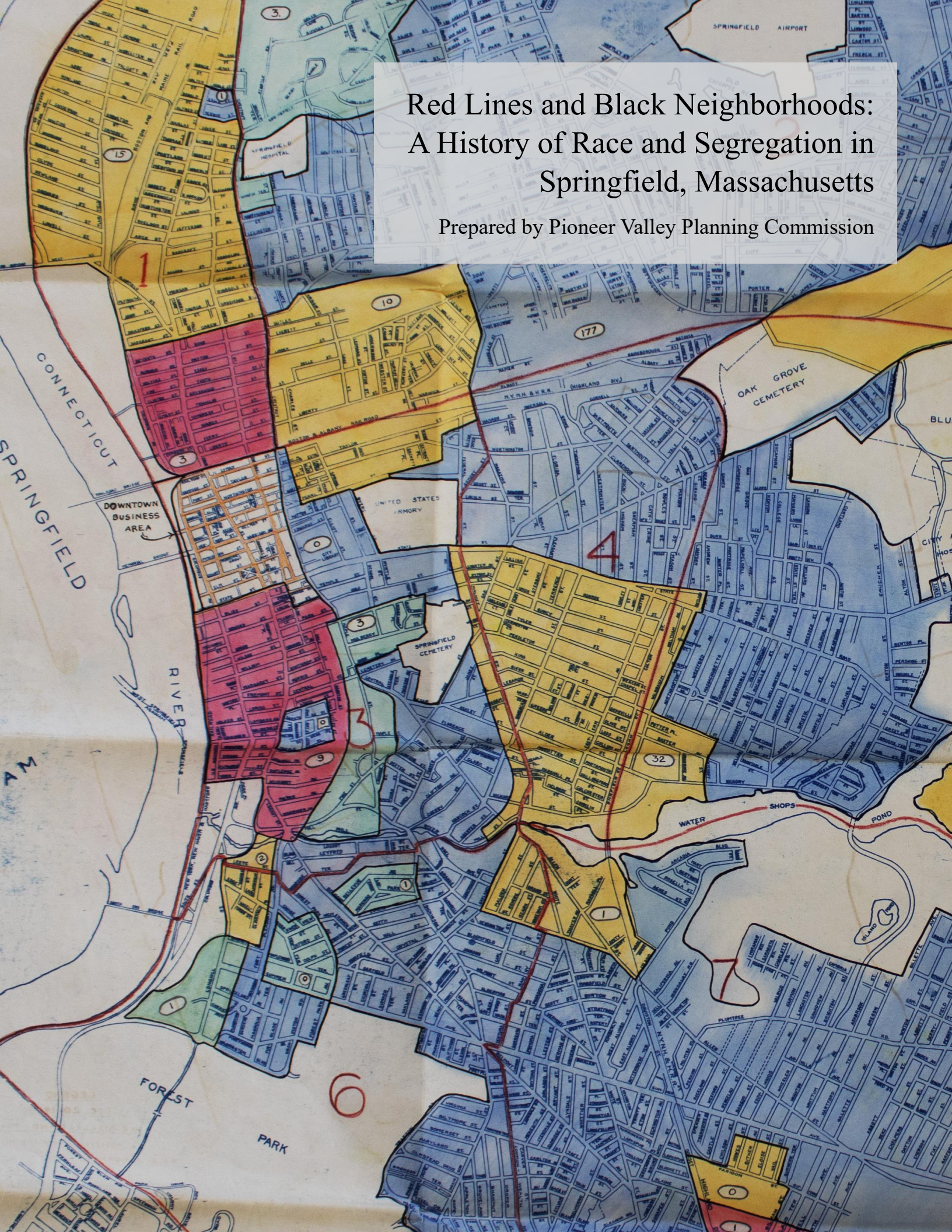


# Red Lines and Black Neighborhoods: A History of Race and Segregation in Springfield, Massachusetts

Prepared by Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

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This report is funded by the Kresge Foundation through its Climate Change Health Equity initiative. It was prepared by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission for the LiveWell Springfield coalition. The coalition is convened by the Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts and includes Arise for Social Justice, the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, and Way Finders Community outreach and engagement team, in collaboration with the staff from the Office of Planning and Economic Development and resident advisors.

*Cover image: 1935 Home Owners' Loan Corporation map of Springfield, Massachusetts. Mapping Inequality.*

## Contents

# Introduction

The purpose of this report is to document the nearly 400-year history of Black residents in Springfield, with an emphasis on the discrimination, segregation, and other challenges that Black residents have faced and overcome during this time. This research is part of an effort to understand the impacts of segregation on Black people and other people of color in Springfield to design effective tools to advance equitable opportunity for everybody in the city. The work was completed by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission as part of the Livewell Springfield coalition's efforts to advance a race and health equity impact assessment tool in Springfield. However, this report is by no means a comprehensive history. We invite suggestions, comments, and feedback on how this report can be utilized to accomplish that goal.

The first part of this report, prior to the Civil War, covers the period of time when the Black population was relatively small. There is very limited demographic data available for this period, other than total population numbers, and as a result that part of the report focuses primarily on individual Black residents and the ways in which they resisted slavery and built thriving communities within Springfield. The second part of the report, from the Civil War to the present, takes a much broader look at the city's Black population, focusing primarily on demographic data rather than on the stories of specific Black residents.

Overall, the data reveals a city that saw dramatic increases in its Black population during the 20th century, yet at the same time also saw the city's population become increasingly segregated. This was rarely the result of overt, legally enforced segregation, but rather through government policies such redlining, and also through informal agreements between property owners, real estate agents, and other private individuals. As a result, housing discrimination was an ongoing challenge for Black residents, and this form of segregation also carried over into schools, which were highly segregated due to the use of neighborhood boundaries as the basis for school enrollment.

The data also reveals that, throughout the 19th and into the 20th centuries, Black residents were denied equal access to employment opportunities. This segregation within the workforce meant that Black workers were generally relegated to low-paying jobs, including unskilled labor and domestic service. This lack of opportunity, combined with housing discrimination, made it difficult for Black residents to acquire wealth through employment and through property ownership, which in turn led to a lack of intergenerational wealth.

Springfield's Black community has proven resilient during this time, and has overcome challenges while successfully advocating for reform in many areas. However, the long-term effects of segregation and disinvestment in Black residents and in Black neighborhoods has directly contributed to the disparity in employment status, household income, homeownership, and educational attainment rates that are still reflected in modern census data.

This report is funded by the Kresge Foundation through its Climate Change Health Equity (CCHE) initiative. Springfield is funded via the LiveWell Springfield coalition, convened by the Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts. The coalition includes Arise for Social Justice, the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, and Way Finders Community outreach and engagement team, in collaboration with the staff from the Office of Planning and Economic

Development and resident advisors. The LiveWell Springfield (LWS) CCHE initiative identified development of a race and health equity impact assessment tool as a priority.

This report does not make specific recommendations about what should be done in light of these disparities. Rather, it is intended to be used as a tool for guiding public policy decisions by showing how historical racism, discrimination, and segregation continues to have an effect on disparate outcomes between Black and White residents in Springfield.

# Colonial Era

The Black community in Springfield can be traced back to the earliest years of colonial settlement in the region. The first known Black resident of Springfield was Peter Swinck, who was living here by 1650. He was an indentured servant to John Pynchon, son of Springfield's founder William Pynchon, and he may have previously been enslaved by a Dutch colonist in New York, given his Dutch surname. After the term of his indenture expired, Swinck became a landowner in Springfield, and he eventually acquired up to 55 acres of land on several different parcels. He and his wife Mary had three children, and they lived in Springfield until his death in 1699 and her death in 1708.[1]

Although Peter Swinck was an indentured servant to John Pynchon and was not enslaved by him, Pynchon did enslave several other people in Springfield. The earliest known reference to this is from 1657, when he recorded in his account book that John Leanord was to be paid "for bringing up [i.e., up the Connecticut River] my negroes."[2] Pynchon is known to have enslaved at least three men and two women. Among them were Roco and Sue, who married in 1687.[3] Roco, despite being enslaved, was also a landowner, with at least 60 acres by 1685.[4] He ultimately purchased his freedom and Sue's freedom in 1695, in exchange for "Twenty five Barrels of good cleane pure Turpentine of 40 gallons to a Barrel & Twenty one barrels of Good merchantable Tarr."[5]

Slavery in Springfield was never as widespread as it was in the south, but it nonetheless existed throughout the colonial period. Colonial ministers often enslaved several people, as did many of the merchants and other members of Springfield's upper class. In late 1754 and early 1755, a census was conducted of all the enslaved people in Massachusetts who were aged 16 and older. This census listed 27 in Springfield, including 22 men and 5 women.[6] This was far larger than the numbers of enslaved people in other towns in the Connecticut River Valley, but at the time Springfield's borders were much larger than in the present day, encompassing the modern-day towns of Agawam, Chicopee, East Longmeadow, Hampden, Holyoke, Longmeadow, Ludlow, West Springfield, and Wilbraham.

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[1] Joseph Carvalho III, *Black Families in Hampden County, Massachusetts 1650 – 1855* (New England Historic Genealogical Society and Institute for Massachusetts Studies, Westfield State College, 1984), 12, 122.
[2] Account books of John Pynchon, as quoted by Robert H. Romer, *Slavery in the Connecticut Valley of Massachusetts* (Florence, Massachusetts: Levellers Press, 2009), 142.
[3] Robert H. Romer, *Slavery in the Connecticut Valley*, 142.
[4] Joseph Carvalho III, *Black Families in Hampden County,* 12.
[5] Account books of John Pynchon, as quoted in Robert H. Romer, *Slavery in the Connecticut Valley,* 143.
[6] Robert H. Romer, *Slavery in the Connecticut Valley*, 141.

A subsequent census in 1765, which enumerated all inhabitants of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, listed 39 Black residents of Springfield. This figure evidently included both free and enslaved people of color, but as was the case a decade earlier, it included a much broader geographic area compared to the modern-day boundaries of Springfield. Overall, the number of Black residents in Springfield in 1765 represented about 1.4% of the total population.[7]

Despite their relatively small numbers, the Black residents of Springfield played an active role in the American Revolution. Among those who enlisted in the Continental Army in Springfield were Bacchus Boston, Peter Haskall, Peter Hazard, Fortune Holland, Quarck Martrick, Isaac Mitchell, and a man who is identified in the enlistment records only as Jack.[8]

In 1780, the new Massachusetts state constitution implicitly outlawed slavery with its declaration that "[a]ll men are born free and equal." However, this did not immediately end slavery; rather, it led to a series of court cases that effectively resulted in slavery becoming legally unenforceable. In the interim, though, some of the slaveowners in the Springfield area may have chosen to bring enslaved people out of state to sell them, rather than see them become free. Chauncey E. Peck, in his 1914 book *History of Wilbraham, Massachusetts*, states that, after the ratification of the state constitution,

> *[I]t is said that some of those slaves were invited to accompany "Massa" on a visit to Hartford, and were privately sold and invited to go on board a sloop lying at the wharf, to have a good time, and while fiddling and dancing, the sloop dropped into the stream, spread sail, and disappeared down the river. They were never heard of again."*[9]

Although this claim is unverified in primary sources, historian Joseph Carvalho III calls attention to one particular document in his 1984 book *Black Families in Hampden County, Massachusetts 1650 – 1855*. Carvalho cites a 1784 poll list in Longmeadow, which indicated that there were 92 people of color who were living on the property of Benjamin Swetland. This would have been an extraordinarily high number of laborers for even the wealthiest people in Western Massachusetts, and it is even more implausible for someone such as Swetland, who had only modest landholdings. It is possible that this was an error on the part of the assessors, but Carvalho speculates that Swetland may have been buying enslaved people who would otherwise have gained their freedom in Massachusetts, and then selling them out of the state.[10]

## End of Slavery and the Rise of a Free Black Community

By the first federal census in 1790, Springfield had a population of 1,574, including just 13 Black residents. Both numbers were much lower than in the colonial period, in part due to the many towns that had been partitioned off of Springfield in the years between the 1765 and 1790 censuses.

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[7] Jesse Chickering, *A Statistical View of the Population of Massachusetts, from 1765 to 1840* (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1846) 24, 116.
[8] Joseph Carvalho III, *Black Families in Hampden County*, 34, 67, 68, 72, 88, 95, 150.
[9] Chauncey E. Peck, *The History of Wilbraham, Massachusetts* (Wilbraham, 1914), 310.
[10] Joseph Carvalho III, *Black Families in Hampden County*, 15.

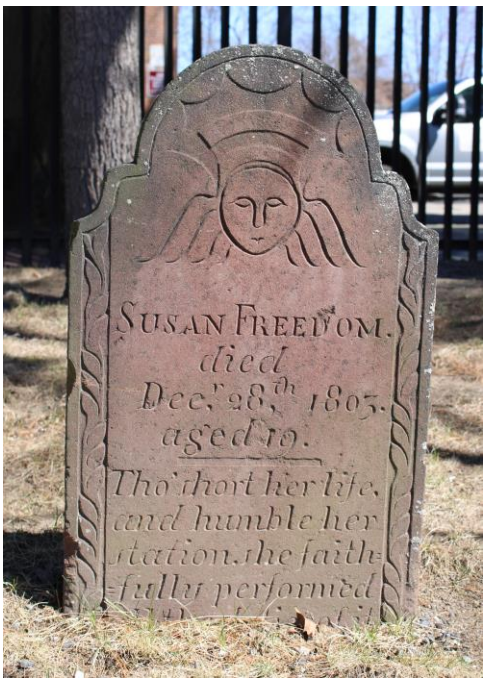


*Figure 1: Gravestone of Susan Freedom in Springfield Cemetery. Photo by Derek Strahan.*

One of these residents was Susan Freedom, who is remembered primarily for her gravestone at Springfield Cemetery, which is a rare surviving example of an early gravestone for a person of color. As noted on her gravestone (Figure 1), she died in 1803 at the age of 19. Her epitaph reads:

*Tho' short her life,*
*and humble her station,*
*She faithfully performed all the duties of it.*
*"The wise and great could do no more."*

Little is known about the details of her life, but Susan would have been born around 1784, right around the same time that slavery was ending in Massachusetts, so her surname might have been chosen by her parents to reflect their newly emancipated condition.[11] It seems unclear who her parents were, but church records identify her as having been "a colored Girl brot up by Col. Worthington."[12] As such, it is possible that her parents had been enslaved by Worthington or by one of his family members. By 1798, she was 14 years old and was listed as a pauper in the town of Longmeadow. That same year, she was indentured to Thomas and Hannah Dwight in Springfield for a term of four years, during which time she would be trained in various housekeeping skills.[13] Her indenture ended when she turned 18 in 1802, but she remained as a paid servant in the Dwight household until her death in 1803.

