



Revised 10/14/2024

**Title:** Profiles of African American Montanans, by Ellen Baumler, Interpretive Historian, Montana Historical Society

**Grade Level:** 4th-8th grades

**Subject(s):** Social Studies/Montana State History

**Duration:** One Fifty-Minute Class Period

**Description:** This PowerPoint lesson complements, but does not duplicate, the model fourth and eighth grade lesson plans created as part of the Montana Historical Society's [African Americans in Montana Heritage Resources](#) project (visit the [For Teachers](#) page and scroll to the bottom to access the model curriculums.)

**Goals:** To introduce students to members of Montana's diverse and long-standing African American population.

**Objectives:** Students will recognize that:

- Montana is made up of many different ethnic groups.
- African-American Montanans lived in many parts of the state and pursued many different professions.
- In Montana, African Americans found both prejudice and opportunity.

**Content Standards Addressed:**

- **SS.H.4.3.** Explain how Montana has changed over time given its cultural diversity and how this history impacts the present.
- **SS.H.6-8.5.** Explain how Montana has changed over time and how this history impacts the present.

**Materials:**

PowerPoint (which you can download from the following link:

[https://mhs.mt.gov/shpo/AfricanAmericans/AfAm\\_docs/ProfilesofAfricanAmericanMontanans.ppt](https://mhs.mt.gov/shpo/AfricanAmericans/AfAm_docs/ProfilesofAfricanAmericanMontanans.ppt)) and script, below.

Laptop and projector

**Procedure:** Print the PowerPoint script by printing pages 3 through 12 of this document.

Review the script and PowerPoint before presenting. Slides 47-49 may not be appropriate for class viewing and can be removed prior to presentation.

Before beginning the PowerPoint, engage your class with the introductory exercise. Then present the PowerPoint.

**Special Comments:** This PowerPoint offers an introduction to some of Montana's African American citizens. It does not offer a thorough examination of Montanans' experiences with racism or Montana's civil rights movement.

Teachers may wish to extend this presentation by using one of the Society's model lesson plans on Montana African American history:

- [http://mhs.mt.gov/Shpo/AfricanAmericans/AfAm\\_docs/AfrAmerCurLessonPlans4th.pdf](http://mhs.mt.gov/Shpo/AfricanAmericans/AfAm_docs/AfrAmerCurLessonPlans4th.pdf)
- [http://mhs.mt.gov/Shpo/AfricanAmericans/AfAm\\_docs/AfrAmerCurLessonPlan8th.pdf](http://mhs.mt.gov/Shpo/AfricanAmericans/AfAm_docs/AfrAmerCurLessonPlan8th.pdf)

Teachers may also find this list of “Dos and Don’ts of Teaching Black History,” from Teaching Tolerance, of use: <http://www.tolerance.org/activity/dos-and-donts-teaching-black-history>.

**Introduction:** Ask your students, “Why do you think African Americans came to Montana?” (Possible Answer: They came for many different reasons. Like their white counterparts, many came seeking new opportunities.)

Ask: “What did they do when they got here?” Then tell students that this presentation will provide a glimpse into the lives of a few of the many African American individuals who lived in Montana and contributed to its history.

**Present PowerPoint** (script below).

**Culminating Activity:** Lead your students in discussion. Possible questions may include the following.

1. This presentation was just an introduction to African American Montanans and to Montana's African American history. What, or who, would you be interested in knowing more about?
2. Many of the people presented here were “firsts,” or “onlys”—from York, the only African American on the Lewis and Clark Expedition, and Sarah Bickford, the first black woman to own a utility to Mary Field, one of only two women in the nation who drove a mail route. How might it have felt to be a first?
3. How might it feel today to be a member of the African-American community in Montana?
4. What can students do to make sure everyone feels welcome and a part of the overall community?

## POWERPOINT SCRIPT

**[Slide 1: Title slide]** African-Americans have made indelible marks on our state and thus contributed significantly to Montana's diverse heritage.

