

C - A R L O T T E S V I L L E C O M M U N I T Y D E S I G N C E N T E R

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Although today it is primarily African American, 10th and Page for many years was a racially diverse neighborhood characterized by a mix of ethnic backgrounds, occupations, and incomes. Encompassing just 83.86 acres, the neighborhood is one of the most compact in the city and historically most residents knew each other well. Individual experiences varied: some in the neighborhood recall a tradition of community harmony and trust, while others experienced prejudice firsthand when black families moved into formerly white areas.

The Gaines house, 214 9th Street, was owned by a detective before the present owner's family bought it, and a white policeman lived across the street. Local resident Ms. Thelma Hagen remembers that when her family bought the house in at 820 Anderson Street (where she still resides) from the Dudley family in 1935, neighbors got along well and there were few locks or even knobs on the doors of houses in the neighborhood. Her father, Thomas Terrell, was the first chef at University of Virginia hospital. Over the years, many 10th and Page residents have worked at the University, and also at the Monticello and Albemarle Hotels. Page Street was a popular housing choice for railroad employees, due to its proximity to both the C & O and Southern routes. Railroad workers, both black and white, also lived in the nearby Starr Hill neighborhood.

People looked after each other's children as they played in the yards, streets, and open fields of the neighborhood. And there was plenty for the children to do and see: in those days, the 700 block of Anderson Street was a lake where people who came to town on Saturday stabled their horses for the day. Paoli Street was a field, a popular site for traveling minstrel shows, with dancing and comedy acts. The circus used to locate where the Monticello Dairy building now stands. Schenk's Branch traversed the neighborhood, and it was a favorite place for children to play until a little boy drowned and the creek was piped and covered for safety. There was a jail in the center of the neighborhood, and the inmates would call out to the children as they headed for Jefferson School through the railroad underpass on Commerce Street. Connections between 10th and Page, Starr Hill, and Vinegar Hill were more direct in those days, and there was lots of traffic back and forth between the black business district and the residential areas.

Some of the older houses in 10th and Page were built as early as the late 1800's, but the majority of the current housing inventory was constructed in the 1920's. Residents of the neighborhood have played a notable role in Charlottesville history, and beyond its borders as well. Benjamin Tonsler was a successful African American contractor who built the house that still stands at 206 10th Street, and he also owned a restaurant in Vinegar Hill. Tonsler Park, located on Cherry Avenue, carries his name. West Street in the neighborhood was named for John West, a former slave who lived in the 300 block. He was a barber by trade, but over time made a substantial return from real estate he had acquired. The late William Monroe grew up in the neighborhood, and graduated from Hampton Institute, where he was captain of the tennis team. Chuck Chisholm, a resident of Page Street, also attended Hampton Institute and later was a professional boxer. Roosevelt Brown, well known for being the first African American professional football player from Charlottesville to be named to the NFL Hall of Fame, lived on 5th Street NW, close by in what is now called the Starr Hill neighborhood.

10th and Page was not called by its present name - longtime residents recall that it did not have a particular title. (The name Starr Hill is also new to many old-timers, although a few remember it.) 9th Street was originally called Alfonso Street, and many residents used Commerce Street to go east, since the railroad tunnel was open at that time. Taylor's Grocery operated on West Street, the Lewis store was on Paoli, and the Inge family lived on Anderson and owned a store on the corner of West Main and 4th Street NW. On the site of Dawson Cabinets was a catgut stitches manufacturing business, which supplied the University hospital. It was closed due to health concerns about the source of the raw materials used in the stitches. Dr. Miller was well known in the neighborhood, and it was also home to several preachers. Revered E.G. Hall, pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church, lives in 10th and Page today. Other notable citizens of the Charlottesville area

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When the Vinegar Hill urban renewal project eliminated a large number of African American residences in the 1960's, 125 replacement units were constructed in the Westhaven public housing complex on Hardy Drive. A much more modest redevelopment project is currently in the planning stages, in which the City and Piedmont Housing Alliance are purchasing thirteen single family properties in the vicinity of 10th and Page Streets for renovation and redevelopment. Ultimately these properties will be resold to individual buyers committed to owner occupancy, a return to the tradition of a family-oriented neighborhood.

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