II. African Americans in Camden: Reconstruction to the Modern Civil Rights Movement
A. Political Participation

In the aftermath of the Civil War, the black community-building traditions that had evolved within the system of slavery became the basis for the participation of African Americans in formal politics. The Reconstruction decade represented the high tide of black political power in Kershaw County and in South Carolina. This brief period was followed, beginning around 1880, by approximately six decades of retrenchment by white South Carolinians. Black activism increased again during the New Deal era, resulting in a “second Reconstruction” lasting from the mid-1950s to about 1970.

The First Reconstruction

In Kershaw District, the arrival of federal troops under the command of General William T. Sherman in late February 1865 signaled the effective end of the war and of slavery. In June, two Ohio companies were garrisoned in the town. With the demise of the old regime, blacks could “vote with their feet” to a degree never before possible. In the following weeks and months, many left their plantations to savor their new freedom of movement, while others attempted to reconnect with family members that had been separated during slavery.

By early 1866, blacks and whites alike came to terms with the devastation of the area’s agriculture. While African Americans in Kershaw District and throughout the South hoped that the federal government would break up the plantations and redistribute the land to them, white landowners wanted to preserve a labor system as close to slavery as possible. In January 1866, a large crowd of freedpeople and planters gathered to hear the local commander read new military orders regarding labor contracts. A description of the event in the *Camden Journal* reveals much about the conflicting expectations of local blacks and whites and indicates the rapid emergence of a new class of black leaders:

> On Saturday last we saw the largest gathering of sable gentlemen and ladies that our eyes ever rested on. The open square in front of the Court House and site of the old Market and the spacious cross streets were packed with a living mass of colored people. We observed present also many of the largest planters. The orders were read and explained to them... John Chesnut and Harmon Jones, two intelligent freed-men, also made addresses and repeated the good advice they have given on several occasions. Let us hope the delusions fondly cherished by the freed-men, that the government intended to give them land or support them in idleness have been dispelled.

As it became clear that the federal authorities did not contemplate radical land reform, most African Americans resettled on or near their previous plantation homes and signed their first contracts as free agricultural laborers. Significantly, however, they often built new houses away from the old slave street and out of sight of the planter’s house.

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131 Edgar, *South Carolina*, 381.
Across the state, the aftermath of the war also saw significant movement of African Americans from the countryside into towns. Residing in town offered blacks non-agricultural employment and more opportunities to organize their own businesses and community institutions such as churches, schools, and mutual aid societies. Churches in particular became centers for political organizing, with campaign rallies held on church grounds in much the same style as revival meetings. Close proximity to other blacks also afforded more physical security in the face of white hostility and violence. Between 1870 and 1910, the black population of Camden more than tripled to approximately 1800 people. For the first time, blacks, who had long constituted a majority in Kershaw District, were also the majority in Camden. Other blacks from Kershaw District were surely among the thousands from around South Carolina who migrated to Charleston, the state’s largest city, and among the thousands more who left for Arkansas, Florida, and Louisiana in search of higher wages.132

In the fall of 1865, under President Andrew Johnson’s lenient plan for the reunification of the country, the prewar elite of South Carolina organized a new state government. The legislature ratified the Thirteenth Amendment abolishing slavery, but it also passed the “Black Codes,” a series of laws that severely restricted African Americans’ civil, social, and economic rights. Among the few prominent whites in the state to oppose the Black Codes was Kershaw District’s James Chesnut, a former Confederate general, who predicted they would provoke a harsh reaction by the Radical Republicans in Congress. He was correct. In early 1867, over President Johnson’s veto, the Radicals passed the Reconstruction Acts. The new legislation dissolved the state governments formed under Johnson’s plan and provided for military rule. A state became eligible for reentry into the Union only when a majority of each state’s voters approved new constitutions and its legislature approved the Fourteenth Amendment guaranteeing black male suffrage.

The political reorganization of South Carolina began in July 1867 with the establishment of the state’s Republican Party. Local Republican clubs, called “Union Leagues,” sprang up all over the state. Membership was overwhelmingly black, with an active minority of native whites and migrants from the North. South Carolina’s demographics ensured an electorate with a sizeable black majority. When the military completed the registration process, black men comprised nearly two-thirds of the state’s voters.133 The numbers in Kershaw District reflected the same reality, with 1,765 black voters to 859 white.134 In Kershaw and across the state, most native whites boycotted the election of delegates to the new constitutional convention. With whites refusing to participate, Kershaw District’s freedmen elected as delegates Justus K. Jillson, a white Massachusetts native who had come to South Carolina with the Freedmen’s Bureau; Solomon G. W. Dill, a white former resident of Charleston; and John A. Chesnut, one of the local African Americans who, at the 1866 gathering at the courthouse, had counseled his fellows to go back to work under the new labor agreements.135

132 Edgar, South Carolina, 379.
133 Edgar, South Carolina, 386-8.
134 Kirkland and Kennedy, Historic Camden: Part Two, 200.
135 Kirkland and Kennedy, Historic Camden: Part Two, 200.
Convening in Charleston in January 1868, the constitutional convention produced a progressive document that guaranteed voting rights for all men, regardless of race, and provided for the state’s first system of free public education. The new constitution also decentralized power from Columbia, changing the districts into counties and providing for the election of three-member county boards of commissioners with budgetary and taxing authority. The voters approved the constitution and elected new state and local governments. Republicans dominated at both levels, with black candidates most successful in the legislative elections. Robert K. Scott, a white Ohioan who had been head of the Freedman’s Bureau in South Carolina, was elected governor. Francis L. Cardozo of Charleston, the new secretary of state, was South Carolina’s first person of African descent to be elected to statewide office. \(^{136}\)

In seventeen regular and special elections between 1868 and 1877, Kershaw County voters elected blacks to the General Assembly fourteen times. The county’s first legislative delegation was composed of two whites, Senator Justus Jillson and Representative S. G. W. Dill, and two blacks, Representatives John Chesnut and Jonas Nash. From 1868 to 1876, Jillson also served as the state’s first Superintendent of Education. In 1871 he gave up his seat in the Senate, and Kershaw County voters sent Henry Cardozo, an African American, to replace him. At the local level, three black fire companies were established in Kershaw County and blacks served on the Camden police force. Kershaw County’s first Superintendent of Education was Frank Carter, a black teacher at Camden’s Jackson School for freedmen. In 1875, Kershaw County voters elected Carter to replace Cardozo in the Senate.

Black and white educators and Republican politicians agreed that the best way to ensure political rights for African Americans was through sound education of the population, and the new General Assembly passed legislation to create and fully fund the new public school system. While the Constitution provided for schools free and open to all “without regard to race and color,” white resistance meant that in practice most schools were segregated. Evidently one school in Kershaw County and several in Richland County were for a time the only racially integrated schools in the state. Legislation provided for equal access to public accommodations. In practice, some integrated public facilities, such as theaters and trolley cars, existed in Columbia and Charleston, but in smaller towns like Camden, racial segregation was the norm.

**The Era of White Reaction**

The legislature’s moves to ensure social as well as political equality for African Americans deepened the alienation of whites, while widespread corruption in all branches of government provided a convenient public excuse for their increasingly violent opposition. Shortly after the 1868 election of the first Reconstruction legislature, federal troops began their withdrawal. By October, there were only 881 soldiers left in the entire state. The year before Congress had disbanded the state militia, leaving local law enforcement in the hands of the brand-new county governments. Almost immediately violence erupted, particularly in Upstate counties with proportionately smaller black populations. Local units of the Ku Klux Klan formed to neutralize the Union Leagues. Legislators from Abbeville and Orangeburg Counties were assassinated.

In the spring of 1868, the Klan organized in Kershaw County. At least one group was

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141 Harvey Teal, *Public Schools, 1868-1870: Education during Reconstruction in Kershaw County, South Carolina* (Columbia, SC: Harvey Teal, 2005), 12.
formed, under the title “Fraternal Democratic Club,” in the Harmony neighborhood near Elgin on the western edge of the county. On the night of June 1, they attacked the nearby home of Kershaw representative S. G. W. Dill, a center of Union League activity in the area. A volley of bullets killed Dill and Nestor Peay, a black League member on guard at the house, and injured Dill’s wife. Federal troops investigated and made arrests, but could not identify the assassins.147

In response to the spreading violence, the General Assembly authorized the creation of a new state militia, but whites refused to join. As in other counties, Kershaw’s new militia unit, the Ellis Light Infantry, was all black.148 By the fall of 1870, violence was everywhere in South Carolina. Over the next year, federal efforts to stop the Klan were weak and ineffective. Finally in October 1871, President Ulysses S. Grant declared nine upcountry counties to be in rebellion, including Lancaster, Fairfield, and Chesterfield which surrounded Kershaw on three sides. Hundreds of Klansmen turned themselves in, but the campaign of terror continued. Paramilitary organizations, calling themselves saber, rifle, or gun clubs, proliferated around the state.149 The white insurgency culminated around the elections of 1876, when former Confederate general Wade Hampton, the Democratic candidate for governor, led the paramilitaries in a statewide campaign of intimidation, violence, and voting fraud. For four months after the election, parallel Democratic and Republican governments competed for power. In April 1877, in return for South Carolina’s disputed electoral votes, Republican President-elect Rutherford B. Hayes agreed not to acknowledge South Carolina’s Republican government and to withdraw the remaining federal troops from the state.150 The Reconstruction experiment with interracial democracy was over.

While the paternalistic Hampton remained in power, the new white-minority regime remained relatively tolerant in racial matters. Hampton appointed black officials and ensured that the segregated public schools were funded equitably. In the coastal counties of Beaufort and Georgetown, Democrats and Republicans agreed to power-sharing arrangements, but in the Upstate local whites began almost immediately to strip blacks of voting rights. Precincts were reorganized to keep blacks away from polling places, and strict registration requirements and abuses by local registrars effectively reduced the number of black voters. In 1876, some 91,000 black South Carolinians voted, but by 1888 only 14,000 did so. In 1872, ninety-six black legislators were elected; in 1890 there were only seven.

In 1890, Benjamin Ryan Tillman of Edgefield County won the governorship in a landslide. Calling himself a man of the people, Tillman rabidly opposed anything he associated with Charleston, the planter aristocracy, the University of South Carolina, and blacks. In 1895, Tillman and his supporters called for a new constitutional convention with one major objective: the disfranchisement of the black population. Over the protest of the six African-American delegates, the convention approved literacy tests and poll taxes for voter registration, provisions that would all but eliminate the black vote.151 The last black legislator was defeated for reelection in 1896, and by the turn of the century only a few of the remaining 10,000 black

147 Kirkland and Kennedy, Historic Camden: Part Two, 201-2.
149 Edgar, South Carolina, 400-1.
150 Edgar, South Carolina, 404-6.
151 George Brown Tindall, South Carolina Negroes, 1877-1900, with a new introduction by the author (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 81-5.
registered voters dared to cast a ballot. \(^{152}\) The new constitution also laid the groundwork for legal segregation of the races, prohibiting interracial marriage and mandating separate school systems. Soon after followed laws to segregate railroad cars, trolleys, and textile mills. \(^{153}\) By World War I virtually every aspect of life in South Carolina was segregated.

During the first half of the twentieth century, a handful of black Camdenites continued to vote, but with no hope of swaying an election. \(^{154}\) Following World War I, as cotton prices plummeted and the boll weevil struck the region’s staple crop, many black South Carolinians continued to “vote with their feet.” Kershaw County residents were among the 50,000 black farm families who left the state for the North after the disastrous harvest of 1922. Those who remained focused on the economic and educational development of the black community. They continued to celebrate Emancipation Day (1 January), as in 1924 when a large parade of schoolchildren, tradesmen, and bands marched down Broad Street to a program in the Opera House. Social and charitable organizations such as the Uplift Club, a Camden chapter of the South Carolina Federation of Colored Women’s Clubs active in the 1920s, raised money for a variety of service projects in the black community. \(^{155}\)

The Second Reconstruction: The Modern Civil Rights Movement

The social and economic dislocation of the Great Depression and World War II, combined with the relatively egalitarian policies of Democratic President Franklin D. Roosevelt, provided impetus for an assault on the structures of the Jim Crow order across the South. While Camden was not the scene of the dramatic demonstrations or massive white backlash often associated with the civil rights movement, local activism was significant.

In South Carolina between 1939 and 1948, membership in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) increased from 800 to 14,000, with a proliferation of local chapters. In 1945, local African Americans founded the Camden branch. \(^{156}\) Among the leaders of the Camden NAACP was Barry Drakeford, a World War I veteran who ran a country store outside town. Other leaders of the local movement included Jewel Thomas, sister of one of the two black doctors in town, and two morticians, R. H. Haile and Eugene Brown. \(^{157}\) Funeral directors in many southern towns tended to be active supporters of the civil rights movement, since their livelihood did not depend on white people. Jim Francis, the principal of the St. Mathew School outside Camden, and Reverend Sanders, a Presbyterian minister, were other local activists. Civil rights meetings were held in the local black schools and in the black branch library. \(^{158}\) One former Camden resident recalled meetings of the Youth Chapter of the Camden NAACP in the tiny back room of Trinity Methodist Church.