**[Slide 2: Population Chart]** For historical perspective, the population in Helena in 1870 was about 3,000. The census noted that 600 residents were Chinese, and 71 were black. By comparison, you can see from these statistics that Montana's African-American population has always been relatively small. Despite the small numbers, this ethnic group has long been a significant presence in our state.

The history of this minority group on the frontier, however, has been largely overlooked. This is partly because a lack of written records has made the historian's task difficult. Newspapers, for example, rarely recorded anything but notorious or infamous items relating to minorities. **[Ask: Why do you think that was?]** But it's also partly because few have sought out these stories. They do exist! This program will share the stories of some of our well-known black Montanans and some whose stories are not so well known. So let's begin with...

**[Slide 3: “Clark on the Columbia”]** ... York, who was likely the first African American to set foot on what would become Montana. York accompanied the Lewis and Clark Expedition in 1805 and 1806 across Montana and back. York was William Clark's slave, but according to journal entries, he was a valued member of the group and an equal among the other men. York is portrayed in the work of C. M. Russell here as part of the Expedition. ...

**[Slide 4: “York”]** ... and here in a Mandan lodge. York was the first black person Native Americans had ever seen, and they tried to rub the black off his skin.

**[Slide 5: “Yorks Islands”]** That Clark valued York is especially evident in his naming a geographic feature after him. Even today, Yorks Islands are remembered and honored as a fishing access near Townsend.

**[Slide 6: James Beckwourth]** A little after Lewis and Clark's historic trek across Montana, James Beckwourth worked as a trapper for the American Fur Company in the 1820s and was adopted into the Crow tribe. The Crow gave him the name Medicine Calf. He left as his legacy a valuable description of the Montana wilderness, the fur trading industry, and Fort Cass—the first Crow trading post established by the American Fur Company in 1832.

**[Slide 7: Isaiah Dorman]** Nothing is known of Isaiah Dorman's birth or childhood. He spent much of his adult life on the plains involved in trading on the Missouri River. He had lived with the Sioux, spoke their language fluently, and knew their customs well. First hired as Army courier in 1865, he carried the Army payroll, and in 1871 he served as the guide and escort for Northern Pacific Railroad surveyors as they scouted the route the railroad would later take through Montana. Dorman then became post interpreter at Fort Rice. General George Custer requested his services as U.S. Army interpreter and Dorman fell with him at the Battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876.

**[Slide 8: Isaiah Dorman]** Isaiah Dorman was probably the only African American to die in that battle. One story goes that Sitting Bull found Dorman on the battlefield, severely wounded and dying. The famous chief gave Dorman water in his personal horn drinking cup and said to his

companions, “This is the black white man. He used to be one of us.” In what was likely a sign of respect, Dorman’s body was not desecrated, even though some of the bodies of Custer’s other men were. Dorman was buried on the battlefield with the other fallen soldiers.

**[Slide 9: Samuel Lewis]** Samuel Lewis hailed from the West Indies and was a musician, sleight-of-hand expert, and barber. He came to Montana with the gold rush, first to Virginia City in 1863, to Helena in 1864, and then settled in Bozeman in 1868 where he set up a barber shop. Lewis became a highly successful businessman, operating his barber shop and bathing parlors where hot baths were a real luxury. He owned much property and built one of the town’s finest homes, pictured here (lower left) in 1885 along with some of his other properties.

**[Slide 10: Samuel Lewis House]** Lewis’s house, listed in the National Register of Historic Places, is a Bozeman landmark.

**[Slide 11: Lewis House Interior]** With the fortune he made in Montana, Lewis financed the education of his sister, Edmonia, sending her to Boston and abroad to Paris, France, and Florence, Italy, where she became a sculptress of world renown.

**[Slide 12: Edmonia Lewis, *Forever Free*]** Edmonia was the first black sculptor to celebrate Emancipation. Her *Forever Free*, completed in 1868, celebrates the heritage and freedom of African Americans.

