

PAST PURSUITS

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A Newsletter of the
Special Collections Division

Akron-Summit County
Public Library

Photographer and community activist Horace Stewart. Photo from the Horace and Evelyn Stewart Photograph Collection, Archives and Special Collections, University Libraries, The University of Akron.

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Akron-Summit County
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PAST PURSUITS

Shining a Light on the Finest Angle: Horace and Evelyn Poole Stewart

BY JANE GRAMLICH, LIBRARIAN



Evelyn Stewart McNeil was interviewed by the Akron Beacon Journal just a year before her death. The article and this photo appeared in the paper on February 4, 1991.

Among the treasures of the University of Akron's Archives is a collection of remarkable photographs documenting the lives and activities of the city's African American residents. Dating mostly from the 1950s through the 1970s, this collection covers a crucial era that hasn't been well represented in Akron's available photographic history. The credit for this effort goes to two modest people who devoted their lives to their community.

Horace St. John Stewart was born in Georgetown, British Guiana in the late 1890s. Sources differ on his year of birth, but all agree on the date of December 1. Stewart graduated from Queens College in Georgetown and had started studying overseas at Cambridge University in England when World War I began. He switched gears and joined the Canadian Army instead, serving in France. After the war he decided to move to New York City, where he attended the New York Institute of Photography and later opened a studio. Stewart's decision to relocate to Akron came during the depths

of the Depression, just as his business was on a downslide and he was tiring of life in a metropolis. Hearing that there might be an upswing in the auto industry and knowing that Akron was a "tire town," he thought the small city environment would suit both him and a new business. He was right on target. In 1934, he opened a studio at 11½ North Howard Street, the beginning edge of Akron's burgeoning Black cultural and business district.

It wasn't long before Stewart became a "spark plug in community affairs," as he was later described in an Akron Beacon Journal article. His photography business seemed to be a diversion from his fierce commitment to a more just society. During the next several years he became an active member of the Akron chapter of the NAACP, as well as an organization called the Association for Colored Community Work that had been formed in 1925 to improve the lives of local African Americans and foster better race relations. Committee roles, project coordination, and speaking



The Stewarts captured important moments in the Black community. The Akron Community Service Center and Urban League held their annual dinner on March 9, 1967 and presented awards for distinguished service. Pictured left to right are Frank Stanley Jr., Robert C. Wilson, Mrs. Marion Hall, Clifford Gates, and Dr. Eldridge Sharpp Jr. (The University of Akron Archives)

engagements occupied his time outside the studio. Yet in the midst of this tireless work, what appeared to be missing was a life partner who shared the same passions.

Evelyn Elizabeth Poole was born on September 17, 1917 in Memphis, Tennessee, the fifth of six children born to George and Martha (Bailor) Poole. The Poole family moved to Akron by 1927, where George Poole worked in the local brick and tile industry and later

for the WPA. His daughter was a star pupil throughout her school years, prevailing as spelling bee champion at Fraunfelter School and qualifying as an honor student at Central High School.

Stewart and Poole met when she was working for the Call & Post, the newspaper for Cleveland's Black community. As Poole recalled, she was the paper's "all-purpose representative" for Akron, not just writing articles and taking photos,

but also distributing the paper and collecting subscription fees. Yet there's another clue to the couple's association. A 1940 feature in the Beacon highlighted Poole's own developing sense of civic duty. Working with a group under the auspices of the Association for Colored Community Work, Poole and several other volunteers including her sisters Clara and Vivian assembled 1000 Easter baskets for underprivileged children. The photo of the project and the young women involved in it was credited, not surprisingly, to Stewart. The two future spouses were moving in the same circles at least a decade before their marriage in Atlantic City in 1950.

As husband and wife the Stewarts were a formidable team. Evelyn's focus was work with the Akron Community Service Center, an outgrowth of the 1925 organization that later evolved into the Akron Urban League. For a time, Horace was the Center's director. He expanded his scope of influence over the years, serving on the executive committee of the NAACP, as chair of the Glendale

Shining a Light on the Finest Angle continued



Sometimes a little research is necessary to identify the Stewarts' photos. In the case of this unidentified photo of a champion basketball team, a few newspaper searches led to the possibility that this is a church league team from Greater Bethel Baptist Church. (The University of Akron Archives)

branch of the YMCA, and as trustee of the Family and Children's Service Society of Summit County. He also worked closely with the Akron Public Library. His photographs were on display at the Library and he presided over a number of book discussion groups and lectures.

