The story of the desegregation of Poughkeepsie's public schools did not end in a clear-cut triumphant victory, especially for Joseph Rhodes and his family, who probably paid a high personal price for their efforts. Although a direct cause and effect case cannot be established in determining business losses and failures, there is a strong probability that Rhodes suffered severe economic losses for stirring the waters of Poughkeepsie's milieu of de facto segregation. In their fine history of opportunity in Poughkeepsie during the mid-nineteenth century, the Griffens point to this possibility.

... whether Rhodes paid for his challenge through a subsequent loss in prosperity cannot be ascertained. In 1873, the year of his dramatic public gesture in taking his daughter[s] to one of the city's previously all white schools, a credit reporter described his dyeing shop as a "good business, making a little money" and Rhodes himself as a careful, close man who paid cash for what he bought and owned his house. By 1877 all his effects had been mortgaged to the Poughkeepsie Savings Bank and from then on he was described as worth nothing.⁴⁸

For a careful and frugal man who only paid in cash to lose everything within a few years underlines the suspicion of economic retaliation.

Rhodes, of course, was one of a small handful of Negroes during the Reconstruction period to achieve the status of self-employment or a skilled occupation. Over a period of forty years, 1840 to 1880, only nine blacks achieved self-employment and R.G. Dun and Company, the credit evaluators, only listed seven black businessmen: three in barbering and hairdressing and three in cleaning and dyeing. The owner of a clothing store had failed and left town in 1849.⁴⁹

Among the wealthiest black people during this period were two stewards who worked on the steam boats. One of them, who also operated his own concession, had his worth estimated at \$20,000 upon his death in 1874. The other had his property assessed for \$400 in 1880, one of the few blacks who owned property.⁵⁰ As the Griffens noted in their comparative analysis of labor and race, whites comprised 59 percent of the teamsters, carmen and carters — occupations with opportunities for self-employment — but only 36 percent of the drivers and coachmen, 16 percent of the gardeners, and none of the waiters. Blacks moved in the opposite direction with 5 percent as teamsters, carmen and carters; 23 percent as drivers and coachmen; 7 percent as gardeners; and 77 percent as waiters. More than 90 percent of black males who were employed worked in unskilled jobs (primarily common laborer) or in service positions.⁵¹ At this time factory jobs were not open to blacks. While the Irish immigrants suffered from some forms of employment discrimination, their rates in the lowest occupational categories could not match that of the black population as a whole.

The majority of Negro women worked but they also had fewer occupational choices. From 1850 to 1880, over 90 percent of employed black women worked as domestics. In the late nineteenth century, before the advent of washing machines, doing the laundry was among the hardest of chores. Being a laundress

was the other occupational choice for colored women. As the Griffens pointed out,

*One fourth of the working black women in the sixties and in the seventies persisted in the labor force, a much higher rate than for white women of any nationality. In 1880 a mere 3 percent of white wives reported jobs, but in 1860 a third of the black wives worked and in 1880 one fourth worked, mostly as laundresses.*⁵²

Since economic values have been primary and predominant in American society, often used to determine social status and social relations, the severest forms of racial discrimination that black people have encountered have usually been economic in character. A close study of economic mobility in Poughkeepsie in the late nineteenth century has shown that even with the passing of several generations, black workers did not experience that mobility and were often trapped in the lowest occupational rungs.⁵³

Immigrants like the Germans and even the Irish fleeing the famine who arrived in the Mid-Hudson in the 1840s and 1850s could expect job mobility within a generation or two. But for large numbers of black people the myth of Horatio Alger remained a myth rooted in pigmentation, which even the strongest educational aspirations and hard work could not overcome. Except for a small handful of successful people like Gaius Bolin, Sr., the vast majority of black people in Poughkeepsie in the late nineteenth century did not experience intergenerational upward mobility. Most black women remained in domestic and laundry work and most black men were common laborers or in service occupations like waiter. Several of Bolin's brothers, for example, were waiters at the Nelson House and the Morgan House.⁵⁴

During the last decade of the nineteenth century, the black community in Poughkeepsie began to experience some of the changes that would radically alter its character in the twentieth century. In 1891 a combination of newcomers and long time residents from the Mill Street Baptist Church decided to organize the first Negro Baptist church in the city. Under the Rev. Charles E. Faïress's leadership and after a series of prayer meetings in homes, the mission group moved to the Leslie School building on Academy Street and organized the Ebenezer Baptist Church with the Rev. Faïress as its first minister.⁵⁵ After several moves, the church members built a permanent home at Smith and Winnikee in 1905. The black Methodists at the Catharine Street Church, which had dominated the community for over fifty years, began to experience some competition for members and influence. On May 20, 1894 at the 73rd Session of the New York Annual Conference of the A.M.E. Zion Church held at Catharine Street, Bishop James Hood ordained Mrs. A. J. Foote as the first black woman deacon, the first breakthrough by a woman, black or white, in any Methodist denomination.⁵⁶ This pluralism in religion and progress in sexual equality were only harbingers of the changes to come in the twentieth century.

The Black Community in Poughkeepsie in the Twentieth Century: A Capsule Summary

The history of the black community in Poughkeepsie until the mid-twentieth century was affected by two major demographic events: the waves of black migrations from the South to northern and western states, and the move of the International Business Machines Corporation to the Mid-Hudson area in the 1940s. Both events radically altered the character of the black community and the



Gaius Charles Bolin, Sr.
1865-1946

*First black graduate of Williams College in 1889.
In 1945 he was elected president of the Dutchess
County Bar Association.*

Photograph courtesy of Williams College



Smith Metropolitan A.M.E. Zion Church
(Oldest Black Church in Poughkeepsie)

Founded in 1837, it was first named the Catherine Street A.M.E. Zion Church in 1840.

Photograph courtesy of collection of C.B. Magill



Bessie Harden Payne

Born January 16, 1895

Community activist and volunteer in numerous human services agencies. Elected president of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, Inc.