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\(^{152}\) Edgar, “South Carolina,” 443.


\(^{156}\) *Camden-Kershaw County Branch NAACP Sixty-Second Anniversary*, (printed program in possession of author, n.d.).

\(^{157}\) Interview with Rev. George Watson, 1 February 2006.

\(^{158}\) Interview with Carl and Mollye Robinson, 27 January 2006.
people gathered around the pot-belly stove with no lights on so as not to attract attention.\textsuperscript{159}

Activists had reason to fear. They had their mail delivered in unmarked envelopes, but it was tampered with in the post office anyway. Several Camden residents recalled that teachers who joined the NAACP would be fired.\textsuperscript{160} Sometimes white opposition was violent. Barry Drakeford’s store was torched at least three times for his civil rights activities.\textsuperscript{161} As the movement intensified in the 1960s, several churches in the area, among them Sanders Creek, Red Hill, Mount Moriah, Second Baptist, St. Paul, and Fort Clark, fell target to arson. One Camden resident recalled the old men spending the night in her church and shooting at Klan members when they came to torch the building. R. H. Haile and other activists had crosses burned in their yards.\textsuperscript{162} Several residents noted Klan activity in Camden and Kershaw County; one recalled that they met frequently in Bethune and in a field just east of Camden.\textsuperscript{163}

In 1947, George Elmore, a black resident of neighboring Richland County, went to court to challenge the exclusion of African Americans from the state’s Democratic Party primary elections, the only meaningful elections in a one-party state. In July, federal Judge J. Waites Waring in Charleston ruled that the white primary was illegal, and blacks across the state rushed to register.\textsuperscript{164} Among them were a group of young Camden women organized by R. H. Haile. One resident recalled going to the courthouse to register. The registrar yelled curses at them, but Haile said to the women, “Don’t say a word.” They were terrified. The man administered the literacy test, giving them a passage from the state constitution to read out loud, and they spoke so quickly that they did not even pay attention to the words.\textsuperscript{165} The next month the women were among some 35,000 new voters around the state to cast Democratic primary ballots.\textsuperscript{166} During the 1950s and 1960s, Camden residents went door to door registering blacks to vote.\textsuperscript{167}

Like many smaller towns in South Carolina, Camden had its share of demonstrations in the 1960s, although not on a massive scale, as individuals and groups challenged the segregation of public accommodations. Some protests were spontaneous. One Camden resident recalled her brother going to a white-owned restaurant to order a large number of sandwiches for a funeral or some other large family gathering. He and the other black customers were not allowed to come inside, but had to place their orders through a special window. When a white employee made derogatory remarks to him, he said “You eat them” and drove off without the sandwiches and without paying.\textsuperscript{168} Other protests were planned. During the mid-1960s, several local ministers attempted to test new federal legislation requiring equal service in public accommodations. One small group of ministers attempted to integrate local restaurants. They quickly left one establishment when the restaurant’s female owner threatened them with a shotgun. U.S. Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach filed suit against two restaurants on behalf of the

\textsuperscript{159} Interview with Rev. George Waston, 1 February 2006.
\textsuperscript{160} Interview with Dr. Daisy Alexander, 7 February 2006; and Interview with James McGirt, 27 January 2006.
\textsuperscript{161} Interview with Rev. George Watson, 1 February 2006.
\textsuperscript{162} Interview with Dr. Daisy Alexander, 7 February 2006.
\textsuperscript{163} Interview with Rev. George Watson, 1 February 2006.
\textsuperscript{164} Edgar, \textit{South Carolina}, 519-20.
\textsuperscript{165} Interview with Dr. Daisy Alexander, 7 February 2006.
\textsuperscript{166} Edgar, \textit{South Carolina}, 519-20.
\textsuperscript{167} Interview with Leila Salmond, 14 February 2006.
\textsuperscript{168} Interview with Dr. Daisy Alexander, 7 February 2006.
ministers for violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In February 1966, orders were filed in
the U.S. District Court in Columbia requiring Tony’s Restaurant and Pines Drive-In Restaurant,
both on DeKalb Street, to provide “equal service to Negro patrons.” The owners did not contest
the orders. 169

By 1970, the legal framework of white supremacy was all but gone. That year, the state
dismantled its segregated school system, the last major element of a Jim Crow regime that had
lasted more than seventy decades.

Associated Sites

Police station on DeKalb Street. Formerly the black branch library and a site of civil rights
meetings.

Camden First United Methodist Church. Site of civil rights meetings.

B. Economic Life

The Economics of Freedom: Reconstruction

With the end of the Civil War, thousands of blacks throughout the state of South Carolina found
themselves free but without jobs. The federal government, anticipating this dilemma, created the
Freedmen’s Bureau in March 1865 to assist African Americans in their new life. Many of the
newly freed men believed they would receive land abandoned by former plantation owners, but
the program providing African Americans with “forty acres and a mule” did not come to fruition.
Most African Americans ended up working the land through contracts with white landowners. 170

During Reconstruction, many white planters wanted to secure a cheap work force, which
they clearly recognized in the newly freed African Americans who often had no choice but to
work the land of white owners. Consequently, many blacks found themselves in one of four
agricultural positions. They rented land as sharecroppers or tenant farmers; they received
monthly wages for their labor; they worked as a foreman or manager in the fields; or they owned
their own land. The majority of blacks found themselves working as tenant farmers or
sharecroppers where they received roughly one quarter to one half of the cotton and corn they
produced. Landowners usually provided these workers with housing, fuel, and sometimes
additional food. Those men working for wages received on average nine to fifteen dollars a
month. 171 These conditions prevailed throughout the South and were certainly present in
Camden based upon the area’s immersion in agriculture after the Civil War. In 1868, many

170 Harvey S. Teal, Return of Crops and Other Statistics of Kershaw County, South Carolina 1868 (Camden, SC:
Kershaw County Historical Society, 1998), 1; and Franklin and Moss, From Slavery to Freedom, 259.
171 Joel Williamson, After Slavery: The Negro in South Carolina During Reconstruction 1861-1877 (Chapel Hill:
University of North Carolina Press, 1965), 126; and Franklin and Moss, From Slavery to Freedom, 259.
blacks remained in rural areas after gaining their freedom, and these individuals likely worked on or for one of the 556 farms in Kershaw County, which averaged fifty-four acres in size.  

In 1871, some South Carolinians noted that women had become almost totally removed from any field labor and worked primarily in domestic areas. In terms of size, the domestic class of workers was second only to that of agricultural workers. Women comprised the majority of this class. They worked as housemaids, personal maids, cooks, laundresses, nurses, and serving girls. Domestic servants typically received only five to ten dollars a month. Men, however, constituted a small portion of these domestic jobs by working as valets, coachmen, gardeners, and handymen.

Those African Americans not in agriculture or domestic work found employment in the various industries that cropped up during the last decades of the nineteenth century. By 1924, there were fourteen different mills or manufacturing companies operating in Camden. These mills processed cotton, lumber, and cottonseed oil while the other industries included veneer, brick, bottling, and ice companies. Blacks filled the menial positions that most white workers did not want, but many felt these jobs were better than picking cotton. In 1915, South Carolina passed a law that relegated blacks to only the most menial jobs within the textile mill  

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industry, such as grounds keeping and cleaning the toilets.\textsuperscript{176}

After gaining their freedom, a large portion of the African American population returned to working the land. Others found domestic jobs in white people's homes, and still others went to work in factories. Their former lives as slaves and the lack of support they received from the Freedman's Bureau following the war severely hindered their opportunities. However, despite the limitations there were African Americans who persevered to find a livelihood in other areas.

\textbf{Figure 8.} \textit{Carrying Laundry}

During this period women often worked in the domestic sphere as maids, cooks, laundresses, and nurses. Courtesy of South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC.

Hotels and Horses: Camden’s Tourism Industry

Many blacks found employment in Camden’s hotels during the “Great Hotel Era” which began in 1883 with the establishment of the Hobkirk Inn and ended shortly after World War II as tourism declined. The hotel buildings, with the exception of the Hobkirk, are now all gone. The contribution of the African-American labor force to the success of this local industry cannot be underestimated. There were three major tourist hotels in Camden; The Hobkirk Inn (1882), The Court Inn (1889) and The Kirkwood Hotel (1903). The hotels were large resorts; the Kirkwood Hotel, for instance, had two hundred guest rooms. The hotels were established in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries during a time when people increasingly believed in the healing effects of the outdoors and fresh air. They provided access to a variety of facilities including golf courses, hunting grounds, gardens, horse tracks, polo fields, and other places for outdoor leisure activities. The hotels serviced mostly northern winter tourists who, trying to escape the bitter northern winters, came to Camden. Some of these tourists discovered the area while stopping briefly on their way to and from Florida, and chose to make Camden, their permanent winter destination. In order to accommodate their guests, the hotels opened in late fall and closed in late spring. Smitten with the city’s old southern charm, several of the wealthy tourists who stayed in Camden bought homes and became permanent seasonal residents.

Figure 9. The Court Inn, ca. 1900

Many African Americans in Camden’s hotels worked service jobs such as the buggy driver pictured here. Courtesy of the Camden Archives and Museum, Camden, SC.

177 Betty Garber, “Camden man is living reminder of great hotel era,” Camden Independent, Camden, 26 December 1979; and John H. Daniels, Nothing Could Be Finer (Camden, SC: John Culler & Sons, 1996), 7.
179 Daniels, Nothing Could Be Finer, 8.
Figure 10. Grounds of the Kirkwood Hotel, ca. 1923

The extensive grounds of the Kirkwood Hotel featured several buildings including a separate servants quarters, a carpenter’s shop, a club house, and an annex. Separate servants quarters were common for hotels during this particular time period. Courtesy of the Thomas Cooper Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC.

The great success of the tourism industry in Camden allowed blacks to escape their unpredictable and economically depressing jobs as sharecroppers and wage laborers. Employment in the tourist industries allowed blacks access to a variety of new jobs. Many African Americans found employment in the hotels as bellboys, chambermaids, kitchen assistants, groundskeepers, buggy drivers, waiters, and other types of service workers. One resident remembers, for instance, that all of the caddies on the hotels’ golf courses were black.

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182 Newby, *Black Carolinians*, 121-123.
184 Blacks, however, could not use the golf courses. Dooley Golf Course was the only black golf course in Camden. Interview with Johnny Williams, 8 February 2006.
The hotel service jobs, however, could be tinged with racism. The hotel industry often attracted tourists by alluding to the atmosphere of the old slave South which dictated that blacks would perform most if not all of the hotel’s service jobs. Karl P. Abbott, owner of the Kirkwood Hotel in the 1920s, admitted that in order to attract the northern tourists he would “staff the establishment with trained Negro servants who smiled and bowed and rendered perfect service.” In Abbott’s view blacks in Camden made good employees because many of them “had been employed as butlers, maids, and cooks in Southern homes and were especially well trained.”

In spite of the unfavorable conditions in the hotel industry, many hotel jobs allowed African Americans to assume roles of leadership, establish professional careers, and improve their quality of life. Some of the most prominent black employees at the Kirkwood Hotel in the 1920s and 1930s were the Gambell brothers. The Gambell brothers each held jobs dealing with a variety of tasks at the resort. Edward Gambell was a caretaker and gardener at Kirkwood from 1912 to 1924. He held such an important position at the hotel that he and his family lived on the hotel grounds during summer and fall in the off seasons. During the peak season, they lived on Gordon Street located just down the hill from the hotel. The livelihood of the entire Gambell family depended on the hotel. Edward’s wife was a dressmaker who made all of the maid’s uniforms and sewed for the guests. The family also sold milk for the servants’ dining room. Edna Bates, Edward Gambell’s daughter, recalled that her sister’s summer job consisted of ridding the hotel of rodents. William Lawrence Gambell, Edward Gambell’s brother, started working for the Kirkwood Hotel when he was a child as a water boy, retrieving water for the carpenters during the construction. He later became Captain Bellhop and was a trusted employee of manager, Edward Krumbholtz. He traveled with Krumbholtz his entire life, spending winter seasons in a hotel in Melbourne, Florida and summer seasons at a resort in Montauk, New York.

Figure 11. *The Gambell Brothers*

Many black workers became professionals in the hotel industry. The Gambell Brothers held a variety of important jobs at the Kirkwood Hotel and were highly respected by staff and guests. Permission of *S.C. Postcards, VIII, Camden*, by Howard Woody and Davie Beard.