In addition to their leadership and service skills, the Stewarts were also uniquely poised to document their community through photography. "We took pictures of anything of interest, everything that was happening in the black community including marches and picketing," Evelyn said. "No

one else was doing it. It was our contribution to the city, to just let people know what was going on." Like much of what they did, it was a volunteer effort and a labor of love.

Horace's health began to decline in the mid-1960s and he relinquished some of his duties. He recovered sufficiently to go on a cruise to the West Indies with Evelyn in 1966, but the improvement didn't last long. Horace Stewart died on March 23, 1968, and was buried at Northlawn Memorial Gardens. The loss was deeply felt. An editorial in the Beacon praised his "example of constructive citizenship" and



Photos of individuals are especially valuable in this collection. The name associated with a photo may be the person who ordered it and not always the person who's pictured. An address may be included. The information for this photo is "Mrs. Rosa Lampley, 840 Douglas St." (The University of Akron Archives)

observed, "how fortunate we are that Mr. Stewart spent the best years of his life in Akron." Ten days later, the Akron Board of Education announced that the newest elementary school on Wooster Avenue would be named Horace St. John Stewart Primary School. Today it's part of the Akron Public Schools' Preschool/Early Learning Program and still bears his name.

After Horace's death, Evelyn continued to run the studio and contribute to her community. She occasionally submitted photos to Akron's Black-owned newspaper, the Reporter. She remarried in 1975, but sadly, soon became a widow once again when her husband Dr. Noah McNeil died in 1978. Evelyn retired from the studio the same year, and for once, it seemed she got some rest – or at least some recreation. She found an outlet for her boundless energy in bowling with local competitive leagues. For a while she appeared regularly in the Reporter's "Bowling Ball" column with impressive scores. Newspaper articles mentioning her civic activity dwindled and she took on more of an honorary role.

Evelyn Poole Stewart McNeil died on January 7, 1992 at the age of 74. One of her last acts of service was to donate her photograph collection to the University of Akron "for all to enjoy." The Horace and Evelyn Stewart Photograph Collection stands as a unique and significant

source of local history, and it is available to view by appointment at the [University of Akron Archives and Special Collections](#).

The Stewarts' longtime business motto was "if you have beauty we take it...if not, we make it." That carried over into their civic lives as they spent much of their time together working for the greater good and lifting it up where they found it. Evelyn remembered that her first husband taught her "more than the basics of photography. He told me that 'everyone looks good at some angle, just watch them – your job is to find that angle and light it properly.'" Indeed, that philosophy was much more than a photographic technique. It was the way Horace Stewart saw the world.

Featured Resources: Local African American History

BY REBECCA LARSON-TROYER,
LIBRARIAN



Participants in the Coming Together Unity Walk in Akron, September 2002. From the Coming Together Project Collection.

[Coming Together Project Collection](#)

A collection of publications, promotional materials, photographs, video recordings, meeting minutes, start-up grant materials, contest-winning essays and art, and photographic negatives from 1995-2006. In January 2008, Coming Together ceased operations due to lack of financial support. Trustees Hal Horton and Lynn Clarke transferred the remainder (except financial records) of the organization's collection on August 19, 2008.

[The Contributions of Blacks in Akron, 1825-1975](#)

By Dr. Shirla McClain

Doctoral dissertation providing a thorough investigation of African American history in Akron and the social and economic factors that characterized the Black experience in the city from the time of Akron's founding until the 1970s.

[Akron Negro Directory: March 1940](#)

Compiled by A. Kingsberry

Includes statistical, organizational and business information on the Black community as well as local advertisements.

[Negro Business Directory of Akron](#)

Theodore R. Wilson, ed., 1969-1974

Print directory of African American businesses and business people in Akron.