**[Slide 13: Sarah Bickford]** Sarah Bickford triumphed over the worst kind of adversity to become one of Montana’s pioneer businesswomen. Born into slavery in Tennessee, her parents were sold and she never saw them again. Upon Emancipation, Sarah went to live with an aunt. At 15, she came west by covered wagon with the John L. Murphy family. Murphy was headed to Virginia City to serve a term as Chief Justice of the Territorial Supreme Court. The Murphys, however, stayed only a brief time and returned East. Sarah remained. She worked as a hotel chambermaid and soon married miner William Brown. They had 3 children, but by 1880, two of her children and her husband had died. Her oldest daughter, Eva, lived to age nine, and then she also died.

Sarah started over. She married Stephen Bickford, a white miner who was the owner of Virginia City’s water company. The Bickfords had four children. As the children grew up, Sarah often told them stories of her other family. Stephen died in 1900. Sarah inherited the water company and learned to run it. There were a number of mixed marriages like the Bickfords’ in 19<sup>th</sup> century Montana. However, in 1909, the Montana legislature passed a law making mixed-race marriages illegal. It was not rescinded until 1953.

**[Slide 14: Hangman’s Building]** This Virginia City building is well known for the quintuple hanging that occurred on its crossbeam in 1865, but it is also famous as the office of the Virginia City Water Company. Sarah Bickford did business here from 1900 to her death in 1931 and was the only black woman in the nation to own a utility.

**[Slide 15: Coggswell/Taylor Cabins]** Sarah Bickford is sometimes touted as Virginia City’s first black businesswoman. While her contribution is great, the claim is probably not true. Consider sisters Minerva Coggswell and Parthenia Sneed. The two were also born into slavery. With emancipation and the gold rushes in Montana, the two came west from Missouri. Photos of Virginia

City from the 1880s show loads of laundry hanging at the back of this property. Even before this, we know that ...

**[Slide 16: Coggswell/Sneed advertisement]** ...the sisters operated this restaurant on Wallace Street. Parthenia married and moved to Butte, but Minerva continued to take in laundry and boarders and may have run a restaurant out of her cabins. When she died in 1894, Jack Taylor bought the property from her estate. Taylor was a longtime African American resident of Virginia City who had boarded at Minerva's since the early days. He served in the Union Army during the Civil War and arrived at Virginia City in 1866 as a teamster. He eventually owned considerable property including land and livestock.

**[Slide 17: Jack Taylor lawsuit]** In 1906, Taylor figured in a well-publicized trial. He accused Thomas Thexton, son of a prominent Virginia City blacksmith, of horse rustling. To prove his point, he had one of the elderly horses killed and the prosecution brought in the branded hide as evidence. The jury deliberated 20 hours before delivering a guilty verdict. Thexton served a year in prison at Deer Lodge.

Years later, Sarah Bickford cared for Taylor in his last illness in 1926, and then bought his property from the estate. Jack Taylor's tombstone in Hillside Cemetery above Virginia City recalls a life of honest labor. It reads: "As long as the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest will not cease."

**[Slide 18: Mary Fields with dog and rifle]** Mary Fields was a colorful personality, well-known to old-timers around Cascade, and she is especially interesting because in a time when women seldom enjoyed much freedom, Mary held her own and lived her own way in a world where the odds were stacked against her. She dressed as she pleased in a man's cap and boots, and packed a revolver under her apron. At six feet tall and 200 pounds, she was said to be a match for any man in Montana Territory. She had a standing bet that she could knock out any man with one punch. By order of the mayor of Cascade, she was the only woman of reputable character in the town allowed to drink in the local bar, and while she enjoyed that privilege, she never drank to excess. She smoked cigars in public and like to argue politics.

Mary Fields was born a slave in Tennessee. After the Civil War she moved to Mississippi where she got a job emptying chamber pots into the Mississippi River aboard the steamboat *Robert E. Lee*.

