The Diaspora

**1619-1835** Africans are stolen and sold for profit, and forced into slavery.

**1740s Plantation Culture Established in Charlotte, NC.**
Large numbers of Europeans settled in Charlotte, NC bringing enslaved Africans with them or acquiring them after arrival. They quickly develop a plantation economy. The oldest remaining plantation in Charlotte, NC is Latta Plantation. Museum is still active today. Its sheer size provides a clearer picture of why slave masters had so much autonomy in making decisions about punishments for their enslaved populations. The master’s person, in essence, constituted the entire legal system for a plantation. This explains why so many masters became and were viewed by enslaved men and women as tyrants.

**1700s-1800s Rosedale Plantation in Operation.**
Also known as “Frew’s Folly” the Rosedale plantation was built by Archibald Free on eight acres of land. It was later restored by the Rosendale Foundation.

Life and Death in the Early Community

**1800s Alexander African Burial Ground.**
Members of the Alexander family buried deceased “slaves” in this corner of their estate known as the Alexander African Burial Ground. The cemetery is now located in the rear of a modern Apartment complex near the intersections of Harris and Tryon Streets in North Charlotte, NC.

**1891 The Cherry Neighborhood is Planned Adjacent to Cherry Park.**
Cherry Neighborhood an all black neighborhood was designed by the city for use by African American families. Cherry Park, patterned after Latta Park in the affluent Dilworth community, is the name for the greenway behind the Myers Tabernacle African Episcopal Church and is still known as “Cherry Park,” today. Open to the entire community the park is used for baseball, and other sporting events.
1928  McCoy Road Slave Cemetery.
The McCoy Road Slave Cemetery is one of many African American Burial Grounds in and around Charlotte, NC. The use of property for the burial of enslaved Africans by black families as well as by white slave owners, may date back one-hundred years before this plot of land was recognized as an official burial ground by Mecklenburg County.

1853 Pinewood and Elmwood Cemetery.
Located near the intersections of Cates and North Leader Streets, Pinewood and Elmwood Cemetery was originally two cemeteries. Segregation led to separate burial grounds for Africans and whites. Elmwood was designated for whites only and Pinewood, for deceased African Americans. A lovely line of trees now marks the fence than ran East and West across the breadth of the cemetery. Some of the most famous African Americans in the history of Charlotte, NC are buried here, including the Imperial Potentate A.E.A.O.N Shrine; W.C. Smith, first publisher of an Afro-American newspaper in Charlotte, NC and an expert mason and builder. A.M.E.’s leading pastor Clinton is buried here; as is one of his successors Bishop Lomax; Henry McCrorey and his family members are also buried at Pinewood.

[1920s?]  Washington Heights Neighborhood.
Named after Booker T. Washington, Washington Heights was a street car development and one of the first such communities in the nation built to accommodate blacks. The area is still notable for its wide streets and for its street names which given the titles of prominent blacks and area residents.

1896  AME former Headquarters.
From 1896, until the late 20th century the A.M.E. [National] Church headquarters was this simple building (today the Mecklenburg Investment Co.) on Brevard Street in Uptown Charlotte, NC.

1850s  Biddleville Community Forms.
Developing as a rim village on the outside of the city property, Biddleville is the oldest black Neighborhood in Charlotte, NC. It was here that immediately following the American Civil War day workers would reside at night and go into the city to work during the day.
Creating & Sustaining Educational Institutes

1867 Colored Church [School] of Charlotte, NC Opens.
Queens College, found in 1771, was the first college to open in Charlotte, N.C.; however, it was a whites-only campus. In 1866 the Reverends Samuel Alexander and Willis Miller organized the Catawba Presbytery establishing a Committee on Missions for the Freedmen. The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church voted to support the founding of an African American School and church. The first educational session of the Colored Presbyterian Church of Charlotte was held on May 1, 1867.

1876 Renamed Biddle Memorial Institute, the Campus Grows.
A fundraising effort for the school is launched at the Presbyterian headquarters in Philadelphia. Mrs. Mary D. Biddle donates more than $10,000 to the school, under the auspicious attitude of the Freedman’s Bureau.

1883 Biddle Hall Built.
Biddle Hall, the oldest brick structure in Biddleville was built with funds from a gift by Mary D. Biddle, and named in honor of her late husband Major Henry J. Biddle, a Civil War veteran.

1883 Biddle University Chartered.
The North Carolina State Legislature amends the charter of the Henry Biddle Memorial Institute to reflect the new name of the educational institution as Biddle University.

1895 Carter Hall Built.
Carter Hall is the second oldest brick structure on the JCSU campus. It was built by the male students on campus as part of their applied instruction under the supervision of the Industrial Department. Carter Hall served as the men’s dorm from 1911 onward.