As was the case for Susan Freedom, most of the Black residents of Springfield in the late 1700s lived with white families, rather than in independent households. In the 1790 census, for example, just two of Springfield's 13 Black residents lived in their own household. However, this would change in the coming decades, as Black families became more independent and established their own communities within Springfield and other surrounding towns. In 1800, 10 of Springfield's 18 Black residents lived in independent households, and this figure increased to 41 of 47 by 1810.[14]

Among these independent Black residents was Jenny Cumfrey, who escaped from slavery in Schenectady, New York and came to Springfield around 1800. Here she married Jack Williams in 1802, and the couple lived near Goose Pond, which was located on the north side of State Street at modern-day Mason Square. However, in 1808 her former enslaver tracked her down and

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[11] Melissa Cybulski, "Susan Freedom, of Longmeadow," Documenting the Early History of Black Lives in the Connecticut River Valley, UMass Amherst, accessed April 19, 2024, https://websites.umass.edu/pvhn-blackhistory/susan-freedom-of-longmeadow/

[12] Quoted by Joseph Carvalho III, *Black Families in Hampden County*, 57.

[13] *Indenture Certificate of Susannah Freedom*, Longmeadow Copybook and Misc. Manuscripts, Box 3, Folder 16. Collection of the Longmeadow Historical Society, Storrs House Museum, Longmeadow, MA.

[14] Joseph Carvalho III, *Black Families in Hampden County*, 22.

demanded her return. Rather than seeing her be forced back into slavery, a group of 19 Springfield residents purchased her freedom for $100. The donors included both White and Black residents; one person, who contributed $2 to the cause, was identified in the bill of sale as Simon Negro.[15] Overall, Jenny's place of residence in the Mason Square area would foreshadow the subsequent development of a Black community in that part of Springfield. Additionally, the effort to purchase her freedom would later be followed by many other instances of organized resistance to slavery by both White and Black residents of Springfield.

The Black population in Springfield increased at a steady rate throughout the first half of the 19th century, at a pace that was similar to the overall population growth. During this time, the area around Goose Pond, where Jack and Jenny Williams had made their home, continued to emerge as a Black community. It was known as "Hayti," and it was located in the modern-day McKnight neighborhood, between State Street and Bay Street. At the time, this was regarded as undesirable land on the outer fringes of Springfield. Prior to the Civil War, most of Springfield's development centered around the Main Street corridor, and also on State Street as far east as the Armory. Beyond the Armory, the land was far less valuable for most residents. It was more than a mile walk from the downtown area, and it was the site of noxious uses such as a slaughterhouse and a horse burying ground. The land itself was also sandy and poorly suited for agricultural use.[16]

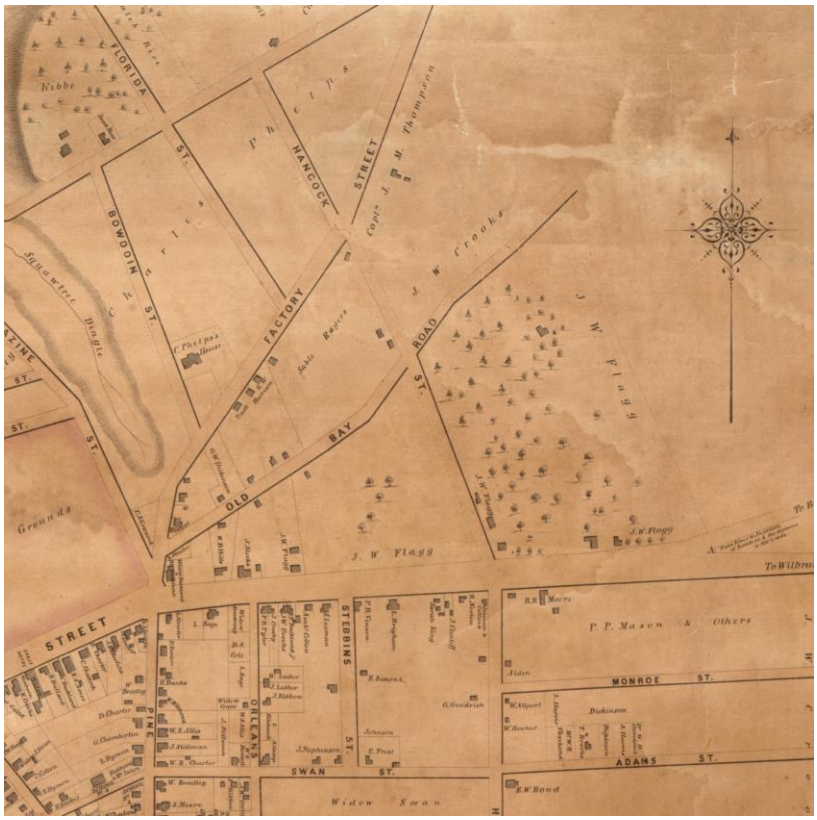


*Figure 2: Detail from the 1851* Map of Springfield, Massachusetts*, showing the "Hayti" neighborhood around modern-day Mason Square. Boston Public Library, Norman B. Leventhal Map Center.*

The most famous resident of Hayti, and the eventual namesake of this part of Springfield, was Primus P. Mason (1817-1892). Born in Monson, he later spent time in Suffield and as an apprentice in Monson before coming to Springfield in 1837 and settling in Hayti. Because of his race, his employment opportunities were limited, but he found several niche markets that were generally undesirable yet profitable, including recycling old shoes and disposing of dead horses.

[15] Joseph Carvalho III, *Black Families in Hampden County*, 137-138.
[16] "Fifty Years Ago: The Springfield that Was," *Springfield Weekly Republican* (Springfield, MA), May 30, 1902

He was able to accumulate wealth through this type of work, and he invested heavily in real estate, becoming a major landowner in the area around modern-day Mason Square.[17]

## Abolitionism and the Civil War

In the meantime, Springfield residents – both Black and White – became increasingly active in the abolitionist movement and the Underground Railroad in the years leading up to the Civil War. Initially, many White leaders in Springfield were involved in the colonization movement of the 1820s and 1830s. However, this effort to repatriate formerly enslaved people to Africa was often based on racial prejudices and a belief that Whites and Blacks could not coexist in the United States, rather than being based on a good faith attempt to serve the interests of the former enslaved people.

By the late 1830s, many abolitionist-minded people began to distance themselves from the colonization movement, and in 1838 the Hampden County Anti-Slavery Society was organized.[18] One of its leaders was the Rev. Samuel Osgood, pastor of Springfield's First Church. His church, which still stands at Court Square, was the site of the organization's first annual convention in 1838, where he was elected as vice president.[19] In the period prior to the establishment of a Black church in Springfield, Osgood often performed marriages for Black residents, including interracial marriages. He was also involved in the Underground Railroad, reportedly providing shelter to as many as 50 people in a single year.[20]

Aside from Osgood, several other Springfield residents participated in the Underground Railroad. Two of the leading hotels in the mid-19th century were the Massasoit House and Warriner's Tavern. The owners of both hotels provided shelter for self-emancipated enslaved people and assisted in arranging safe passage to the north. Jeremy and Phoebe Warriner, owners of Warriner's Tavern, also provided employment at their hotel for those who chose to remain in Springfield.[21]

The most prominent abolitionist with ties to Springfield was John Brown, who lived here from 1846 to 1849. He worked as a wool merchant, but he was also heavily involved in the abolitionist movement and the local Black community. He attended the predominantly Black Sanford Street Church, which had been established several years earlier in 1844, and he formed close friendships within the Black community.

One of John Brown's closest friends was Thomas Thomas, who had been born into slavery in Maryland. Thomas had purchased his freedom and later moved north, ending up in Springfield by the 1840s. Here he worked in several different hotels, and he was also employed in John Brown's wool warehouse. In addition, he was involved in the Underground Railroad, as were

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[17] "'Hayti' Settlement that Was: Some of its Ancient Worthies," *Springfield Republican* (Springfield, MA), May 20, 1888.
[18] Joseph Carvalho III, "Uncovering the Stories of Black Families in Springfield and Hampden County, Massachusetts: 1650 – 1865," *Historical Journal of Massachusetts*, Summer 2012: 79.
[19] Mason Arnold Green, *Springfield, 1636-1886: History of Town and City* (C.A. Nichols & Co, 1888), 442.
[20] Joseph Carvalho III, "Uncovering the Stories of Black Families," 77.
[21] Joseph Carvalho III, "Uncovering the Stories of Black Families," 78.

many other people in Springfield's free Black community. Thomas later worked in Illinois, California, and Illinois again, before returning to Springfield in the early 1860s and opening his own restaurant. He became a successful businessman, and operated his restaurant until shortly before his death in 1894.

In the book *Hampden County, 1636-1936*, Clifton Johnson published a conversation that he had with Thomas Thomas, regarding his time in Springfield during the height of the abolitionist movement. According to Johnson, Thomas recalled:

> *There were quite a good many colored people in Springfield, and most of them had been slaves who'd taken French leave of their masters. I've been a slave myself. That is, there were those who said they had a claim on me. I never acknowledged this though, and I never have bowed to but one master, Him, God. But we were in no danger here. Runaways were all the time going through to Canada, mostly stopping with us colored people. They went about openly enough usually, but once in a while there'd be a timid one, or one would fancy he'd seen his master on the street. Then they'd keep dark. But after the fugitive slave law was passed, and some men were carried back from Boston, we all got pretty well scared and a good many went off to Canada. After a few years most of them came back. There was intense excitement here over the slavery question and we had the greatest speakers there were in the country at different times. Sometimes they wouldn't let the Abolitionists have a hall, and then they'd come to the colored church and speak. They were stirring times. The whole town would come out to the meetings and the largest hall in the place wouldn't hold the crowds*.[22]

As Thomas described, the passage of the Fugitive Slave At of 1850 caused considerable concern here in Springfield, since it facilitated the re-enslavement of self-emancipated people, even in abolitionist hotbeds like Springfield. In response to this threat, John Brown briefly returned to Springfield in 1851, where he organized the League of Gileadites. The goal of this group was to violently resist any efforts to recapture people, and its membership included at least 27 Black men and women, along with "seventeen others" who were not named in subsequent transcriptions of the organization's founding document.[23]

Thomas Thomas was not listed as one of the names, but he was almost certainly the leader of the Gileadites and was probably one of the "seventeen others" who were alluded to on the list. Of the named members, the prominent members of the group included Beverly C. Dowling, William Green, John N. Howard, and William H. Montague. All four men came to Springfield from the south, where Dowling, Green, and Howard had all been enslaved prior to emancipating themselves and coming north. Green's story became particularly well-known in 1853 after he published a booklet, titled *A Narrative of Events in the Life of William Green, Formerly a Slave, Written by Himself*.[24] According to Clifton Johnson, Dowling and Howard were the two

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[22] Clifton Johnson, *Hampden County 1636-1936, Vol. I* (New York: The American Historical Society, 1936), 359.
[23] F. B. Sanborn, *The Life and Letters of John Brown, Liberator of Kansas, and Martyr of Virginia* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1891), 124-127.
[24] Cliff McCarthy, "Who Were the Members of Springfield's League of Gileadites?" *Historical Journal of Massachusetts*, Summer 2022: 165-170.

lieutenants within the League of Gileadites under Thomas's leadership, and both were said to have had close friendships with Frederick Douglass.[25]

None of the Gileadites are known to have originally been from Springfield, but some became successful small business owners and property owners here. However, even with the League of Gileadites in place, there was still the possibility of being recaptured, and many of the members ultimately abandoned their lives in Springfield and continued their journey northward. Some, such as John N. Howard, would later return to Springfield, where he lived in a house that still stands at 22 Salem Street.[26] Others, though, would remain on the move, including William Green, who went to Worcester and then to Utica, New York, where he lived under an assumed name.[27] Ultimately, though, the Gileadites were successful in their mission; none of the self-emancipated people who took shelter in Springfield were ever captured and returned to slavery.[28]

During the Civil War, many Black residents of Springfield served in the Union Army, including nine who enlisted in the 54th Massachusetts Regiment, one of the first Black army units of the war. Most famously, the regiment was involved in the frontal assault of Fort Wagner in South Carolina, where they sustained heavy casualties. Among those who were missing and presumed dead after the battle were two men from Springfield: Peter Johnson and Ralsey Townsend.[29]

## Late 19th Century Growth

In 1860, just before the start of the Civil War, Springfield's total population stood at 15,199, including 276 Black residents. However, both numbers would see significant growth during and after the Civil War. Wartime-related industries such as the Springfield Armory had dramatically increased their workforce during the war, and many of these workers remained in the city after the war, which led to a major population boom that would continue into the 20th century.