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189 Betty Garber, “Memories of Kirkwood Hotel fond ones for Mrs. Edna Bates,” Located in “Kirkwood Hotel” Vertical File, Camden Archives and Museum, Camden, SC.
190 Margaret Pokrant, “The Kirkwood Hotel (3)” *Legacy II*, 63; and Garber, “Memories of Kirkwood Hotel...”
The tourism industry also created opportunities elsewhere in the country for African Americans who called Camden home. Many hotel employees migrated north during the off-season, following the managers to their northern hotels where they could experience life outside of Camden. Blacks often formed connections with the northern tourists who provided contacts for high-paying, seasonal jobs in the North. Despite these opportunities, whites still treated African Americans as second class citizens. Regardless of their professional standings, blacks were not even permitted to use the same entrance as the white tourists. In the tourism industry, they often functioned as part of the attraction, perpetuating a social structure which kept them subordinate in real life.

African Americans in Camden had no formal hotels of their own. Those traveling through Camden had no choice but to stay at private homes. A network of boarding houses existed throughout Camden, accessible by word of mouth. According to some, the Price sisters who owned the Price House, often housed travelers in the seven smaller buildings located on their property. The house once located across the street from the Price House at the present-day location of Davis Printing (17 South Broad Street), also functioned as a primarily black

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193 They also boarded girls attending Mather Academy. Interview with Vivian Metze and Ruby Minton, 3 February 2006.
boarding house where people could rent rooms. Several famous black opera singers, including Marian Anderson, reportedly stayed there. The Sarsfield Hotel, established in the mid 1900s as a segregated hotel became the first hotel in Camden to integrate.

The horse industry in Camden developed simultaneously with the rise of northern tourism, and like the hotel industry, provided blacks with additional employment opportunities. Eventually, hotel managers began to market the countryside as one of the main reasons to visit Camden. The Kirkwood Hotel hosted annual horse shows that always drew large audiences. Part of the festivities included bull races where black youths would race bulls in front of an audience of both whites and blacks. As wealthy northerners became part-time residents of Camden, they brought with them their passion for polo and horse racing, as well as their fancy thoroughbreds.

Horse owners across the country have had a long standing tradition of employing blacks in the horse industry. The elite horse racing community often regarded black jockeys and horse trainers as distinguished professionals. The African-American employees affiliated with steeplechasing traveled the circuit from Florida to Saratoga Springs, New York every year. Many black jockeys, known as “Bug Boys,” rode in the Camden Flat Track races. Most of the black riders, however, were exercise riders. Other jobs held by African Americans in the horse industry included groomers, trainers, riders, stable hands, groundskeepers, hot walkers, and gardeners.

Much of Camden’s horse industry revolved around the Carolina Cup race held annually since 1930. Harry D. Kirkover and Ernest L. Woodward, two northern seasonal residents of Camden, founded the Carolina Cup, which is often described as South Carolina’s “biggest cocktail party.” With many grounds men, groomers, trainers, and hotel staff involved in its production, the event was also important for African Americans. Blacks and whites alike enjoyed watching the races, although blacks had to watch from behind fences. In 1966, John Edward Truesdale, commonly known as “Squeaky” because of his size, became the first African-American jockey to race in the Carolina Cup. Residents remember that on that day it seemed as if every black in Camden was at the track to watch Squeaky ride. In 1982, Jerome Williams became the only other African-American jockey to race in the Carolina Cup.

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194 Interview with Vivian Metze and Ruby Minton, 3 February 2006; and Interview with Gladys Woods, 23 February 2006.
197 Daniels, Nothing Could Be Finer, xii.
200 Discussion with Hope Cooper, 23 February 2006.
202 Interview with Mary Sue Truesdale, 20 March 2006.
While horse racing remained a popular attraction, the game of polo also exposed many blacks in Camden to opportunities in the horse industry. Polo was one of the earliest outdoor sports in Camden. The Camden Polo Club, founded in 1900, was the fourth oldest polo club in the nation. The sport’s introduction required extra stable-hands, groomers, saddlers, and talented trainers. African Americans eagerly sought employment in these fields. Many African Americans got their first glimpse of the horse industry through attending the polo games. Some horse owners asked blacks on the sidelines if they wanted to tend to their ponies. This practice often led to permanent employment positions. Squeaky Truesdale used to play hooky from school to watch polo games. His passion for polo landed him a job as a stable hand. Eventually Truesdale became one of the best horse trainers in the South, training such legends as the champion racehorse, Ruffian.

While this era of the grand hotels is gone, the horse industry continues to play an important role in the lives of many African Americans in Camden. Camden’s first racetrack, Hawthorne Track, was located downtown, bounded by Lyttleton, DeKalb, Mill and Laurens Streets. The grandstand was located where Laurens and Fair Streets intersect. Many of the residents who worked with the horse industry lived around Carter Street running all of the way to Chesnut Street. Stables are still visible from many of the streets in Kirkwood, a neighborhood that grew out of the tourism industry. A great deal of the horse industry workers today come from families with a tradition of working in the horse and tourism industries.

Figure 13. Camden Stable Boys at Belmont Park, Long Island, New York, ca. 1960s

From left to right: John Edward (“Squeaky”) Truesdale, unidentified boy, Leroy (“Nip”) Mitchell, and Plenty (“Bo”) Thomas. The horse industry offered many opportunities for African Americans in Camden. Horse workers often “traveled the circuit” with their horses, attending the races from Florida to New York. Courtesy of Mary Sue Truesdale.

Daniels, Nothing Could Be Finer, 2, 4, 114.
Trainers currently train thoroughbred flat horses at Wrenfield track, located at the end of Chesnut Street, west of the seaboard railway station. Trubiano, The Carolina Cup, 12.
Venturing into Business

While most African Americans remained in service-oriented and laboring jobs, some blacks made a name for themselves beginning in the era of Reconstruction by opening and operating their own businesses. On 28 January 1873, John Moreau Dibble (1848-1877), a great-grandson of Bonds Conway, purchased property on the east side of Camden’s main thoroughfare, Broad Street, becoming one of the town’s earliest black storeowners. It was at this property, south of Rutledge Street, that the Dibble family began its tradition of store proprietorship. John Moreau Dibble and his brother, Eugene Heriot Dibble (1855-1935), operated this general store until John’s death. Under the operation of Eugene Heriot Dibble, the business begun by John Moreau Dibble moved across the street to 1053 Broad Street prior to 1890 and operated as “E.H. Dibble & Brothers Grocers and Crockery.” The building stands today at 1053 Broad Street and is inscribed at the top with “E.H. Dibble 1887.” Their businesses were so prosperous that within the first thirteen years of the twentieth century, Eugene Heriot Dibble began operating yet another grocery (or general merchandising store) at 609-11th Avenue, now DeKalb Street.207

Figure 14. Dibble Store, ca. 1892

John Moreau Dibble opened this store on east Broad Street in 1873. Permission of S.C. Postcards, VIII, Camden, by Howard Woody and Davie Beard.

The Dibbles became highly successful members of Camden’s African-American community. At one point the family owned property making up an entire block of Broad Street. The Dibble family’s success stemmed largely from the fact that they belonged to a family whose freedom had begun long before that of other African Americans in Camden. As descendants of Bonds Conway, the Dibbles had opportunities for growth and advancement denied to many who had remained in slavery. Nevertheless, some former slaves, such as William Boykin, succeeded in opening businesses as well. In 1890, Boykin operated a grocery store in Camden.208

In these years following Reconstruction, blacks in Camden and throughout the South experienced increased discrimination. By the 1890s, Jim Crow laws segregated every aspect of life, especially economic life. However, these laws ironically created conditions for some black businesses to flourish. To combat discrimination and segregation, numerous blacks in Camden followed the Dibble family’s example. These black entrepreneurs opened dry good stores, grocery stores, restaurants, drug stores, beauty shops, and barbershops. Several also became shoemakers, tailors, blacksmiths, wheelwrights, undertakers and even cabinetmakers. Most of these businesses had appeared in the *Camden Business Directory* as early as 1886. The majority of those African-American business owners became members of Camden’s middle-class black community. Samuel Walter James operated the only blacksmith shop in Camden and the surrounding areas for over fifty years. His shop, the Village Blacksmith at 531 Arthur Lane, served a mixed clientele comprised mostly of farmers and those affiliated with horse industry. He served customers from Camden, Darlington, Florence, Aiken, and areas near Charlotte. He was able to also employ five or six employees in his shop.

A small number of people did find a niche in the black professional class. One of the most notable among this group was Dr. John Pickett, Camden’s first black doctor. Dr. Pickett was born in April 1879 and started his practice in Camden around 1904. Some believe he entered the field because he witnessed so many of his brothers and sisters die young. Of the eleven children born to his parents, Hardy and Ella Able Pickett of Fairfield County, only five survived to adulthood. Dr. Pickett, the oldest child, attended Allen University before moving on to the Leonard Medical School at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina. One of his earliest offices was located at 920 Broad Street. At the office, he cared for both black and white customers.

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210 Interview with Dr. Althea Truitt, 4 February 2006.
patients, and many of Camden’s white doctors recommended him to African Americans. Pickett’s children recalled that in the early years of their father’s practice he relied on a bicycle and then a horse and buggy to make house calls. As the years progressed and their economic status climbed, Dr. Pickett purchased a 1909 Hupmobile to use during the day, and at night he used the buggy pulled by his horses “Lady,” “Lady Lightfoot” and “Flossie.”

Dr. Pickett was more than simply Camden’s first black doctor. He also made most of his own medicines and soon began operating part of his practice at 920 Broad Street as a drug store. Originally known as People’s Drug Store, Dr. Pickett later renamed it Pickett’s Drug Store. His younger brother Elmer eventually came to work as the pharmacist in 1927. Dr. John Pickett’s career in Camden spanned approximately fifty years. Prior to retiring from his practice, he served as a consultant in pediatrics at Meharry University in Nashville, Tennessee. He also served as the president of the Palmetto Medical Association (the South Carolina organization for black physicians) and wrote an article on the endocrine glands, which the Journal of the American Medical Association published. The A.M.A asked him to address its conference in Chicago, but when the organizers discovered he was African American they rescinded the invitation.

Roughly thirteen years before Dr. Pickett retired, another black-owned pharmacy opened under the ownership of Theodore J. Whitaker at 191 Broad Street. Whitaker, a graduate of Jackson High School, South Carolina State College, and Howard University, opened up his shop in 1940 when two other pharmacies, Dr. Pickett’s and one operated by Dr. J. Horace Thomas, were already in business. However, Whitaker’s shop thrived because of a soda fountain and luncheon counter. These two services not only provided what whites refused to give blacks elsewhere, but they also provided a meeting place for young and old in the African-American community. Whitaker also provided employment behind the fountain counter for teenagers.

Other members of the professional class were those involved in the funeral industry. The three black funeral homes that operated in Camden during the last half of the twentieth century included the Collins Funeral Home (DeKalb Street), Haile Funeral Home (Rutledge Street), and Brown Funeral Home (Broad Street). Collins Funeral Home, established in 1914, is the oldest in Camden. It was, and still is, operated out of one of the oldest buildings in Camden (built 1823). By law, blacks and whites had to be served in separate rooms or facilities. Unlike other black businesses that served only one race, these funeral homes served solely the African-American community. Therefore, the funeral business became a profitable line of work and provided their owners a significant place within the black community.

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212 Garber, “First black doctor.” Upon arriving in Camden, Dr. Pickett hung a slate outside of his office so that patients could leave him messages.
Like undertaking, the barbering business benefited from segregation; however, while the black funeral industry never served whites, the barbering business did. This fact led to the creation of black-owned barbershops that served only whites and black-owned barbershops that served only blacks. One would never see a white person cutting the hair of a black person because it was considered shameful for a white to “serve” an African American. Some of these black barber shops housed women’s beauty salons like the one operated by Susie Brown in Des Kennedy’s barbershop.\(^{216}\) In the barbering industry there was little competition for patrons between white and black barbers.\(^{217}\) While some whites operated barbershops in Camden, black barbers outnumbered white barbers in 1941. As in other cities and towns, African Americans in Camden laid a claim to this occupation and drew a certain degree of economic standing from it.

Figure 16. *A Camden Barbershop*

The barbering business provided African Americans with some degree of economic standing. WIS image is courtesy of Camden Archives and Museum, Camden, SC.

**DuPont: Changing the Shape of Camden**

The arrival of the DuPont plant in 1950 improved the status of African Americans while changing the face of Camden’s economy. DuPont’s May plant, located in Lugoff, South Carolina, was dedicated and named for Benjamin M. May, a former Department General Manager of the DuPont Company. The plant originally manufactured Orlon, an acrylic fiber produced primarily from petroleum derivatives and used in textiles.\(^{218}\) Hiring 1,300 employees, the May Plant became a top employer in Camden and brought nearly 1,000 new residents to the area.

\(^{216}\) Interview with Gladys Wood, 14 February 2006.


area in the early 1950s. Its opening stands as one of the most significant economic developments in the history of Camden; and one that directly impacted African Americans.