1912 Carnegie Library Opens on Johnson C. Smith University Campus.
Whites established the first public library in Charlotte, NC in 1903; however, it was only open to white patrons. When African Americans were barred from utilizing the facility, the leadership at Johnson C. Smith University insisted that the African American community, and especially the students, needed a library. Andrew Carnegie donated the $12,500 needed for the construction of the library at the request of Reverend Daniel J. Sanders, President of Biddle University. The structure served as a library for Charlotte’s African American population for decades.

Revised June 16, 2009
1886 First Black Professor Appointed At Biddle University.
George E. Davis becomes the first black Professor at Biddle University and the first black professor at any four-year Historically Black College and University in the South.

1891 Daniel Jackson Sanders Elected President of Biddle University.
Daniel Jackson Sanders becomes the first African American President of a four year college in the South.

1895 George E. Davis House Built.
George E. Davis builds his home a vernacular style house and now designated a state historic site. Davis was the first African American Professor to serve on the faculty at Johnson C. Smith University. Davis went on to serve as the Dean of Faculty at JCSU.

1923 Biddle University Renamed Johnson C. Smith University.
Jane Berry Smith of Pennsylvania donated over $700,000 to build nine additional structures on the Biddle University campus and to create an endowment for the school. The school’s charter was again amended to reflect the change in the institution’s name. The school was renamed after Smith’s late husband, Johnson C. Smith.

1938 Johnson C. Smith Becomes Independent.
The school is released from the Board of National Missions and operates as a private-independent university.

[1910s ?] West Charlotte High School.
West Charlotte High School is the only historically black high school still in existence in Charlotte, NC today. In 1955 it moved to its current site on Senior Dr., just off of Beatties Ford Road.

1938 North West School of the Arts Founded.
North West School of the Arts was built in 1938 by the African American community to absorb the overload in the student population from West Charlotte High School, located at the time in the Second Ward. The school was not accredited, had no indoor toilets, no cafeteria and no gym. Generations of African Americans were educated here despite the shortcomings of the building.

1927 Old Billingsville School Opens.
This Rosenwald School was built by the philanthropic Rosenwald money directed at educating African American youth. After integration, African American children began

Revised June 16, 2009
attending the white school built nearby and Old Billingsville served for a number of years as community center.

**1940’s Carver College Founded.**

Carver College opened its doors in the Second Ward neighborhood to provide night classes for African American Students who were not allowed to take advantage of night classes at Central High under the administration of what would become the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Many of the students came from JCSU, which had reached it capacity due to the large number of students who wished to apply their GI Bills to their college educations at the close of World War II. Eventually Central High became Piedmont Community College and UNCC moved to the northern edge of the city. Carver College students who were unable to travel the twenty miles North to UNCC were eventually absorbed by the community college.

**Spiritual life**

**1831 A White Church with African American Parishioners.**

The Second Great Awakening and the revolt of itinerant preacher Nat Turner of Virginia influenced the decision by white slave owners to include African Americans in worship services. Hopewell Presbyterian Church, a white church established in 1762, constructed a servant’s entrance and balcony for blacks when the building was renovated in 1863. The original Hopewell Presbyterian Church was constructed here by the Synod of Philadelphia, PA. The current outer structure of the church was built or renovated in 1863.

**1864 Clinton African American Methodist Episcopal Church of Zion Founded.**

The Clinton A.M.E. Zion church is the oldest black church built in Charlotte. Established in 1864, the motherhouse originated out of Philadelphia but has been headquartered out of Charlotte, NC for decades. Eventually, this congregation split over the temperance debate, with part of the believers founding Grace A.M.E. Zion Church.

**1867 First Baptist Church Opens.**

First Baptist Church is the oldest Baptist Church in Charlotte, NC. Founded in 1867, the church’s original structure was built in Brooklyn.

**1870s Little Rock A. M. E. Zion Church Founded.**

Built in 1870s, the Little Rock A.M.E. Zion Church is one of the oldest black churches in Charlotte, NC. It was relocated to its present site on North McDowell Street in 1920, but sold its original building to the Afro-American Culture Center in 1980.
1883 Mount Carmel Baptist Church Built.
Mt. Carmel Church was built by Johnson C. Smith University students and faculty who noted the Presbyterian services hosted on the JCSU campus, but preferred to worship as Baptists. For several years, parishioners worshiped in a shop at 600 Beatties Ford Road. In 1883, the congregation raised funds to purchase a lot on Campus Street and constructed Mt. Carmel. In 1918, a new building was designed by Louis Ashbury.

1896 Lutheran Church Founded.
This is the only known Lutheran Church in the Cherry neighborhood. Constructed by its African American parishioners, the structure was once an important part of the Cherry community.

1926 The United House of Prayer Founded by Charles Emanuel Grace.
Better known as “Sweet Daddy Grace,” this renowned pastor’s philosophy was self-help for the African American community. “Daddy Grace” led a parade through Charlotte’s Second Ward on September 18, 1959, inviting all people to accept Christ.