This population boom, in turn, led to an increased demand for housing, and one of the first large-scale residential developments in Springfield after the Civil War was the area to the east of the Armory, in the predominantly Black community of "Hayti." This proved highly profitable for some landowners, including Primus Mason, who had purchased many tracts of previously undesirable land prior to the Civil War and later sold them to developers for much higher prices. For example, an 1888 *Springfield Republican* article states that Mason had purchased a tract of land near State Street for $150 in 1860, and had sold it to the McKnight brothers a decade later for $17,500.[30]

However, the redevelopment of the Hayti community also meant displacing most of the Black residents, many of whom had lived there for decades. The same 1888 *Republican* article

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[25] Clifton Johnson, *Hampden County 1636-1936,* 487.
[26] Cliff McCarthy, "Who Were the Members," 168.
[27] Cliff McCarthy, "Who Were the Members," 165-166.
[28] Cliff McCarthy, "Who Were the Members," 184.
[29] National Park Service, *Faces of the 54th: Soldiers and Officers Database*, Boston African American National Historic Site, accessed April 22, 2024, https://www.nps.gov/boaf/learn/historyculture/faces-of-the-54th.htm
[30] "'Hayti' Settlement that Was," *Springfield Republican*, May 20, 1888.

highlighted the history of the community, noting their self-sufficiency but also their eventual relocation:

> *There were but few negroes in Springfield then, and most of them lived in Hayti. As the march of the McKnightville improvement progressed, they were dislodged, and came down town to find homes, or migrated into the Eastern avenue region. They lived wholly by themselves in Hayti, cultivated a little land, foraged for fuel and occasionally came down town for supplies.*[31]

It seems unclear to what extent the Black residents of Hayti received compensation when the neighborhood was redeveloped. Those who owned large amounts of property, such as Primus Mason, would have profited from the sale of their land. However, the 1851 Springfield map (Figure 2) shows a relatively small number of landowners in the Hayti area, most of whom were White, including J. W. Flagg and J. W. Crooks. This suggests that most of the Black residents of Hayti were tenants rather than landowners, and likely would not have received compensation upon being displaced by the post-Civil War redevelopment of the land.

In the meantime, throughout the second half of the 19th century, the Black population of Springfield continued to grow at a pace that reflected the overall growth of the city, with Black residents generally comprising about 2% of the population throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. Table 1 shows the rate of population change in Springfield from 1790 through the 2020 census.

As indicated by the 1888 *Republican* article, many Black residents lived in the area near Eastern Avenue, in the modern-day Old Hill neighborhood. This would become the hub of Springfield's Black community throughout the late 19th and into the 20th centuries, but census data shows that Black residents also lived in other parts of the city in the period immediately after the Civil War. As shown in Table 2 and Figure 3, the single largest number of Black residents (159) lived in Ward 3 in 1870, which encompassed the South End area between State Street and Central Street. Ward 2 (Metro Center) and Ward 5 (Old Hill and McKnight areas) also had over 100 Black residents in 1870, and there were also 64 Black residents in Ward 6, which included the southern part of the South End and parts of the modern-day Forest Park neighborhoods. Because of the relatively low overall population of Ward 6, this represented the highest percentage of Black residents in any ward in the city in 1870.

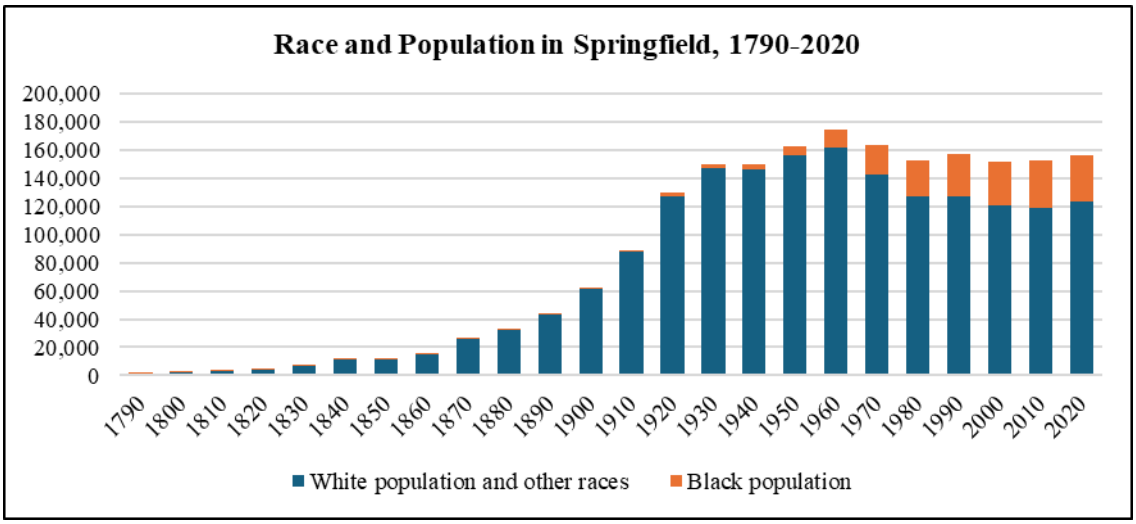
Table 3 and Figure 4 show the same type of ward data for the 1910 census. By this point the city had grown substantially since the 1870 census, and the ward boundaries had shifted, so it is difficult to make direct comparisons between the wards in these two censuses. However, this data does indicate that the Black residents of Springfield were fairly widely distributed across the different wards in 1870, while by 1910 they had begun to be more concentrated in particular parts of the city. This was especially the case for Ward 5, which by 1910 included most of the modern-day McKnight neighborhood and portions of Old Hill as far south as King Street. A total of 399 Black residents lived in the ward in 1910, nearly all of whom would have lived in the southern part of the neighborhood below State Street. Other wards with high concentrations of Black residents included Ward 3 (the Metro Center area), and Ward 6, in the South End.

[31] "'Hayti' Settlement that Was," *Springfield Republican* (Springfield, MA), May 20, 1888.

During his lifetime, Primus Mason was often portrayed in newspaper accounts as being an example of what people of color could achieve in Springfield. One 1885 article in the *Springfield Republican* confidently asserted that "there is no more trace of race feeling than is to be found between the different white nationalities," and went on to state that "race prejudice" was only found "among the poorer class of both colors." The article cited Primus Mason, John N. Howard, and Thomas Thomas as examples of successful Black leaders, and also noted that the city's Black workers "are in various branches of business, working successful by the side of and against white competitors."[32]

**Table 1: Race and Population in Springfield, 1790-2020[33]**

| Year | Total Population | Black Population | Percent Black | Year | Total Population | Black Population | Percent Black |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1790 | 1,574 | 13 | 0.8% | 1910 | 88,926 | 1,475 | 1.7% |
| 1800 | 2,312 | 18 | 0.8% | 1920 | 129,614 | 2,650 | 2.0% |
| 1810 | 2,767 | 47 | 1.7% | 1930 | 149,900 | 3,141 | 2.1% |
| 1820 | 3,914 | 28 | 0.7% | 1940 | 149,554 | 3,144 | 2.1% |
| 1830 | 6,784 | 48 | 0.7% | 1950 | 162,399 | 6,173 | 3.8% |
| 1840 | 10,985 | 101 | 0.9% | 1960 | 174,463 | 13,086 | 7.5% |
| 1850 | 11,766 | 271 | 2.3% | 1970 | 163,905 | 21,387 | 13.0% |
| 1860 | 15,199 | 276 | 1.8% | 1980 | 152,319 | 25,219 | 16.6% |
| 1870 | 26,703 | 567 | 2.1% | 1990 | 156,983 | 30,064 | 19.2% |
| 1880 | 33,340 | 775 | 2.3% | 2000 | 152,082 | 31,472 | 20.7% |
| 1890 | 44,179 | 811 | 1.8% | 2010 | 153,060 | 34,073 | 22.3% |
| 1900 | 62,059 | 1,021 | 1.6% | 2020 | 155,929 | 32,503 | 20.8% |




[32] "Springfield Colored People: The Rapid Growth of the Colony," *Springfield Republican* (Springfield, MA), March 8, 1885.

[33] U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Censuses 1790 – 2020. The population figures for 1790 – 1840 include the residents of modern-day Chicopee, which did not separate from Springfield until 1848.

| Table 2: 1870 Population by Ward | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ward | Total Population | Black Population | Percent Black |
| 1 | 6,289 | 85 | 1.4% |
| 2 | 4,182 | 108 | 2.6% |
| 3 | 4,558 | 159 | 3.5% |
| 4 | 3,074 | 43 | 1.4% |
| 5 | 3,600 | 102 | 2.8% |
| 6 | 1,676 | 64 | 3.8% |
| 7 | 1,433 | 1 | 0.1% |
| 8 | 1,891 | 5 | 0.3% |

| Table 3: 1910 Population by Ward | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ward | Total Population | Black Population | Percent Black |
| 1 | 16,274 | 22 | 0.1% |
| 2 | 10,825 | 83 | 0.8% |
| 3 | 5,389 | 234 | 4.3% |
| 4 | 9,170 | 86 | 0.9% |
| 5 | 7,950 | 399 | 5.0% |
| 6 | 9,356 | 257 | 2.7% |
| 7 | 14,258 | 213 | 1.5% |
| 8 | 15,724 | 181 | 1.2% |

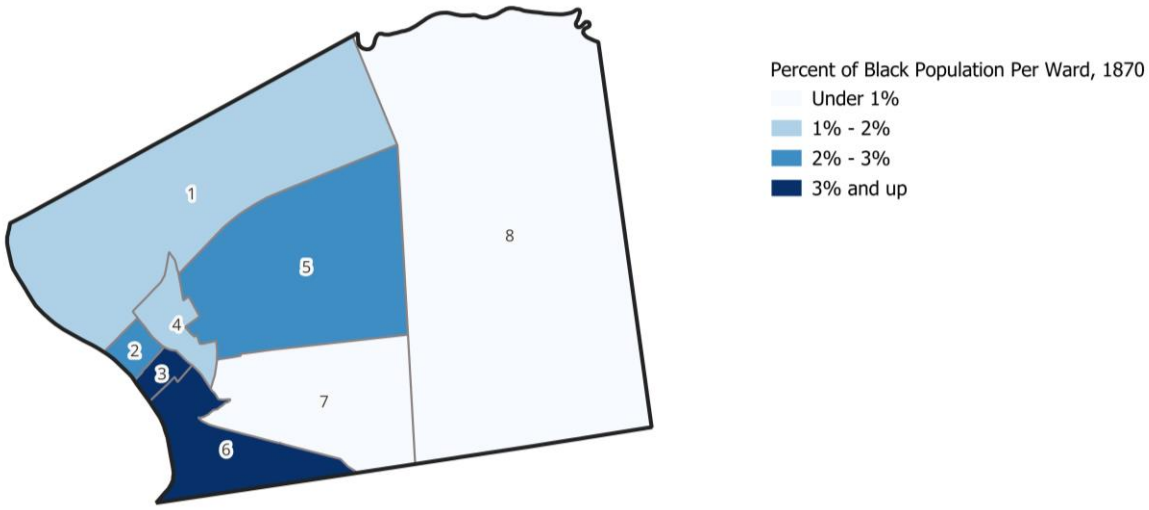



*Figure 3: Percentage of Black Population Per Ward, 1870*

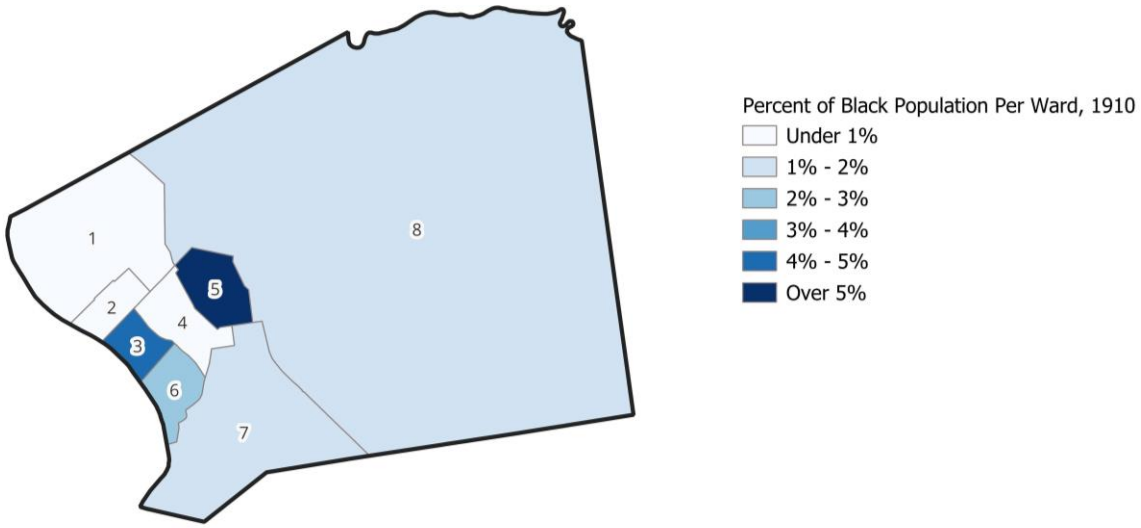



*Figure 4: Percentage of Black Population Per Ward, 1910*

## Early 20th Century Challenges

Overall, the 1885 article presented a very optimistic view of race relations and the economic prosperity of Springfield's Black community. However, it relied heavily on generalizations and anecdotal evidence, with little in the way of empirical data. It would be another 20 years before a truly comprehensive survey of the city's Black residents was conducted in 1905, and it led to conclusions that were very different from the picture that the 1885 article portrayed.

