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The Marian Cheek Jackson Center For Saving and Making History

TIN TOP — One of Northside’s Historic Neighborhoods

Donny “Hollywood” Riggsbee’s recollections of Tin Top and the sense of community and family they revealed inspired me to learn more about the neighborhood. I found an article online about Orange County places. Using land records, maps and books, the author (unidentified) provides a fascinating spatial history of Tin Top. However, the article starts by saying the neighborhood “came into being in the 1920s, but was gone by the 1940s.”

I was surprised to read that. Hollywood grew up in Tin Top in the 1960s, so I knew it was not gone, even if the name was no longer inscribed on a map. Although town officials or developers may assign a new name, residents carry their own neighborhood identity into the future through the telling and retelling of their history.



The Tin Top houses that Hollywood described on Hargraves Street were built in the 1920s by Luther R. Hargraves, a carpenter and the first African American mortician in Chapel Hill. Mr. Hargraves was Ms. Janie’s grandfather.

Janie Alston: *My grandfather would build houses for people, and bury people. And people that didn’t have money: he was a Christian man, so if people didn’t have money, he would still bury them. And they would give him a hog or some chickens. He needed to feed his family. And he would build houses and he wasn’t a very good bookkeeper, because he would just take people at their word and people would pay him and people would not pay him. Like where Tin Top is now? He built those houses. You see that street that says Hargraves? He built houses with tin tops down there. And some people paid him, some didn’t. But then when the Depression came, he lost a lot of stuff. At that time I guess that’s what they did, put tin tops on the houses. I wouldn’t want to live in a house with a tin top, it makes too much noise. A lot of people like that sound.*

Heidi Dodson was an oral history specialist at the Jackson Center in 2017-18. This article is based on a blog entry. Read more at jacksoncenter.tumblr.com. A complete interview with Ms. Janie Alston can be found at archive.jacksoncenter.info.

Meet Donny “Hollywood” Riggsbee

Where is Tin Top, exactly? And where did the name come from? In this clip from our Oral History Trust, Hudson Vaughan and Alex Stephens talk with life-long Tin Top resident, Donny “Hollywood” Riggsbee:

HV: I want to hear more about Tin Top. And, first of all, even what y’all considered to be Tin Top, where all it included and what it was known for. ...

DR: ... We had some old regular houses with tin on them. Everybody, you know, they was in a row, lined up on Hargraves Street.



...Everybody known each other. ... it was the whole top row, up on, on Hargraves Street. ... everybody up there was some kin, okay. The top was called Tin Top, the top part. And we was in the bottom. We was Carr’s Court. So it was in between Carr’s Court and Tin Top.

HV: And so the top was like Hargraves, Eugene, that area?

DR: Yeah. Okay, the Hargraves Street was like was, Tin Top.

HV: Okay. What street were you on?

DR: I was on Eugene Street. We was in Carr’s Court.

AS: Brewer Lane. Was Brewer Lane part of it?

DR: Just, if you come across the railroad track, you going to run into Brewer Lane. And when you get there from Brewer Lane, then you come on around the curve, okay, right there is Hargraves Street. That was Tin Top. And we was Carr’s Court, because we was in the bottom. So we didn’t have tin houses. ... We had roof houses. [coughs] So that’s, that’s the way, how they start calling Tin Top. But, then everybody said, “Well, what the heck? We’re going to call it all “Tin Top,” since it’s all, you know,

HV: [laughs]

DR: [laughs] we all in the same neighborhood. Let’s call it all “Tin Top.”

November 6th Election: Read Between the Lines

On a recent afternoon at the Rogers Road Community Center, the Rev. Robert Peter Campbell was in the kitchen preparing snacks for the after-school program when I asked him about the upcoming election. A tireless activist who pulls no punches but somehow always manages to exude a sense of optimism, Reverend Campbell warned about the serious long-term consequences of the amendments on the November ballot. These include a voter i.d. amendment, and amendments that take away power from the governor and place more power in the hands of the legislature in matters such as the appointment of judges and overseeing state elections and reductions in the income tax rate. “I would pay more in taxes than some of the richest people in the state.” Read the fine print, he warns. The Victims Rights amendment and one on hunting and fishing are sponsored by wealthy donors and lobbies. Ask: *who’s sponsoring the measure? Who benefits? It is necessary? What other programs will be cut to pay for this?* Get information about the proposals from trustworthy sources. **Early voting starts on October 17.**

Porch Revival Tour

Next Stop: **Craig Street**
Friday, October 26
5:30-7:30PM



Our Craig Street neighbors will be hosting a multi-family Halloween extravaganza with food, fun, and plenty of tricks and treats!