**[Slide 19: St. Peter's Mission]** In 1872, Mary worked for a private family and accompanied her employer's children to Toledo, Ohio to attend school at the Ursuline convent. When they finished school, Mary stayed on with Mother Superior Amadeus, and there Mary learned to read. Mother Amadeus left Ohio in 1884 to take charge of St. Peter's Convent near Cascade, Montana. When Mother Amadeus became gravely ill with pneumonia, Mary rushed to Montana, nursed her back to health, and remained at St. Peter's. She drove the stage back and forth from the train station with passengers and supplies. She tended the mission gardens, raised chickens and did the laundry. She also fought with her fists, became a crack shot with a revolver and rifle, and smoked her cigars. Mary got into a heated debate with a rancher, using a rock and the rancher's head to make her point. Bishop John Brondel was appalled and ordered the sisters to dismiss her. Mother Amadeus moved Mary to nearby Cascade and secured the mail route between Cascade and the convent for her.

**[Slide 20: Mary with gun]** For the next eight years, Mary delivered the mail. She was the second

woman in the U.S. to manage a mail route.

**[Slide 21: Russell, “A Quiet Day in Cascade”]** Mary gave up her mail route at age 70 and ran several restaurants, but she was so good hearted that she gave away the money she made. Artist C. M. Russell featured Mary in a pen and ink drawing which shows a hog knocking her down and spilling a basket of eggs. Mary claimed the incident never happened, but Russell maintained that the drawing was a composite of real events that happened in Cascade at different times. Actor Gary Cooper, who knew Mary when she babysat him as a small boy, wrote about her in a story published in *Ebony* magazine in 1959.

**[Slide 22: Mary portrait]** Mary babysat scores of children and spent most of what she made buying treats for them. In 1912, when her home and laundry business burned down, the townspeople all gathered to build her a new house. She died in 1914.

**[Slide 23: Tombstone]** Her simple grave lies in the small cemetery alongside the road between Cascade and St Peter’s Mission she had traveled so many times during her life.

**[Slide 24: Millie Ringold]** Millie Ringold was born a slave in Virginia in 1845. After emancipation, she traveled to Fort Benton as the nurse and servant of a U.S. Army general. She remained in Fort Benton and ran a boardinghouse. Gold discoveries in the Judith Basin compelled Millie to sell her boardinghouse and buy two condemned army mules, provisions, and whiskey and set out for Yogo City in 1878. She set up a hotel, restaurant and saloon and for a couple of years mined the miners.

Twenty years later, there was no gold left, but white linens still adorned the tables in her restaurant. Miners claimed Mille made the most beautiful music with mouth harps, band saws, washboards, and dishpans. They said that she could make more music with an empty 5-gallon can than most people could playing a piano. But Millie’s burst of prosperity ended and she eked out less than a meager living raising a few chickens and turkeys. She never lost hope that the town would rebound. She died destitute in 1906 and was buried in a piano crate in the cemetery at Utica.

**[Slide 25: Soldiers at Fort Shaw]** The black military troops known as Buffalo Soldiers served at many of Montana’s forts including Fort Missoula, Fort Assinniboine, and Fort Shaw.

**[Slide 26: Saddle Patent]** William D. Davis was a Buffalo Soldier stationed at Fort Assinniboine when he patented an improvement to the military saddles used by the cavalry of the time. His patent, issued in 1896, added springs to the seat and stirrups. Davis saddles, although never standard army issue, provided a smoother ride for long hours in the saddle.

**[Slide 27: 10th Cavalry, G Company]** Horace W. Bivins, born in Virginia of free ancestry, served in the 10th Cavalry, G Company. Formally educated at Hampton Agricultural Institute and Wayland Seminary, Bivins enlisted in the 10th Cavalry in 1887 under an order to recruit educated men of color as non-commissioned officers. He served in Arizona in Indian campaigns against Geronimo and kept telegraph lines guarded and in good repair.

