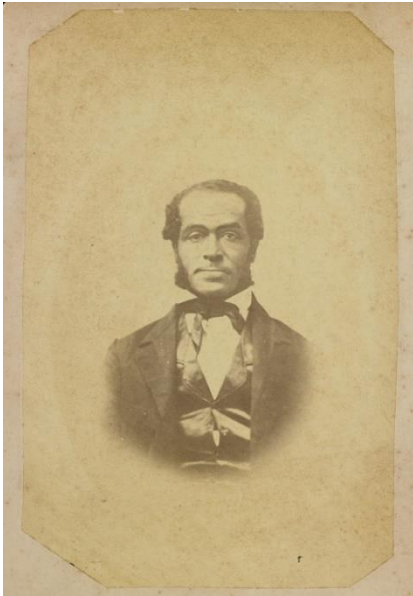


Black History Month: Notable Illinois Residents

1854



Free Frank McWorter (1777 – September 7, 1854) was an American born into slavery who bought his own freedom in Kentucky and in 1836 founded the town of New Philadelphia in Illinois; he was the first African American to found a town, and establish a planned community in the United States. The New Philadelphia Town Site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2005 and designated a National Historic Landmark in 2009. In the late 20th century, a local history group recruited archaeologists to explore the long-abandoned town site. Teams from the University of Maryland, College Park, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, and De Paul University have worked for years on research and excavations, collected data about residents from census and land records, and turned up thousands of artifacts. McWorter descendants donated 11 collected volumes of documentation to the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in February 2008. In addition, the family donated a bronze bust of Frank McWorter by

his great-great-granddaughter Shirley McWorter Moss.

1868

William Fleurville (1807-1868) was a Haitian-born barber and businessman whose shop on Adams Street between Fifth and Sixth streets became a regular meeting place for Springfieldians, including Abraham Lincoln. The spelling of Fleurville's last name is inconsistent; he often used the Haitian/French "Fleurville" in advertisements, for instance, but he signed his famous letter to Lincoln as "Florville," and both William and his wife **Phoebe** are buried — separately, William (a Catholic) at Calvary Cemetery and Phoebe at Oak Ridge Cemetery — under the last name "Florville." (As was common for African Americans at the time, Fleurville also acquired a belittling nickname, "Billy the Barber," which has stuck into the 21st century.) Fleurville, who had lived in Baltimore, New Orleans and St. Louis after leaving Haiti as a child, came to Springfield in 1831. *First Catholic Mass in Sangamon county was held in his home.*

Grandchildren of William and Phoebe Fleurville included **George Richardson**, whose arrest on a false charge of rape ignited the Springfield race riot of 1908, and Col. Otis B. Duncan, the U.S. Army's highest ranking black officer in World War I. Many other descendants of the couple continue to live in the Springfield area.

1897

Mrs. Phoebe Florville Coleman - Published in the Illinois State Register, Springfield, Illinois, on October 14, 1897: "Died, at the home of her daughter, Mrs. Sinnette Richardson, on Wednesday morning, Oct. 13, 1897, of dropsy, Mrs. Phoebe Florville Coleman, widow of **William Florville**, aged 76 years. The deceased was colored and was well known in this city. She was born in Kentucky and has been a resident of this state for the past sixty years. Her husband was a well known barber. She leaves to mourn her loss two children, Mrs. Richardson and William S.

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Florville; one sister, Mrs. Sophia Huggins, four grandchildren, seventeen great grandchildren and three great, great grandchildren. Interment in Oak Ridge cemetery.”

1897 **John Augustus Tolton** (April 1, 1854 – July 9, 1897), baptized Augustine Tolton, was the first Catholic priest in the United States publicly known to be Black. (The Healy brothers, who preceded him, all passed for White.) Tolton was ordained in Rome in 1886. Assigned to the Diocese of Alton (now the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois), Tolton first ministered at his home parish in Quincy, Illinois before opposition from local White Catholics and Black protestants caused discord. Reassigned to Chicago, Tolton led the development and construction of St. Monica's Catholic Church as a Black "national parish," completed in 1893 at 36th and Dearborn Streets on Chicago's South Side. Soon after, he died of a heat stroke at the age of 43 in 1897. Tolton's cause for canonization was opened in 2010, and he was declared Venerable by Pope Francis in June 2019.