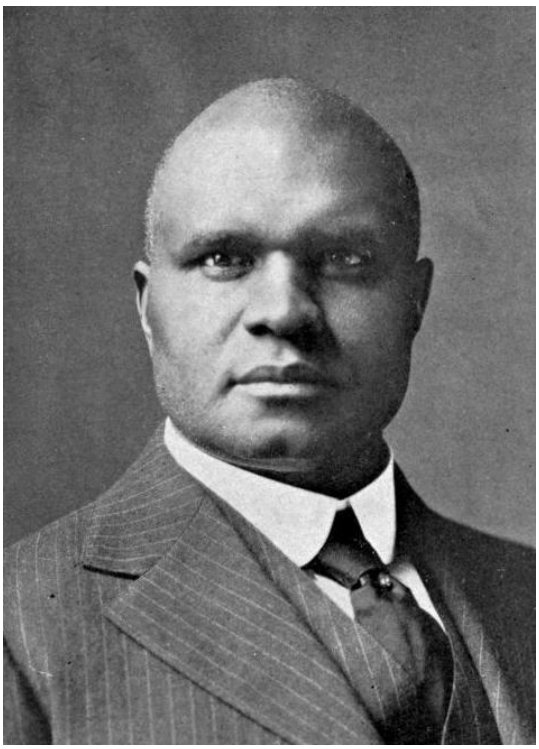


*Figure 5: The Rev. William N. DeBerry, around the late 1910s. Image from* The National Cyclopedia of the Colored Race *(1919)*

The 1905 survey was conducted by the Rev. William N. DeBerry, the pastor of St. John's Congregational Church, a predominantly Black congregation that traces back to the 1844 establishment of the Sanford Street Church. Born in Nashville in 1870, DeBerry was the son of formerly enslaved parents. He graduated from Oberlin Theological Seminary, and in 1899 he came to Springfield to become the pastor at St. John's, which at the time was located on Quincy Street in the modern-day Old Hill neighborhood. He conducted the survey by systematically interviewing the Black families in Springfield and gathering a variety of socioeconomic data. His report was subsequently published in the February 5, 1905 edition of the *Springfield Sunday Republican*.

In the introduction of his report, Rev. DeBerry explained his motivation for compiling the data:

> *During the five years of my residence in Springfield as a minister among my people I have been made to realize again and again that their material progress is seriously impeded, and their moral and social betterment hindered, by certain barriers which ought to be removed. But I have felt that no plea for the removal of these barriers could have as much weight as an accurate display of the facts regarding some of the deplorable aspects of the general condition of the people in question, the aspects for which such barriers are chiefly responsible. I have also felt that the best way to show their worthiness of the consideration they ask is to give some idea of the things of merit which many have achieved in spite of such obstacles.*[34]

According to DeBerry's survey, there were 1,253 Black residents in Springfield as of January 1, 1905, including 512 who lived in the downtown area and 741 who lived in the Hill and Forest Park areas. Specifically, he delineated two areas of the city that had the highest density of Black residents. The first was within the modern-day Old Hill neighborhood, in the area bounded by State Street, Walnut Street, Alden Street, and the now-disused railroad tracks east of Eastern

[34] William N. DeBerry, "Negroes of Springfield: Race in a Typical Northern City," *Springfield Republican* (Springfield, MA), February 5, 1905.

Avenue. The second area was in the South End, bounded by Main Street, Stockbridge Street, Willow Street, and Hubbard Avenue.[35]

In his report, DeBerry described the Black enclave in the South End as "the most undesirable tenement section of the whole city," where "there are negro homes, the miserable plights of which an outsider would never suspect possible in a city like Springfield. Many of these people are forced to live in this section under such conditions because of their inability to secure tenements in more desirable locations."[36]

As DeBerry noted in his introduction, there were several barriers that limited the opportunities of Black residents. Of these, he believed that the most significant barrier was the lack of employment opportunities. His survey identified 375 men and 337 women who were employed outside of their homes. The most common occupations for men were working as laborers, jobbers, teamsters, hotel waters and bellmen, porters, janitors, cooks, and elevator operators. Overall, 86% of the Black men in Springfield were employed in menial labor. Likewise, the vast majority of employed Black women had menial jobs, with about 84% of women working as domestic servants or laundresses.[37]

These rates of menial employment are particularly high when compared to citywide averages. At the turn of the 20th century, the various manufacturers and other businesses in Springfield employed large numbers of skilled workers. In the 1910 census, two of the most common skilled

*Figure 6: Mason Square at the intersection of State Street, Wilbraham Road, and Eastern Avenue. This has been at the center of Springfield's Black community since the early 19th century. Photo by Derek Strahan.*

[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.

labor positions were machinists (1,940 men) and carpenters (1,163 men), yet DeBerry's survey five years earlier identified just one Black machinist and one Black carpenter. Many men in Springfield also worked as clerks, with 1,157 having that occupation in 1910. However, DeBerry identified just four Black men who held such clerical positions.[38] Likewise, DeBerry's survey found very few Black residents who were employed in professional fields, including just one physician and one dentist, compared to 176 and 76, respectively, in the citywide data from 1910.[39]

A comparison of women's occupations reveals a similar disparity between the employment status of Black women compared to the general population. In 1910, only 30% of employed women in Springfield were domestic servants, compared to 83% of employed Black women in 1905. Other major occupations for women in 1910 included working as dressmakers, seamstresses, telephone operators, teachers, and nurses.[40] However, these positions were largely unavailable to Black women, with just 20 individuals who worked in any of those fields in 1905, representing 6% of the Black female workforce.[41]

Aside from limited employment opportunities, DeBerry also identified housing as a barrier for Black families in Springfield. He observes that Black residents have generally been successful in purchasing real estate, and that they owned property that was collectively worth $177,320 according to the assessor's records, with an average home value of $1,800. However, DeBerry also notes that this desire for homeownership is due in part to necessity, because of the discrimination that Black tenants face when trying to rent an apartment. In particular, he notes an unwillingness of landlords to rent units to Black tenants unless the previous tenants had also been Black, which in turn forced Black renters to live only in less desirable neighborhoods.[42]

*Figure 7: St. John's Congregational Church, which was the social and spiritual hub of Springfield's Black community during the early 20th century. Photographed around 1938-1939. Image courtesy of the Springfield Preservation Trust.*

[38] Ibid.
[39] Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910 Volume IV: Population 1910, Occupation Statistics*, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1914), 275-279.
[40] Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States*, 274-279.
[41] William N. DeBerry, "Negroes of Springfield," *Springfield Republican* (Springfield, MA), February 5, 1905.
[42] Ibid.

Regarding this issue, DeBerry writes:

> *The fact that, as a rule, negroes are unable to rent tenements which have not before been let to negroes, has often caused them great inconvenience and therefore led many to purchase homes of their own. There is in Springfield as elsewhere a strong tendency to colonize them in the less desirable sections. And so intense is the antipathy to negro families as neighbors that it is seldom if ever that a colored family secures a tenement on a street where negroes have not hitherto lived, without raising a storm of indignant protest.*[43]

The last major obstacle that DeBerry identified was education. Although the city's public schools were integrated, Black students tended to score lower than their White counterparts in their academic achievements. DeBerry noted that, of the 222 Black students in primary and grammar schools, 23 were above average, 102 as average, and 97 below average, as reported by their principals. Of the 16 Black students in the high school, 2 were judged above average, 6 as average, and 8 below average.[44]

DeBerry viewed this disparity as a long-term, inter-generational consequence of slavery and the intellectual stifling of enslaved people. He writes:

> *Does this fact and the fact that so large a percentage of the pupils represented by the figures above are below the average in scholarship prove that they are naturally more stupid than others, or that the measure of their natural mental endowment is less? No, this fact and these figures prove no such conclusion. They prove rather that the present generation of negro children is mentally less apt than the present generation of white children, not from natural causes, but from the fact that for two centuries and a half the minds of the immediate ancestors of the less apt children were stunted by mental inactivity. This was slavery's most criminal deed. This fact is not always considered when such comparisons are made.*[45]

Overall, DeBerry's report presents a very different view of race relations in Springfield when compared to the 1885 news article. However, he also emphasizes that, despite the systemic discrimination against Black residents, many have been able to persevere and make remarkable achievements in the face of adversity. He concludes his report by summarizing:

> *But when all the facts are considered, it is but just to conclude that the negroes of Springfield, as a whole, are progressive and worthy citizens. They have their virtues and their vices as individuals, their advantages and disadvantages as a class. That which they most desire and for which they most earnestly plead at the hands of their more favored fellow citizens is merited industrial opportunity.*[46]

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[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.

Over the next few decades after DeBerry's initial survey and report, the population of Springfield would continue to grow at a rapid rate. Between 1900 and 1920 the population more than doubled, from 62,059 to 129,614. The Black population in the city grew at an even faster rate during that same period, increasing from 1,021 to 2,650. This was in large part an effect of the Great Migration, when millions of Black southerners relocated to the north and west during the early and mid-20th century. Motivated by the hope of less racial discrimination and greater economic opportunity, many moved to the industrial cities of the northeast, including Springfield.

DeBerry published an updated report in 1922, in which he noted the rapid population growth and the migration out of the south. His survey identified 3,069 Black residents of Springfield as of January 1, 1922, including 2,066 adults. Of the adults, 62% were born in the south, 32% in the north or west, and 4% in foreign countries, with the remaining adults having an unknown birthplace. Georgia (18%) was the single largest birthplace for Black adults in Springfield in 1922, followed by Virginia (16%), Massachusetts (15%), South Carolina (10%), North Carolina (9%), and Connecticut (5%).[47]

The 1922 report addressed many of the same concerns that DeBerry had raised in his 1905 report, and the employment status of Black Springfield residents remained a high priority for him. In this regard, DeBerry was cautiously optimistic. He described how World War I had opened up new opportunities for Black workers, in order to meet the wartime demand for labor. He observed that "[f]or the first time in the history of labor in this section, the Negro group was permitted to rise above the restricted sphere of menial service and accorded a welcome and a place in the wider sphere of skilled and ordinary employment." However, he also acknowledged that it was still too soon to make any long-term predictions, since it was necessary to "await the country's return to industrial normality before we can know whether this recent industrial advance in the North is a transient or a permanent result of the war."[48]

According to DeBerry's report, the primary occupations for Black men were similar to the ones that were identified in his 1905 report, including laborers, janitors, porters, and hotel service workers. Overall, 70% of Black men were employed in either a common labor or menial service positions. However, this represented a significant decrease compared to 1905, when 86% of Black men had such jobs. As for Black women, their employment status appears to have remained largely unchanged, with 82% having menial jobs in 1922, compared to 83% in 1905. The vast majority of employed Black women in 1922 were either domestic servants or laundresses.[49]

In the 1922 report, DeBerry only briefly addressed housing issues, but he reiterated the same issue from 1905 regarding the unwillingness of landlords to rent apartments to Black tenants. DeBerry noted that this has been an incentive for Black families to purchase their own homes, while also pointing out that the rental discrimination "makes the housing problem of Negroes in

[47] William N. DeBerry, "Sociological Survey of the Negro Population of Springfield, Mass" (Springfield: The St. John's Institutional Activities,1922), 7-8.
[48] Ibid., 9-10
[49] Ibid., 9-12

Springfield one of the most trying and difficult of all the problems with which they are confronted as a people."[50]

DeBerry also briefly addressed education in his 1922 report, noting that one of the motivations for Black families to move north was for the greater quality of public education. In the report, he provided enrollment figures for Black students at the city's public schools, but he did not include any data on academic achievement, nor did he raise any other education-related concerns.[51]

The 1922 report provided only limited information about where Black residents lived, but more data is available from the 1920 census, which has ward-level demographic information about the city. As described earlier, the time period from 1870 to 1910 saw the gradual concentration of the city's Black population in a relatively small portion of the city. This trend would continue in 1920, as shown in Table 4 and Figure 8, with the vast majority of Black residents living either in Ward 2 (southern part of the North End), Ward 3 (Metro Center), or Ward 4 (Old Hill and Six Corners). By contrast, the suburban Wards 7 and 8, which collectively included 82% of the city's land area and 29% of its total population, were home to just 91 Black residents, equivalent to just 0.2% of the population of those wards.[52]

**Table 4: 1920 Population by Ward**

| Ward | Total Population | Black Population | Percent Black |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 16,110 | 44 | 0.3% |
| 2 | 22,466 | 771 | 3.4% |
| 3 | 13,143 | 492 | 3.7% |
| 4 | 14,786 | 778 | 5.3% |
| 5 | 12,625 | 320 | 2.5% |
| 6 | 13,061 | 154 | 1.2% |
| 7 | 14,714 | 21 | 0.1% |
| 8 | 22,709 | 70 | 0.3% |

**Table 5: 1940 Population by Ward**

| Ward | Total Population | Black Population | Percent Black |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 21,506 | 965 | 4.5% |
| 2 | 25,511 | 14 | 0.1% |
| 3 | 26,899 | 459 | 1.7% |
| 4 | 16,174 | 1,579 | 9.8% |
| 5 | 13,930 | 31 | 0.2% |
| 6 | 16,501 | 33 | 0.2% |
| 7 | 14,994 | 4 | 0.0% |
| 8 | 14,039 | 59 | 0.4% |