[Akron Reporter on Ohio Memory \(1969-1999, 2003-2018\)](#)

Akron's newspaper serving African Americans, The Reporter, has been

DUNAGAN'S SERVICE STATION

Gas, Oil, High Pressure
Lubrication

Zerone Antifreeze
Amoco Products

834 Rhodes Avenue
FR-1572



Thomas Dunagan, a resident of Akron for 22 years, ran a service station on Rhodes Avenue. The photo may be of his wife Demma. From the Akron Negro Directory: March 1940.

documenting the community's history since 1969. Established that year by William R. Ellis, Sr., The Reporter was founded as a response to a lack of coverage by the mainstream press. The Ellis family continues to operate this weekly newspaper that records the lives and perspectives of our African American residents, covering everything from church histories, biographies, and social events to articles about current

issues. The Reporter was made available online for researchers, students, and family historians through the Library and a grant from the Dick and Chris Chenoweth Fund of the Akron Community Foundation.

[University of Akron's Opie Evans Collection on Summit Memory](#)

The Opie Evans Collection contains 125 photographs selected from the Opie Evans Papers held

by Archival Services, University Libraries, University of Akron. The images were taken or collected by Evans and provide a rich visual history of the African American community in Akron, Ohio and surrounding areas during the middle of the twentieth century. The images also capture the 1964 and 1967 elections and the civil rights movement in Akron. This collection is contributed by Archival Services, University Libraries, University of Akron. View more of the collection at University Libraries Archives and Special Collections [Digital Collections](#).

[Summit County Historical Society's Samuel Shepard Collection on Summit Memory](#)

The Samuel Shepard Collection contains images of the publisher of The Informer, an African American newspaper in Akron during the 1950s as well as many issues of The Informer. This collection was contributed by the Summit County Historical Society.

Spotlight on Databases: HeritageQuest Online

BY BARBARA LEDEN, LIBRARIAN



The quest to discover our heritage has become less daunting with the many genealogical databases available online. While most researchers are familiar with Ancestry and FamilySearch, there are other databases to consider when building a family tree. Appropriately named, HeritageQuest Online is an additional source that just might help solve some of your genealogy mysteries.

HeritageQuest Online, operated by [ProQuest](#) and powered by Ancestry, is a database providing

access to essential genealogical and historical records, research guides, interactive census maps, and more. Comprised of about 4.4 billion records, HeritageQuest Online provides coverage in about 60 countries back to the 1700s. Because this database is powered by Ancestry.com, the interface and search functions look the same.

Beginning in April 2020, due to the pandemic, Ancestry Library Edition was offered remotely for Library customers. While Ancestry Library Edition will still be available at Library locations, remote

access ended on December 31, 2021. Free with a valid Library card, HeritageQuest Online is another way of accessing a substantial segment of genealogy records such as census data, city directories, military records, immigration papers, and probate records outside Library walls. Over the years, HeritageQuest Online has also increased its content, gradually adding more from Ancestry Library Edition.

To access this database whether you're in the Library or at home, visit the Library's home page



and hover over the Research tab near the top of the page. Select Databases by Subject, then Genealogy and Local History to find HeritageQuest. If you're accessing the database outside the Library, you'll need to enter your Library card number.

The main menu links to three search categories: Search, Research Aids, and Maps. Within the Search category a multitude of core data collections are available including Census, Books, Wills and Probates, City Directories, Military Records, and Immigration Records. Some non-U.S. records are available as well. With the release of the 1950 U.S. census in April 2022, it seems timely to focus on what HeritageQuest Online offers in regard to all census data. Currently, it contains around 700 million searchable records for the U.S. Federal Census from 1790-1940. Additional data sets are the 1850 and 1860 U.S. Federal Census Slave Schedules, 1890 Veterans Schedules, the U.S. Indian Census Rolls 1885-1940, the U.S. Selected Federal Census Non-Population Schedules 1850-1880,

U.S. Enumeration District Maps and Descriptions, 1940, U.S. Federal Census Mortality Schedules, 1850-1885, U.S. Special Census on Deaf Family Marriages and Hearing Relatives 1888-1895, and the U.S. Federal Census Schedules of Defective, Dependent and Delinquent Classes.