Camden’s transformation became obvious within the first few years of the May Plant’s existence. The once widely held belief that “DuPont is Camden” reflected the influence of the plant on the city’s economic and physical growth. Its employees funneled money into Camden, providing a boost to the local businesses. The city met increased housing needs by creating Camden’s first apartment homes and new housing developments. The growth also stimulated improvements such as paving the streets and creating sidewalks. With the creation of the May Plant, Camden was no longer a small quaint town. It became more industrial and much busier.

In its first decade, DuPont hired a large number of African Americans but due to the law prohibiting blacks and whites from working in the same room, they mostly worked menial jobs outdoors. For example, the grounds crew at DuPont was primarily black. Several people remember DuPont workers acting amicably towards blacks, at least in comparison to other employers in the area. The plant’s arrival allowed many blacks to leave domestic service, farming, and the hotel industry in order to work for a company where pay was much higher. Higher wages allowed blacks to improve their lives and social standing by purchasing cars and homes. Some even purchased houses from whites. DuPont also offered employee benefit programs to assist its workers regardless of race. These benefits included free life insurance and some medical coverage. DuPont’s arrival represented an important shift in the direction of economic equality.

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220 Interview with Richard Darby, 20 February 2006.
221 “When DuPont came to town…”
222 May Times 9, no. 16 (15 May 1959); and Interview with Johnny Williams, 8 February 2006.
223 Interview with Johnny Williams, 8 February 2006.
224 Interview with James McGirt, 27 January 2006; and Interview with Vivian Metze and Ruby Minton, 3 February 2006.
Despite the oppression of Jim Crow laws and segregation, African Americans in Camden created opportunities for themselves in various businesses throughout town. By operating their own businesses, many African Americans became members of the emerging black middle or professional classes. Many in the horse and tourism industries discovered opportunities to establish professional careers. Still, others in the barbering and funeral industries found lucrative businesses that excelled because they lacked white competition. Through all of these ventures, African Americans in Camden hoped to bring themselves out of the shadow of slavery and discrimination.

Associated Sites

E.H. Dibble & Brothers Grocers and Crockery, 1053 Broad Street; E.H. Dibble Store, 609 DeKalb Street; Rufus Dennis Dibble Store, 1206 Campbell Street. These stores were owned and operated by various members of a significant African-American family.

Collins Funeral Home, 714 DeKalb Street. Amon R. Collins began operating this funeral home around 1914, and it was later taken over by his son George Evans Collins. The original hearse carriage first used in 1914 sits in front of the home.

Haile Funeral Parlor, 848 Broad Street. The Haile Funeral Home is another African-American funeral home, which was opened after the Collins Funeral Home. This funeral home is presently located at 919 Church Street.

Brown Funeral Home, 704 Broad Street. This funeral home opened sometime after 1941. Brown learned his skills from Richard Haile prior to opening his business.

Dr. Pickett's office, 920 Broad Street. The office of Camden's first black doctor was established here in 1904.

Theodore J. Whitaker drug store, 191 Broad Street. Whitaker opened his drug store in 1940. He made many of his own medicines and operated a soda fountain and luncheon counter. These venues served as a meeting place for many blacks.

Central Barber Shop, 1047 Broad Street; Eureka Barber Shop, 1050 Broad Street, Des Kennedy, 953 Broad Street; Columbus Knox, 929 Broad Street; Paul McGirt, 917 Broad Street; Palace Barber Shop, 535 DeKalb Street; Jason Reynolds, 905 Broad Street. These businesses were important within the African-American community. They offered blacks an industry where they did not have to compete with whites for customers.

Southern Cotton Oil Company, 116 DeKalb Street. This company opened in 1885 and could have employed newly freed African-Americans who did not find work in the fields.

Hermitage Cotton Mill, 125 Bishopville. Opened in 1891, this mill processed cotton produced in Camden. African-Americans likely filled menial jobs here.
Chero Cola Bottling Company, 935 Broad Street. This company opened in 1910, and potentially employed blacks. Its building later housed the Southern Furnishing Company and Thomas Williams Drugs.

Wateree Mill, 114 Union Street. This mill opened in 1915. Like the other industries, blacks who worked here would have spent their days cleaning bathrooms, grounds-keeping and performing other work that white employees refused to do.

Camden Iron and Brass Works, 120 DeKalb Street. Like the Wateree Mill, this manufacturer also opened its doors in 1915. It also likely employed blacks in menial positions.

Springdale Race Course 200 Knights Hill Road. The site of the annual Carolina Cup Race. Historically employed and continues to employ many African Americans in the horse industry.

Hawthorne Track. Downtown, bounded by Lyttleton, DeKalb, Mill and Laurens Streets. A race track that employed blacks and was the site of many flat races where black jockeys rode.

Grounds of the Kirkwood Hotel (previously bounded by Green Street); the Court Inn (previously bounded by 2nd Avenue and 13th Street); and the Hobkirk Inn (previously bounded by Green Street and Lyttleton Street): These hotels hold an important place in the history of African Americans in Camden. Many African Americans were employed as bellboys, chambermaids, kitchen assistants, groundskeepers, buggy drivers, waiters, and other service workers in the hotels.

C. The Impact of War

Memorializing the efforts of African-American soldiers in Camden and in other small cities like it across the country often occurred in city cemeteries. Camden’s Cedar Cemetery contained countless men who fought in foreign wars during the twentieth century. The Revolutionary and Civil Wars presented African Americans with limited opportunities to take an active role in establishing their freedom from the system of slavery, and the results of the Civil War left African Americans free but still oppressed. Three important wars of the twentieth century – World War I, World War II, and the Vietnam War – presented African Americans with more prospects to advance their status in society and experience a world free of Jim Crow segregation and exploitation.

Fighting for Equality: World War I

Like previous wars, African Americans found themselves fighting in World War I. In a nation upholding Jim Crow segregation and political oppression, African Americans looked to fighting in a war as an opportunity to prove their status as American citizens worthy of equal treatment. A majority of African Americans entered the war through the national draft. Enacted on 18 May 1917, the draft required all men between the ages of twenty-one and thirty to register with the government. While the process gathered people of all races and places, a majority of those
drafted into the war were African Americans; South Carolina’s draft numbers reflected this national trend. Within South Carolina, counties in the Lowcountry drafted the smallest percentage of African Americans; counties in the northernmost portion of the state, including Kershaw County, the highest percentage. While African Americans attempted to end the racist system that continually exploited them, the draft and military service was, in many ways, just an extension of that system.  

Unfortunately for black South Carolinians, the military treated minority soldiers much like they treated them in the Revolutionary and Civil Wars: they endured segregated training and filled laboring positions more frequently than did whites. At the beginning of the war, the United States military did not offer African Americans any training facilities; this omission not only prevented black soldiers from receiving the basic training needed for battle but also eliminated African Americans from becoming ranking officers due to their lack of special training. Only after intense pressure from African-American organizations and media did the military open an all-black officers’ camp in Iowa. On 15 October 1917, their segregated camp produced its first class of army officers, including officer Elliott H. Kelly, a resident of Camden, South Carolina.  

Even though fighting in the war often perpetuated Jim Crow racism and segregation, African Americans returned from Europe with new, positive experiences to inspire them for continued civil rights progress. For most African-American soldiers from rural South Carolina, opportunities for traveling had been largely confined to trips across the county or state. Through fighting in Europe, black South Carolinians interacted with African Americans from other parts of the South and the country. They also came into contact with blacks from other nations. South Carolinians were able to experience other countries like France and all of its cultural treasures without any component of Jim Crow reminding them of their second-class status. 

In addition to visiting foreign lands, some African-American soldiers fought in integrated military units with foreign troops. Stationed in France, the 92nd Division, made up of several black regiments from various regions of the United States, fought alongside white and black French soldiers. Because of their efforts, the 92nd Division received more medals of honor from the French government than any other American combat division or regiment. While the soldiers of the 92nd Division returned to America with praise, they soon realized that American society had not improved since their departure for war: both the society and the military remained segregated, limiting their economic and social opportunities.

Roughly two decades later, dispute in Europe would yet again call upon the services of African-American soldiers – and African Americans helped not only to defeat the Axis Powers abroad but also to weaken the bonds of segregation at home.

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227 Meggison, “Black South Carolinians,” 165; and Alt and Alt, *Black Soldiers*, 82.
Popular African-American leader W.E.B Du Bois realized the potential World War II held for providing a better life for the nation’s marginalized. Portraying the war as a dispute over increased democratic opportunities for various minority groups, Du Bois encouraged young African-American men to take up arms on behalf of their country. Nearly one million African Americans, some listening to Du Bois and some not listening, joined the war effort. In fact, some might argue that the number of African Americans who participated in World War II far surpassed the expectations of the community: the minority group composed sixteen percent of the armed forces despite the fact that they only made up ten percent of the total United States population. Their goals for fighting in the war were just as ambitious as the numbers they produced. In addition to combating the forces of fascism and Nazism, the nation’s commitment to aiding the Allied Forces in World War II allowed African-American soldiers to inch closer to equality in both the military and in the greater society.  

The recruitment of African-American soldiers for active combat was slow in the beginning of the war. It was not until the white, young, male population began to dwindle that the military aggressively recruited young African-American males. While at first the military followed strict policies of segregation in training, housing, and combat, the depleted numbers of white soldiers forced officials not only to draw from the untapped African-American reserve of soldiers but also to utilize these soldiers in operations with other white soldiers. The harsh, distinct lines of racial segregation slowly began to blur as World War II continued.

Like every other war in which African Americans participated, they found that white authority limited their roles. White supremacy at home often made initial training and early service in America difficult and humiliating for African-American soldiers. Recruiting centers, training facilities, and even blood banks remained segregated, which forced African Americans to acknowledge their secondary status. Also, menial service abroad did not help to improve the status of African Americans. Black soldiers found themselves washing the dishes of white soldiers, transporting white officers, and running errands for white soldiers. Even abroad, African Americans could not escape the servant’s role.

Although many African-American men struggled to improve their second-class status, they nonetheless made important strides towards achieving equal status within the military ranks during World War II. For the first time in any war, some African-American soldiers received official training as pilots, like the Tuskegee Airmen, served as soldiers instead of servants on war ships, and fought actively in ground combat in both Europe and Asia. In addition to men, African-American women began to join the ranks of the military with promising positions. Despite facing some of the same discrimination experienced by men, like living and training in segregated barracks, African-American female nurses often had significant exposure to white soldiers and other white nurses. These changes proved to the nation and the world that African Americans were just as dedicated in winning the war and just as reliable in fighting the

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enemy as were their fellow white soldiers. Demonstrating their active commitment to the war made African-American demands for equal opportunity more apparent and legitimate in American society.

Desegregation of the Armed Forces

Removing the racial barriers that dominated military life and service was a gradual process that spanned several decades. In the years leading up to the United States’ involvement in World War II, officers in the armed forces maintained segregated barracks but promoted early glimpses of progress through utilizing a quota system to ensure that population of African-American soldiers was proportional to their population in the larger American society. As World War II progressed and as more African-American soldiers replaced dying and injured white soldiers, the existing divisions of race slowly dissolved out of necessity. In addition to the mounting white casualties, racial segregation also began to weaken because of African-American activism at home. Civil rights activists wrote letters to the president Roosevelt urging him to create more opportunities for African-American soldiers in the military. Activists published articles in prominent black magazines and newspapers that criticized the government for adopting racial policies in the armed forces. Some civil rights leaders even met with the president and his staff to discuss the need for better treatment among African Americans in the military. 233

Despite the efforts of activists, ending segregation within the military remained controversial. Many officers debated the dedication, motivation, and competencies of African-American soldiers. For example, the United States published reports in 1945 and 1950 on the aptitude and abilities of African-American soldiers; from these reports, the Army suggested to President Harry S. Truman and other officials that the “lower mental and aptitude levels” of African-American soldiers made them ultimately undesirable on the battlefield. 234 Combating racism within the military proved to be a long challenge for African Americans and their white allies. However, with the election of President Truman in 1948, activists for desegregating the armed forces received increased support from the executive branch of the federal government.

As part of greater effort to understand race relations and the impact of racial violence on African Americans, Truman created the Committee on Civil Rights in 1946. While the committee looked at various aspects of American life, it focused considerable attention on the impact of segregation in the armed services. The committee reported that desegregation had to occur in the military for several reasons. One reason emphasized the obvious need for loyalty and dedication to one’s country. The committee believed that racial discrimination only helped to alienate African-American soldiers who desired to defend their country in times of war. In addition to loyalty, the committee also stated that as the nation moves closer towards integration, the military served as a model to show how government agencies could work together to promote racial equality. 235

234 Alt and Alt, Black Soldiers, 99.
235 Mershon and Schlossman, Foxholes, 164 – 164.
In addition to the remarks from the Committee on Civil Rights, the president also had military testimonials to further promote the need for desegregation in the armed services. Truman listened to accounts of the courage African-American soldiers showed on the battlefield – how black soldiers often performed dangerous missions that no white soldier would attempt in order to gain respect. With the encouragement of committees, activists, African-American soldiers, and other invested individuals, President Truman continued the gradual trend towards desegregating the armed forces by issuing Executive Order 9981, which officially ended segregation within the military in 1948; the law now required the military to “phase in men for military assignments without regard to race.”