Photograph courtesy of Poughkeepsie Journal

city of Poughkeepsie. They led to a gradual increase in the size of the black population from 500 in 1870 to 5,876 in 1970. They also changed the character of the leadership structure of the community from one dominated by long-time residents to a mixture of natives and newcomers. The demographic changes also meant a dramatic increase in the pluralism of black social organizations and institutions, especially among the churches. Most of these changes, however, occurred after World War II.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, the leadership of the black community remained fairly stable, composed largely of natives or long time residents. The sons and daughters of leaders in the late nineteenth century took over. For example, Gaius Bolin, Sr., the only black attorney in Poughkeepsie, replaced his father Abraham as a leader in the community and the Zion church. Mary Matilda Wood Harden and her daughter Bessie Mae Harden Payne were also community activists and members of the Ebenezer Baptist Church which Mrs. Payne's husband, the Rev. Herbert Payne served as pastor for a few years. The few black professionals included Dr. Garrett A. H. Price, a physician and a leader in the Ebenezer Baptist Church in the early 1920s and Dr. Robert Wesley Morgan, a dentist who came to Poughkeepsie about 1932 and was active in the Smith Street A.M.E. Zion Church. This small elite group of leaders of the black community also included the pastors of the A.M.E. Zion and Ebenezer Baptist churches, particularly those who resided in Poughkeepsie for 10 years or more. Pastors who were very active in the pre-World War II period included: the Reverends Charles S. Fairess, Thomas Jenkins of Ebenezer Baptist, and Charles Byrd who served several Baptist churches in the County; and the Reverends Thomas Judd and Arthur E. May of the A.M.E. Zion Church.⁵⁷ All of these community activists also comprised the leadership core of the local branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, which was founded in 1931.⁵⁸

While the Southern states practiced official "de jure" segregation through Jim Crow laws, northern cities like Poughkeepsie condoned unofficial "de facto" segregation in many areas: in housing and places of residence, jobs, education, in public accommodations like restaurants, hotels, and lodging houses. Although there were no blatant signs indicating "white" or "colored" as in the South, by social custom, tradition and practice everyone understood implicitly where the racial boundaries lay. On January 25, 1910 when the Rev. Dr. Booker T. Washington, the founder of Tuskegee Institute and the acknowledged national Negro leader, lectured on "The Negro Race" at the Vassar Institute, he could not stay overnight at the Nelson House or the Morgan House even if he wanted to.⁵⁹ As a Baptist clergyman he probably was a guest at the home of the Rev. Fairess of Ebenezer Baptist. The same things happened to other famous black people who came to Poughkeepsie to perform. In the early 1920's Langston Hughes was an overnight guest of the Zion minister after reading his poetry. Roland Hayes was refused accommodations at the Nelson House. Marian Anderson had to go to catch a train back to New York City while the crowd was still applauding her performance at the Bardavon Opera House.⁶⁰ Ironically, blacks worked as waiters at both the Nelson and Morgan Houses but they could not stay there as guests. For example, John W. Harden, Bessie Payne's father, worked as head waiter at the Nelson House for thirty years.⁶¹

In 1913 Mrs. Mary Harden and her daughter Bessie gathered a group of 10 women to start the Poughkeepsie Neighborhood Club.⁶² Mrs. Harden served as

President of the club until her death in 1948. The purpose of the club was to help women do civic work and to help uplift womanhood in general. It brought outstanding Negro speakers to Poughkeepsie for lectures. It also encouraged churches and community groups to observe Emancipation Day and Negro History Sunday. In 1917 the club sponsored its first Lincoln-Douglass dinner. During the first week of every April, the club supported Negro Health Week. The Poughkeepsie Neighborhood Club became a member of the United Federation of Negro Women, which was organized by the famous educator and college president Dr. Mary McCleod Bethune. The club also played an informal role in social change by encouraging black professionals like Dr. Price to relocate to Poughkeepsie.⁶³

Throughout the twentieth century there was a small but steady flow of migrants from the Caribbean Island nations, especially Jamaica. The migrants came in search of better employment and educational possibilities and to escape depressed economic conditions. For example, Dr. Robert Morgan was one of the early West Indian migrants who came for advanced educational opportunities. Many other West Indians came to Poughkeepsie as a result of employment as migrant laborers in the apple orchards and farms to the Mid-Hudson. After the 1950s Poughkeepsie developed a significant Jamaican sector in the black community.

From World War I into the 1920s Poughkeepsie and other cities along the Hudson River received an influx of Southern migrants, largely a spillover effect from the large numbers that headed for New York City and Harlem. Many of these early migrants came from nearby states like the Virginia Commonwealth and most of the post-World War II migrants came from Deep South states like the Carolinas, Georgia and Louisiana. The existence of these migrants put additional pressure on the small group of leaders to seek ways to open up the job market for Negroes in Poughkeepsie. Leaders like Mrs. Harden, Gaius Bolin, Sr., Dr. Morgan, Dr. Price, Miss Lucy Graves and clergy like the Rev. Arthur May began to work quietly behind the scenes, negotiating with the owners of factories and hospital administrators and doctors. Dr. Morgan had also organized a Colored Citizens Committee in the 1930s to investigate the abuses which Negroes suffered in housing. The employment scene for black workers began to improve gradually by the late 1930s and early 1940s when the factories and hospitals started hiring them. Hannah M. Johnson became the first black public health nurse in the Dutchess County Health Department in 1940 and Dorothy L. Edwards was the first black nurse hired at the Vassar Brothers Hospital in 1946.⁶⁴

With the growing numbers of black migrants to northern cities like Poughkeepsie and with the bloody racial riots of the "Red Summer" of 1919 in cities across the country, the Ku Klux Klan also began to organize in the North and was active in the Mid-Hudson area in the 1920s and 1930s. On August 24, 1924 the Klan held a massive membership rally in the old Driving Park or Ruppert Park which was the site of the Dutchess County Fair from 1888 to 1929. An estimated 3,000 people were in attendance and hundreds more tried to get in without invitations. After the meeting crosses were burned in the town of Milton. Other activities included parades in full regalia, attempts to influence local elections and "charitable visits" to Black churches as part of their campaign of intimidation. In 1925 Poughkeepsie Klan No. 237 visited a Negro church in the eastern part of the county. They entered the service in hooded robes, singing "Onward Christian Soldiers." Upon leaving they gave a \$50 donation to the pastor.⁶⁵

In spite of these attempts at intimidation and enormous racial discrimination in employment and in other areas of life, black people created and maintained institutions parallel to those in the larger white society. As the dominant black institutions, black churches had often functioned as community centers, auditoriums for large meetings, concert halls, art galleries, and schools. However, the growing complexity of urban society required a specialization of functions and a separation from specific religious requirements. In Poughkeepsie some key members of the Poughkeepsie Neighborhood Club along with the clergy and other community leaders were instrumental in founding the Catharine Street Community Center in 1922. The Center had begun earlier as the YWCA's North Side Branch for Negro Girls, which taught sewing skills and sponsored recreational activities. The YW had received the center property on Catharine Street as a gift of Dr. and Mrs. William Bancroft Hill. Mr. and Mrs. Albert Smith were the first directors of the community center in its first location at 69 Catharine Street. In 1936 Miss Lucy Graves became the Center's Director and an influential community activist. In 1945 the Board of Management of the YWCA voted to deed the center over to the black community as an endorsement of the work of the Catharine Street agency. In that same year Dr. Morgan, President of the Catharine Street Board, and City Judge Corbally led to a \$50,000 fund raising campaign to build a new and better equipped center.⁶⁶

Another set of parallel institutions, which has a long and illustrious history in the black community, is comprised of the fraternal orders and lodges like the Masons and the Elks and their female counterparts such as the Daughters of the Eastern Star. The Mount Moriah Masonic Lodge existed in Poughkeepsie as early as 1855 and by 1876 it had 34 members when George P. West was the Worthy Master.⁶⁷ However, the growth of the fraternal orders and lodges in Poughkeepsie's black community did not occur until the post World War II period when the migrations resulted in a bewildering array of these organizations.⁶⁸

The black college fraternities and sororities also were another set of organizations created by the college-educated sector in the black community. As a result of the migrations, a number of these fraternities and sororities have been established in Poughkeepsie.⁶⁹ In addition to supplying a pool of volunteers for community human service activities, they have played a major role in giving collegiate scholarships to minority students and in emphasizing the need for achievement.