By 1940, the Black population of Springfield had become even more concentrated in specific parts of the city, as shown in Table 5 and Figure 9. At the ward level, over 80% of Black residents in Springfield lived in either Ward 4 (McKnight and Old Hill neighborhoods) or in Ward 1 (North End). The only other part of the city with a significant Black population was Ward 3, which covered the Metro Center, South End, and Maple-High/Six Corners neighborhoods. The remaining five wards, which were mostly suburban in character, had a combined total of just 141 Black residents, equivalent to less than 0.2% of the population of those wards. This is a striking contrast to 1870, when the city's Black population was much smaller yet was much more evenly distributed across the city. In 1870, Black residents comprised 2.1% of the city's population, and

[50] Ibid., 17

[51] Ibid, 17-18

[52] Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. *Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920 Volume III: Population 1920, Composition and Characteristics of the Population by States* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1922), 469.

six of the eight wards were at least 1.4% Black. However, in 1940, when Black residents likewise comprised 2.1% of the city's population, only three wards were more than 0.4% Black.[53]

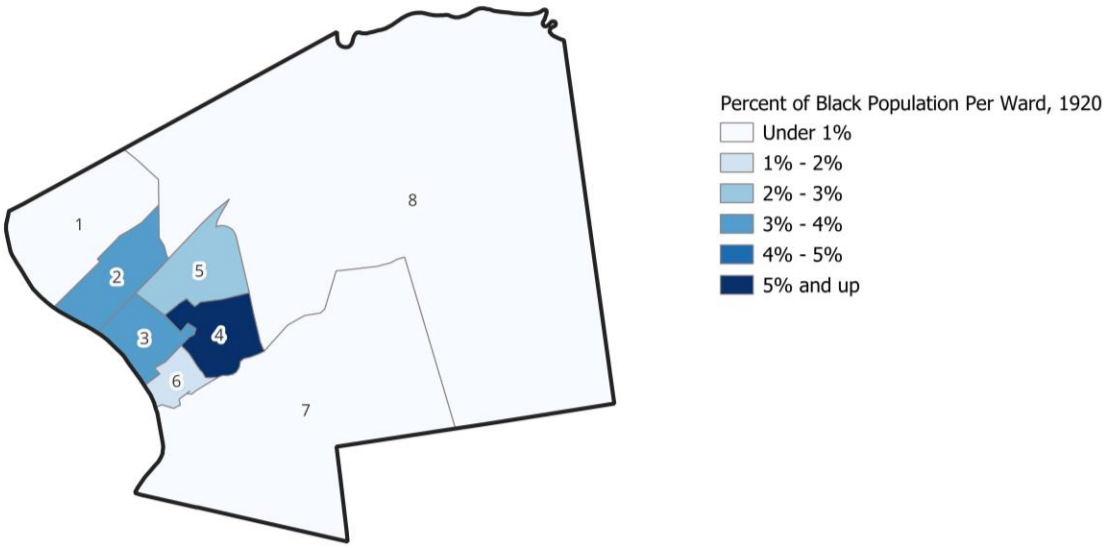


*Figure 8: Percentage of Black Population Per Ward, 1920*

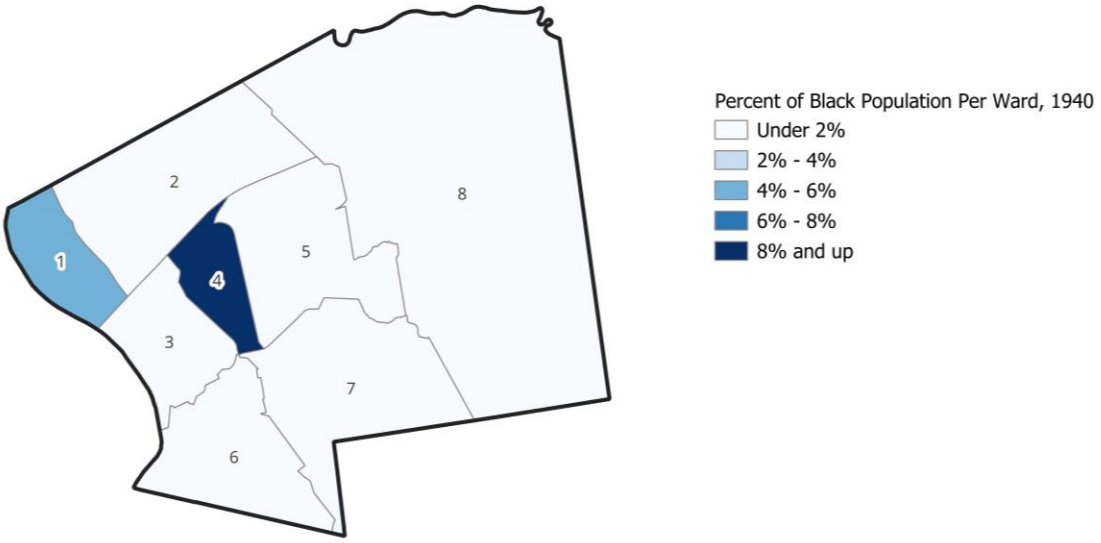


*Figure 9: Percentage of Black Population Per Ward, 1940*

In his final edition of "Sociological Survey of the Negro Population of Springfield, Mass.," published in 1940, William DeBerry does not specifically raise the issue of increasing concentration of the city's Black residents. However, he does reiterate his concerns about

[53] United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940. Population Volume II: Characteristics of the Population. Part 3 Kansas – Michigan* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1943), 669.

housing discrimination, noting that "Springfield Negroes are the victims of a restricted form of race prejudice which operates against them chiefly in industry and in their efforts to rent or purchase homes in certain localities."[54] This is an injustice that he had been calling attention to since at least 1905, evidently without much success, and the decennial censuses between 1910 and 1940 reveal the result of those discriminatory housing practices, namely the increasingly segregated nature of the city's wards.

Aside from housing discrimination, DeBerry's 1940 report also addressed the ongoing concerns about the lack of employment opportunities for Black workers. In his 1922 report, he had noted that the labor demands during World War I had expanded the types of jobs that Black workers were able to fill. However, he also expressed uncertainty about whether this was the beginning of a long-term trend, or just a temporary wartime change. As it turned out, these employment-related gains proved temporary, especially once the Great Depression began. In industrial cities across the country, Black workers were usually the first to be laid off, and throughout the Depression they experienced higher rates of unemployment than White workers.[55]

This was the case in Springfield, with DeBerry noting in his 1940 report that:

> *The widespread and long continued industrial depression of the last decade has had a retrenching effect upon the Negro's enlarged industrial status in the North which resulted from the World War. To a very large extent, it has neutralized this wholesome result and virtually restored the black man's pre-war industrial status. This status was in the main that of the "hewer of wood and drawer of water."*[56]

Overall, DeBerry observed that, since the 1922 report, "there has been no material change in their industrial status. There has been, however, in the meantime, a decline of 18 per cent in the number employed.[57]

Aside from employment and housing, the third major barrier that DeBerry had identified in his initial 1905 report was education. As with the 1922 report, he did not provide specific data regarding educational performance, but he did indicate the number of Black students at each of the city's schools. Just as the census data indicated a considerable degree of segregation within the city's wards, DeBerry's school enrollment data likewise shows that, by 1940, there was a significant amount of segregation within the public schools in Springfield.

DeBerry's report does not specifically address it, but in 1939 the Springfield Public Schools, under the leadership of Superintendent John Granrud, implemented a new curriculum that was intended to combat racism. Known as the "Springfield Plan," this attempt at multicultural education was remarkably progressive for its time. It promoted the social equality of all races,

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[54] William N. DeBerry, "Sociological Survey of the Negro Population of Springfield, Mass." (Springfield: Dunbar Community League, 1940), 14.
[55] William A. Sundstrom, "Last Hired, First Fired? Unemployment and Urban Black Workers During the Great Depression," *The Journal of Economic History* 52, no. 2 (1992): 420–421.
[56] William N. DeBerry, "Sociological Survey" (1940), 5.
[57] Ibid., 7

emphasized studying Black history, and even asked students to examine and discuss their own prejudices. The implementation of the plan coincided with the start of World War II, which proved to be a favorable political environment. Many other school districts across the northeast soon adopted similar curriculums, and wartime propaganda heralded it as an example of American democracy and tolerance as a contrast to the extremes of fascism. Springfield was portrayed in the press as a model city for race relations, and its innovative curriculum was even the subject of a 1945 Warner Brothers film, *It Happened in Springfield*.[58]

However, the Springfield Plan proved to be temporary. After the end of the war, the city's political climate changed, and the plan was ended. Granrud was dismissed from his position as superintendent, and his successor declared that the plan had done its job and was no longer needed. According to him, racism was no longer an issue in the city. In reality, though, Springfield had never fully lived up to the ideals of the plan, even when it was making national news for its plan in the early 1940s. Despite high-minded ideals, the practical reality was that Springfield's schools were heavily segregated in the 1940s, due to the use of neighborhood schools at the elementary and junior high school levels.[59]

*De jure* school segregation in Massachusetts has been illegal since 1855, but the results of long-term housing discrimination in cities such as Springfield led to *de facto* segregation of neighborhood schools. As shown in Table 6, the elementary and junior high schools in the urban parts of the city had high numbers of Black students, while the schools in the suburban neighborhoods had few or no Black students. This was the case at Forest Park and

**Table 6: Black Students Enrolled in Springfield Public Schools, January 1940**

| Type of School | School Name | Black Enrollment |
|---|---|---|
| High School | Classical | 37 |
| High School | Commerce | 27 |
| High School | Technical | 35 |
| High School | Trade | 4 |
| Junior High | Buckingham | 81 |
| Junior High | Chestnut Street | 42 |
| Junior High | Classical | 38 |
| Junior High | Forest Park | 2 |
| Junior High | Van Sickle | 1 |
| Elementary | Acushnet Avenue | 10 |
| Elementary | Armory Street | 2 |
| Elementary | Balliet | 1 |
| Elementary | Barrows | 64 |
| Elementary | Brightwood | 0 |
| Elementary | Brookings | 53 |
| Elementary | Carew Street | 2 |
| Elementary | Dorman | 2 |
| Elementary | East Union Street | 90 |
| Elementary | Eastern Avenue | 16 |
| Elementary | Glenwood | 0 |
| Elementary | Harris | 0 |
| Elementary | Homer Street | 0 |
| Elementary | Hooker | 136 |
| Elementary | Howard Street | 31 |
| Elementary | Indian Orchard | 0 |
| Elementary | Jefferson Avenue | 5 |
| Elementary | Kensington Avenue | 1 |
| Elementary | Liberty | 2 |
| Elementary | Lincoln | 0 |
| Elementary | Morris | 6 |
| Elementary | Myrtle Street | 0 |
| Elementary | Samuel Bowles | 0 |
| Elementary | School Street | 0 |
| Elementary | Sumner Avenue | 0 |
| Elementary | Tapley | 13 |
| Elementary | Warner | 0 |
| Elementary | Washington | 0 |
| Elementary | White Street | 0 |

[58] Sokol, Jason, *All Eyes are Upon Us: Race and Politics from Boston to Brooklyn* (New York: Basic Books, 2014), 5-27
[59] Ibid.

Van Sickle junior high schools, which had just 2 and 1 Black students, respectively, in 1940. And, of the city's 29 elementary schools, only 5 had more than 16 Black students. Six elementary schools had just one or two Black students, and 13 had no Black students at all.[60]

In addition to noting the challenges that Black Springfield residents were facing, DeBerry's 1940 report also highlighted the progress and achievements that had occurred despite systemic discrimination. DeBerry identified 36 Black small business owners in the city, including beauty parlors, barber shops, pool rooms, and grocery stores. Professional services included three lawyers, three dentists, two physicians, five clergymen, one chiropodist, and one public school teacher. Of the three Black lawyers, one was J. Clifford Clarkson, who represented Ward 4 on the City Council.[61]

DeBerry ended his 1940 report with a summary of the five major conclusions, many of which echo the same concerns that he had raised 35 years earlier in his initial 1905 report. The results of his survey indicated:

> *(1) That since the great influx of migrant Negroes from the South during the World War, the race in Springfield has retained, without material change, its numerical strength.*
> *(2) That the facilities available for the social betterment of Springfield Negroes as a specially handicapped group are sadly inadequate and disproportionate to their social needs.*
> *(3) That measured by normal moral standards, the colored people of Springfield are, on the whole, a worthy and progressive group that deserves commendation for what they have accomplished with the limited opportunities and means at their disposal.*
> *(4) That the real social tragedy of the Negro in Springfield, as elsewhere in New England, is the very limited sphere of his industrial opportunity.*
> *(5) That in spite of the adverse conditions which beset their social development and progress, the general lot of Springfield's Negro citizens is more fortunate that that of the vast majority of the race of which they are a part.*[62]

## Redlining, Segregation, and Disinvestment

In addition to the concerns that DeBerry raised in his report, another ongoing injustice in Springfield during this time was the practice of redlining. In 1933, in the midst of the Great Depression, the federal government established the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) to provide support for homeowners who might otherwise lose their homes to foreclosure. As part of appraisal process, the HOLC created a series of maps of major cities in the United States, which were color coded based on perceived risk in different neighborhoods. These assessments were based on a variety of metrics, including racial and ethnic composition. In general, neighborhoods with higher percentages of people of color were more likely to be graded as "Hazardous." This practice, which is often referred to as "redlining," made it more difficult for homeowners in poorly graded areas to obtain loans, and borrowers were often subject to higher interest rates.

[60] William N. DeBerry, "Sociological Survey" (1940), 10.
[61] Ibid., 14.
[62] Ibid., 15.

This practice exacerbated existing inequities by making it more difficult for people of color to build intergenerational wealth through property ownership.