Despite the executive order, integrating military barracks and regiments took time to accomplish. African Americans faced intense resistance from many officers and branches of the armed services. Some African-American soldiers served in integrated forces during the Korean War. In those circumstances, however, one or two African Americans fought alongside an entire regiment of white soldiers. There was not a full-scale effort to produce integrated forces until the war in Vietnam. Even with the delay, however, African Americans established a crucial first victory in the battle to topple Jim Crow segregation through their participation in the military.

**Fighting for Equality: Vietnam**

Combating the spread of communism was just one reason African Americans accompanied their country in its battle in Vietnam. Just like in other wars during the twentieth century, joining the military during the Vietnam War era created hopes of a better life for many African Americans, particularly those from rural areas where prosperity was not as prevalent. A career in the military provided soldiers with a full time job that offered a lifetime of advancement, health and education benefits, and special training. Also, the war fueled a young individual’s quest for worldly adventure. More importantly, however, it also gave African Americans another chance to claim equality in their social status – a chance they simply could not get on a farm in South Carolina or many other places in the United States. Decades after the end of official segregation in the military and in society, African Americans still found themselves mobilizing around war in order to improve their status in society.

While the Vietnam War was the first fully integrated war for African Americans, they still met difficulties due to racial discrimination and class exploitation. Even though recruiting no longer relied on open forms of racism and segregation as it once did, new measures and incentives often benefited the white, middle and upper classes over the poor black and white populations. Popular methods of “dodging the draft” quickly emerged as the nation drafted more and more young Americans, and the richer, white youth benefited most from these methods. For example, white youth routinely avoided the Vietnam War by running to other nations, by receiving medical and student deferments, or by claiming conscientious objections. Often lacking the financial means to leave the country or attend college, many African Americans chose to serve their country in Vietnam. Despite the large amount of deaths and the racism that...
existed among soldiers, African Americans still fought bravely in Vietnam and some were able to improve their own lives economically and through participating in combat. 239

D. Education

Black Education during Reconstruction

The dawn of Reconstruction saw the rise of a number of schools dedicated solely to the education of the newly freed men and women of South Carolina. One northern transplant, a Quaker teacher by the name of Anna Gardner, noted the changes in post-bellum South Carolina and the importance of education: “It is of still greater import that those who, while under the yoke of bondage, were subjected to the extremist penalties of a diabolical law when found with a book in hand, are now vigorously prosecuting the work of school superintendents, or acting as trustees of colleges.”240 Forbidden for so long from knowledge and learning, newly freed blacks embraced the educational opportunities Reconstruction gave them with fervor.

Educational changes for blacks were so successful in the Reconstruction era because of outside assistance organized to counteract the animosity and disdain felt by southern whites towards their newly freed neighbors. The first important organization to appear during Reconstruction actually went into effect over a month before the war ended. In March 1865, the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands was within the War Department to assist blacks in states under Reconstruction. 241 Commonly known as the Freedman's Bureau, the organization sought to assist the impoverished areas of the South and protect the rights of those newly freed. One of the areas the Freedman's Bureau oversaw was organizational services such as aid, uplift, and education. The creation and management of schools fell within that section. The Bureau oversaw the management of the finances, facilities, and staff of schools in an attempt to assure that as many people as possible could partake. Hated by many southern whites who viewed the Bureau as run by staunch abolitionists, the Freedman's Bureau had a great deal of support from northern missionaries who came to the South in substantial numbers towards the end of the war bearing assistance for freed slaves in the form of materials, spiritual doctrine, and a strong desire to educate. 242

By February 1866 there were four black schools operating in Camden: Lincoln, Hamilton, Jackson, and Whittmore. Five more schools appeared before the end of the year: Stevenson, Dickerson, Anderson, Adamson, and a night school. These nine schools and the three more that followed all operated under the Freedmen's Bureau with some staying open for only months while others lasted many years. 243

239 Alt and Alt, Black Soldiers, 117 – 118.
240 Anna Gardner, Harvest Gleanings, memoir (1881). Located in Camden Archives and Museum, Camden, SC.
241 “Freedman's Bureau of Augusta County, Virginia: Brief Overview,”
243 Teal, Public Schools, 1868-1870, 11.
By the late 1860s, the South struggled to accept the goals set by the federal government for its reinstatement in the union. The Freedman's Bureau organized aid to freedpeople and the impoverished of any color. It was at this time, in 1868, that the South Carolina Constitutional Convention, with participation from both black and white representatives and senators, passed a new constitution with the hopes of rebuilding of South Carolina. This constitution passed into effect one of Reconstruction's most lasting legacies: the public school system, an organized, state-wide, and publicly funded education system. Originally intended to be integrated, opposition by whites prevented such a system's implementation. After the end of Reconstruction, South Carolina public schools, often citing the Supreme Court decisions in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, systematically implemented dual school systems all over the state.

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244 Edgar, *South Carolina*, 390; and Teal, *Public Schools, 1868-1870*, 11-12.
Black Education during Jim Crow

The educational and social outreach of Reconstruction quickly died off once the federal government removed its presence. However, through the 1880s, South Carolina provided roughly equal funding for black and white schools. The ascension of Governor Benjamin Tillman and the passage of a new constitution in 1895 sounded a death toll for fair educational funding. The 1895 constitution required separate schools for black and white children and made no attempt to equally fund the dual systems.245

African Americans struggled through the years of Jim Crow to learn and flourish with sorely under-funded schools. Black schools in Camden were forced to make due with outdated books, inadequate equipment, and a lack of facilities.246 Black Camdenites walked miles to the schools while busses carrying white children passed them by. Textbooks for the black public schools were old, outdated, and branded “For Colored Students Only.” Science equipment at Jackson consisted of photographs of microscopes instead of the actual objects.247 Many succeeded in the public system due to dedicated staff and hard work, but they did not always have equality in funding and space.

245 Edgar, South Carolina, 420.448.
246 Interview with Dr. Althea Truitt, 4 February 2006.
247 Interview with Dr. Daisy Alexander, 7 February 2006.
Through the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, a grade system developed in South Carolina and across the country in schools to serve students of all ages effectively. Teachers separated children by age groups into specific grades and then created lessons for each group. This development resulted in the grade system that is still in place today. As the state-wide grade system developed, single-room, multi-age schools, such as the original “Jackson School,” grew and split into elementary, middle, and high schools. Camden Elementary, Middle, and High School served the white population, while Jackson Elementary, Middle, and High School served the black population. An African-American school known as both Kirkwood and Kirkland School existed slightly outside of the city boundaries, educating children from the area known as Kirkwood.\(^{248}\) Saint Matthew was also outside the city limits but was included in Camden as it was the school associated with farmers and those living in more rural areas.\(^{249}\)

Philanthropy became one important source of support for black schools. Julius Rosenwald, a successful northern businessman, became involved in the betterment of African-American education after meeting Booker T. Washington and learning of the deplorable conditions of many black schools in the South. Rosenwald created a fund that, among other things, gave money to aid in the construction of better schools for southern blacks.\(^{250}\)

In Camden, the Julius Rosenwald Fund sponsored several schools through the years. Rosenwald funds went to assist the Jackson, Kirkwood/Kirkland, and Saint Matthew schools. Saint Matthew received Rosenwald funding in 1923, and Kirkwood received funding in 1930.\(^{251}\) Jackson School began in 1866-1867 and was incorporated into the state graded school system in 1893. It received Rosenwald money in 1923 for the construction of a high school. While Jackson School had been operating since 1893 with only ninth grade, the newly funded Rosenwald School opened in 1924 as solely tenth grade. Eleventh grade was added in 1925, and the school officially became Jackson High School. The high school had its first class in 1926 with twenty female graduates. In 1936, the Works Project Administration (WPA), an active force in Camden through the 1940s, constructed a two-story brick building to replace the wooden Rosenwald School.\(^{252}\) Jackson School operated as both a grammar and high school run by the same faculty and was located next to each other on the corner of DeKalb Street and Campbell Street. Principal P.B. Mmodona, a native of Africa, served both schools from 1917 until his retirement in 1951.\(^{253}\) He was the first black principal in Kershaw County to run a high school that prepared its graduates for college.\(^{254}\) After Mmodona retired, the high school and grammar school began to operate as separate entities. As the schools grew, the elementary school took over the entire property at the corner of Campbell and DeKalb and the high school was moved to

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\(^{248}\) Dewey D. Dodds to J.C. Walton, 10 November 1970, Manuscripts Division, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia.

\(^{249}\) Dodds to Walton, 10 November 1970; and Interview with Janie Lloyd, 17 February 2006.


\(^{251}\) Rosenwald School Insurance Cards. Located in the South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia.


\(^{254}\) “Former JHS Principal Succumbs.”
a new building on Chesnut Ferry Road to accommodate its size.  

Due to the lack of state support, the public school system for blacks in Camden was never as successful as the local private school, Browning Home-Mather Academy, later known as Boylan-Haven-Mather Academy, in fostering a diverse atmosphere or providing unique opportunities for the students to experience the arts.

Mather Academy: An “Oasis in the Desert”

In 1867, a northern missionary named Sarah Babcock came to Camden to create a school for African-American children. She ran her school for a brief period in a building off Broad Street before realizing she would need larger facilities to accommodate the number of children in the area. Babcock purchased a twenty-seven acre former plantation off Campbell Street with the mansion still extant on the property. Once she made this purchase, Babcock returned to New England, married, took the surname Mather, and managed the school's future from a distance by raising funds to construct another building on the land. Fanny O. Browning gave a large amount of money to the school. The school utilized these funds to construct a female dormitory named Browning Home in her honor. The school, with its two buildings, Mather Hall and Browning Home, opened its doors for female African Americans in 1887 with few resources and a white, northern missionary staff.

In 1889, the New England Southern Conference of the Women's Home Missionary Society, a Methodist Episcopal organization, purchased the school for $2,000. Milestones came quickly for the growing private school. Boys first began attending the school in 1890, and the first commencement was held in 1893 with four girls graduating. Through the last decades of the nineteenth century subjects such as botany, civil government, Latin, geography, algebra, ancient history, and geometry were added to a curriculum that already included the basic skills of reading and writing, along with religious courses and devotions. In 1900, the school changed its name to Mather Academy.

Mather Academy was well-known for the “superior education” it provided to African Americans. It was the first school in Kershaw County to have a twelfth grade. The academy provided exceptional education by exposing black children to cultural events not normally accessible to them such as concerts, lectures, plays, and religious education. One Mather graduate, who had attended Kirkwood/Kirkland School, until the seventh grade, noted that at Mather there was a great deal of focus on and positive discussion of black history. Mather brought well-known artists to the town and encouraged the children to partake in the arts by

255 “Jackson School.”
258 Peacock, Browning Home and Mather Academy, 9.
going to Columbia. Students even participated in conferences related to their schoolwork and extra-curricular activities.260

Figure 20. Browning Home, ca. 1900s
Mather Academy and its grounds grew out of the Browning Home. Courtesy of South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC.

Figure 21. 1932 Mather Girls Basketball Team
Mather Academy provided its students with a wide variety of activities related to academics, sports, and also the arts. Permission of S.C. Postcards, VIII, Camden, by Howard Woody and Davie Beard.

Mather Academy boasted both a day school and housing facilities for boarders from other parts of the state and country. The campus sprawled over a large tract of land. By the end of its career it had both boys' and girls’ dormitories. The school's renown drew students from all over the country and a few from overseas. Those attending school had exposure to many different types of people and situations.261

Mather was “an oasis” from the segregated society outside by allowing interracial

261 Interview with Ruby Minton, 3 February 2006; and Mather Academy Yearbook (Camden, SC: Mather Academy, 1949).
interaction in a friendly and supportive way. Mather's faculty was integrated and this interaction between the African-American students and the integrated faculty was very beneficial to the students.

This comprehensive education and exposure to cultural events allowed many of Mather's alumni to become leaders in their communities. South Carolina Sixth District U.S. House Representative James E. Clyburn graduated from Mather in 1957 and credits Mather with lessons on how to appreciate diversity and how to give back to your own community. Upon graduation, Clyburn had been planning to travel north because he felt “I wouldn't be able to do what I wanted here.” It was the school's financial secretary that convinced Clyburn to stay by telling him that by leaving nothing would get better and he should instead stay and make a difference.