Colored baseball teams existed in the Queen City in the late nineteenth century. In 1883 the *Eagle* reported on a game between Poughkeepsie's "colored baseball club" and a visiting colored team from Connecticut.⁷⁰ During the 1930s and 1940s the Imperials and the Mohawks of Poughkeepsie and the Millbrook Giants were colored baseball teams that competed against other ethnic teams in Dutchess County leagues. There was also an Imperial basketball team that challenged other teams from Albany to New York City from 1938 to 1946. Wilbur Thompson, father of Dutchess County legislator Sherwood Thompson,⁷¹ played for the Mohawks and was elected to the Dutchess County Baseball Hall of Fame. One of the most well-known Negro athletes during this period was Robert S. Magill. Magill worked for the Post Office and played on and coached almost all of the colored teams in all of the major sports, including the semi-pro football team the Poughkeepsie All-Americans. Magill was also instrumental in forming the Poughkeepsie Net Club to promote Negro interest in tennis and his club sponsored a city tournament as well as played in the New York State Colored Tennis

Association.⁷² Besides Magill, Morgan Reed, dubbed "Mr. Black Sports of Dutchess County," Ray Bradford and Pete Anthony also played for the colored teams and later were inducted into the Dutchess County Hall of Fame, Old Timers Baseball Association.

Another sporting event for which Dutchess County and Poughkeepsie earned considerable fame was in race horse breeding and trotter racing. The only mile long track in Dutchess County was located at the Hudson River Driving Park, which was also known as "Ruppert Park" from 1879 to 1923.⁷³ Among the black people who earned their livelihood from this sport were Wyatt Jones, a horse owner, and Vincent "Skinny" Jackson, a local Poughkeepsie jockey.⁷⁴

The religious character of the black community continued to change during the twentieth century. By the end of World War II, the earlier dominance of the Zion Methodists in the Mid-Hudson was ended by the rapid growth of black Baptist churches, which still constitute the largest black denominations in the United States. The Holiness-Pentecostal movement, which developed out of Methodism in the late nineteenth century, also stressed an emotionalism that appealed to many black migrants, particularly during the Depression and post war years. Father Divine's Peace Mission movement, which attracted many Holiness followers, mushroomed in New York City with spillover effects in the Mid-Hudson. Divine had a vacation mansion at Krum Elbow near President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's estate in Hyde Park and seven "heavens" or communal farms in Ulster County. There is evidence that in 1934 about 150 local residents attempted to begin a Peace Mission in the former building of the Poughkeepsie Bicycle Club at 176 Mansion Street.⁷⁵ Apparently, that effort failed since there is no listing of the church or other evidence of the influence of Father Divine's movement in Poughkeepsie.

In 1934 the Rev. Eustace McMurrine started a black Pentecostal church on Tulip Street, and in 1936 he established the United Pentecostal Church, a church of children.⁷⁶ After the death of her husband, the Rev. Marie McMurrine Watterson established more permanent quarters by founding the Church of the Living God United in 1943. Black members of the Seventh Day Adventists faith also attracted a core following that was large enough to establish Trinity Temple and the predominantly black Victory Lake Nursing Home in Hyde Park. In the early 1970s the Nation of Islam, a militant black nationalist group, had a small following in Poughkeepsie. Later the group changed to orthodox Sunni Islam and established a Muslim masjid or place of prayer in the city in 1976. Chart 1 gives an overview of the religious pluralism that developed among black churches and religious groups in Dutchess County.

CHART 1

Black Religious Groups of Dutchess County

Church or Group	Date Organized	Founding Minister
Smith Metropolitan A.M.E. Zion Poughkeepsie	1837	The Rev. Jacob Thomas (?)
St. James A.M.E. Zion Beacon (formerly Fishkill Landing)	1844	The Rev. Joseph Pascal Thompson (?)
Ebenezer Baptist Church Poughkeepsie	1891	The Rev. Charles Fairess
Star of Bethlehem Beacon	1900	The Rev. Barnum
Mt. Zion Baptist Church Green Haven	1902	The Rev. Brown
Central Baptist Church Salt Point	1919	The Rev. F. H. Wiggins
Beulah Baptist Church Wappingers Falls	1928	The Rev. Williams
Beulah Baptist Church Poughkeepsie	Sept. 12, 1933	The Rev. J. H. Wright
Second Baptist Church Poughkeepsie	July 19, 1946	The Rev. Thomas Jenkins
Springfield Baptist Church Beacon	1946	The Rev. Mattie Cooper
Church of the Living God United Poughkeepsie	1943	The Rev. Marie McMurrine Watterson
Holy Light Pentecostal Poughkeepsie	1952	Bishop Mack McClinton
Green Chapel Overcoming Church of God Poughkeepsie	1960	Elder A. Green
Faith Temple Church of God in Christ, Beacon	1961	The Rev. James E. Hunt
Bethel Missionary Baptist Church Wappingers Falls	1966	The Rev. Clarence Carson
Bethel Church of God in Christ Poughkeepsie	1966	The Rev. James E. Hunt
St. Mark A.M.E. Zion Poughkeepsie	Dec. 8, 1971	The Rev. Ralph McGhee
Trinity Temple Seventh Day Adventist, Poughkeepsie	1964	The Rev. Judge A. Brummel
Masjid Ut Mutakabbir Poughkeepsie	1976	Imam Sabir Alaji
Mount Olivet Fire Baptized Holiness Church, Poughkeepsie	1980	The Rev. Magdalene Patterson

If the Great Depression was difficult for whites, it had a devastating impact in the black community. The discovery by Eleanor Roosevelt of the extremely depressing and squalid conditions of hundreds of impoverished black families living near the brickyards at Brockway and Dutchess Junction became a catalyst for social welfare programs under the national recovery acts sponsored by FDR.⁷⁷ Oral history interviews with local black residents indicated that there was extreme impoverishment. Hunger was the word which summarized their experiences. A number of volunteer relief agencies sprang into existence in the city. The federal government sponsored WPA projects and work corps to help ease the massive unemployment. The Rev. Herbert Payne, a former pastor of Ebenezer Church, became an administrator for WPA projects in New York State.⁷⁸ After the Depression years, Mrs. Bessie Payne became the first principal of the Little Red School House, a forerunner of the Rehabilitation Programs, Inc.