1926



Bessie Coleman (January 26, 1892 – April 30, 1926) was an early American civil aviator. She was the first African-American woman and first Native American to hold a pilot license. She earned her license from the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale on June 15, 1921, and was the first Black person to earn an international pilot's license. In 1915, at the age of 23, Coleman moved to Chicago, Illinois, where she lived with her brothers. In Chicago, she worked as a manicurist at the White Sox Barber Shop. There she heard stories of flying during wartime from pilots returning home from World War I. She took a second job as a restaurant manager of a chili parlor to save money in hopes of becoming a pilot. American flight schools of the time admitted neither women nor black people, so Robert S. Abbott, founder and publisher of the Chicago Defender newspaper, encouraged her to study abroad.

1932 **Julius Rosenwald** (August 12, 1862 – January 6, 1932) was an American businessman and philanthropist. He is best known as a part-owner and leader of Sears, Roebuck and Company, and for establishing the Rosenwald Fund, which donated millions in matching funds to promote vocational or technical education. In 1919 he was appointed to the Chicago Commission on Race

A group of members of the Associate Anti-Racist Committee constructed a time line for the history of African-Americans in the United States -- and Illinois in particular. Anne Hilofsky and Doug King, both Associates, were joined by Doug's wife, Pam, Sr. M. Clare, and Molly Parker, a member of SDART. Sources of information include Google, Wikipedia, [The History of Black Catholics in the United States](#) by Cyprian Davis, materials from the Central Illinois Black History Museum, and personal remembrances of the five "elders". All photos are courtesy of the Library of Congress.

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Relations. He was also the principal founder and backer for the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago, to which he gave more than \$5 million and served as president from 1927 to 1932.

- 1937** **Adelbert H. Roberts** - In 1918, Roberts was elected to the Illinois House of Representatives as a Republican. After the Chicago race riot of 1919, Governor Frank Orren Lowden's appointed Roberts to the Chicago Commission on Race Relations created in response to the incident. He was appointed to the Illinois Senate in 1924 to fill a vacancy and elected to the Senate in 1926 and 1930. He was the first black to serve in the Illinois Senate. Died in 1937
- 1969** **Fredrick Allen Hampton Sr.** (August 30, 1948 – December 4, 1969) was an American activist. He came to prominence in Chicago as deputy chairman of the national Black Panther Party and chair of the Illinois chapter. In 1967, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) identified Hampton as a radical threat subverting his activities in Chicago, sowing disinformation among black progressive groups and placing a counterintelligence operative in the local Panthers organization. In December 1969, Hampton was drugged, shot and killed in his bed during a predawn raid at his Chicago apartment by a tactical unit of the Cook County State's Attorney's Office. Law enforcement sprayed more than 90 gunshots throughout the apartment; the occupants fired once. During the raid, Panther Mark Clark was also killed and several others were seriously wounded. In January 1970, the Cook County Coroner held an inquest; the jury concluded that Hampton's and Clark's deaths were justifiable homicides. A civil lawsuit was later filed on behalf of the survivors and the relatives of Hampton and Clark. It was resolved in 1982 by a settlement of \$1.85 million; the U.S. federal government, Cook County, and the City of Chicago, each paid one-third to a group of nine plaintiffs.
- 1969** **Mark Clark** (June 28, 1947 – December 4, 1969) of Peoria, Illinois - was an American activist and member of the Black Panther Party (BPP). He was killed on December 4, 1969 with Fred Hampton, state chairman of the Black Panthers, during a Chicago police predawn raid. In January 1970, a coroner's jury held an inquest and ruled the deaths of Clark and Hampton to be justifiable homicide. Survivors and the relatives of Clark and Hampton filed a wrongful death lawsuit against the City of Chicago, Cook County, and the federal government (specifically FBI). It was settled in November 1982, with each entity paying \$616,333 to a group of nine plaintiffs.

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2000 **Gwendolyn Elizabeth Brooks (1917-2000)**, an American poet, author, and teacher. Her work often dealt with the personal celebrations and struggles of ordinary people in her community. She won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry on May 1, 1950, for *Annie Allen*, making her the first African American to receive a Pulitzer Prize. Throughout her prolific writing career, Brooks received many more honors. A lifelong resident of Chicago, she was appointed Poet Laureate of Illinois in 1968, a position she held until her death 32 years later. She was also named the U.S. Poet Laureate for the 1985–86 term. In 1976, she became the first African American woman inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters.