**[Slide 28: Horace Bivins equipped for service]** When the 10th Cavalry was reassigned to Montana, Bivins and his fellow soldiers, newly arrived at Billings from the hot desert, marched to Fort Custer in a blizzard. Bivins made such a name for himself as a marksman at Fort Custer that Buffalo Bill Cody sought him out. He offered Bivins all expenses and \$100 a month to travel with

his show, but Bivins preferred the military life and refused the offer.

Bivins served in both Cuba and the Philippines during the Spanish-American War. At the attack on San Juan Hill, Bivins, then a sergeant, operated one of the heavy Hotchkiss guns alone. Each shot rebounded six to eight feet, and Bivins had to reposition and reload each time. After firing a number of times, the gun was no longer serviceable and he took up a carbine and went among Colonel Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders, fighting along with them until the battle was over.

Bivins retired in 1913 but he reenlisted in 1918 during World War I, sacrificing a tract of irrigated property near Billings and unharvested crops at a loss of \$5,000. "Every man who can be of service to his country at this time should think of his country first and himself second," Bivins said. He retired a second time as captain in 1919 and returned to Billings. In 1925, he received the Silver Star for his actions at Santiago during the battle at San Juan Hill.

Bivins' record for marksmanship stood until the 1970s, and today remains one of the all-time highest. During his 32-year career in the military, Bivins received 32 medals, one for every year of service.

**[Slide 29: Bivins and Booth]** In the book *Under Fire* that Bivins co-authored on the adventures of the 10th Cavalry, he relates a poignant story about his dog, Booth, who saw service with him in Cuba and the Philippines. Booth was an Irish water spaniel that Bivins trained at Fort Custer to retrieve and carry messages. At the start of the Spanish-American War, Booth was tested for service and passed with flying colors. He accompanied the men of the 10th Cavalry to Cuba and to the Philippines.

**[Slide 30: Booth guarding fallen soldier]** During the battle at San Juan Hill in Cuba, Booth guarded the remains of a fallen private until his comrades could recover the body. The dog later went with Bivins to the Philippines and further distinguished himself, but when his master returned to the United States, Booth was not allowed back into the country for fear of contagion. Left in the company of some officers, he disappeared.

**[Slide 31: Fort Missoula Powder House]** Bivins served at numerous Montana forts including Forts Missoula, Custer, and Assinniboine. His signature can be found at the Powder House at Fort Missoula. Captain Bivins studied taxidermy at the University of Minnesota and made a name for himself in Billings after his military retirement practicing that art.

**[Slide 32: Bicycle Corps]** Black buffalo soldiers of the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry stationed at Fort Missoula made up the U.S. Army's only bicycle corps. Dubbed "iron riders," these dedicated soldiers rode their 70-pound iron bicycles a grueling 1,900 miles from Missoula to St. Louis in 1896-1897, testing the feasibility of troops mounted on bicycles. They pedaled over snow-dusted peaks and across the sweltering Great Plains. When they arrived near St. Louis, 1,000 civilian bicyclists rode to meet them and escorted them to town in triumphant celebration of their remarkable feat.

**[Slide 33: Hamilton Census]** In Hamilton in 1900, the US census shows that there were a number of young black teenagers employed as jockeys. These youngsters worked for Marcus Daly's Bitterroot Stock Farm exercising the highly prized blooded race horses Daly cherished above all his possessions.

**[Slide 34: Mary Gordon]** Mary Gordon of White Sulphur Springs was born a slave in Kentucky in 1853. Her husband John was a free person of color who came from Scotland to the US with his employer. A trained chef, he worked as chef and baker in White Sulphur Springs' Higgins House, the town's main hotel. In 1895, he took a job as chef for a Canadian railway and died in a train accident just before the birth of the Gordons' fifth child, Taylor.

Mary took in laundry, provided nursing care for the community, and cooked fine dinners for parties given by the town's elite. Daughter Rose did the serving. The tables were always set with an array of knives and forks, and miners and cattlemen were often at a loss as to what to do with all this silverware. They would ask Mrs. Gordon and she would always tell them to watch the host and do what he or she did. Mrs. Gordon loved to tell how once an old miner, who was a dinner guest at a fancy banquet, drank from his finger bowl.