UP NEXT: November 10, your neighbors at 509 Whitaker St. will host the next Porch Revival party from 1:00-3:00PM.

The Legacy of Gerry House, CHCCS Superintendent — 1985-92

In the September issue of the Northside News we reported that Superintendent Pam Baldwin was the first black superintendent of the Chapel Hill Carrboro City schools. About as soon as the newspapers were printed and delivered, the phone began ringing, and a number of our well-informed neighbors told us about Dr. Gerry House. It took some effort to find her name on the Chapel Hill Carrboro City schools website. She isn’t mentioned on the history timeline, and only after a series of clicks did I find her name on one line in a document called “Chapel Hill Carrboro City Schools Leaders.” That’s it. Many of our neighbors have shared in their oral histories that the struggle for desegregation was a long, difficult, and painful one. And so it’s surprising to me that the appointment of a black woman to head the school district—the first black female superintendent in the state and in the district—isn’t highlighted more prominently on the district’s history pages.

After seven years in the district, she left in 1992 to head the public schools in Memphis, Tennessee, and, shortly thereafter, was elected National Superintendent of the Year at the American Association of School Administrators. Clementine Self remembers Dr. House’s tenure in Chapel Hill:

She started out in the early 1980s as a counselor at Carrboro High, then became assistant superintendent and, finally superintendent. She was associated with several programs to support children and families whose parents worked for Memorial Hospital (later called UNC Hospitals), hiring Northsiders Lucy Fearrington and Hilliard Caldwell to work with families in the community with the goal of providing children support so they could succeed in school. They made sure children had proper medical and dental care. “We had children coming to school with ear infections, needing glasses, things like that, even heat in their homes.”

According to Ms. Clem, CHCCS was at the forefront of efforts to address disparities and spearhead “courageous conversations” on the role of race and diversity in schools, thanks in large part to Dr. House. Parents were provided with rides to parent-teacher conferences and funds covered field trips and activities at school. Ms. Fearrington would go in to classrooms and observe, giving teachers strategies to support African-American students. The message was: “Take out all the assumptions about people and about parents not caring about people, because that’s not the case.” Ms. Clem told me that people liked her, and they respected her. “She could be bold. She didn’t mind putting the cards on the table.”

— Andrea Wuerth

In memory: Robert Leon Revels

On September 25, the Northside community lost one of its most joyful voices, Robert Leon Revels. Born on December 5, 1937, Brother Revels worked in Chapel Hill and at UNC and was an active member of St. Joseph C.M.E. Church. He was president of the Voices of Joy, sang with the Male Chorus, and was a member of the Ambassadors of Chapel Hill.



Singing was at the center of his life. Yvonne Cleveland tells this story: *Brother Revels spent his last days in Pruitt Health nursing home in Durham. Even though he couldn't really respond to us, as he struggled – you could see in his eyes that he recognized but couldn't speak—he seemed to want to say something.*

But the moment we started singing, the words came out. And so we would always sing the songs that he loved. This was one of his favorites and he remembered every word.

The Doors of Progress

When it seems like the doors of progress have been closed in your face.
And no matter what you do your friends don't appreciate.
You need to steal away, fall down on your knees.
Tell God, tell God, have mercy please.

Come on, Jesus; come on, Jesus.
Come on and see about me.
You know the right road is the narrow road.
It don't have no crooks and bends.

When I started my Christian journey,
I found out Jesus is my only friend.
When I get in trouble, just steal away.
Go down on your knees.
Tell God have mercy, please.

[Brother Revels: "Everybody in the building!"]
Come on Jesus; Come on, Jesus.
Come on and see about me.
You know the right road is the narrow road.

Ask Keith

Q: Early voting is starting soon for the November election. What is the voting schedule and what should I look out for?

A:First and foremost you must be registered to vote. The regular voter registration deadline is 5 pm, Friday, October 12. Same day registration is available during the early voting period beginning Oct 17 and ending November 3rd. For those doing an absentee ballot, requests must be received by your county elections office by 5 pm., Tuesday, October 30th. On Election Day, November 6th, polls will be open 6:30 am to 7:30 pm.

Please give special attention to the six proposed amendments to the N. C. constitution, including one that can change our voting practices.