Here in Springfield, the HOLC map (Figure 10) was prepared in 1935, with the residential neighborhoods graded as either "Best," "Still Desirable," "Definitely Declining," or "Hazardous." At the time, most Black residents lived in either the Old Hill area or in the southern part of the North End, and both of these neighborhoods received low grades. Old Hill was rated as 'Definitely Declining," while the North End was "Hazardous." The other two areas of the city that received a Hazardous grade were the South End, where the population was primarily Italian immigrants, and a small portion of the East Forest Park neighborhood near Harkness Avenue. It seems unclear why the latter area was graded as such.[63]

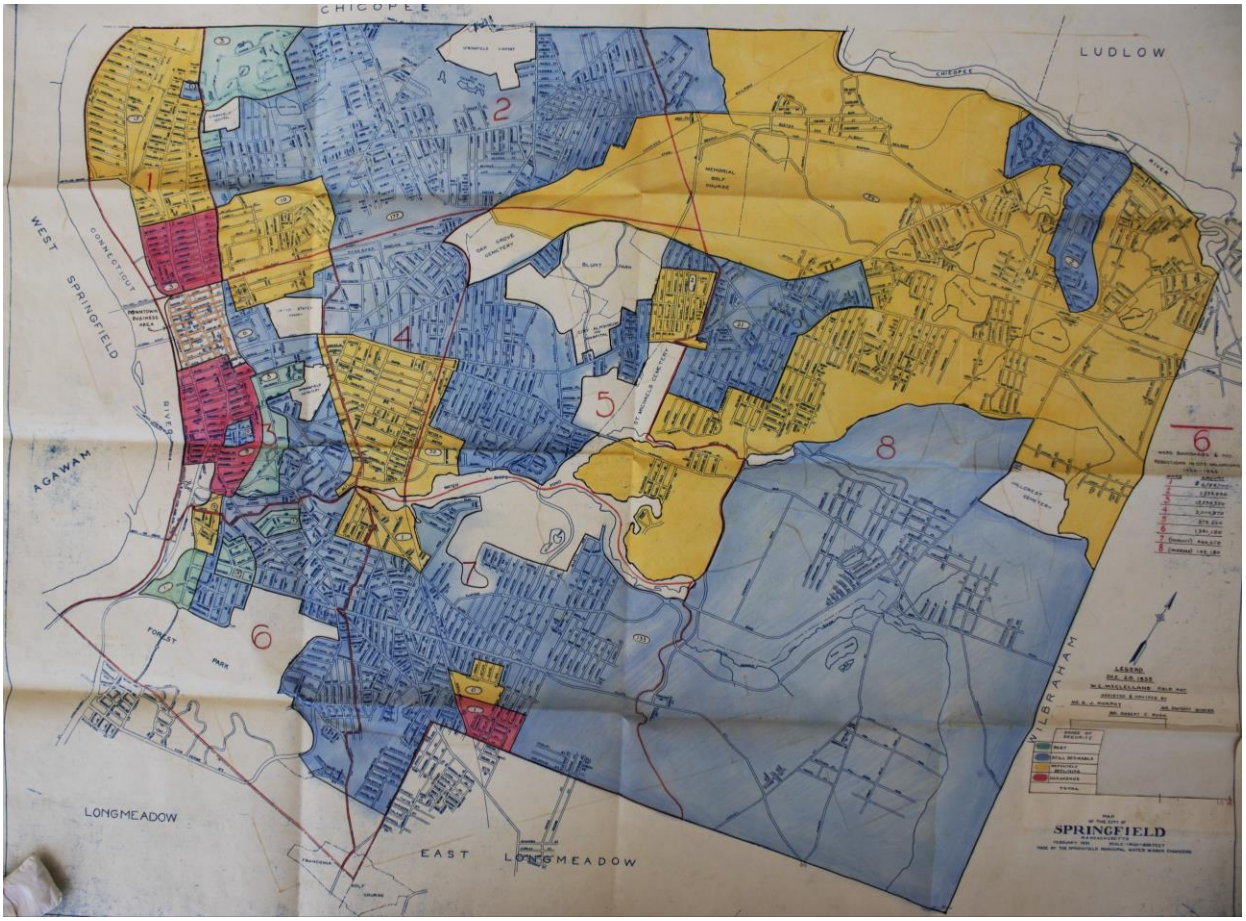

*Figure 10: HOLC map of Springfield, Massachusetts. Source: Mapping Inequality.*

Nationwide, one of the effects of redlining was that only a small number of Black homebuyers were able to obtain Federal Housing Administration (FHA) loans. Most loans went only to properties that were in the top two categories, while those in the "Definitely Declining" and "Hazardous" areas were much less likely to receive financing. Overall, the FHA financed about

[63] Robert K. Nelson, LaDale Winling, et al, "Mapping Inequality: Redlining in New Deal America," edited by Robert K. Nelson and Edward L. Ayers, *American Panorama: An Atlas of United States History*, 2023, https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining.

60% of the home purchases that were made in the United States between 1930 and 1950, yet fewer than 2% of these loans were to non-white buyers.[64]

During the 1940s, the Black population of Springfield continued to grow. From 3,144 Black residents in 1940, this figure nearly doubled to 6,173 a decade later. By 1950, Black residents comprised 3.8% of the city's population, which marked the first time that it had ever risen above 2.3%. However, the city remained highly segregated. The 1950 census was the first to record data at the census tract level, as shown in Figure 11. Previous censuses had enumerated the city based on its eight wards, but starting in 1950 the city was divided into 26 tracts, which provided much more granular data for individual neighborhoods.[65]

More than 70% of the city's Black residents lived in one of just two census tracts. There were 2,839 Black residents in census tract 18, where they comprised 29% of its population. The boundaries of Tract 18 were defined by State Street, Walnut Street, Hickory Street, and the former railroad right-of-way between Eastern Avenue and Wilbraham Avenue. These boundaries correspond to the modern-day Old Hill neighborhood. The other census tract with a large Black population was Tract 10, which had 1,551 Black residents who comprised 34% of its population. This tract was in the southern part of the North End, bounded by Patton Street to the north, Chestnut Street to the east, the railroad tracks to the south, and the Connecticut River to the west.[66]

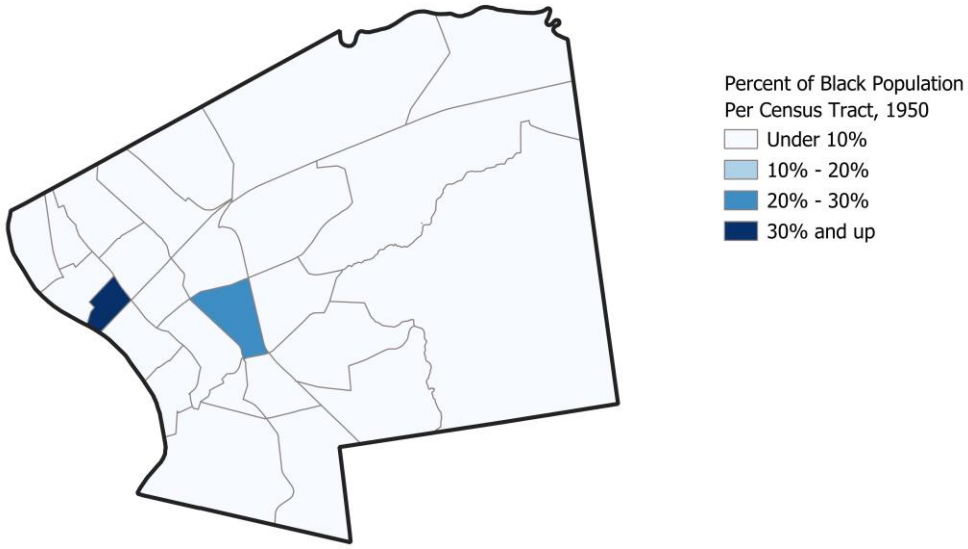


*Figure 11: Percentage of Black Population Per Census Tract, 1950*

By contrast, the suburban census tracts were almost exclusively White in the 1950 census. Tracts 16 and 21-26, which collectively comprise the modern-day Forest Park, East Forest Park, and

[64] Marc Seitles, "The Perpetuation of Residential Racial Segregation in America: Historical Discrimination, Modern Forms of Exclusion, and Inclusionary Remedies," *Journal of Land Use & Environmental Law* 14, no. 1 (1998), 92-93. http://www.jstor.org/stable/42842721.
[65] United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *1950 United States Census of Population: Springfield, Mass. Census Tracts* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1952), 7-8.
[66] Ibid.

Sixteen Acres neighborhoods, had just 35 Black residents out of a total population of 37,296, equivalent to just 0.09% of the residents of those tracts. Likewise, census tracts 1-6, covering the Indian Orchard, East Springfield, and Liberty Heights neighborhoods, had 50 Black residents out of 37,255 total, equivalent to 0.13% of the population.[67]

The highly segregated nature of the city's population was the result of many decades of discriminatory housing practices. This included the enforcement of informal gentlemen's agreements, as described in DeBerry's reports, along with officially sanctioned practices within public housing facilities.

In 1950, the Springfield Housing Authority (SHA) came under criticism from civil rights advocates who protested against its policy of "limited segregation," as SHA chair John I. Robinson described it. Among those leading the effort to end segregation within public housing was the Rev. Albert B. Cleage, who served as pastor of St. John's Congregational Church and as chair of the housing committee for the Springfield chapter of the NAACP. A June 1, 1950 article in the *Springfield Daily News* quoted him as saying, "[t]he NAACP contends that a pattern of segregation as practiced by the Springfield Housing Authority contradicts the non-discriminatory provisions of both state and national housing acts from which the Springfield Housing Authority derives its powers."[68]

The segregationist policies of the SHA remained a source of controversy throughout the spring of 1950, with Robinson defending it as a necessary evil. He described it as "a very realistic approach to the overall housing program," and argued that fully integrating all of the public housing projects could cause a political backlash against public housing in general.[69] Robinson, who is the namesake of the modern-day Robinson Gardens SHA facility on Bay Street, insisted that "[i]t is a fact that many of them (Negroes) wish to live with their own, despite reports that emanate from various groups to the contrary. Many are happier that way." However, this assertion was contradicted by interviews conducted by the *Springfield Union*, which reported that 12 of 14 Black residents at Reed Village would prefer to live in integrated units.[70]

The issue of segregation within the SHA was ultimately resolved in May 1950, when Governor Paul A. Dever signed a bill into law that prohibited segregation within public housing projects in Massachusetts. However, Black residents of Springfield continued to face structural barriers to accessing housing in other parts of the city. In May 1954, the *Springfield Union* published a three-part series of articles that highlighted ongoing discriminatory practices in the city. In particular, the newspaper emphasized that the two major problems were:

1. *Negroes who are crammed into substandard units in blighted sections.*
2. *Negroes who possess the economic means to live in desirable sections of the city but are prevented from doing so by gentlemen's agreements.*[71]

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[67] Ibid.
[68] "Progressives Cannot Crash Rights Parley," *Springfield Daily News* (Springfield, MA), January 11, 1950.
[69] "Robinson is Assailed On Segregation Stand," *Springfield Union* (Springfield, MA), April 27, 1950.
[70] "Negro Families at Reed Aware of Segregation But They're Glad They Have a Place to Live," *Springfield Union* (Springfield, MA), May 11, 1950.
[71] "Housing Poses Challenging Problem for City's Negroes," *Springfield Union* (Springfield, MA), May 6, 1954.

The first issue was the result of discriminatory rental practices among private landlords, with the newspaper noting:

> *It is virtually impossible for a Negro to rent an apartment or tenement in a desirable section. They can rent only in dilapidated sections or from other Negroes who own multiple-unit dwellings. White people, as a rule, refuse to rent a tenement or apartment to a Negro in predominantly white areas. Many Negroes are packed into semislum blocks in the North End, with some of the worst conditions existing on Sharon, Ferry, Congress, Tenth, Essex, Franklin, Holyoke, Auburn, Vine, and Seventh Streets.*[72]

The second issue involved collusion among real estate agents and sellers to prevent Black residents from purchasing homes in predominantly White neighborhoods. The *Union* noted that:

> *They find it practically impossible to locate in Forest Park, upper Allen St., Sixteen Acres and other choice residential areas. A prominent real estate dealer flatly told a reporter: "there really is nothing available to Negroes except in sections where they now live. He said it is up to the seller to say whether he wished his home sold to a Negro or not, but that it was "more or less of a foregone conclusion" that homes in Sixteen Acres and other preferred sections would not be sold to colored people."*[73]

To test the accuracy of this statement, the *Union* reporter placed calls to several real estate agents. The article described one such instance involving a house that was for sale in Sixteen Acres:

> *Inquiries were made about a house off Plumtree Rd. The agency was eager to show the home to the caller – until he said he was a Negro. He was told the seller would have to be consulted. The dealer called back to say the house in question had been sold–but that a house on Willard Ave., off State St., was available. He was told a home in the Sixteen Acres section was desired. Later a call to the same agency revealed the house off Plumtree Rd. still was very much on the market and an appointment could be arranged to see it. But apparently only for a white man.*[74]

The house on Willard Avenue, where the agent had attempted to direct the reporter, was located within the McKnight neighborhood, which by the mid-1950s was becoming home to many Black residents. The article went on to describe how:

> *Negroes who attempt to buy homes in all-white areas often meet with suggestions that they purchase in the McKnight district or other sections where colored people already have located. When a Negro does purchase a home on an all-white street, almost invariably the other residents become upset. Usually several white families immediately place their homes on the market.*[75]

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[72] Ibid.
[73] "Negroes' Efforts to Buy Homes in Better Sections of City Are Effectively Blocked," *Springfield Union* (Springfield, MA), May 7, 1954.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.