**[Slide 35: Rose Gordon]** Rose, one of the five Gordon children, wanted desperately to be a doctor. She graduated valedictorian from the local high school in 1903, and had great potential, but never had enough money to go to medical school. Instead she became a physical therapist and practical nurse.

**[Slide 36: Rose's Café business cards]** She also owned a café and was a great cook.

**[Slide 37: Reverse side of card]** She had a great sense of humor, too, as the back of one of her business cards reveals.

**[Slide 38: Taylor Gordon]** The youngest of the five Gordon children was Taylor, who led both a charmed and tragic life. His adventures began when John Ringling—of circus fame—came to town with his chauffeur, John Spencer. Spencer taught Gordon how to be a mechanic, which led to a job as chauffeur and mechanic for the president of the Metropolitan Opera in New York City. Taylor eventually worked as chef for Ringling and traveled with the circus. He quit that to take a very strange job with the federal government, escorting a mental patient to Barbados in the British West Indies. Everything was fine until they arrived in Barbados. The patient insisted that Gordon was the one with the mental illness, and Gordon very nearly ended up an inmate in the same asylum to which he was to deliver his charge.

**[Slide 39: New York/Helena concerts]** Gordon made a name for himself as a talented gospel singer and performed in a popular vaudeville act in the 1920s. He toured Europe with his singing group until the group disbanded, and then he appeared on Broadway in several productions. He also published an autobiography, *Born To Be*. But his career fell apart and during World War II, Gordon worked as a lathe operator at a B-29 factory in New Jersey. In 1947 he suffered a breakdown and spent 12 years in a mental hospital.

**[Slide 40: Taylor Gordon older]** He returned home to White Sulphur Springs in 1959, gave a few Montana concerts and continued his writing, but his only other publication was a history of the Castle, a local landmark built by B. R. Sherman. Taylor Gordon died quietly in 1971. Unlike some other African American Montanans, Gordon did not experience much prejudice and discrimination growing up. In his biography, *Born To Be*, he wrote that although he knew his dark skin made him different, his childhood was very happy, and he was always free to associate with people of all nationalities, creeds, and colors. "The Race Question," said Gordon, "has never been the big ghost

in my life!"

**[Slide 41: Garfield School]** Despite Gordon's positive experience, Montana had a history of segregation. Most churches and social organizations were segregated in Montana Territory. Beginning in 1872, by territorial legislation, so were schools. But financial considerations likely stemming from the small black population ended school segregation by electorate vote in 1882. Butte's Garfield School was one example of an integrated school.

**[Slide 42: African-American Miners]** African-Americans lived in Butte from the town's earliest days and some organized their own mining companies. But racism was prevalent. For example, in 1942, during World War II, white miners refused to work with a battalion of black miner-soldiers who had been sent to Butte to help increase copper production. The 8,000 white miners who walked off the job in protest cited safety issues, even though the soldiers were skilled and experienced miners.

**[Slide 43: St. James African Methodist Episcopal Church]** When African American communities were large enough, churches—as in white communities—provided a focus for social life. In 1888, the St. James African Methodist Episcopal (or AME) Church in Helena organized and by 1894, it had sufficient national prestige to host the annual national convention.

Helena never experienced residential segregation. Whites and blacks lived together in all neighborhoods except the wealthy West Side. Although prejudice was obvious in social segregation, Helena offered its black citizens opportunity. Helena's black community is an important chapter in the urban history of the western frontier. And here, as elsewhere in Montana, are individuals who left important legacies.

**[Slide 44: J. P. Ball]** James Presley Ball was a professional photographer. He and his son, J. P. Ball, Jr., came from Cincinnati in 1887 and set up a studio. They took some odd photos during their decade in Helena as well as some that documented momentous events.