The Research Aids category provides basic tips and tricks for research as well as more advanced guides for census, cemetery, and African American research. The Maps category presents the Map Guide to the U.S. Federal Censuses, 1790-1920. This interactive map enables you to see the progression of county and state lines. Simply click on the image of the state. Its land development, decade by decade from inception to 1920, will be available. Click on the decade listed on the left, and a map depicting the area at the time will appear. This is especially useful when researching with census data, because state and county boundaries have shifted over time. The place names may have changed as well. For instance, in 1790, Ohio was considered part of the Northwest Territory, and it did not become a state until

1803. Today's counties were often once part of a larger county with a different name. Summit County was not created until 1840. In 1803, most of what's now Summit County was included in Trumbull County. By 1820, it fell mostly within Portage County with parts included in Medina and Stark Counties. Early settler Jonathan Hale of Bath, in today's Summit County, is recorded in 1820 as living in Medina County.

Though we may have lost the ability to use Ancestry Library Edition at home, remember that HeritageQuest Online offers much of what Ancestry Library Edition does and is still remotely available.



Ohio and its counties in 1820, with existing county lines (black) superimposed over current county lines (white), as shown in Map Guide to the U.S. Federal Censuses, 1790-1920.

Best Wishes Cheri, Welcome, Riza



BEST WISHES

Cheri Goldner
Special Collections

We're sad to see Cheri Goldner leave Special Collections, but happy to see her accept a new position as Public Service Manager of Neighborhood Services for the Public Library of Youngstown and Mahoning County. Cheri is a Mahoning County native who drove to Summit County for sixteen years to work at the Akron-Summit County Public Library, so she's glad to be working closer to home now. Cheri holds degrees from The Ohio State University, Western Kentucky University, and Kent State University.

Cheri left a wonderful legacy working on many significant collections and projects, especially initiating ASCPL as a partner library in the [Ohio Obituary Index](#) and

coordinating volunteer indexers. She has been an outstanding reference and research librarian, kept many of our materials organized, and kept us on track with updates on technology and policies. Cheri is passionate about public service and building connections with other community groups and organizations to help bring library sources and services to a wider audience. It's because of that passion that ASCPL continues to have positive relationships with many community partners and why we know Cheri will do her very best at her new position in Youngstown. Best wishes, Cheri!



WELCOME

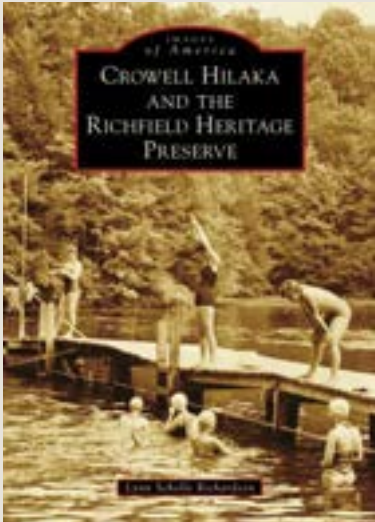
Riza Miklowski Special Collections

We're excited to announce the arrival of our new Special Collections Librarian Riza Miklowski. She received two bachelor's degrees in History and Public History from Baldwin Wallace University where she graduated Summa Cum Laude. She also holds an MA in History and an MLIS from Kent State University.

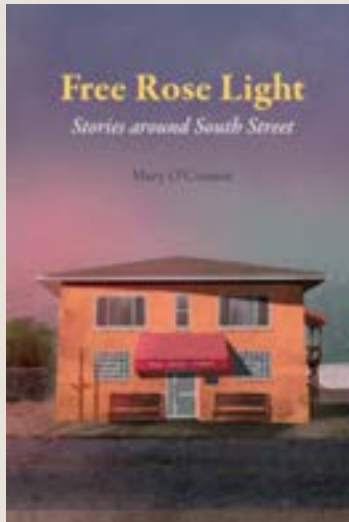
Riza has a variety of experience working with historic collections at different institutions. She has inventoried and processed archival collections, digitized collections, created exhibits, and has worked with multiple digital platforms at Baldwin Wallace University, Wright State University Special Collections and Archives, the National Afro-American Museum and Cultural

Center, and at Oberlin College Archives and Special Collections. One of Riza's favorite projects was writing biographical sketches for the [Oberlin College Libraries' Oberlin's Women: A Legacy of Leadership & Activism](#) online exhibit. The exhibit detailed the careers and experiences of female Oberlin College graduates from the nineteenth century through the present day. Most recently, Riza interned at the Cuyahoga County Archives where she not only processed archival collections, but also answered in-depth genealogy research questions. In her free time, Riza loves reading, quilting, and walking with her two dogs, Francis, a Flat-Coated Retriever and Maisie, a Golden Retriever. Welcome, Riza!