The primary objections to Black families in White neighborhoods centered around the perception that it would cause property values to drop. However, the *Springfield Union* article disproved this assertion by citing the city assessor, who noted no such trend, along with a nationwide study that had been conducted by the Race Relations Department of the American Missionary Society. Another objection that some White residents raised was that Black homeowners did not maintain their property. However, the *Union* likewise challenged this assertion, by noting that Black homeowners were generally unable to purchase any property except for those that were already run-down before they acquired it.[76]

Overall, the series of articles in the *Springfield Union* emphasized that integration would resolve many of the racial disparities within the city. In the third article, the Union quoted the Rev. Ernest H. Sommerfield, pastor of the Church of the Unity, who argued that:

> *They are always talking about the problems created by a racial neighborhood. Segregation and discrimination actually create these problems. The elimination of segregation eliminates these problems.*[77]

## Highways and Redevelopment

The Black population of Springfield grew at an even faster rate in the 1950s than it had in the 1940s. By the 1960 census the city had 13,086 Black residents, which was more than double the number from 1950. However, the city remained heavily segregated. Tracts 10 and 18, where Black residents had comprised about one-third of the population in 1950, were now the majority in both of those tracts, as shown in Figure 12. Tract 18, in Old Hill, was 54% Black, while Tract 10, in the North End, was 52% Black. Other parts of the city with high concentrations of Black residents included Tract 13 (McKnight neighborhood), which was 31% Black, and Tract 14 (Bay neighborhood), which was 28% Black.[78]

It was also during the 1950s that the Hispanic population of Springfield began to increase, largely due to migration from Puerto Rico. The 1960 census recorded 694 Springfield residents who were born in Puerto Rico or had parents who were born in Puerto Rico. Most lived in Tract 8, in the area around Memorial Square in the North End, where they comprised about 10% of the tract's population in 1960. This census tract was directly to the north of the predominantly-Black Tract 10. The Hispanic population of Springfield would continue to grow in subsequent decades, and residents often faced discrimination due to ethnic and linguistic differences, along with disinvestment in neighborhoods with high populations of Hispanic residents.

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[76] Ibid.

[77] "Negroes, Whites Dwelling Side by Side Are Amicable," *Springfield Union* (Springfield, MA), May 8, 1954.

[78] United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Censuses of Population and Housing: 1960. Census Tracts: Springfield-Chicopee-Holyoke, Mass* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), 18-20.

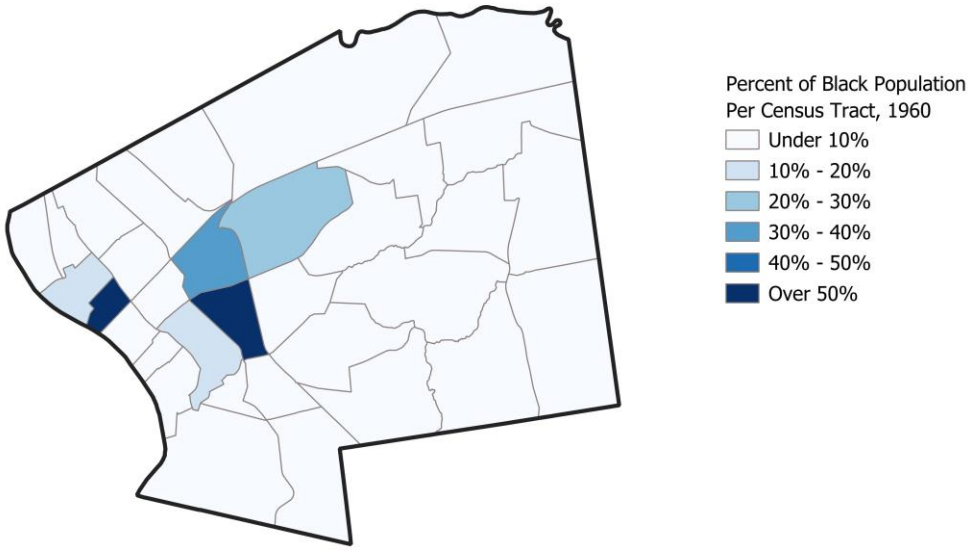


*Figure 12: Percentage of Black Population Per Census Tract, 1960*

During this same time, the suburban neighborhoods remained predominantly White in 1960. For example, Tract 16 – which comprised the city's suburban Sixteen Acres neighborhood, had grown to the point where it had been divided into five different tracts by 1960. During that time, its population had grown from 2,457 residents in 1950 to 14,774 in 1960. However, during that same time its Black population had only increased from 7 in 1950 to 35 in 1960. The other suburban census tracts likewise showed minimal numbers of Black residents, including just 47 who lived in tracts 21-26, out of a total of 39,920 residents. In the northern part of the city, tracts 1-6 reported 112 Black residents out of a total population of 31,416, and tract 4 – in the Hungry Hill part of the Liberty Heights neighborhood – reported no Black residents out of a total population of 7,620.[79]

The concentration of large numbers of Black residents in particular parts of the city, combined with the disinvestment that had resulted from redlining and other discriminatory practices, meant that these neighborhoods were particularly vulnerable to redevelopment efforts in the 1950s and 1960s. This was often done under the guise of "slum clearance" and highway construction, and both of these types of initiatives tended to disproportionately target Black communities.[80]

Here in Springfield, the "slum clearance" and highway development efforts of the 1950s and 1960s primarily focused on the southern part of the North End. This area, particularly Tract 10, had the highest percentage of Black residents of any census tract in the 1950 census, and it was one of only two majority-Black census tracts in Springfield in 1960. It was also a very impoverished part of the city, as noted in the 1954 *Springfield Union* article series, which had described it as "semislum."

[79] Ibid.
[80] Marc Seitles, "The Perpetuation of Residential Racial Segregation" *Journal of Land Use & Environmental Law* 14, no. 1 (1998), 91. http://www.jstor.org/stable/42842721.

Much of this redevelopment effort in the North End was guided by a Citizens Action Commission, which was created in 1958. It consisted of 140 members, including a 17-person executive committee. However, the membership was not representative of the city's overall demographics. The 17 members of the executive committee included just one woman and one person of color. None of the executive committee members lived in the North End, and fewer than half lived anywhere in Springfield, with most of the other members residing in Longmeadow.[81]

*Figure 13: Modern highways overlaid in black on a 1920 map of the Memorial Square area. The blue checkered pattern covers the "clearance area" that was designated in 1959, and nearly all of those buildings were demolished in the early 1960s. Sources: Boston Public Library Norman B. Leventhal Map Center, and MassGIS.*

This lack of North End representation in the planning process resulted in a redevelopment plan that favored the interests of commuters who drove into the city from the suburbs, rather than the interests of the people who lived in the affected area. This included the demolition of nearly all of the existing buildings between the railroad tracks and Memorial Square, and between Chestnut Street and the Connecticut River. This targeted area closely overlapped with the boundaries of the predominantly Black census tract in the North End, and it also included much of Tract 8, which had the majority of the city's Puerto Rican residents in the early 1960s.

The homes and apartments in the area were replaced with large-scale commercial and institutional facilities, which were surrounded by large surface parking lots that catered to suburban commuters. This part of the North End also became the site of the highway interchange between Interstate 91 and Interstate 291, which occupies a significant part of what had once been Tract 10.

[81] "Mayor O'Connor Announces Citizens Action Commission," *Springfield Union* (Springfield, MA), March 9, 1958.

*Figure 14: A house on Vine Street, located in the predominantly Black section of the North End. This site is now the location of the Interstate-91/291 interchange. Photo taken around 1938-1939. Courtesy of the Springfield Preservation Trust.*

The highway placement was a particular source of controversy in Springfield in the early 1960s. Some North End residents spoke out against the highways, including State Representative Armand N. Tancrati, who was opposed to any highways in the city, predicting that they would create "ghost towns." He also expressed concerns about compensation, believing that there was "no protection" for the people who would be "evicted" by the highway project. By contrast, though, the legislators from the more suburban parts of the city—which would not be directly affected by the highways—voiced their support for these projects. Among them was Representative John D. B. Macmillan of suburban East Forest Park, who dismissed concerns about the routes by arguing that, either way, "someone has to be hurt."[82]

With regards to compensation, the vast majority of affected North End residents were renters rather than homeowners. Only 10% of White households and 6% of Black households in Tract 10 lived in owner-occupied units as of 1960.[83] This meant that most residents would not directly receive payment for the land takings. Instead, these displaced tenants received relocation allowances. By 1965, a total of $106,300 in relocation allowance payments had been distributed to 702 families and 386 individual residents of the North End. On average, this amounted to $118 per family, and $60 per individual.[84] Adjusted for inflation, this is equivalent to about $1,118 and $600, respectively, in 2024 dollars.[85]

[82] "Rocky Road for Expressway," *Springfield Union* (Springfield, MA), June 2, 1960.
[83] United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Census Tracts: Springfield-Chicopee-Holyoke, Mass* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), 43.
[84] "$106,300 Paid For Relocation," *Springfield Daily News (Springfield, MA)*, April 24, 1965.
[85] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, CPI Inflation Calculator, https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl, accessed May 6, 2024.

## De Facto School Segregation and Busing

Aside from vulnerability to highway projects and other redevelopment efforts, the high degree of segregation in Springfield also had the effect of creating de facto segregation within the public schools. As discussed earlier in this report, this was noticeable in DeBerry's enrollment reports from 1940, and it continued to be an issue in the 1960s.

In 1963, the Springfield chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) raised concerns about de facto segregation in 11 of the city's schools, and requested that the city take action to correct this racial imbalance. The city's inaction ultimately led to a federal lawsuit in 1964, which was filed on behalf of 16 Black students in Springfield.[86]

In January 1965, Judge George C. Sweeney ruled in favor of the students, finding that:

> *In the light of the ratio of white to non-white in the total population in the city of Springfield, I do find, however, that a non-white attendance of appreciably more than 50 per cent in any one school is tantamount to segregation.*[87]

Judge Sweeney noted that Black and Puerto Rican students comprised a majority of the students in seven elementary schools and one junior high school, while other schools were entirely White. He cited the fact that, of the 3,386 Black elementary students, all but 595 were enrolled at one of eight of the city's 38 elementary schools. At the junior high level, 702 of 946 Black students were enrolled at Buckingham Junior High School, 117 at Chestnut Junior High School, and the remaining 127 students were at one of the city's six other junior high schools.[88]

In his ruling, Judge Sweeney ordered the city to prepare a desegregation plan by April 30, 1965. The city, however, argued that segregation did not exist in Springfield, and that any racial disparity was entirely due to housing. Superintendent T. Joseph McCook claimed that "[i]n any big city there is bound to be a racial concentration and under the neighborhood concept any segregation in schools is a matter of housing rather than schooling." This excuse, however, overlooks the fact that segregated neighborhoods themselves were a result of discriminatory practices. McCook's objections were anticipated by Judge Sweeney, who noted in his ruling that "segregation results from a rigid adherence to the neighborhood plan of school attendance."[89]

The city appealed Judge Sweeney's decision, and it was ultimately overturned by the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, which ruled that neighborhood school districts did not create segregated schools. The Court of Appeals also noted that the School Committee had already begun an effort to reduce the racial imbalance in the city's schools.[90]

Over the next decade, the city would continue to grapple with how to resolve the racial imbalance. As was the case in cities across the northeast during this period, the question of

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[86] "Chronology of a Crisis: One Year Just Spilled into the Next," *Springfield Sunday Republican* (Springfield, MA), May 23, 1971.
[87] "Federal Judge Rules Segregation Exists in Springfield Schools," *Lowell Sun* (Lowell, MA), January 12, 1965.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid.
[90] "City Wins School Appeal," *Springfield Daily News* (Springfield, MA), July 12, 1965.

busing students to integrated schools was a controversial solution here in Springfield. In 1965, the state passed the Racial Imbalance Law, which mandated desegregation in Springfield and other cities with heavily segregated school systems. Cities that failed to comply with the law would risk having state funding withheld.[91]

However, the Springfield School Committee resisted desegregation, and in 1966 the state Board of Education withheld $6 million in state funds due to the city's failure to comply.[92] Several members of the School Committee were particularly outspoken in their opposition to the Racial Imbalance Law, including Mary M. Lynch, who advocated for the repeal of the law. Lynch, the namesake of the city's modern-day Mary M. Lynch Elementary School, argued that the law "discriminates against the white child."[93] Over the next few years, she and other school committee members continued to obstruct desegregation efforts, with the *Springfield Union* noting in 1971 that "[t]he School Committee has now turned down six busing proposals, and refused to go on record saying it will comply with the law." In the process, the city continued to risk losing state funding rather than desegregate.[94]

This impasse would continue until August 1974, when the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court unanimously ordered Springfield to implement a six-district busing plan for its elementary schools for the upcoming 1974-1975 school year. In reporting on the court's decision, the Springfield Daily News described it as a "stinging rebuff" of the school committee. The article also quoted Lynch, who decried the decision as "a travesty on justice," and paraphrased another school committee member, Francis P. Coughlin, who suggested that parents should resist busing by starting a private school.[95]

It seems unclear as to exactly what role the busing controversy played in the "white flight" that Springfield and many other cities experienced during the 1960s and 1970s. Springfield reached its peak population in 1960, with 174,463 residents, including 161,102 White residents. By 1970, the overall population had declined to 163,905, including 142,518 who were White. A decade later, the population dropped to 152,319, including 115,873 White residents. In terms of percent of the overall population, White residents in Springfield decreased from 92% in 1960, to 87% in 1970, to 76% in 1980. Since 1980, the city's population has stabilized, and has remained consistently above 150,000 in every subsequent census. As of 2020, 63% of Springfield residents identify as White, which includes White Hispanic residents. Non-Hispanic White residents comprised 31% of the population in 2020.