Other Churches established during the late 1800’s and early 1900’s

Jerusalem Church.
Jerusalem Church is an example of the scores of small street corner churches found in Charlotte, NC. This one is located at the corner of J.T. Sanders Street in Washington Heights.

Grace A.M.E Zion Church.
Grace A.M.E. Zion Church lay in the heart of Brooklyn on South Brevard Street. Much of the family life of the Third Ward was centered on Grace; the site of weddings, funerals, political forums, and other gatherings important to the members of the Brooklyn community were held here.

Grier Heights Presbyterian Church.
Grier Heights is one of the primary black Presbyterian churches in Charlotte, NC. The location of the church at the intersection of Skyland and Marney Avenues, gives a hint about the local political clout of the Presbyterians sector within Grier Town’s faith community.

Myers Tabernacle African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church.
Located at 509 Cherry Street in the heart of the Cherry neighborhood, Myers Tabernacle A.M.E. serviced the spiritual needs of African American residents in the community.

Revised June 16, 2009
immediately surrounding it, as well as those in the Grier neighborhood.

The Antebellum

1861-1865 African American Participate in the American Civil War.
Thousands of African American soldiers fought for a Union victory during the American Civil War. However, a few hundred of North Carolin’s blacks are remembered by their families and by memorabilia and war records having fought on the side of the Confederacy. In general, enslaved Africans used the disruption caused by the conflict as a shield under which to quietly flee from bondage. Hundreds of thousands of African Americans left the south, and southern cities like Charlotte, NC, during the war.

The Postbellum

1879-1913 The Industrial South Rises.
Charlotte, NC is home of the first continental gold rush in the 1800s. Railroad companies and lines were laid connecting Charlotte, NC to other major cities. Textile plants grew up across North Carolina, and Charlotte, NC became a major manufacturing center for cloth, and the textile industry became a leading industry for the area.

Civil Rights

1946-1959 Desegregation Movement Begins in Charlotte.
The large number of African Americans in Charlotte, NC and their employment in the textile industry makes segregation on trains complicated for whites to sustain. Combined with African American protests, the impracticality of segregation in an industrial city led to the desegregation of buses and trains by 1959.

September 4, 1957, The Desegregation of Four Charlotte, NC High Schools.
Dorothy Counts, Delois Huntley, and Gus and Girvaud Roberts desegregate the four public high schools in Charlotte, NC on this day.

1957 The Desegregation of “Old” Harding High School.
Harding High School was the first high school to be desegregated in Charlotte, NC. Dorothy Counts was one of four teenagers to attempt to attend segregated high schools in Charlotte, NC on the same day in 1957. Other students attempted to enter Central High down town. Civil Rights strategists worked with families like the Counts and other children to make the attempt at integration on the same day. One group later became known as the “Little Rock Nine” as they attempted integration into Central High School in Little Rock, AR.

Revised June 16, 2009
February 9, 1960 Student Protest Movement Reaches Charlotte.
Johnson C. Smith students follow the lead of North Carolina A & T students by sitting-in at segregated lunch counters. The JCSU students demonstrated inside of the downtown Kress store, leading to the desegregation of lunch counters in Charlotte, NC.

The city leaders respond in part by creating a Mayor's Friendly Relationship Committee to improve race relations.

The parents of James Swann of Charlotte, NC file suit against Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools for refusing to allow their son to attend a neighborhood white school, assigning James to school on a segregated basis instead. The case gained national attention helping to end the practice of segregation in public schools.

1960's Friendship Missionary Baptist Church Pastor's Leaders in Civil Rights.
Friendship Missionary Baptist Church is of historical importance for its role as an organizational base in the Civil Rights Movement. Ella Baker held community meetings at the church, and its activist leaders succeeded in helping Charlotte, NC residents protest segregated conditions throughout the city. Now located near the intersection of I-85 and Beatties Ford Road, the original site of the church was in Brooklyn.

1968 The Homes of Fred and Kelly Alexander Bombed.
The Alexander Brothers, Fred and Kelly, both survived bombing of their homes on the same day in the late 1960s. Fred Alexander had been the first African American in the city to sit on the city council, and Kelly revived the NAACP in 1940. In 1948, Kelly was named State Chapter President. Under his leadership, North Carolina brought more civil rights law suits than any other state chapter.

1968 Reginald Hawkin's House Bombed.
Reginald Hawkin's house at 1801 Fairfield Street was fire-bombed in 1968 on the same day as those of the Alexander brothers. Hawkins was a JCSU student and a leader in the effort to desegregate Charlotte’s public schools.

Revised June 16, 2009
1960s Charles Jones, Activist.
While a student at JCSU, Charles Jones organized and led many of the sit-ins in Charlotte, NC during the 1960s. He became the president (local) of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee. Jones still occupies his home at West Trade and Solomon streets.