The United States did not fully recover from the Depression until the world war in Europe and the Pacific. The social conditions of the 1940s set into motion even larger waves of migrations of black people from the South and paved the way for the emergence of the Civil Rights movement from 1954 to 1968. During World War II more than 200 black men from Dutchess County entered the military services. Walter Patrice, a graduate of Poughkeepsie High School who attended Howard University, became the first black Poughkeepsian to be commissioned an officer, first lieutenant in the U.S. Army, and the Rev. Charles Byrd served as a military chaplain of the Air Force with the rank of lieutenant colonel. In October 1941, the Women's Service Club of the Catharine Street Center was organized and it published a monthly magazine called "The Patriot," which contained excerpts of letters and news about the men serving in different countries. Headed by Mrs. Robert Morgan as President, the club also sent Christmas gifts and other gifts during slack periods to keep the morale of the men up. It also sponsored talks at the center by returning servicemen.⁷⁹ Although there were glimmers of hope for black people in the 1940s, most of American society remained closed to them and that condition was reflected in Poughkeepsie.

In a bold and prophetic address to the annual American Brotherhood dinner, sponsored by the city in 1944, the guest of honor and principal speaker, Judge Jane Bolin Mizelle, the daughter of Gaius Bolin, Sr. and the first black woman judge in the United States, eloquently summarized the situation for Negroes in the city. She charged that there were no Negroes on the staffs of the District Attorney's Office, on the City Council, in the Fire and Police Departments, or in the local hospitals as doctors and nurses. There were also no Negroes as teachers in the schools or as skilled workers in the industrial plants. Even the local YMCA and YWCA engaged in the racial hypocrisy by not allowing Negroes as members and thus "degrade the word Christian." She asked plaintively:

... America, which has reached its present stature only by the contributions of its various minority groups, can it afford not to utilize the abilities and aptitudes of these citizens? Can America stand the human waste? ... You forward-thinking people have not only the opportunity but the duty to begin immediately to break down the traditions of this city and to begin the practice of democratic principles.⁸⁰

Judge Jane Bolin also pointed to the need to revise the textbooks used in schools because they neglected the contributions of minorities. Having left the comforts of her father's home 12 years ago in order to fulfill her aspirations, she said that

declarations of "brotherhood" were pointless until the city of Poughkeepsie ended its intolerance and racial discrimination.⁸¹

In 1941 Thomas Watson, Sr. began the expansion of his company's operation from Endicott, New York to the Mid-Hudson region when an International Business Machine subsidiary, the Munitions Manufacturing Company bought 215 acres along the River. Then, IBM gradually purchased more property until Watson relocated his research and engineering laboratories to Kenyon House in 1944.⁸² These early moves into the Mid-Hudson signaled the growth of the company into a national and multi-national corporation. However, it was not until the early to mid-1950s that the first professional blacks were hired by the corporation.⁸³ In 1952 Harry Cochrane was the first black professional hired at the Poughkeepsie facility; some other early blacks hired during this period include: Calvin Waite, William Crawford, Fleming Alexander, Clifton Kearney, Harry Wilkinson, Columbus Stanley, Victor Morris and John Cooper.⁸⁴ The vast majority of black professionals were recruited to IBM after 1963. The arrival of the black IBMers became a significant factor in the history and development of the local black community. They came with a sense of optimism, vigor, college education, skills, and most important, a political savvy that had been honed in the heartland of Jim Crow segregation. Their fresh insights and energy were important to the local community. Together with the local black leaders, they helped to challenge and to change the closed society of Poughkeepsie.

The experiences of these first black IBMers confirmed the insights of Judge Bolin's brotherhood speech. They found a "rigid residential segregation" in Dutchess County and they saw a city that was completely circumscribed by a suburban town with all of the blacks "trapped in decaying census tracts in the city."⁸⁵ Housing became a major issue for the early IBMers because all of them were denied the opportunities to live where they wanted to because of their skin color. Even the Housing Office of their giant corporation could not help them and only continued to hand out lists of houses which would not rent or sell to black people. IBM's Welcome Wagon, which was set up to meet and help employees in the process of relocating, only met with white families. So the first black IBMers developed their own informal version of the welcome wagon and their own housing lists to help those who came later.⁸⁶ Furthermore, they found a public school system that had no Negro teachers. That confounded many of them because even in the de jure segregation of the South, they themselves had grown up with Negro teachers as role models in the public schools and even in college. Except for a few places, they also found that there were no black clerks and no black workers in the small grocery stores, nor in the larger stores on Main Street like Woolworth, Kresge, and Luckey Platt.

The Civil Rights Watershed

The 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown vs. The Board of Education* was the unofficial start of the Civil Rights era because it provided the legal legitimation for all of the tumultuous events and activities that followed.

The cracks in Poughkeepsie's silent wall of segregation began to appear gradually. On August 3, 1946 members of the Poughkeepsie Chapter of the United Negro and Allied Veterans of America sponsored a memorial rally at Mansion Square Park to protest the lynching of four Negro citizens in Monroe, Georgia.⁸⁷ In 1947 Robert Vaughn became the first black to be hired by the Fire Department and by the time of his retirement in 1974 he had become the first

black captain in the Fire Department. In 1977 Vaughn was the first black appointed to the Dutchess County Legislature, 12th District, and later he became the first black Dutchess County Deputy Coordinator. In 1957 Mrs. Thelma Morris was the first black teacher appointed by the City of Poughkeepsie School District since the integration of the schools in 1874.⁸⁸ Mrs. Dorothy Stanley was a substitute teacher in 1956 and later she became the first black administrator of the school system.⁸⁹ In 1957 Mrs. Eleanor Benjamin began her courageous volunteer work with the migrant farm workers in the Mid-Hudson region. For thirteen years she served on the Dutchess County Migrant Council.⁹⁰ In spite of these first breakthroughs, the city did not experience the impact of the Civil Rights movement until the decade of the 1960s.

Housing became the issue that first rallied the Civil Rights forces in the city. A bi-racial committee started by black and white religious groups in Poughkeepsie and some individual citizens began the major push for State legislation to ban discrimination in housing. They succeeded with a Fair Housing Bill of 1961 which opened about 15 percent of the market and again in 1963 with a bill that opened the other 85 percent. Except in isolated instances prior to the 1960s, the majority of blacks experienced considerable racial discrimination in finding adequate housing. It was not until after 1963 that middle class blacks could freely move to suburbia in Dutchess County.⁹¹

The next target became employment, especially to get the grocery and department stores to hire black clerks and workers. Led by the Northern Dutchess Chapter of the NAACP and their president Wiley Jackson in the mid-1960s, a variety of demonstrations and pickets occurred at stores like Woolworth's. A few Vassar College students joined in the demonstrations. Mrs. Earline Patrice, a long time community activist, recalled warning her friends and neighbors not to cross the picket lines.⁹² Activist black clergy during this period included the Rev. Belvie Jackson of the Zion Church, and the Rev. Robert Dixon of the Central Baptist Church, who ran for mayor unsuccessfully. In 1963 the Rev. Jackson, Cecelia Magill and Rupert Tarver were appointed to serve on Poughkeepsie's first Human Rights Commission.