Carol Elizabeth Moseley Braun, also sometimes Moseley-Braun (born August 16, 1947), is a former U.S. Senator, an American diplomat, politician, and lawyer who represented Illinois in the United States Senate from 1993 to 1999. Following her Senate tenure, Moseley Braun served as the United States Ambassador to New Zealand and Samoa from 1999 to 2001. She was a candidate for the Democratic nomination in the 2004 U.S. presidential election; she withdrew from the race prior to the Iowa caucuses. Moseley Braun was the first African-American woman elected to the U.S. Senate, the first African-American U.S. Senator from the Democratic Party, the first woman to defeat an incumbent U.S. Senator in an election, and the first female U.S. Senator from Illinois.

Barack Hussein Obama II (born August 4, 1961) is an American politician who served as the 44th president of the United States from 2009 to 2017. A member of the Democratic Party, Obama was the first African-American president of the United States. He previously served as a U.S. senator from Illinois from 2005 to 2008 and as an Illinois state senator from 1997 to 2004, and previously worked as a civil rights lawyer before entering politics. He was the first black president of the Harvard Law Review. After graduating, he became a civil rights attorney and an academic, teaching constitutional law at the University of Chicago Law School from 1992 to 2004. Turning to elective politics, he represented the 13th district in the Illinois Senate from 1997 until 2004. In 2008 Obama was elected over Republican nominee John McCain in the presidential election and was inaugurated on January 20, 2009. Nine months later, he was named the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize laureate. He won re-election by defeating Republican opponent Mitt Romney, and was sworn in for a second term on January 20, 2013. As the first person of color elected president, Obama faced racist sentiments and was the target of numerous conspiracy theories. Since leaving office, Obama has remained active in Democratic politics.

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Michelle LaVaughn Robinson Obama (born January 17, 1964) is an American attorney and author who served as first lady of the United States from 2009 to 2017. She was the first African-American woman to serve in this position. She is married to former President Barack Obama. Raised on the South Side of Chicago, Obama is a graduate of Princeton University and Harvard Law School. In her early legal career, she worked at the law firm Sidley Austin. She subsequently worked in nonprofits and as the associate dean of Student Services at the University of Chicago as well as the vice president for Community and External Affairs of the University of Chicago Medical Center. Michelle campaigned for her husband's presidential bid throughout 2007 and 2008, delivering a keynote address at the 2008 Democratic National Convention. As first lady, she served as a role model for women and worked as an advocate for poverty awareness, education, nutrition, physical activity, and healthy eating. She supported American designers and was considered a fashion icon. After her husband's presidency, Obama's influence has remained high. In 2020, Obama topped Gallup's poll of the most admired woman in America for the third year running. Michelle married Barack in 1992, and together they have two daughters.



Bobby Lee Rush (born November 23, 1946) is an American politician, activist and pastor who served as the U.S. representative for Illinois's 1st congressional district for three decades. A civil rights activist during the 1960s, Rush co-founded the Illinois chapter of the Black Panther Party. Rush was first elected to Congress in 1992. He has since won consecutive reelections. His district was originally principally on the South Side of Chicago, with a population from 2003 to early 2013 that was 65% African-American, a higher proportion than any other congressional district. In 2011 the Illinois General Assembly redistricted this area after the 2010 census. Although still minority-majority, since early 2013 it is 51.3% African American, 36.1% White, 9.8% Hispanic, and 2% Asian. A member of the Democratic Party, Rush is the only politician to have defeated Barack Obama in an election, which he did in the 2000 Democratic primary for Illinois's 1st congressional district. On January 3, 2022, Rush announced that he was retiring from Congress.

Barbara Taylor Bowman (born October 30, 1928) is an American [early childhood education](#) expert/advocate, professor, and author. Her areas of expertise include early childhood care/education, educational equity for minority and low-income children, as well as [intergenerational](#) family support and roles. She has served on several boards and was the co-founder of [Erikson Institute](#), where she pioneered the teaching of early childhood education and administration. Bowman was born and raised on the South Side of Chicago, Illinois, the daughter of Laura Dorothy Vaughn (née Jennings) and Robert Rochon Taylor, who was on the board of the Chicago Housing Authority. Her grandfather was architect Robert Robinson Taylor. Her parents were African-American. After receiving a B.A. degree from Sarah Lawrence College, she began teaching at the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools' nursery school, while simultaneously earning her M.A. degree in education from the University of Chicago in 1952.

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Valerie June Jarrett (née Bowman; born November 14, 1956) is an American businesswoman and former government official. She currently serves as the Chief Executive Officer of the Obama Foundation. She previously served as the senior advisor to U.S. President Barack Obama and assistant to the president for public engagement and intergovernmental affairs from 2009 to 2017. Before that, she served as a co-chair of the Obama–Biden Transition Project. She has been the CEO of the Obama Foundation since October 2021.