

**EVIDENCE OF THE PINCKNEY NEIGHBORHOOD BEING A
“HISTORICALLY BLACK NEIGHBORHOOD”
*A compilation of historically significant quotes and details***

Background Information:

At the end of the Civil War, Lawrence attracted “former slaves and a number of blacks who had served in the conflict. The African American population in Lawrence grew from 25 in 1860 to 936 in 1865. Because of continued emigration of blacks, by 1880, 2000 African Americans lived in Lawrence. The federal census of that year listed the total residents of Lawrence at 8,510, so African Americans comprised about 25% of the city’s population. That number remained relatively constant through 1900.”

Citation: *Lawrence in Perspective: Free State Stronghold* (2019), written by Patricia A. Michaelis, Ph.D.

<https://www.lawrencebusinessmagazine.com/2019/09/lawrence-in-perspective-free-state-stronghold/>

Then, from the 1920s to the late 1960s, the use of “covenants” limited where people of color could live. Cities across the nation—including the city of Lawrence—utilized racially restrictive property deeds (called ‘covenants’). The Fair Housing Act later outlawed these racist practices in 1968, but long-term damage was done. Despite Lawrence’s passing of its own fair housing ordinance to desegregate the city in 1968, it was poorly enforced and allowed racial segregation of neighborhoods to continue. These practices had repercussions that are felt to this day, and they created generational trauma.

As pointedly stated in Rusty Monhollon's book,

“Racial exclusion and clustered housing characterized [Lawrence] and the University of Kansas in the 19th century and well into the 20th century. Blacks had voted freely in Lawrence since the end of the Civil War, but most could buy or rent only substandard housing in clustered neighborhoods scattered around town.”

Citation: *This is America? : The Sixties in Lawrence, Kansas* (2002), written by Rusty L. Monhollon

<https://link.springer.com/book/10.1057/9781403982407>

Specific lines of evidence:

- (1) The southeast corner of what is now considered the Pinckney Neighborhood (so, the area from approximately Constant Park to approximately the 300 block of Indiana St.) was recognized in 1855 as the northwest tip of the original town of Lawrence, and it was originally called the “West End.” After 1865, records show that the rest of the area (so, from Indiana St. to out past California St.), was called “West Lawrence.”

Note: The neighborhood being referred to as ‘West Lawrence’ is supported by the fact that current resident Glen Walker grew up here and he says that’s what this area was called until the neighborhood association was formed in the 1970s.

Of particular relevance to the discussion of the Pinckney Neighborhood being a historically Black neighborhood:

“In the post Civil War period, the West End assumed the dignified appearance of civilized society. The population was diverse ethnically. A variety of occupations were listed in the directories. Farther west, houses were generously spaced among fields and orchards. Men listed as stock dealers and teamsters had corrals and pastures adjacent to their homes. Inter-penetration of pastoral and residential uses was a significant characteristic of the neighborhood.”

Citation: *Pinckney Neighborhood Architecture & History Project*, compiled by Dale Nimz in the 1970s. Available at the Watkins Museum of History.

- (2) “In the early twentieth century, African-Americans in Lawrence were not strictly segregated, but their residences were dispersed in clusters throughout the town. Most men were laborers, teamsters, and janitors. Most families lived in rented sub-standard houses. Racial separation, however, was instituted in churches, schools, and places of recreation.”

Citation: “Historic Resources of Lawrence, Douglas County, Kansas” from the 1997 filing with the National Register of Historic Places (United States Department of the Interior)

<https://assets.lawrenceks.org/assets/pds/planning/documents/lawrencethematicnr.pdf>

- (3) Teamsters and farm laborers were often African American. “The 1886 Lawrence City Directory provides a brief look at the African Americans living there. According to the customs of the time, listings of the names of black residents was followed by “col’d” in parentheses to indicate the person was colored. The majority of the men did some form of labor although various jobs were listed. Over 140 men were listed as laborers and over 40 were teamsters and wagon drivers. Over 30 men were listed as farmers, though many were probably truck farmers.”

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Note: Combining the evidence from points 1, 2, and 3 clearly show that the people who lived after the Civil War in what is now recognized as the western portion of the Pinckney Neighborhood were mainly farm workers, teamsters, etc. Those kinds of jobs tended to be held by Black men. Therefore, this neighborhood was populated by a sizable number of African American families in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

- (4) More evidence that the neighborhood had a substantial population of African American families comes from examining the history of segregated schooling in Lawrence. In the

mid-1880s, after pressure from abolitionists, the city of Lawrence began integrating its schools, “but in a peculiar, halfway manner. In most primary schools white and black children attended school in separate classrooms in the same building through the third grade, but from fourth grade and up classes were mixed.”

Historical newspapers from the early 1900s document the fact that Pinckney School had segregated classes up through the third grade. This is a strong indicator that the neighborhood had a sizable population of Black children.