**[Slide 45: Capitol Cornerstone]** They photographed the laying cornerstone of the state capitol and ...

**[Slide 46: Ming's Cook]** They took many photos of immigrants of various ethnic groups, of prominent businessmen, society women, and families.

**[Slide 47: William Biggerstaff]** One record J. P. Ball left us is a bizarre sequence documenting the hanging of William Biggerstaff in Lewis and Clark County in April 1896. This thoughtfully composed portrait, taken sometime before Biggerstaff murdered a popular local prize fighter, is typical of the Balls' work. It shows a prominent, well dressed gentleman with no hint of the horror soon to come.

**[Slide 48: Hanging of Biggerstaff]** The photographer took this grisly photograph with Sheriff Henry Jurgens (right) and the Right Reverend Victor Day (left with his hat removed) flanking Biggerstaff moments after his execution. Biggerstaff is wearing the same coat as in the previous photograph.

**[Slide 49: Coffin]** And here is Biggerstaff, looking strangely peaceful after his violent death. While some might view Biggerstaff's hanging as a miscarriage of justice due to racial bias, perhaps Ball had an entirely different message. Biggerstaff freely admitted his guilt, and he had a fair and impartial trial like any other citizen. Underscoring this point, Ball also documented the execution of a white man with his camera.

**[Slide 50: Dorsey Grocery]** While most Helenans in the black community worked for others, a few had small businesses. Walter Dorsey owned a restaurant and later his grocery was the best on the East Side. After Dorsey died of pneumonia in 1908, Mrs. Dorsey and her daughters ran the store for several more decades.

**[Slide 51: Wise Penny]** Helenans likely remember the Dorseys' 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue grocery in more recent years as the Wise Penny, a second-hand store. The Dorseys, like most African American Montanans, unfortunately left us no written or oral record of their personal experiences as blacks in Montana. One African American who grew up in Helena, however, explains the difficulties he faced in living in two worlds. He was always taught that there was one set of rules when you were in public with whites, and another set of rules at home. This made growing up harder than it was for other kids.

**[Slide 52: Julian Anderson]** One of Helena's best remembered and most beloved characters was Julian Anderson, whose dedicated service to members of the far-famed Montana Club spanned sixty years. No record was kept of his birth in Hamburg, Germany, where his parents had moved as household slaves of a Caroline County, Virginia, family. At the end of the Civil War, when Julian was 6 or 7, the Andersons returned to the United States. They moved west to Denver. Julian later struck out on his own for Laramie, Wyoming, where he learned the trades of baker and confectioner. In the spring of 1887, Julian came to Helena, worked as night clerk at several hotels, and then in 1893 he began employment behind the bar at the Montana Club.

**[Slide 53: Montana Club Ruins]** He was working there 10 years later in 1903 when arson claimed the first club building.

**[Slide 54: Harry Anderson]** Authorities soon discovered that the culprit was none other than 14-year-old Harry Anderson, Julian's son. It turned out that Harry Anderson had set other fires—including one that nearly burned down the St. James AME Church—and he was sent to reform school in Miles City. In deference to his father, however, the cause of the very costly and spectacular Montana Club fire was hardly ever mentioned.

**[Slide 55: Julian Anderson, 1938 tribute]** Julian continued to work at the Montana Club until he retired in 1953. Famous in Helena as "the Master of Mixes," Julian never took a drink himself. He died in 1961 at 102.

**[Slide 56: Federation of Women's Clubs]** The Montana Federation of Colored Women's Clubs organized in the 1920s and was a vibrant, active organization across the state. The Montana black communities were close-knit, enjoying large regional gatherings of several hundred people at a time. They were like family reunions.

**[Slide 57: Octavia Bridgewater]** The entire Bridgewater family was active in these affairs. Daughter Octavia graduated from the Lincoln School of Nursing, NY, one of only two nursing

schools exclusively for African Americans. She returned to Helena in 1930, did private duty nursing, and then joined the Army in 1943 and served during World War II. At this time, the Navy did not accept any black nurses and the Army had a quota of only 56. There were at the time 8,000 black nurses in the U.S. These women realized that if the military situation was not rectified, black nurses could never be integrated into the mainstream medical community.