Chapel Hill voters will consider whether the Town of Chapel Hill should move forward with a \$10 million bond for Affordable Housing. If passed, the bond funds would be used towards the development and preservation of 700 affordable housing units.

For more information contact the N.C. State Board of Elections at 919-814-0700. Website: <https://www.ncsbe.gov>

Northside Trivia

This months question: At which Northside venue did Tina Turner? sing?

How it works: If you think you know the answer, call the Jackson Center at (919) 960-1670 any time from 9-5 to win a Northside button! Whoever ends the year with the most buttons will be our Northside News Trivia Champion and receive a trophy!

Last months answer: The first African-American daycare center in Northside was Holmes Daycare located in the Hargraves Community Center. Thanks to everyone who called in!

Birthdays

- 11/5- Billue Baldwin
- 11/6- Eva Barnett
- 11/16- Paul Caldwell
- 11/18- Sallie Pendergraft
- 11/22- Olivia James
- 11/23- Chandler Alston
- 11/29- Belinda Caldwell
- 11/30- Betty Gear

If you are interested in receiving a digital copy of the newsletter, send us your email address! contact@jacksoncenter.info

Vote B

When you vote you can,
When you vote you can't
And they say vote
Just keep voting
Voting will solve all of your problems
Voting is the key
"It's our civic duty to vote."
"It's an honor."
"My dad fought at D-Day--"
Better yet, a privilege.
So it can be taken away.
Stripped bare, voice void
Bound by ballot bullies building brick walls of bigotry
Cross countless bulletins, flashing from phones to jumbotrons
Cancerous thoughts grow exponentially,
Weakening the integrity of those organs
 ahem nations, states, and minds
Paralyzed by gerrymandered factions
Married along jagged edges,
Crushed within rigid borders.
Vindictive voters.
Ebb and flow toward true equality,
Wearing against a shore of time that we don't have.
That ensures the survival of a planet that cries.
We live in a place where towns trade us,
Break apart communities so that voters powers are cut in half.
This devastating democracy directly,
 dictates determined destinies,
Damning our larynx, legacies, lives?
Political poetry,
Parties planned...
A partitioned Sunset.
How trifling and underwhelmingly
 beautiful is this metaphor and action.
More suffering, more listening to "well-intentioned" white liberals,
Who dare not be as stubborn or steadfast
Giving in to those who create racist policy that wrecks
the peace of mind in our communities,
 in our homes, and in our hearts.
Will we ever know happiness and pride in voting?
Will we ever again vote for something that isn't a lesser evil
of an oppressive ultimatum issued by someone
 who seeks to strip us of our dignity,
diluting the importance of
a point of power and pride,
ever truly grasped by the margins?
An origami flag centered in a sea of white
Framed as if in museum guarded by
Glass ceilings
A congress of baboons
Playing keep away
Ripping rights away
A triggers' distance away,
The American Dream
Is a dead tree lying
Rootless
Dependable decomposition done by dependents
Will you ReRoot? Or ReBoot?

— Brentton Harrison, Teen Center Youth Leader

Community Board

Chapel Hill Food Distribution **Event times:** Trunk-or-Treat, 5-6:30 pm;
Sites: Glow-in-the-Dark climb for kids over 6
1st Wednesday of the month—10 AM years, 7-9 pm; movie begins at 6:45 pm.
109 Bright Sun Pl Don't forget your costumes!
Coordinator: Shirley Jennings

2nd Wednesday — 10AM
303 S. Estes Dr. Ext.
Coordinator: Betty Williams

3rd Wednesday — 10AM
108 Jackie Robinson St.
919-265-7075
Coordinator: Louise Mitchell

4th Wednesday — 1PM
405 Sykes St.
Coordinator: Louise Mitchell

Upcoming Events:
Haunted Hill, October 20, 5-9 pm,
Free, Chapel Hill Community Center
120 S Estes. Dr.
Features a Trunk-or-Treat with games
and activities, ghost stories, haunted
walk, and a movie in the park.

Get Covered Carolina
Would you like more information about
about health insurance plans, including
Medicare and Medicaid? Get Covered
Carolina is a resource for **health
insurance** information and enrollment.
Certified Application Counselors meet
one-on-one with consumers to provide
qualified assistance and advice free of
charge.

*To schedule an appointment, call (919)
590-9266.*

Open Enrollment is coming up —
November 1 through December 15, 2018!
This is a time when you can enroll in and
renew a health insurance plan on
Healthcare.gov

Election Day is November 6! VOTE!