The public schools, however, still remained a major problem because racial tensions rose with the growing influx of black migrants, especially among the lower income families who were attracted by the County's economic prosperity. In 1940 Dutchess County's nonwhite population was 3.6 percent and in 1960 it grew to 5.8 percent. Of the 9,917 Negroes in the County in 1960, the city of Poughkeepsie had the largest number, 3,601.⁹³ In the two decades after 1960, Poughkeepsie's black population more than doubled to 7,606 or 25.6 percent of all citizens in 1980. With this significant growth in the black population, some of the city's white residents reacted as they have in other parts of the nation with a flight to suburbia.⁹⁴ The growing number of minority students was an important factor which contributed to the creation of a separate, predominantly white Spackenkill High School in 1970.⁹⁵ Prior to that time Spackenkill students attended Poughkeepsie High School. In 1964 Mrs. Marie Tarver, a native of Louisiana, was appointed to fill a vacancy on the Board of Education. She not only became the first black on the Board but in 1965 she was elected to it, the first to win a public election, and later also the first to become the Board's president. In 1966 Lorraine Roberts became the first black teacher to chair an academic department in the Poughkeepsie City School District and in 1982 Mr. James Clarke, Jr. became the first black Superintendent of Schools for the same school

district.

In 1965 Dutchess County's first Human Rights Council was formed with Victor Morris as its chairman. Morris was also instrumental in becoming the editor and publisher of the first two black newspapers in the Hudson Valley. In 1957-1959 he started the first paper, the *Antler Digest* and between the years 1969 and 1979 he edited the *Mid-Hudson Herald*.⁹⁶

Following the Newark and Detroit riots in July 1967 Poughkeepsie also experienced several days of disturbances from July 28 to July 30. Fed by rumors, bands of mostly black teenagers roamed the streets breaking store windows on Main Street. Members of the black clergy and other community leaders like Ruppert Tarver, Harold Anderson and Morris mediated with the youths to help stem the spread of trouble.⁹⁷

The activism of the 1960s also led to the creation of numerous community organizations and self-help groups. During President Johnson's War on Poverty, Ruppert Tarver became the executive director of the Neighborhood Services Organization, while his wife Marie directed Poughkeepsie's Model Cities Agency.⁹⁸ Harold Anderson was the director of the Poughkeepsie Opportunity Center of the Dutchess County Committee for Economic Opportunity. Mrs. Ethel Vaughn was the only woman and the first black person appointed to the Poughkeepsie Urban Renewal Agency Board in 1965. The Lower Main Street Association was formed in 1967 after the July disturbances under the leadership of Wiley Jackson and Earline Patrice.⁹⁹ The Hudson Valley Opportunities Industrialization Center was organized in 1968 with Edward Johnson as its executive director. The Cultural Progress Club was organized by Mrs. Robert Dixon in 1968. Other cultural breakthroughs were achieved by Vivian Gaines Tanner, Carol Crawford, William Duke, Jr. and Myra Morris.¹⁰⁰

For a period of time in the late 1960s and early 1970s there existed a coalition of groups for political purposes, the United Black Council Executive Committee.¹⁰¹ The 28th Congressional District Division of the New York State Voters League Association supported black candidates for mayor and other municipal offices. In the mid-1970s the black community achieved a significant breakthrough in the previously closed society when Stewart Bowles became the first black Chief of Police of the City of Poughkeepsie. Also in the 1970s, the Jamaican Concerned Citizens was formed by Clement Parkinson, Wiley Jackson and Earline Patrice to address the issues and concerns of Jamaicans and other West Indians in Poughkeepsie. Other community activists from Jamaica included Winston Bailey, who served on the Board of Education, and Rodney Douglas, who created the first black repertoire and acting company in the Mid-Hudson. Jeh V. Johnson was the first black architect in Poughkeepsie with design credits that included: the Dutchess County Mental Health Building (1969); St. Simeon (1970); Interfaith Towers (1973); Tubman Terrace (1974); Catharine Street Center (1979). There were numerous other "first" breakthroughs that cannot be mentioned completely in this text.¹⁰²

Conclusion

An overview of 300 years of black history in the Mid-Hudson, Dutchess County, and the city of Poughkeepsie reveals not only the struggles and accomplishments of black people from slavery to freedom, but it also acts as a mirror that refracts the strengths and weaknesses of the larger society. Racism remains America's great unsolved problem. W.E.B. DuBois once said that "the problem

of the twentieth century is the color-line."¹⁰³ Foreign observers like Alexis DeTocqueville in the nineteenth century and Gunnar Myrdal in the twentieth have also puzzled over this "American dilemma" of having the highest democratic ideals but of failing to put them into practice. The authors of this article can only concur with these observations and urge greater efforts on the part of all Americans in the continuing struggle to resolve this dilemma.