![Mather Academy Graduation, ca. 1930s](image)

**Figure 22. Mather Academy Graduation, ca. 1930s**

Mather produced many prominent African-American graduates who contributed a great deal to South Carolina and beyond. Permission of *S.C. Postcards, VIII, Camden*, by Howard Woody and Davie Beard.

For all of its intellectual success, Mather Academy's financial fortunes were not always so positive. Financial success through the first half of the twentieth century had allowed the school to rebuild the girls' dormitory. Browning Hall, in 1928 and in 1950 to construct Bryan Hall, a boys' dormitory. Prior to the construction of the boys' dormitory, many male students had stayed in homes throughout Camden as boarders. The school prospered into the 1950s when enrollment reached its peak of roughly 300 students. In 1959 Browning Home-Mather

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262 Interview with Dr. Althea Truitt, 4 February 2006; and Cahn, “Boylan-Haven-Mather Academy: A Legacy of Racial Tolerance.”
264 Interview with Dr. Althea Truitt, 4 February 2006; and Cahn, “Boylan-Haven-Mather Academy: A Legacy of Racial Tolerance.”
Academy joined forces with Boylan-Haven School out of Jacksonville, Florida to become Boylan-Haven-Mather Academy. Boylan-Haven School was actually two schools, Boylan School in Jacksonville, Florida and Haven Industrial Home and School in Savannah, Georgia. Haven Industrial ran from 1882 to 1932 when due to poor attendance and termite problems it merged with Boylan School. Boylan School operated from 1886 until 1959 when due to dilapidated building conditions it was sold and the “equipment, records, and...proceeds” as well as Boylan's name and legacy were donated to Mather Academy. When Boylan-Haven-Mather Academy opened its doors in 1959, it boasted grades seven through twelve as well as a kindergarten. In 1963, the administration eliminated the seventh grade.266

Despite these changes and some new construction that happened in the 1960s, Boylan-Haven-Mather struggled with maintaining attendance. Integration and changes in the public school system left Mather with dwindling numbers. By 1980 enrollment had fallen to 57 students. Discussion began within the United Methodist Church, the school's owning body, in 1980 as to what course to adopt for the school. Though at the time the school's administrator remained positive about Mather's future, the school closed its door for good in 1983 after seeing off a final graduating class of fifteen.267

School Integration

The end of the dual school system in Kershaw County Schools during the Jim Crow era occurred in a span of several years from the end of the 1960s through the beginning of the 1970s. The philosophy of “separate but equal” schools existed legally in the United States until 1954 when the Supreme Court overturned Plessy v. Ferguson with their ruling in the Brown v. Board case. The unanimous ruling, which stated that “separate but equal” was “inherently unequal,” reenergized the quest for a unitary school system.268

At the same time that proponents of school integration were mobilizing to fight “separate but equal,” Governor James Byrnes of South Carolina was campaigning for increased tax revenues in order to improve the state’s schools, both black and white. Because the dual school system created blatant inequalities for the state’s youth, state officials needed a new plan to stall the integration process in South Carolina by improving black schools – even in the smallest ways. Consequently, Byrnes and his colleagues created and implemented the “school equalization program.” As part of this equalization movement, Byrnes and others attempted to repair and to build new schools for white and African-American students so that “separate but equal” appeared to be providing an adequate educational experience for all residents of South Carolina.269 While this movement helped the dual school system remain intact during the remainder of the 1950s and into the 1960s, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 officially ended school

segregation and any other form of segregation in public locations.\textsuperscript{270}

However, dual school systems still existed throughout the South even after the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Through “freedom of choice” integration plans, parents, at the school’s discretion, selected what school their children attended. Working together, parents and local school districts perpetuated the dual school system: most parents placed their children into single-race schools and most local schools allowed this practice to continue. For example, local schools in Kershaw, Darlington, Greenville, and other counties in the state utilized the “freedom of choice” policy when placing children in schools. However, after nearly a decade of debate and planning, the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) informed the Kershaw County School District that its schools must terminate the dual school system by the fall semester of 1969, and, with it, the district’s “freedom of choice” policy.

HEW’s integration plan evolved over several years and mainly focused on the gradual integration of county schools with its own modified version of the “freedom of choice” policy as a key component to the process. HEW allowed the school district to adopt a limited form of “choice” as a means to obtain eventual, countywide school integration. Initially, even with the incentive of “choice” as part of the program, the Kershaw School District claimed that the integration process proved to be a difficult policy to implement. Citing the “present attitude of our people,” Arthur Stokes, Superintendent of Education for Kershaw County Schools, admitted that the school system and its community were not prepared to meet HEW’s fall deadline and, consequently, requested an extension.\textsuperscript{271}

In this same letter, Stokes detailed the reconfiguration of area schools in Kershaw County, including the schools in Camden. He wrote that most schools would continue to integrate at their gradual pace. Breaking from “choice” policy, the superintendent wrote that elementary students living in the Pine Tree Hill Elementary zone would all attend Pine Tree, adding nearly seventy-five African American students to the formerly all white school. However, the Pine Tree Hill Elementary School was the only school to integrate based on residency. Stokes stated that the remaining students in Camden would observe the “freedom of choice” policy – allowing parents to decide whether their children would attend integrated schools.\textsuperscript{272} Responding to Kershaw County’s integration proposal, Lloyd Henderson, Education Branch Chief for the Office of Civil Rights in HEW, informed Stokes and the school district that HEW rejected the proposal; the school district had another thirty days to alter the plan and resubmit it to HEW.\textsuperscript{273}

After altering the proposal once more in May 1969, the county schools and HEW agreed on a sufficient integration policy plan in June 1969. The implementation of the plan was to occur in two phases, which spanned the two subsequent academic school years. In the first phase, the integration process emphasized the familiar “choice” policy for parents and students.


\textsuperscript{271}Arthur Stokes to Lloyd Henderson, 21 February 1969, The Donald Holland Paper Collection, The South Carolina Political Collections, University of South Carolina, Columbia.

\textsuperscript{272}Stokes to Henderson, 21 February 1969.

\textsuperscript{273}Lloyd Henderson to Arthur Stokes, 14 April 1969, The Donald Holland Paper Collection, The South Carolina Political Collections, University of South Carolina, Columbia.
According to the plan, the school district granted students in grades ten through twelve the option of attending either Camden High School or Jackson High School. Students in grades seven through nine had the choice of attending either Camden Junior High or Jackson Junior High. All elementary students had either a choice between Camden Elementary, Jackson Elementary, or received an assigned elementary school, depending on the students’ residential location. In the second phase, the plan emphasized school integration based on geographic location: gone were the days of “freedom of choice.” HEW and the school district required students, depending on their residency, in grades nine through twelve to attend either Camden High School (formerly Camden High and Junior High School) or Lugoff-Blaney High School. Depending again on their residency, students in grades six through eight enrolled in Camden Middle School (formerly Jackson High School and Jackson Junior High School) or the Lugoff-Blaney Middle School (formerly the Wateree School). The remaining group of students, children in grades one through five, attended one of the following three schools: Camden Elementary School, Pine Tree Hill School, or Lugoff Elementary School. Much like they did with the other students, the Kershaw School District placed these children into one of the three schools according to their residency. In addition to changing students’ attendance patterns, phase two of the integration plan also altered two schools entirely. Because African-American children no longer attended Jackson Elementary School, the city utilized the building as its “special services school.” Another school that was no longer in use, St. Matthew Elementary, shut down completely with the implementation of phase two.

While resistance and tension plagued the planning of school integration, the actual process of school integration occurred without major protest or violence from parents, students, and school officials. As a teacher in Camden, Vivian Metze recalled that the integration of the city schools occurred in a safe and effective manner because of the faculty and administration’s commitment to providing an enriching educational experience for students. Even though it took time for faculty members of the opposite race to build working and social networks with other faculty members, she commented that teachers and administrators created lasting professional relationships, which made the goal of integration easier to obtain. In addition to the budding relationships between faculty members, Metze also stated that white parents ultimately accepted African-American teachers because black faculty members provided students of all races with educational opportunities important to their future success. While the dual school system dominated Camden schools for most of the twentieth century, both the cooperation of the Kershaw County School District and the commitment of the faculty and administration helped to successfully complete the process of integration.

274 Lloyd Henderson to Arthur Stokes, 10 June 1969, The Donald Holland Paper Collection, The South Carolina Political Collections, University of South Carolina, Columbia.
275 Henderson to Stokes, 10 June 1969.
276 Interview with Vivian Metze, 3 February 2006.
E. Religion

The Development of Black Churches

Immediately after the Civil War, southern blacks fled white-dominated churches, of which they had been members in the antebellum period, to form their own churches. In the majority of cases, it was a choice: African Americans decided to leave these churches; whites did not force them out. In the 1860s and 1870s, religious separation meant liberation for blacks, not enforced segregation. These newly formed black churches became the first postwar African-American institutions throughout the South, including Camden. Churches represented an opportunity for newly freed slaves to express their freedom and their right to choose. In black churches, African Americans could worship as they wished, develop a sense of community, help fellow African Americans in need, cultivate leadership, and be free from white supervision.

Southern black Methodists made a mass exodus from the Methodist Episcopal Church (South). In South Carolina, there were 46,640 black Methodists in 1860; by 1876, there were only 421. Black Methodists had several choices when creating their own congregations. Some joined the African-American Methodist denominations that developed in the antebellum North, such as the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (AMEZ). The AME Church founded its South Carolina Conference in May 1865, planning to use South Carolina as its base for missionaries throughout the South. The AMEZ Church founded its North Carolina Conference in May 1864 as its base for southern recruitment. Several AMEZ churches were founded in Camden.

The other choice was the Methodist Episcopal Church (North), which sent missionaries to the South for the new freedmen in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War. The South Carolina Missions Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church (North) organized on 2 April 1866. Camden was one of seven charges of the Charleston District of this conference. Sometime in 1866, blacks withdrew their membership from Camden’s Methodist church to create their own congregation. Tradition states that the black members made known their desire to separate, and the white members offered them what help they could. On 7 April the South Carolina Missions Conference’s bishop appointed William Cole as the new congregation’s first pastor. Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church (North) held its first annual conference on 11 February 1869 with 1,320 members. In 1872 the white congregation moved to Lyttleton Street where it built a new sanctuary and allowed the Trinity congregation to use the original 1828

279 Edgar, South Carolina, 382.
280 William E. Montgomery, Under Their Own Vine and Fig Tree: The African-American Church in the South, 1865-1900 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993), 69.
281 Montgomery, Under Their Own Vine and Fig Tree, 65.
282 Inabinet, Lyttleton Street, 98.
structure (at 704 DeKalb Street). On 24 November 1875 Trinity purchased the DeKalb Street sanctuary from the white Lyttleton Street congregation.283

Area blacks founded several other Methodist congregations in the Camden area during the Reconstruction period. One of them, Zion Methodist, no longer exists and the building has been demolished.284 Blacks founded several others around the outskirts of Camden. In 1868, a group of newly freed slaves met and formed St. Paul’s Methodist Church. The church constructed its first building on two acres of land donated by Mr. and Mrs. P. Watts. This sanctuary stood until 1918 when fire destroyed it.285 According to oral tradition, the Wateree Mission’s plantation chapel at Mulberry developed into Wesley Chapel Methodist Episcopal Church. The Wateree Mission affiliated with the Methodist Episcopal Church (North) when it created the South Carolina Mission Conference. It became part of the Camden charge that included Good Hope and Trinity. Colonel Chesnut sold 10 acres to the congregation in 1866 with the deed recorded on 20 June 1870. The congregation moved a building from Mulberry to the site, and the present building was constructed in the early 1880s.286 The congregation constructed a one-room church building in 1879 and affiliated with the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1892.287 Emmanuel Methodist Episcopal Church was founded in 1870 when 12 blacks met under a brush arbor, led by Pastor James Brown. Henry

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Carrison gave property to the new church, which built a frame building on the site.  

A smaller number of southern African Americans remained within the Methodist Episcopal Church (South), which eventually created a separate denomination, the Colored (now Christian) Methodist Episcopal Church (CME), for its black members at its 1866 General Conference. Even into the late 1860s, there was still a “colored” woman, Maria Brown, on Lyttleton Street’s membership roles.

Black Baptists across the South also chose to leave their original congregations and form independent black Baptist churches. Black Baptists in South Carolina developed a statewide organization in 1876. This occurred relatively quickly in Camden. On 22 January 1866, the “colored membership” of Camden (First) Baptist Church assembled at 10 a.m. for a daylong meeting that resulted in an orderly withdrawal of the African-American membership from Camden Baptist Church. A total of one hundred and four black members from Camden Baptist Church and Swift Creek Baptist Church founded what is now Mount Moriah Baptist Church. Tradition states that Camden (First) Baptist Church offered financial support to establish Mount Moriah. The church called its first pastor, Monroe Boykin, who was a former slave who had been known as an “exhorter to the colored people” before the war. Within a few years, Mount Moriah had a membership of 250. The congregation originally met in homes and at the white Baptist Church. In 1870 the church purchased the current lot at the corner of Broad and York Streets and met in the dilapidated, blacksmith shop on the site. In 1891, the church completed the present sanctuary.