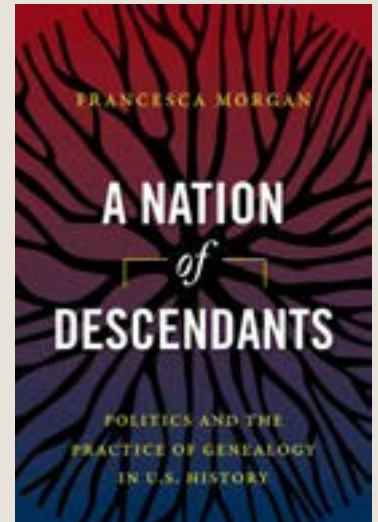
New Books



Crowell Hilaka and the Richfield Heritage Preserve
by Lynn Scholle Richardson



Free Rose Light: Stories around South Street
by Mary O'Connor



A Nation of Descendants
by Francesca Morgan

What could possibly be the connection between vacuum cleaners, Girl Scouts, and the National Register of Historic Places? The answer is James Kirby, [Crowell Hilaka and the Richfield Heritage Preserve](#). In this book packed with photos and images, Lynn Scholle Richardson tells the meandering and engaging story of a piece of local land with wider historical significance.

For New York architect Mary O'Connor, what seemed like a routine renovation job in Akron turned out to be a profound moment in her life. It revealed an opportunity to put untold tales – hers and those of others – into words. In [Free Rose Light: Stories around South Street](#), she explores the development of South Street Ministries, founded in 1997 by Duane and Lisa Crabbs, hand-in-hand with her deeply personal experience of a city that embraced her.

Why are Americans so obsessed with genealogy? In [A Nation of Descendants](#), Francesca Morgan explores the motives behind this phenomenon from a variety of angles – political, legal and historical; religious and scientific; commercial and altruistic. From the first exclusionary lineage societies through the latest multiple uses and meanings of genetic genealogy, Morgan tackles it all and sorts out what she sees as the wheat from the chaff of this wide-ranging field of study.

For more new books recently added to our collection that can help you with your research, be sure to see the [New Books](#) page on our website.

Special Thanks

We would like to send a special thanks to the following for their generous contributions:

George Beckham for the collection of historic postcards of Portage Lakes and surrounding areas

Dave McCann for Notes on the Genealogy of the Biddle Family

Ohio Society Dames of the Court of Honor for genealogy books on West Virginia and Bedford and Somerset Counties, Pennsylvania

Linda Salvato and Tim Lombardi for the Ange Lombardi Collection of sheet music, arrangements, recordings, and related materials

Special Dinners

Lincoln's Birthday

February 12th

Special Dinner

\$1.50 Per Cover

Menu

Fruit Cocktail India Relish
Clear Tomato Consomme en Tasse
Broiled Steak Minute, Mushroom Sauce
Brussel Sprouts in Butter
Fr. Fried O'Brien Potatoes
Salad Nancy
Neapolitan Slice Assorted Cakes
Coffee

Served from 6:00 to 8:30 p. m.

□+□

Valentine Day

February 14th

Special Dinner

\$1.50 Per Cover

Menu

Fruit Cocktail
Hearts of Celery Sweet Gherkins
Old Fashioned Vegetable Soup
Chicken Maryland, Cream Sauce
Corn Fritter Potato Croquette
Cupids Salad
Biscuit Tortoni Fancy Heart Macaroons
Coffee

Served from 6:00 to 8:30 p. m.

□+□

Supper Dances

Throughout the Season Carnes-Richards Syncopators will furnish music at regular Wednesday and Saturday evening *Supper Dances* between the hours of nine-thirty and midnight.

□+□

The Hotel Portage

Main 5100

HARRY HALFACRE, Manager



**Akron-Summit County
Public Library**

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The Akron-Summit County Public Library Special Collections Division is located on the third floor of the Main Library.

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In the 1920s, the Hotel Portage featured special dinners for holidays as well as twice-weekly "supper dances." Akron Topics, February 4, 1924.