Endnotes

1. Edmund Platt, *The Eagle's History of Poughkeepsie 1683 to 1905* (Poughkeepsie, N.Y.: Platt and Platt, 1905).
2. The authors acknowledge the help provided by the following persons in completing this research project: Betty White, Victor and Thelma Morris, Bessie Payne, Mrs. Olga Galloway, and Frank and Anna Dolfinger.
3. Albert J. Williams-Myers. "A Preface: The African Presence in the Hudson River Valley, Interpersonal Relations Between the Masters and Slaves to the Early Federal Period." unpublished paper, 1987, p. 1. The authors want to acknowledge and thank Professor Williams-Myers of the Blacks Studies Department of SUNY, New Paltz for sharing his research on slavery in the Hudson Valley with them. This summary overview of slavery in the Mid-Hudson is indebted to his work.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 5-8.
5. Platt, *Eagle's History*, p. 64.
6. *Records of the Poughkeepsie (N.Y.) Precinct, 1769-1831*. Manuscript record book. Section on manumissions, p. 1.
7. See, "The S.P.G. in Colonial New York," in Frank J. Klingberg, *Anglican Humanitarianism in Colonial New York* (Books for Libraries Press: Freeport, New York, 1940, reprinted 1971), p. 121-186. Carlton Mabee, *Black Education in New York: From Colonial Times to Modern Times* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1979). Also see Williams-Myers, "The African Presence," pp. 52-53.
8. A.J. Williams-Myers, "Pinkster Carnival: Africanisms in the Hudson River Valley," *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History* (January 1985), pp. 5-17.
9. Henry Noble MacCracken, *Blithe Dutchess: The Flowering of An American County From 1812* (New York: Hastings House, 1958), p. 105.
10. Lawrence H. Mamiya and Patricia A. Kaurouma, For Their Courage and For Their Struggles: The Black Oral History Project of Poughkeepsie, New York (Poughkeepsie: Urban Center for Africana Studies, 1978), p. 3. Also see Denise Love Johnson, "Black Migration," *Poughkeepsie Bicentennial Forum*, Publication of Poughkeepsie High School, June-July 1976, p. 6. This article is a condensed version of Mrs. Love Johnson's senior thesis at Vassar College, written for the Departments of Black Studies and Geography, "Black Migration Patterns: A Case Study of the Origin and Development of the Black Population in the City of Poughkeepsie, N.Y.," May 1973.
11. MacCracken, *Blithe Dutchess*, p. 53.
12. See Henry Noble MacCracken, *Old Dutchess Forever: The Story of An American County* (N.Y.: Hastings House, 1956), pp. 191-192.
13. The Rev. L. M. Vincent, *Methodism in Poughkeepsie and Vicinity: Its Rise and Progress From 1780 to 1802, with Sketches and Incidents* (Poughkeepsie, N.Y.: Press of A. V. Haight, 1892), p. 14. Bishop Asbury made his statements in 1800 or 1801 in a visit to Poughkeepsie, expressing the frustration of several failed attempts to establish a Methodist class.
14. In 1787 the Free African Society, one of the first mutual aid societies, was founded by Absalom Jones and Richard Allen. In 1794 the Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church was established by Allen.
15. Vincent reported that there were 402 white members and 47 colored members between 1834 to 1836. Vincent, *Methodism*, p. 19. The information on the United Society is taken from the historical section of the 1985 *Directory of the Smith Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church*, p. 3.
16. "Catharine Street," spelled with an "a," was the original spelling of the street and the church. See the historical account of the Catharine Street A.M.E. Zion Church given by Gaius Bolin, Sr. in "Armed Patrol Once Guarded Local Church," *The Sunday Courier*, 12 November 1937.

17. According to the 1985 *Directory of the Smith Metropolitan A.M.E. Zion Church* the first pastor mentioned is the Rev. Jacob Thomas. In Charles Sargent Jr.'s unpublished paper, "Negro Churches in Dutchess County, N.Y." (September 30, 1955), the pastor is the Rev. Jacob Thompson. Sargent's paper is available in the Local History Room of the Adriaenc Memorial Library in Poughkeepsie. However, there is no definitive evidence for the founding pastor since key documents were lost in a church fire.

18. See Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1973), p. 121. Douglass became the first black person to speak on behalf of the race in national forums. Tubman was known as the "Moses of her people" for leading the largest number of escaped slaves (over 300) to freedom. Louguen was dubbed "King of the Underground Railroad."

19. The exact founding date of the Baxtertown A.M.E. Zion Church is not known since it ceased to exist by the middle of the 1930's. An oral history interview of Frank and Anna Dolfinger by Lorraine Roberts on 16 July 1987 indicated that the church was about 100 feet from Dolfinger's property. Mr. Dolfinger said that it was a big church, all wood, big windows, plain glass, double doors in front, you could walk off the front porch. An article on tours in Dutchess County in 1937 indicated that the church was no longer in use in the middle of the 1930s. It said the following of the Baxtertown church, "M.E. Zion Church, the roof of which was caved in from the weight of the snow." See *The American Guide Series - Dutchess County, New York*, sponsored by the Women's City and County Club of Dutchess County, N.Y. (Published by the William Penn Association of Philadelphia, 1937), p. 128.

The St. James A.M.E. Zion Church in Beacon was originally named the First Methodist Episcopal Ebenezer Church of Fishkill Landing. It was called the "Colored Methodist Episcopal Ebenezer Church" in order to avoid confusion with the white First Methodist Episcopal Church already in Beacon. (Affidavit of Blossom Jones, church member, New York State, Dutchess County, 28 March 1963). Also see the article by Craig Wolfe, "Historic Church At Crossroads, *Evening News* (Beacon), 23 October 1980. The authors also acknowledge the information on the history of the St. James A.M.E. Zion Church given by Olga Galloway.

20. MacCracken, *Blithe Dutchess*, pp. 105-106.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 106. For the same story regarding Bolding see Platt, *Eagle's History*, p. 135.

22. MacCracken, *Blithe Dutchess*, p. 98.

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 98-100.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

25. Armed Patrol Once Guarded Local Church: Mob During Civil War Threatened to Burn A.M.E. Edifice," *The Sunday Courier*, 12 November 1937. Summary of a history written and read by Mr. Gaius Bolin, Sr. at the centennial celebration of the Catharine Street Church.

26. "Performance by Coward," report of the attack by the soldiers on the colored church, *Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle*, 7 January 1863.

27. "Meeting at the Catharine Street Methodist Church," *Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle*, 7 January 1863.

28. MacCracken, *Blithe Dutchess*, p. 58.

29. See the following issues of the *Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle*: 24 December 1863; 31 December 1863; 7-8 January 1864; 14 January 1864; 5-6 February 1864. In its 16 April 1864 edition, the *Eagle* reported in large bold headlines about the slaughter and atrocities committed on 300 Negro troops and 50 whites at Fort Pillow, who were either shot to death, and burned or buried alive after they had surrendered.

30. *Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle*, 6 February 1964.

31. See the following issues of the *Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle*: 1 February 1864; 17 February 1864; 18 January 1865.

32. In fact at a meeting on 24 October 1870, a resolution was passed that "any Negroes voting the Democratic ticket will be considered enemies of the race." *Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle*, 25 October 1870. At a meeting on 23 June 1876, the Republican Colored Committee passed resolutions asking the party to recognize the rights of colored representatives and to acknowledge that colored men are capable of holding public offices. *Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle*, 24 June 1876.

33. *Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle*, 17 May 1870.

34. *Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle*, 18 June 1865.

35. "Not A City Darkey," *Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle*, 16 May 1864.

36. Carleton Mabee, *Black Education in New York State*. See the section on African Free Schools operated by the New York Manumission Society throughout New York State, pp. 19-22.

37. See Amy Pearce Ver Nooy, "The Anti-Slavery Movement in Dutchess County, 1835-1850," *Yearbook of the Dutchess County Historical Society*, Vol. 28, 1943, p. 61.

38. *Ibid.*

39. "Account of the Board of Education Minutes, Report by The Committee on Teachers," signed by E.Q. Eldridge, E.J. Wilbur, and W. Farrington, 1 November 1870.

40. Quoted in Carleton Mabee, "Toussaint College: A Proposed Black College for New York State in the 1870's," *Afro Americans in New York Life and History* (January 1977, 25-35), p. 30.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

42. *Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle*, 2 September 1873.

43. *Ibid.*

44. *Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle*, 5 September 1873.

45. *Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle*, 11 September 1873. Also see the Poughkeepsie City School District, Board of Education Minute Book (1856-1874), p. 48.

46. *Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle*, 14 May 1874.