1960’s Sit-ins Organized at Seventh Street Presbyterian Church.
Located at North College and 7th streets, Seventh Street Presbyterian Church was originally known as First United Presbyterian Church. Its congregation was predominately white, but because of the Presbyterian philanthropy at Johnson C. Smith University, JCSU students attended this church, which is notable for its role in the protest movement of the 1960s.

Pinewood and Elmwood Cemeteries remove the fence, which enforced segregation and the cemeteries begin to function on an integrated basis.

Early Entrepreneurship

1944 The Excelsior Club Opens.
Built in 1944, the Excelsior Club served as a social club and night spot and still does today. In the 1960s the club also served as a venue for civil rights movement strategy sessions.

[Early 1900s ?] McCrorey Heights Neighborhood.
McCrorey Heights was named after Dr. Henry L. McCrorey, JCSU’s second African American President. McCrorey Heights once provided housing for the majority of JCSU faculty. When Interstate I-277 was built, the homes closest to the campus were destroyed. These homes, unfortunately, were also the neighborhoods oldest and most historically important houses.

1928 The Grand Theatre Opens.
Located at 333 Beatties Ford Road, the Grand Theatre was opened by Samuel M. Pharr to provide a venue for entertainment for Biddleville residents. During the Great Depression, the theatre closed, and Johnston’s Café operated in the building. In 1937, the Theatre reopened and served its African American clientele until other Charlotte, NC theatres were desegregated in the 1960s.

1970’s McDonalds Cafeteria Opens.
McDonalds Cafeteria was one of the only black owned hotels in Charlotte, NC during the 1970s. The hotel had also previously belonged to African American owners from the Alexander family. During its day, the Alexander Hotel was highly valued by African American travelers, including W.E.B. Dubois, who stayed at the hotel. The Alexander’s, who

Revised June 16, 2009
also owned a funeral parlor, sold their hotel to the McDonalds, who later sold it to the House of Prayer.

**Institution Building and Rebuilding**

**1958 Laying of Interstates-85 and I-277 Results in Dislocation of Early African American Cultural Structures.**

African Americans in Charlotte, NC faced massive “urban renewal” from the late 1950s throughout the 1970s, as whites sought to reclaim lands that had been occupied if not owned outright by African Americans for generations. The laying of I-85 physically separated structural pillars of the early community. Brookyn Neighborhood, the center of Charlotte’s African American community is demolished under the direction of the city “fathers.” Black families, businesses, community schools and churches are forced to relocate. African Americans would have to rely on culture capital in their efforts to rebuild the community.

**1936 McCrorey YMCA Founded.**

The McCrorey YMCA relocated to its present spot at 3801 Beatties Ford Road in 1969 after the demolition of the Brooklyn neighborhood. McCrorey’s wife is also remembered for having opened one of the oldest African American YWCA’s in the South.

**1970s Second Ward Alumni House & Museum.**

When urban renewal resulted in the destruction of the Second Ward neighborhood by the city, this home was erected by Second Ward immigrants in commemoration of the dispersal of their former community.

**1960s and 1970s Hyde Park Neighborhood.**

Named after elite communities in other major cities, Hyde Park was one of the first upper middle class neighborhoods established by African Americans in the country. Constructed by blacks for blacks, African Americans planned and built this upper crust neighborhood off Beatties Ford Road.

**[1940s-1970?] Earl Village Populated and Demolished.**

Earl Village was a large public housing neighborhood on Davidson Street. Many people relocated here after the demolition of Brooklyn Neighborhood. The area lacked the black owned business that segregated Brooklyn had enjoyed, and crime and vice became problematic here due to underemployment and poverty. Earl Village was also torn down in favor of “scatter-site” public housing.

*Revised June 16, 2009*
[1910?] Pearl Street Park Established.
Pearl Street Park was the first playground built by the city for African American children. Though segregated, the park was utilized by thousands of Charlotte’s African American youngsters and families. Children and adults played basketball, baseball and other games here. It was a place for the young and the old to socialize and enjoy being outdoors.

[1950s?] “The Quarter” or Grier Town Developed.
With its entrance along Monroe Road, Grier Town was a group of 30 homes built by a group of black investors led by Samuel Arthur Grier. Eventually known as “The Quarter,” this was one of Charlotte’s relatively affluent segregated communities. Grier Town boasted Martin’s Grocery Store (now Lupe’s Café) in the lot adjacent to Mr. Grier’s home. The tree-lined avenue and well constructed homes still indicate the comfort that the neighborhood once enjoyed.

1977 Anti-racist Political Practices instituted.
District elections are implemented in Charlotte, NC in response to demands from the community. District elections give African Americans increased opportunities to elect their own representatives to local government seats, enhancing black political power in the city.