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288 “This is Our Story,” (Camden, SC: Emmanuel United Methodist Church, 27 November 1988). Camden Archives and Museum, Camden, SC.  
290 Inabinet, Lyttleton Street.  
291 Montgomery, Under Their Own Vine and Fig Tree, 108, 113; and Inabinet, His People, 47.  
292 Inabinet, His People, 49.  
293 Dvorak, “After Apocalypse, Moses,”194.  
A black Presbyterian church, Camden Second United Presbyterian Church, began in the 1880s. Two students from Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte organized a black Presbyterian Sunday school at the home of Robert Boykin on Market Street between 1885 and 1886. Attendance grew over the next few years. The group added worship services in the afternoon following Sunday school in the morning. The classes outgrew the house, and the group began to meet in Robert Boykin’s backyard. The group petitioned the Presbytery of Fairfield for permission to organize, and the group called its first pastor, Samuel Calvin Thompson, in 1900.\textsuperscript{295} The congregation began construction of a sanctuary in 1897 and dedicated the building in 1904. The Second Presbyterian congregation still uses the original

\begin{figure}[h]
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\caption{Reverend Monroe Boykin (1825-1904)}
\textbf{Reverend Monroe Boykin} was born a slave. In the antebellum period, he was a member of Camden Baptist Church and was known as an “exhorter to the colored people.” The new African-American congregation, Mount Moriah Baptist Church, named him their first pastor. He was also a missionary who established black Baptist churches throughout South Carolina. Permission of \textit{S.C. Postcards, VIII, Camden}, by Howard Woody and Davie Beard.
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figure25.jpg}
\caption{Mount Moriah Baptist Church}
African Americans from Camden Baptist Church formed Mount Moriah Baptist Church in 1866. The first sanctuary was completed in 1889 at 204 Broad Street. Permission of \textit{S.C. Postcards, VIII, Camden}, by Howard Woody and Davie Beard.
\end{figure}

sanctuary, located at 816 Market Street.\textsuperscript{296}

Following the Civil War, many African Americans left the Episcopal Church for predominantly black denominations such as the AME Church. In 1860 South Carolina, there were 2,973 black Episcopalians; by 1876, there were only 262.\textsuperscript{297} The racism of many white Episcopalians and the Episcopal Church’s refusal to allow blacks leadership roles were responsible for most of this exodus of blacks from the Episcopal Church.\textsuperscript{298} Unlike Methodist and Baptist denominations, which did not necessarily want to let their black members leave, South Carolina Episcopalians officially made blacks unwelcome. Some blacks were actually forced to leave churches where they had worshipped for years. In 1876, the Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina refused to seat St. Marks, Charleston (a black congregation) in the annual conference because it did not want to encourage miscegenation and social equality. In 1875, the Reformed Episcopal Church came to South Carolina and appealed to black South Carolinians.\textsuperscript{299} Partially in response to this racism, a black Episcopal minister, Alexander Crummell, created the Conference of Church Workers among Colored People in 1883. This annual conference (one of which was held in Charleston, South Carolina) had many benefits. It allowed black Episcopalians to link together and served as a network for the black clergy.\textsuperscript{300} It is difficult to say exactly how these trends within the Episcopal Church impacted Camden’s Grace Episcopal Church (1315 Lyttleton Street). It did remain racially mixed between the 1860s and the 1880s, which was probably not unusual for Episcopal churches in smaller urban areas like Camden. Church records indicate that the Episcopal priest baptized African-American children throughout this period.\textsuperscript{301} It seems likely that these families also worshipped at Grace Episcopal Church.

\textit{The Black Church in the Jim Crow South}

Just as blacks had purposefully withdrawn from white congregations to form their own churches after the Civil War, African Americans continued to form new congregations under Jim Crow segregation. At the same time, the church became increasingly central to African-American life, as segregation pushed blacks out of other parts of society.

At the height of Jim Crow, the black church was integral to the lives of African Americans because it was one of the few institutions that they completely controlled. In churches, blacks had the opportunity to plan, organize, and lead without white interference. As evidence for this, the number of black Baptists increased dramatically. By 1890, there were more black Baptists in the South than all the other denominations combined. Baptist congregations were more independent with less church hierarchy than other denominations, which allowed blacks more autonomy. Black women, especially, immersed themselves in church activities. Congregations helped those in need: the sick, the displaced, and the bereaved.

\begin{itemize}
\item [297] Edgar, \textit{South Carolina}, 382.
\item [299] Edgar, \textit{South Carolina}, 382.
\end{itemize}
Black congregations helped thousands of African-American youth attend school and college. As it had in the antebellum period, the black church offered spiritual comfort through sermons and music. The emotional involvement and enthusiastic participation in church was a way to escape from their everyday lives. Black clergy often stressed the joys of heaven over the trials and tribulations of this world. 302 Camden’s churches met these same needs for Camden’s African-American community.

The early 1900s witnessed a growing number of black churches in Camden, as well as changes within existing congregations. In 1899 Doc Curry and Robert Brewer organized Sweet Home Baptist Church, which had thirteen original members, in a bush arbor behind what is now Camden Airport. The church eventually built a sanctuary, but moved in the 1940s because of airport traffic. 303 The Methodist Episcopal Church expanded into black Kirkwood in 1913. Trinity members who lived in Kirkwood wanted a church nearer their homes. Macedonia Methodist Episcopal Church was the result. Members secured land and building materials and built the church in a single day – 12 June 1913. Mount Zion Baptist Church organized in Kirkwood on 28 June 1913 on Monroe Street. Sardis Baptist Church (no longer extant) was built sometime in the 1920s and 1930s. St. Paul’s Methodist Church burned in 1918; the congregation completed the new sanctuary on 4 February 1920. In 1925, a fire partially destroyed Trinity Methodist’s original sanctuary. The congregation used the facilities at Browning Home-Mather Academy and at Mount Moriah Baptist Church until the new sanctuary’s completion in 1928. On 28 June 1928, the congregation marched from Mather Academy to its new building. In 1933, Trinity celebrated the completion of a Sunday school building. 304

The early 1900s also witnessed the rise of Pentecostalism in the South. The Pentecostal Holiness movement originated among whites, who were dissatisfied with the decreasing emotionalism of the older evangelical denominations. It then moved into the black population. The Church of God in Christ was the main African-American Pentecostal denomination, spreading throughout the South in the early twentieth century. In the early 1900s, the Pentecostal Holiness movement was the only significant movement that crossed racial lines. As the movement continued, racial tensions increased, and there was less white-black interaction. Camden reflected the growing racial divide in the Pentecostal Holiness movement. In the 1920s, blacks in Camden formed the Gordon Street Church of God (1707 Gordon Street), which reflected the spread of the Pentecostal Holiness movement into Camden. In 1927, an all-white Pentecostal congregation, the Bethel Pentecostal Holiness Church, began around the same time as the Gordon Street Church of God. 305

Jim Crow segregation did not mean there was no interaction among whites and blacks in Camden’s religious community. Throughout the period, whites worshipped at Trinity. Mather Academy, which was supported by the missions of the Methodist Church, had white Methodist

304 “History of Camden First United Methodist Church,” http://www.camdenfirstumc.com (accessed 30 January 2006); Historic Property Associates Inc., Historic Resources Survey, 32; and
“Historical Highlights of St. Paul’s United Methodist Church.”
missionary teachers, who attended Trinity. One teacher, Emma Virginia Levi, played the organ at Trinity, and other teachers helped in other ways. There are several potential reasons for this decision. First, Lyttleton Street was technically part of a different denominational structure, the Methodist Episcopal Church (South). Second, Mather Academy and Trinity were close partners with students from Mather required to attend Trinity on a regular basis. Third, there is some evidence that Lyttleton Street did not welcome the white Mather teachers when they did attend. Whatever the reason, it is clear that throughout this period whites and blacks worshipped together at Trinity Methodist. Occasionally, whites also worshipped at Mount Moriah Baptist Church. At Mount Moriah’s anniversary service, the congregation invited members of Camden (First) Baptist to participate because of its status as the mother church. Winter tourists also attended. When they did participate, Mount Moriah reserved a section of pews for white worshippers, as occurred at the church’s sixtieth anniversary celebration in 1926.

The Catholic Church also offered some opportunities for African Americans to worship with whites during this period. The antebellum Catholic Church was unwelcoming to blacks and made few efforts at evangelizing blacks. Unlike most other denominations, the Catholic Church showed little interest in missionary work among the freedmen. In the 1866 Plenary Council committed to missionary work among the freedmen, but the mission did not begin until 1871. This missionary activity seems to be “more show than substance” because continuing racism and discrimination led many black Catholics to leave the Church and prevented blacks from joining the Church. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, the Church began presenting itself as less discriminatory than other denominations; however, the lack of a black priesthood along with continued segregation resulted in less black participation than in other churches. Camden did not have a fully functioning Catholic church until 1903 when the Catholic Church sponsored a mission church in Camden. The congregation moved into its present sanctuary on Lyttleton Street in 1914. It does not appear that the Catholic Church had a strong following among Camdenites. Guests and employees at the tourist hotels significantly increased the congregation during the winter. Although it was a small congregation, blacks remember Camden’s Church as “more tolerant” of blacks in services than other denominations.

The Black Church in the Civil Rights Movement

In the South, civil rights and religion have gone hand-in-hand. Black religious experiences had political overtones in the antebellum period, and the oldest black spirituals had civil rights and political messages underneath the religious messages. Many of these spirituals dealt with meeting, planning, and escaping. During the twentieth century, freedom singing became a key element in the modern civil rights movement. Religion and civil rights were also linked

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306 Peacock, *Browning Home and Mather Academy*, 3. Peacock reports that Mather’s early teachers, the Tripp sisters, “would go to the church for white people knowing they would not be invited to sit down.”

307 Inabinet, *His People*, 50.


309 Montgomery, *Under Their Own Vine and Fig Tree*, 82-83.


311 Interview with Althea Truitt, 4 February 2006.
organizationally. For many, civil rights were a moral and spiritual issue more than a political, economic, legal, or sociological one. In the late 1950s and the 1960s, the civil rights movement used the institutional and ethical resources of Southern black churches to build the movement. Black clergy, seminary students, and women of strong religious backgrounds were especially important in the movement. Black religious leadership came mainly from ministers, such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and seminary students, such as James Lawson. Religious women were also extremely important in the movement. For instance Ella Baker considered becoming a medical missionary; instead she became the executive secretary of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the founding mother of Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

These general trends seem to have been characteristic of Camden’s involvement in the civil rights movement. In the 1940s and 1950s, white supremacists burned African-American churches in an effort to maintain the status quo. Area churches hosted events that encouraged African Americans to fight for their freedom. Nearby Hyco Baptist Church sponsored Emancipation Day services, and Trinity Methodist welcomed Fred McCray, the activist editor of the black Columbia newspaper The Lighthouse Informer, to speak. The youth branch of Camden’s NAACP used Trinity Methodist’s back hallway as a meeting space, and Camden ministers were active in challenging segregation.

While the 1950s and 1960s witnessed an increase in racial tensions, some interracial religious activity continued. In 1955, the town’s Christmas parade included an interracial program with both black and white choirs performing. When Mount Moriah suffered an interior fire on 5 January 1956, the congregation raised the $25,000 for rebuilding through contributions from members, black churches, and white churches. Also, throughout this period, Mather’s white teachers continued to worship at Trinity Methodist. The Catholic Church and the Episcopal Church both continued to accept black worshippers.

Between emancipation in 1865 and the civil rights movement in the 1960s, religion remained a central element of southern black life. The church continued to offer solace, a sense of community, and opportunities for leadership. At first segregating churches was a way for newly freed slaves to show their freedom. As Jim Crow laws tightened segregation in the South, the church more and more became the place for blacks to control their own lives without white interference. During the civil rights movement, the church again stepped up to organize African Americans in their fight for equality.

314 “Interview with Dr. Althea Truitt,” 4 February 2006.
317 “1955 Christmas Parade,” Vertical Files, Camden Archives and Museum, Camden, SC.
318 “Interview with Dr. Althea Truitt,” 4 February 2006.
F. The Built Environment

*Forms and Forces*

In the wake of the Civil War, changing economic and political currents shaped the South’s demographics and, in turn, the character of its towns and cities. During the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the general decline of agriculture and growing predominance of industry contributed to an acceleration of urbanization. At the same time, whites gradually constructed a system of racial segregation that directly impacted the physical form of the growing towns.