47. "51 Years A Lawyer" by Dorothy W. Thomson, *The Sunday New Yorker*, 22 November 1943. The article is on the accomplishments of Gaius Bolin, Sr.

48. Clyde Griffen and Sally Griffen. *Natives and Newcomers: The Ordering of Opportunity in Mid-Nineteenth Century Poughkeepsie* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1978), see footnote 9, p. 285.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 123.

50. *Ibid.*

51. *Ibid.*, pp. 208-209.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 237.

53. The extent of this economic deprivation is also reflected in the social institutions that blacks created. During the 1860's there were periodic appeals to sympathetic whites for money, dry goods, and groceries to help support the pastor of the Zion Church. Clyde Griffen and Sally Griffen, *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

54. *Ibid.*, pp. 212-214. The Griffens mention a "Calico Ball" thrown by the colored waiters of the Nelson House in 1877.

55. According to Charles J. Sargent, Jr., charter members of the church were: Mr. and Mrs. William Duval, Mrs. Hunter, Miss A. Huer, Mr. Thomas Vaughn, Miss Emma Vaughn, Mrs. Rhoda Fariess, Mr. William Williams, and Mr. Horace Van Dusen. See Sargent, "Negro Churches," p. 2.

56. See Bishop William J. Wall's history of the Zion Church. William J. Walls, *The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church: Reality of the Black Church* (Charlotte, N.D.: A.M.E. Zion Publishing House), p. 111.

57. Betty White, church clerk of the Ebenezer Baptist Church, "History of the Ebenezer Baptist Church, unpublished paper, Summer 1987. "A History of Smith Metropolitan A.M.E. Zion Church 1837-1985," by The Committee in the *Smith Metropolitan A.M.E. Zion Church, Poughkeepsie N.Y. 1985 Directory*, pp. 3-4.

58. According to Dennis Dickerson's article on Gaius Bolin, Sr., "Success Story . . . With A Difference," Bolin was one of seven Poughkeepsie residents who agreed to form a local branch of the NAACP in 1931. "In addition to Bolin, sixty-one people from Poughkeepsie and other nearby communities became the founding members . . . In 1932 he (Bolin) served on the Executive Committee of the Dutchess County NAACP." Dr. Morgan, his wife Lucy, and Lucy P. Graves, Director of the Catharine Street Center, helped to establish the junior NAACP, which sponsored in 1934 the Phyllis A. Wheatley Scholarship Fund for promising black youths who wanted to go to college. See Dennis Dickerson, "Success Story . . . With A Difference," *Williams Alumni Review*, Fall, 1979, p. 3. In the mid-1960's the name was changed to the Northern Dutchess Branch of the NAACP.

59. *Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle*, 22 January 1910.

60. See the oral history interview with Mrs. Bessie Harden Payne for her reminiscences of racial discrimination in Poughkeepsie in Mamiya and Kaurouma, *For Their Courage*, p. 25.

61. "One of the People," interview with John W. Harden, Bessie Harden Payne's father, by Marion L. McMahon, *Sunday New Yorker*, 10 January 1943.

62. Besides Mrs. Harden and Mrs. Payne, the following women were in the original group: Mrs. Jennie Storts, Mrs. Osafora Strudella Lawrence, Miss Louise Roberts, Miss Jessie Haff, Mrs. Jessie Wye, Mrs. Edna Francis, Mrs. Maria Brown, Miss Lulu Richardson. Unpublished papers of Bessie Harden Payne, courtesy of Mrs. Lorraine Roberts.

63. Oral history interview with Mrs. Bessie Payne in Mamiya and Kaurouma, *For Their Courage*, p. 30.

64. During the 1940s the Hudson River State Hospital also began hiring Negro workers and staff. After the Civil Rights period, Mrs. Gloria Freeman, RN, became the first black to own and operate a private proprietary home for adults, one of the first adult homes certified in Poughkeepsie by the New York State Department of Social Services.

65. The church visited by the Klan in 1925 is probably Mount Zion Baptist in Stormville. For a fine summary of these activities, see the article by Helen Meyers, "Hooded Knights Once Rode in Dutchess," *Sunday New Yorker*, 11 August 1946.

66. "Catharine Street Center's Drive for \$50,000 Opens Tomorrow," *Poughkeepsie Journal*, 13 November 1945, p. 1. In 1971 Henry and Lola Green were instrumental in spearheading the rebuilding of the Catharine Street Center, which was dedicated in March 1979.

67. "Colored Masonic Festival," *Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle*, 21 November 1876.

68. Some examples of the variety of fraternal orders and lodges in Poughkeepsie include the following: Upper Hudson and Capital District Prince Hall Free and Accepted Masons; Nimrod Lodge, No. 96, F. and A.M.; Queen of Hudson Temple No. 292 Excelsior Chapter. Order of the Eastern Star; Corinthian Lodge, No. 24, F. and A.M.; Hattipha Chapter No. 3, Order of Eastern Star; Elks, Pride of Hudson Lodge, No. 466, International Order of the Elks; Masonic Mary Magdalene Chapter No. 127, Order of the Eastern Star; Jehovah Lodge, No. 57; Excelsior Chapter 72. Order of the Eastern Star, Prince Hall Affiliated; Odd Fellows; and Knights of Pythias. In recent years, Mr. Eli Allen, III, became the first and only Grand Master of the Prince Hall Masons from Poughkeepsie.

69. Some of the black fraternity and sorority groups in Poughkeepsie include the following: Howard University Alumni Association; Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity; Omega Psi Phi Fraternity; Delta Sigma Theta Sorority; Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.; Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity; and Zeta Phi Beta Sorority.

70. The article reported that the score was tied 19-19, although Poughkeepsie claimed victory. It ends with a comment of racist humor: "During the game there was a coon in the air all the while." *Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle*, 15 August 1883.

71. In 1984 Sherwood Thompson became the first black elected to the Dutchess County Legislature from the 10th District of Poughkeepsie.

72. "Bob Magill, Player-Coach, Promotes Negro Athletics," by Seymour Prutinsky, *Poughkeepsie Journal*, 15 March 1940. Athletic records indicate that it was not until 1919 that the first colored student, Abraham Bolin Crooke, played on the football team for Poughkeepsie High School.

73. MacCracken, *Blithe Dutchess*, p. 421.

74. Information on Jackson and Jones comes from Walter Patrice's mother, Mrs. Unetta Jackson Patrice, who worked as a waitress at the track around 1913.

75. "Building Sought to Start 'Father' Divine Congregation," *Poughkeepsie Journal*, 19 November 1934.

76. "Pentecostal Church of Children Thrives Here," *Poughkeepsie Star Enterprise*, 9 June 1939.

77. MacCracken, *Blithe Dutchess*, pp. 107-108. In his work with the relief board of Dutchess County, MacCracken claimed that he was responsible for Eleanor Roosevelt's visit.