Citation: From the 2008 article entitled, “African Americans Build a Community in Douglas County, Kansas,” by Katie H. Armitage, in the journal *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plain* (Vol. 31, No. 3).

https://www.kshs.org/publicat/history/2008autumn_armitage.pdf

- (5) The idea that no African American family could have built a prominent house in the neighborhood (particularly in the historically significant “West End” part) is fundamentally flawed. While it is true that Black families of the time tended to be poorer than the white population and few Black people “owned their own homes, with many families renting homes,” it also worth noting that “in Lawrence in the 1880s and 1890s, some African Americans gained some economic stability, many children were educated while dealing with various aspects of segregation in the schools, black businesses served their neighbors and black churches and other institutions and organizations provided support and encouragement for a strong African American community in Lawrence.”

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- (6) One such family that built a prominent house in the neighborhood was the Dillard family. “Jesse Dillard was born into slavery in Henry County, Virginia, in 1826 or 1827, and despite being illiterate when he arrived in Lawrence in 1868, he became a respected property owner and made sure his daughter received an education. With five hundred dollars, Dillard purchased [a] residential lot on Louisiana Street [known as 520 Louisiana St.] where he eventually built a handsome two-story Queen Anne style house. In May 1872 the Daily Kansas Tribune printed a letter from Dillard’s employer, the Lawrence, Leavenworth, and Galveston Railroad, congratulating him on his wedding and noting the company’s gift of a “beautiful silver castor.” By 1876 Dillard was conductor on a special Pullman car on the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe’s route between Kansas City and Pueblo, Colorado. He left the railroad after a few years and thereafter was employed as a janitor for the Lawrence National Bank. On the occasion of his sixty-ninth birthday in 1895, the leading white Lawrence newspaper, which did not often report on African Americans, noted, “At the conclusion of a very enjoyable supper Mr. Dillard was presented a rocking chair, which was given by a few of his gentlemen friends as a token

of their respect to him, and with the hope of his living long to enjoy its comforts.” Though they had no formal education themselves, Jesse and [his wife] Frances Dillard...believed in schooling for their children. The Dillard’s daughter Mary graduated from Lawrence schools and then the University of Kansas in 1896. She became a teacher in the all-black primary class within Pinckney School, where young Langston Hughes was enrolled when he was seven or eight years old. After taking graduate work at the University of Kansas in English and special education, Mary Dillard became principal of Lawrence’s all-black Lincoln school.”

Citation: From the 2008 article entitled, “African Americans Build a Community in Douglas County, Kansas,” by Katie H. Armitage, in the journal *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plain* (Vol. 31, No. 3).

https://www.kshs.org/publicat/history/2008autumn_armitage.pdf

- (7) The Lawrence/Douglas County African American Oral History Interviews project documents an interview with Leonard Monroe, who grew up in the Pinckney Neighborhood. He described himself as being born in 1931 at a house on the intersection of 4th and Wisconsin St. He referred to the neighborhood as ‘West Lawrence,’ and discussed his grandmother as living “next door” and having a large garden. Mr. Monroe went to Pinckney School through the sixth grade; he said the school was integrated. (But no Black teachers were employed at Pinckney School at that time.) He went on to say that later on in life his brother ran a barber shop at 532 Michigan St. and that his brother had pictures of all the Black athletes on the wall. This is strong evidence of a vibrant Black community within the Pinckney Neighborhood.

Citation: “Interview with Leonard Monroe” (2006) – available at

<http://oralhistory.lplks.org/2monroe.html>

- (8) The Lawrence/Douglas County African American Oral History Interviews project documents an interview with Jane Barnes (maiden name Frye), who grew up in the Pinckney Neighborhood. She was born at 416 Wisconsin St. in 1933. In her interview, she stated that she grew up living near extended family – there were cousins “around the corner” from Wisconsin St., her Aunt Martha lived “up in the next block,” and her grandmother lived “next door to the Monroes on Fourth St., West Fourth.” She later went on to state that her uncle had a “house on Fourth Street.” Mrs. Barnes did reminisce about playing with some white children in the neighborhood, and she did state that Pinckney School was integrated (but no Black teachers were employed there; she would’ve attended between ~1938-1945).

However, the fact that Mrs. Barnes recalls in the early- to mid-1940s school administrators “talking about sending all of us [Black] kids over to Lincoln School, busing us over, but after our parents all got together and met and talked, that came to an end” indicates that there was a sizable and vibrant Black community in the Pinckney Neighborhood at that time. If they were able to fight back against school administrators pushing segregation policies, there must have been a decently large and vocal group of

African American families living here, which provides another strong piece of evidence that this neighborhood is a historically Black neighborhood.

Citation: "Interview with James and Janes Barnes" (2003) – available at <http://oralhistory.lplks.org/1barnes.html>

- (9) The Lawrence/Douglas County African American Oral History Interviews project documents an interview with William Robert "Bobby" Kimball, who grew up in what he referred to as 'West Lawrence.' He was born in 1943 at LMH. He remembered having "a tremendous group of friends that lived within a block," including fellow African American family, the Monroes (see above). He recalled attending Pinckney School, which was integrated, but no Black teachers were employed there. Mr. Kimball stated that his father, as well as his own son, also attended Pinckney School – indicating that generations of Black families lived within the Pinckney Neighborhood.

Citation: "Interview with William Robert 'Bobby' Kimball" (2006) – available at <http://oralhistory.lplks.org/2kimball.html>