In 1980, the *Springfield Daily News* published an article that reflected on the six years since busing was implemented, In the article, school officials indicated that they believed it was working, and that "white flight" was not a major issue. School officials cited rising test scores and a decrease in racial tension, while also noting that there were still some challenges, including a need to recruit more non-White teachers and administrators. The article also pointed out that Black and Hispanic students collectively comprised 47% of the enrollment in Springfield Public

[91] "Chronology of a Crisis," *Springfield Sunday Republican* (Springfield, MA), May 23, 1971.
[92] Ibid.
[93] "Two on Board Back Repeal of Imbalance Law," *Springfield Daily News* (Springfield, MA), August 3, 1967.
[94] "Chronology of a Crisis," *Springfield Sunday Republican* (Springfield, MA), May 23, 1971.
[95] "Court Rules District Plan Into Effect," *Springfield Daily News* (Springfield, MA), August 23, 1974.

Schools, and school officials predicted that within two years Springfield would become a majority-minority school district.[96]

In more than 40 years since that article was published, the White, non-Hispanic enrollment in Springfield Public Schools has continued to shrink. In many regards, the schools today are as segregated as they were prior to the start of busing. The difference is that, while prior to 1974 White families generally lived in the suburban neighborhoods of Springfield and attended neighborhood schools, White families generally now live in surrounding communities that have their own, predominantly White, school districts.

**Table 7: School District Enrollment by Race, 2023-2024**

| | Springfield | Agawam | Chicopee | East Longmeadow | Longmeadow | Ludlow | West Springfield | Hampden-Wilbraham |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| African American | 17.6% | 2.5% | 5.8% | 3.9% | 3.7% | 1.9% | 5.1% | 3.7% |
| Asian | 1.7% | 3.4% | 1.8% | 5.3% | 10.5% | 1.6% | 7.2% | 2.3% |
| Hispanic | 69.3% | 12.6% | 44.6% | 13.5% | 7.9% | 16.0% | 23.5% | 9.6% |
| Native American | 0.1% | 0.1% | 0.1% | 0.1% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.1% |
| White | 7.9% | 78.6% | 43.8% | 73.0% | 73.2% | 77.5% | 58.7% | 79.8% |
| Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander | 0.0% | 0.1% | 0.1% | 0.0% | 0.1% | 0.0% | 0.1% | 0.1% |
| Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic | 3.4% | 2.7% | 3.8% | 4.1% | 4.7% | 3.0% | 5.4% | 4.5% |

*Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, School and District Profiles. https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/*

Table 7 shows the racial composition of Springfield's schools, along with those of the surrounding school districts, for the 2023-2024 school year. As shown in the table, White, non-Hispanic students comprise just 7.9% of the student body in Springfield, even though 31% of the city's population is White, non-Hispanic. By contrast, White, non-Hispanic students comprise over 70% of the student body in most of the other cities and towns that surround Springfield. In effect, the implementation of busing has resulted in shifting from segregation at the neighborhood level, to segregation at the municipal level.

## Ongoing Challenges

Along with schools, the modern-day census data strongly indicates that many of the same issues that DeBerry had raised in his initial 1905 report are still barriers for people of color in Springfield. This includes employment opportunities, which DeBerry had noted as being a primary concern on each of his reports. Although employment opportunities for Black residents have certainly expanded in the past century, the data points to an ongoing disparity in employment rates, occupation types, and household income.

[96] "Busing: Did it Work?" *Springfield Daily News* (Springfield, MA), February 18, 1980.

As shown in Table 8, unemployment rates for Black residents of Springfield are consistently more than double the figure for White, non-Hispanic residents. In addition, as shown in Table 9, White, non-Hispanic workers are much more likely to be employed in management, business, science, and arts occupations, and in sales and office occupations. Black workers, on the other hand, are much more likely to be employed in service occupations and in production, transportation, and material moving occupations. Likewise, Black workers in Springfield earn significantly less than White, non-Hispanic workers, as shown in Table 10. As of 2022, the median income for Black households was $49,506, compared to $66,143 for White, non-Hispanic Springfield households.

These disparities in occupation and household income are likely due in part to differences in educational attainment, as shown in Table 11. Although Black and White, non-Hispanic residents have similar high school graduation rates (87.2% and 90.4%, respectively), White residents are twice as likely to have a bachelor's degree or higher.

Census data also shows a disparity in homeownership rates between Black and White residents. Over the course of the 20th century, homeownership rates in Springfield increased for all residents, but they increased at a much lower rate for Black residents when compared to White, non-Hispanic residents. In 1950, the Black homeownership rate was 27.2%, compared to a White homeownership rate of 42.8%. This increased to 31.2% and 51.5% by 1960, and to 33.1% and 53.3% by 1970. As shown in Table 12, the Black homeownership rate in 2010 was 43.1%, compared to 70.4% for White, non-Hispanic residents. This is the most recent year for which homeownership data by race is available from the U.S. Census Bureau. These figures indicate that the divide in homeownership rates that was present in 1950 is still evident as of 2010, and has in fact become an even greater divide in the intervening years.

**Table 8**: **Unemployment Rate by Race in Springfield, Massachusetts, 2018-2022**

| **Race** | **2018** | **2019** | **2020** | **2021** | **2022** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| White | 8.3% | 6.9% | 6.9% | 7.3% | 6.4% |
| White alone, not Hispanic or Latino | 5.4% | 4.5% | 4.5% | 5.1% | 5.0% |
| Black or African American | 11.4% | 12.1% | 12.1% | 13.5% | 11.4% |
| American Indian and Alaska Native | 24.6% | 13.7% | 13.7% | 9.5% | 14.7% |
| Asian | 9.6% | 4.7% | 4.7% | 3.7% | 2.8% |
| Some other race | 16.3% | 12.1% | 12.1% | 11.2% | 9.5% |
| Two or more | 12.2% | 12.1% | 12.1% | 12.8% | 12.4% |
| Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race) | 13.6% | 11.9% | 11.9% | 12.3% | 11.1% |
| **Total Population** | **9.9%** | **8.2%** | **8.8%** | **9.6%** | **8.7%** |

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2018-2022*

| Table 9: Distribution of Workforce by Race and Occupation Type for Springfield Residents Aged 16 and Over, 2022 | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Management, business, science, and arts occupations | Service occupations | Sales and office occupations | Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations | Production, transportation, and material moving occupations |
| White | 35.7% | 22.7% | 20.7% | 6.5% | 14.4% |
| White, not Hispanic or Latino | 42.7% | 17.7% | 22.0% | 7.3% | 10.3% |
| Black | 33.4% | 29.7% | 16.0% | 3.7% | 17.2% |
| American Indian and Alaska Native | 30.7% | 32.1% | 23.4% | 7.6% | 6.2% |
| Asian | 31.9% | 22.3% | 12.9% | 6.0% | 27.0% |
| Some other race | 22.6% | 31.8% | 16.9% | 6.4% | 22.4% |
| Two or more races | 26.0% | 29.1% | 15.3% | 7.8% | 21.7% |
| Hispanic or Latino (of any race) | 23.1% | 31.3% | 16.9% | 6.4% | 22.3% |
| **Total Population** | **32.1%** | **26.2%** | **18.3%** | **6.1%** | **17.3%** |

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey 5-year estimates*

| Table 10: Median Household Income in Springfield, Massachusetts, 2018-2022 | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Race** | **2018** | **2019** | **2020** | **2021** | **2022** |
| White | $38,527 | $40,969 | $43,691 | $49,568 | $55,554 |
| Black or African American | $39,092 | $38,883 | $42,670 | $43,814 | $49,506 |
| American Indian and Alaska Native | $17,639 | $37,773 | $38,491 | $48,214 | $69,266 |
| Asian | $58,992 | $60,236 | $57,882 | $61,419 | $62,436 |
| Some other race | $19,687 | $22,757 | $28,592 | $31,519 | $38,867 |
| Two or more races | $32,164 | $30,192 | $34,486 | $29,574 | $31,584 |
| Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race) | $23,126 | $24,722 | $27,279 | $29,202 | $33,619 |
| White alone, not Hispanic or Latino | $53,499 | $55,460 | $58,991 | $62,724 | $66,143 |
| **All Races** | **$36,730** | **$39,432** | **$41,571** | **$43,308** | **$47,677** |

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2018-2022*

| Table 11: Educational Attainment of Springfield Residents 25 Years and Over, 2022 | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Race** | **High School Graduate or Higher** | **Bachelor's Degree or Higher** |
| White alone | 81.7% | 23.0% |
| White alone, not Hispanic or Latino | 90.4% | 30.0% |
| Black alone | 87.2% | 20.2% |
| American Indian or Alaska Native alone | 72.3% | 9.7% |
| Asian alone | 71.5% | 20.7% |
| Some other race alone | 70.3% | 12.5% |
| Two or more races | 71.3% | 15.6% |
| Hispanic or Latino of any race | 67.2% | 10.8% |
| **Total Population** | **79.6%** | **20.0%** |

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey 5-year estimates*

| Table 12: Homeownership Rate by Race, Springfield, Massachusetts, 2010 | |
|---|---|
| **Race** | **Homeownership Rate** |
| White | 63.3% |
| White, not Hispanic or Latino | 70.4% |
| Black or African American | 43.1% |
| American Indian and Alaska Native | 57.9% |
| Asian | 58.2% |
| Some other race | 23.3% |
| Two or more races | 45.3% |
| Hispanic or Latino of any race | 27.2% |
| **Total Population** | **51.3%** |

*Source: U S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Selected Population Data Profiles*

At the neighborhood and census tract levels, Springfield is less racially segregated now compared to how it was in the mid-20th century, as shown in Figure 15. Of the city's 37 census tracts in the 2020 census, all had a Black population of 7.7% or higher, and most had a Black population of 15% or higher. However, the impact of mid-20th century housing discrimination nonetheless remains evident in the fact that the six census tracts in and around Mason Square all have Black populations of greater than 30%.

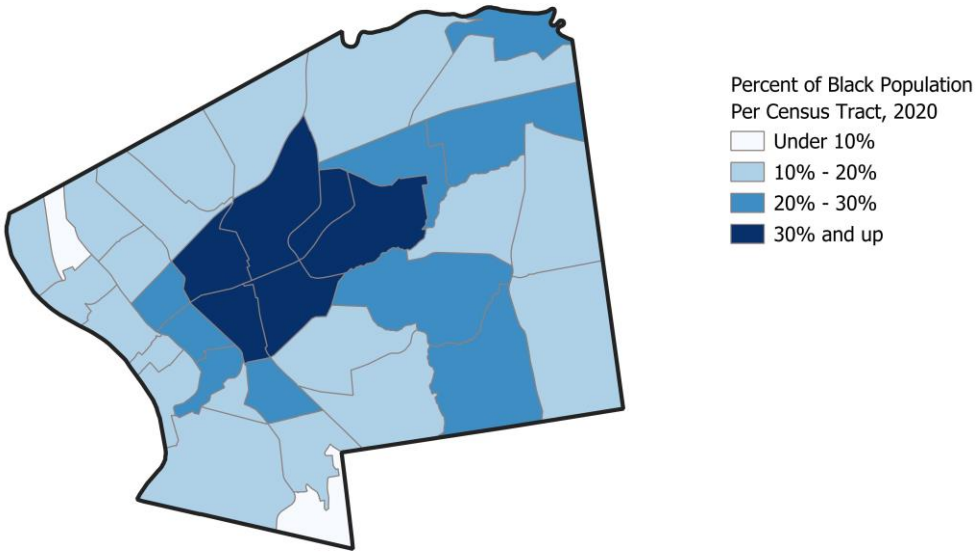


*Figure 15: Percent of Black Population Per Census Tract, 2020*

It is also important to note that, while the neighborhoods within Springfield are more racially integrated now than in previous years, the overall Black and White population of the surrounding region remains highly segregated, when suburban communities are taken into consideration. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) uses the dissimilarity index to measure segregation within metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs), and an index score of 0.55 or higher is considered to have a high level of segregation. When the demographics of the entire Springfield MSA are factored, the region remains highly segregated. As of 2010, the Springfield MSA has a Black/White dissimilarity index of 0.616. This is a significant decrease from 1980, when the dissimilarity index was 0.721, but it nonetheless indicates that the Springfield region remains highly segregated.[97]

In addition to Black/White segregation, the Springfield MSA also has high rates of White/Latino segregation. The White/Latino dissimilarity index, as of 2010, was 0.634. This is the third highest figure for any MSA in the country, and the highest for MSAs with a population over 500,000.[98] This is in large part due to the North End neighborhoods of Brightwood and Memorial Square, which collectively have a population that is 85% Hispanic. This is not specifically within the scope of this report, but it is nonetheless important to consider, due to the potential for inequities that can arise when historically marginalized groups live in highly segregated areas.

[97] Sustainable Knowledge Corridor Consortium, *Knowledge Corridor Fair Housing and Equity Assessment*, 2014, 40 https://www.pvpc.org/sites/default/files/FHEA%2010-30-14%20Final%20Report%20with%20cover.pdf

[98] Ibid.

## Conclusion

Overall, the data indicates that the issues of employment opportunities, education, and housing are critical to the long-term prosperity of Black residents in Springfield. These are important determinants in disparate outcomes related to economic and social stability, inter-generational wealth, environmental justice, health, and a variety of other quality-of-life metrics. And, it is also evident from that data that the inequities in employment, education, and housing are not new issues, nor are they accidental. Rather, they are the result of deliberate acts of racism and discrimination that have consistently resulted in Black residents of Springfield being denied equal access to the same opportunities as other residents in the city.

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