78. Mamiya and Kaurouma, *For Their Courage*, oral history interview with Mrs. Bessie Payne, p. 25.

79. Besides Mrs. Morgan, other members of the club included: Mrs. Aetius Lawrence, Mrs. Gary Mendez, Mrs. Frank T. Wood, Mrs. Crawford McGerald, Mrs. Robert Magill, Mrs. Robert Sullivan, Mrs. James K. Lewis, Mrs. Madeline S. Hawley, Mrs. Oscar Boone Jr., Dorothy Thompson, Mrs. Lillian Saunders, Mrs. Evelyn Smith, Mrs. Margaret Wright, Mrs. Fellmore Wood, and Mrs. Norman Anderson. "Women's Service Club Aids Men At War," *Poughkeepsie Journal*, 12 June 1945.

80. "Judge Bolin Declares 'Brotherhood' Pointless Unless Poughkeepsie Ends Its Intolerance," *Poughkeepsie New Yorker*, 22 February 1944. Judge Jane Bolin was the first black woman to graduate from Yale Law School and she was appointed by Mayor LaGuardia to the New York City Domestic Relations Court.

81. *Ibid.* Although Strudella Ann Lawrence became the first black valedictorian of Poughkeepsie High School in 1944, minority students in the public schools still suffered from the kinds of inadequacies of textbooks and intolerance that Judge Bolin pointed to.

82. Historical information of IBM's Poughkeepsie operations were derived from the IBM publication, "Pages From the Past," published for their 35th anniversary celebration, 16 October 1976.

83. Not until the civil rights outbreaks in the 1950s did IBM become concerned with discrimination against Negro workers. Thomas Watson, Jr. led the aggressive policy of recruiting and training Negroes in positions other than menial service positions. See William Rogers, *Think: A Biography of the Watsons and IBM* (New York: New American Library, 1969), pp. 99-100; p. 293.

84. In 1974 Columbus Stanley became the first elected black alderman of the 5th Ward of Poughkeepsie. Later he became the first black to serve as Vice Mayor of Poughkeepsie. He is one example of the black politicians who derived from the IBM group.

85. Mamiya, oral history interview with Victor and Thelma Morris, 21 August 1987.

86. *Ibid.*

87. Announcement of the rally by William H. Toles, Jr. adjutant of the Chapter in the *Poughkeepsie Journal*, 2 August 1946.

88. Mrs. Thelma Morris also became the first black president of the Adriance Library and Mid-Hudson Library System.

89. Mrs. Stanley was Dean of Students (1968) and Assistant Principal (1972) at Poughkeepsie High School. She also became the first black president of the Poughkeepsie City Schools Administration Association.

90. In July 1969, Mrs. Benjamin was appointed to the State Department of Labor Advisory Council on Minimum Wage Standards for farm workers. On June 8, 1981, she was honored for her service to the Dutchess/Ulster Migrant Committee as Coordinator and for three decades of service to migrant workers and their families in the Hudson Valley. Information on Mrs. Eleanor Benjamin came from her daughter Mrs. Shirley Benjamin Jackson.

91. Mamiya, oral history interview with Victor and Thelma Morris, 21 August 1987.

92. Oral history interview with Mrs. Earlene Patrice in Mamiya and Kaurouma, *For Their Courage*, p. 72.

93. Dutchess County Planning Board, *Population: Analysis 1965, Forecast 1980* (Poughkeepsie, N.Y.: 1965), pp. 40-41; p. 102.

94. There is statistical evidence for this "white flight" from the city of Poughkeepsie. In 1960, there were 34,633 whites in the city. In 1980 the white population numbered 21,669, a decrease of about 13,000. See Dutchess County Planning Board, *Dutchess County Data Books*, 1965 and 1980.

95. Although there is a long history to the idea of a "free school district" in the plans for a separate high school in Spackenkill, there was also a significant racial factor involved in the withdrawal from the Poughkeepsie district. Three Spackenkill clergymen, the Rev. Johannes Meester, the Rev. Thomas Denier, and the Rev. Richard Parker pointed to this factor in their statement to the public opposing the separate high school. "In effect, Spackenkill seeks to remain very separate, largely white and increasingly unequal." "Clergymen Oppose Spackenkill's Plan," *Poughkeepsie Journal*, 19 September 1969.

96. Morris also was the first black member of the City of Poughkeepsie (1967) and Dutchess County Planning Boards.

97. The black clergy included: The Rev. Thomas Jenkins of Second Baptist, the Rev. Verner Matthews of Ebenezer Baptist, the Rev. Starling Grayson of Beulah Baptist, and the Rev. Belvie Jackson of A.M.E. Zion. These disturbances were the most severe of those which had occurred in Poughkeepsie. 5 policemen were injured and 30 youths were arrested. *Poughkeepsie Journal*, 28, 29, 30 July 1967.

98. Ruppert Tarver, Jr. prepared the proposal for the founding of the Hudson Valley Opportunities Industrialization Center (HVOIC) and he served on the first trustee board of the Poughkeepsie Area Fund. Marie Tarver became the first black chairperson of the Board and Campaign Chairperson of United Way of Dutchess County. Mrs. Barbara Jeter Jackson was chairperson of the Model Cities Program, Poughkeepsie Area No. 1 and the first black president of Region 2 Advisory Council of Model Cities (New York, New Jersey, and Puerto Rico).

99. Mrs. Earlene Patrice is popularly known as "Ms. Santa Claus" for her Christmas dinners and gifts for needy children. She is a community activist and organizer of other holiday, community wide dinners and parties for needy citizens of the city.

100. Vivian Tanner, painter and poetess, has had her paintings exhibited in galleries in New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts. She is also the first black member of the Board of the Dutchess County Art Association (Barrett House). Myra Morris, daughter of Victor and Thelma Morris, became the first black member and soloist of the Poughkeepsie Ballet Theatre. Carol Crawford became the principal ballet dancer for the Dance Theater of Harlem after attending Poughkeepsie schools. William Duke, Jr. is an actor and producer in numerous professional productions including Falcon Crest.

101. Perinella F. Lewis became the co-founder of the Political Alliance of Poughkeepsie, one of the many political coalitions which arose from the late 1960's.

102. For example, Gary Mendez was the first black chairman of the Board of the Poughkeepsie Housing Authority. Juanita W. Allen was the co-founder of the Dutchess County Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemorative Committee (1968). Marion Chad Patterson was the first black member of the Board of Trustees of the Dutchess County Community College (1978). Clayton H. Thompson became the first black president of the Dutchess County Voters League, and organizer of Beacon, Kingston, and Columbia County voters leagues. Ethel L. Vaughn was also the first black president and woman president of the Board of the Salvation Army of Poughkeepsie. Clarence McGill is a black contractor of the Mac Track Corporation, project manager of the Queen City Urban Renewal Project in Poughkeepsie and a prominent community activist.

103. W. E. B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: The New American Library Inc., 1969), p. 22.