Nationally through the black press, the women mobilized for their cause. The Army and Navy lifted the boycott against black nurses in 1945. Octavia earned the rank of Captain and returned to Helena to work for St. Peters Hospital for many years. She was always proud that she was part of the national movement.

**[Slide 58: James Crump]** The Crump family has been prominent in Helena for four generations. James served in the Union Army at 14 and was the youngest Civil War veteran in Montana. He hauled freight for Charles Broadwater and owned mines in Marysville, then operated a saloon in Helena and did very well. He was proud to have held the flag at the laying of the Capitol's cornerstone.

**[Slide 59: Clarissa Crump]** James' wife Clarissa Powell Crump was a real Montana pioneer. Born a slave in Virginia, she came west with her owner, Phil Evans. En route to Fort Benton in 1865 on the steamboat *Lily Martin*, she learned of the Emancipation. She made her home in Helena. She and James Crump married in 1869.

**[Slide 60: Pleasant Hour Club]** Clarissa was very involved in social clubs and events. The Crumps' lovely 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue house was home to three generations of the Crump and Howard family. Although it has passed out of the family, the house is still a neighborhood landmark.

**[Slide 61: Grandson Norman Howard]** The Crumps' grandson, Norman Howard, carried on the legacy and preserved the family's history, which he learned by eavesdropping as his grandfather visited with friends. He passed what he learned to his son Ray – a top notch basketball player for UM and a Griz grad who has now returned to Montana in retirement. In an interview in 1979, Norman Howard reflected on what it was like to be black in Montana. He believed that discrimination was tougher for blacks than for Indians. While Montana never had signs for "Whites Only" as in the South, the rules still applied and most blacks found menial employment as waiters, janitors, and hotel workers. Blacks were excluded from restaurants, bars, and barber shops. But as the civil rights movement brought changes for the better, the tightly-knit black communities began to disappear. A lack of job opportunities drew second and third generation blacks elsewhere.

**[Slide 62: Union Bethel Church]** Great Falls' vital African-American community founded the Union Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1890. They built this church in 1916; it is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The congregation swelled in the 1940s with black soldiers stationed at Malmstrom Air Force Base.

In 1952, the Cascade County Community Council appointed the "Inter Racial Committee" to study discrimination against the black airmen, who were not allowed into many Great Falls' businesses. An exception was the far-famed Ozark Club. The jazz club burned in 1962, but until then, it was unique to the state because it employed integrated jazz bands and hosted an inter-racial clientele.

In recent years, the Union Bethel Church has enjoyed another resurgence with black soldiers again stationed at nearby Malmstrom. Membership increased in 1990 from 12 to 108.

**[Slide 63: Alma Jacobs as child]** One prominent Great Falls African-American was Alma Jacobs, who grew up in Lewistown.

**[Slide 64: Alma Jacobs]** In 1957, she was elected the first black president of the Pacific Northwest Library Association. In 1973, she co-founded the Montana Committee for the Humanities, and in 1974 she was appointed Montana's State Librarian.

**[Slide 65: Jacobs memorial]** Alma was instrumental in building the modern Great Falls Public Library and patrons erected this memorial in her honor.

**[Slide 66: Geraldine Travis]** The first women served in the Montana legislature in 1918, but the first African American Montanan to serve was also a woman. Voters elected Geraldine Travis of Great Falls to the House of Representatives in 1973.

**[Slide 67: Nathan Jones]** Montana's black population has made small gains in numbers in recent years. We historians hope that youngsters like Nathan Jones of Great Falls will learn about his own family heritage, explore his roots, those of his community, and pass on what he learns to his own children.

**[Slide 68: African-American Woman, Philipsburg]** It's an honorable history and a legacy worth remembering.