During the Reconstruction era, African Americans enjoyed unprecedented choices in their places of residence, employment, and community life. Significant numbers of African Americans moved from the countryside into cities and towns. Urban living offered blacks non-agricultural employment, more opportunities to organize their own businesses and community institutions such as churches, schools, and mutual aid societies, and a measure of collective protection from white violence. At first, residential patterns were not so different from prewar days, when free blacks, slaves, and whites had lived in close proximity to each other. As more African Americans moved into town, they tended to settle in spaces that whites found undesirable, such as flood-prone bottomlands and vacant lots on the outskirts.

For African Americans in Kershaw County, a natural destination was Camden. Between 1870 and 1910, the town’s black population more than tripled to approximately 1,800. For the first time, blacks constituted the majority not only in the county, but in Camden as well. During the late 1910s and the 1920s, the growing agricultural crisis shifted the balance again. Increasing numbers of blacks in Camden and Kershaw County left the state altogether, while impoverished whites from the countryside moved into town seeking factory work. By the advent of World

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War II, the black majority in Kershaw County had decreased, and whites had regained the majority in Camden.\(^{321}\)

Within this context of migration, the racial policies of South Carolina’s government shaped the development of cities and towns. After the end of Reconstruction in 1877, the state’s white leaders sought new forms of control over African Americans. They gradually developed a legal code designed to severely curtail black civil rights and to maximize the physical separation of the races in public spaces. In 1879 the General Assembly passed a law to prohibit interracial marriage, and in 1889 it eliminated the Reconstruction legislation that protected African-American political participation. In 1895 a new constitution mandated segregation in the state’s public school system. It was followed by a series of laws to impose segregation in such spaces as textile mills and factories, hospitals, recreation facilities, and public transportation. By the turn of the twentieth century, Jim Crow was the law of the land.\(^{322}\)

**Segregation in Camden: A Snapshot in 1941**

The 1941 Camden city directory is an invaluable surviving source for reconstructing what life was like for black Camdenites under Jim Crow. This precursor to the modern telephone directory is a complete annual listing of residences and businesses, by alphabetical order and by street, including the occupation of many individuals. African-American residences and businesses are clearly marked ‘C’ for “colored.” Data from the city directory, combined with information from interviews, maps, and newspapers, provide a unique snapshot of black Camden in 1941.

Racial segregation, both legal and customary, directly shaped the growth of Camden. Although residential neighborhoods were not the subject of state or local segregation laws, the availability of land and financing did confine African Americans to specific parts of town. In 1941, a number of predominately African-American neighborhoods existed in Camden, covering much of the city’s southern and western sides.\(^{323}\) These areas included the western edge of town along Campbell Street; across Gordon Street in the area called “the other side of the tracks;” the entire southern part of town below Rutledge Street; and Monroe Boykin Park on the northern edge of town.

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\(^{323}\) Historic Property Associates Inc., *Historic Resources Survey*, 24, 32.
Each African-American neighborhood maintained a distinct identity. In some cases, residents and their families remained on the same property or at least within the same neighborhood for generations.\textsuperscript{324} Campbell Street included many of Camden’s black professionals.\textsuperscript{325} Monroe Boykin Park, built in 1912, was a neighborhood of modest homes on land given by the Chesnut family after Emancipation to their former slave, Monroe Boykin.\textsuperscript{326} The largest concentration of black residences was on the south side of town below Rutledge Street. The area was prone to flooding, and whites had gradually abandoned it after a malaria epidemic of 1816. Many of the houses around York Street dated to Reconstruction, when blacks had begun filling in the spaces between the area’s grand antebellum white homes.\textsuperscript{327} No matter

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Aerial_View_of_Broad_Street_ca_1930s}
\caption{\textit{Aerial View of Broad Street, ca. 1930s}}
\end{figure}

Many African Americans relocating to Camden’s city limits from the country moved into shotgun houses, constructed of wood and very close together. Pictured are some of those houses (lower portion of photograph) situated very close to Broad Street, the heart of Camden’s business district. Permission of \textit{S.C. Postcards, VIII, Camden}, by Howard Woody and Davie Beard.

\textsuperscript{324} Interview with Dr. Althea Truitt, 4 February 2004; Interview with Leila Salmond, 14 February 2006; and Interview with Dr. Daisy Alexander, Mary Sue Trusedale, and Bettye Lewis, 7 February 2006.
\textsuperscript{325} Interview with Charles and Gladys Wood, 14 February 2006.
\textsuperscript{326} The 3 May 1912 issue of the \textit{Camden Chronicle}, Camden, advertised a “Grand Auction” in which the Wynona Realty Company was selling “75 Fine Residence Lots to Colored People” on Tuesday, 7 May, at 11:00 am. During the sale a brass band was to play and a free lot was to be given away (aside from the one promised for school purposes). On the day of the auction Wynona Realty even offered transportation to Monroe Boykin from the Camden Hotel.
\textsuperscript{327} Interview with Glen and Joan Inabinet, 17 February 2006.
their origins or social composition, African-American residential areas shared similar physical features. In 1921, the *Camden Chronicle* reported of black residents complaining that “the streets were in bad condition and improvement in many ways [was] much needed.” By the early 1940s, conditions were little improved; roads went unpaved and services such as plumbing and electricity were inadequate at best. In fact, black neighborhoods just behind the storefronts of Broad Street still had a decidedly rural appearance.

Segregation and discrimination also spurred the development of black entrepreneurship, most of which catered to black customers. In many larger towns and cities across the South, a “Negro Main Street” became the heart of black social and economic life. In Camden, a robust black business district centered around the western end of Rutledge Street and the southern end of Broad Street. In 1941, the area boasted an impressive variety of stores. There were several grocery stores, including Florence Price’s store on the ground floor of her home at 750 Broad Street, and Hunter Dibble’s at 412 York Street. Camden’s black business district housed several beauty salons and barbershops, among them Lu Bell’s beauty salon at 903 Broad Street and the Central Barbershop at 1047 Broad Street. Abraham Jones ran a shoe repair store, the Red Boot Shop, at 619 Rutledge Street. The black business district also contained a number of drug stores and funeral homes. Samuel W. James’ blacksmith shop on Arthur Lane, an alley off Market Street, serviced both black and white clientele. Other black businesses were scattered throughout the town.

In addition to shaping broad residential and commercial patterns, segregation also influenced Camden’s buildings and public spaces. Either through new construction or the adaptation of existing structures, by 1941 segregation had taken on concrete form in Camden. Across the South, segregated spaces fell into four broad (and sometimes overlapping) categories: exclusive spaces, partitioned spaces, duplicative spaces, and alternative spaces. Exclusive spaces were those from which either blacks or whites were prohibited, either by law or by custom. An example of an exclusive space in Camden was the white Carnegie Public Library on Broad Street (now the Camden Archives and Museum). Partitioned spaces were those in which segregation was maintained within the same facility. Examples of spaces with fixed partitions in Camden were the Seaboard Railroad Station on Gordon Street, with separate waiting rooms for blacks and whites; and Frances Hart’s restaurant on Broad Street, a black-owned establishment which served mostly black patrons but included a separate seating area for whites.

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328 *Camden Chronicle*, Camden, 21 October 1921.
329 Interview with Ruby Minton and Vivian Metze, 3 February 2006; Interview with Dr. Daisy Alexander, Mary Sue Trusedale, and Bettye Lewis, 7 February 2006; Interview with Leila Salmond, 14 February 2006; and Interview with James McGirt, 27 January 2006.
332 Information found in the 1941 *Camden City Directory* (unpublished data compiled by McKenzie Kubly). All subsequent references to business addresses come from this source.
333 Interview with Dr. Althea Truitt, 4 February 2004; and 1941 *Camden City Directory*.
335 Interview with Johnny Williams, 8 February 2006; Interview with James McGirt, 27 January 2006.
Duplicative spaces were ones maintained by whites to provide separate facilities for blacks. Examples of duplicative spaces in Camden were the black branch library on DeKalb Street (now the police station), and Jackson School.336 Blacks created alternative spaces in order to minimize the indignities of segregation or to provide services denied by the white population. Examples of alternative spaces in Camden include black churches and doctors’ offices, as well as Mather Academy.

Many white-owned businesses achieved segregation through partitioning. For instance, JC Penny and Belks, two popular department stores on Broad Street, allowed blacks to shop alongside whites but had segregated dressing rooms.337 Other retail shops practiced a kind of behavioral partitioning. Some clothing stores would not allow blacks to try on merchandise at all. In order to try clothes on at Sam Karesh’s fine clothing store on Broad Street, African-American women had to take them home.338 The movie theater, located on the corner of Broad and DeKalb Streets (formerly the Opera House), had a balcony for black patrons.

In 1941, segregation profoundly impacted the medical services available to Camden’s

336 Interview with Carl and Mollye Robinson, 27 January 2006.
337 Interview with Dr. Althea Truitt, 4 February 2004.
338 Interview with Dr. Daisy Alexander, 7 February 2006; Interview with Carl and Mollye Robinson, 27 January 2006; and Interview with Dr. Althea Truitt, 4 February 2004.
black community. The Camden Hospital enforced segregation through partitioning. Unlike the larger city of Columbia, Camden did not plan for a separate black hospital. ³³⁹ Instead, Camden Hospital separated the races within the same facility, providing different entrances and waiting rooms. One resident compared the black wing of the hospital to an army barracks. He recalled once having to wait at the hospital with a black doctor for an extended period of time in order to gain access to necessary equipment. Since ambulances did not serve African Americans, black funeral directors often offered their hearses as an alternative mode of transportation in emergencies. White doctors who saw black patients partitioned their offices in a manner similar to the hospital with separate waiting rooms, and some dentists even went so far as to provide separate chairs for blacks and whites. ³⁴⁰

![Old Camden Hospital, ca. 1910s](image)

**Figure 30. Old Camden Hospital, ca. 1910s**

During Jim Crow, Camden Hospital served both the black and white communities, implementing segregation via architectural partitioning. The hospital provided separate entrances, waiting rooms, and equipment for the races. Courtesy of South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC.

At this point in time, segregation also affected Camden’s recreation space and activities. Black Camdenites recognized that Monument Square, Hampton Park, and Rectory Park fell under the umbrella of white recreation space. Boykin Park near the Monroe Boykin neighborhood, on the other hand, remained a black recreation space. ³⁴¹ It was not until twenty-years after 1941 that a newly constructed African-American park opened its gates. Pickett-Thomas Park provided a twenty-acre lake for fishing and swimming, along with a concession stand, a bathhouse, and restrooms. However, much like African-American residential areas, roads leading to and from the park lacked pavement and adequate lighting. ³⁴² Drug stores with jukeboxes and soda fountains, such as Whitaker’s, provided Camden’s black youth with a place to hang out. A teen canteen on Campbell Street, provided another place for adolescents to play.

³⁴⁰ Interview with Leila Salmond, 14 February 2006; Interview with James McGirt, 27 January 2006; Interview with Perry Palmer and Elsie Taylor-Goins, 10 February 2006; and Interview with Dr. Althea Truitt, 4 February 2004.
³⁴¹ Interview with Dr. Althea Truitt, 4 February 2004. Boykin Park did not become part of the Monroe Boykin neighborhood (Kirkwood) until its annexation by Camden City Council on 26 December 1967.
games, read books, and drink soda. The skating rink, located across the street from the white Camden High School, excluded blacks altogether, leaving black children to skate on the sidewalks or on Chesnut Street—one of the few paved roads in a mostly black neighborhood.

![Image](image.png)

**Figure 31. The Price House, ca. 1920s**

Owned by a local African-American family, the Price House doubled as a family dwelling and general store. Permission of *S.C. Postcards, VIII, Camden*, by Howard Woody and Davie Beard.

Reconstructing black Camden in 1941 testifies to the degree of intelligence and fortitude with which Camden’s African-American population navigated segregation. From the end of the Civil War to the repeal of Jim Crow, African Americans built their lives around ever-changing social and physical landscapes. In forming their own residential neighborhoods, business district, and community spaces, Camden’s black residents also established an important place for themselves in local history.

**Associated Sites**

1941 Camden Hospital Site, 1800 Fair Street. Old Camden Hospital is an excellent example of segregation via architectural partitioning. The hospital provided separate entrances and waiting spaces for their black and white patients. Many black Camdenites recall the inferior state of hospital spaces designated for African American use.

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344 Interview with Frankie Hull, 8 February 2006; and Interview with James McGirt, 27 January 2006.
Francis Hart’s Café, 923 Broad Street. Frances Hart utilized architectural partitioning to enforce segregation. Catering largely to a black clientele, this restaurant also included a curtained area where whites dined separately from black customers.

Pickett-Thomas Golf Course & N.R. Goodale State Park, 650 Park Road. Designated solely for use by African Americans in 1961, Pickett-Thomas Park was a recreation space that included such amenities as swimming and a concession stand.

Seaboard Railway Depot, Gordon Street. No longer in use, the Seaboard Railway Depot was also a segregated space.