**The Evolution of Black Leadership in Yellow Springs Public Schools**

It appears that Yellow Springs was a destiny for Black people since its origin and early settlement. The Village was located in close proximity to several routes of the Underground Railroad, which were travelled by former slaves, runaways, and adventurous Blacks who were seeking opportunities and safety. The routes from the Cincinnati area and the Ohio River toward Canada was known and relatively safe for people on the move northward.

The close proximity and presence of Antioch College, Wilberforce University, and Payne Theological Seminary became attractive for runaway slaves, reluctant slave owners, and adventurous people in the mid-nineteenth century. A number of former slaves were transported to or sponsored to this area by reformed slave owners, churches, Quakers, and people of conscious. Some adventurous Black people traveled by foot, on Indian trails along wooded streams, and railroad tracks. These methods, with other practices, formed the Underground Railroad of a century of northward movement and re-settlement of countless Black people in the vast promising new world. The combination of escape, re-location, and adventure was how Yellow Springs became a destination for some former slaves and resulted in a gradual destination and re-settlement area in the mid-1800s. The gather became a local community by 1900. Schooling for their children began in churches and local homes until a designated masonry building was obtained on the south side of West South College Street, just east of the intersection with South High Street. This, according to Angela Shellcroft, became the local school for Black children. The school operated with success until 1887 when the Yellow Springs local schools invited all children of the Village to attend the Village Schools system. This county school system later became an exempted village school in the 1950s, a state designated role of specific local control and authority.

William Perry was the first Black member of the Yellow Springs Exempted Village School Board in 1945. Paul Ford followed him in 1958. Several school superintendents, principals, and board members were instrumental in welcoming diversity, equality, and quality in the school system. This group of talented leaders and educators included Rudolp Augsburger, Warren Hamilton, John Malone, Jay Check, Robert Gourley, Bruce McFadden, Barry Hollister, Keith Howard, and Margaret Mercer. Mrs. Elizabeth Hatcher, and experienced elementary teacher, was the first Black teacher to be hired in the school district in 1955.

Edward Wingard became the first Black teacher at the high school in 1959 when he was hired to teach history, driver education, science, and serve as the athletic coach. He also became the first Black administrator when he was appointed as junior high school principal in 1964. Additional minority teachers and administrators were employed on a regular basis throughout the school district, as displayed below.

**Principals Teachers**

Edward Wingard Elizabeth Hatcher

Daniel Smith Marjorie Anthony

Joseph Anthony Willa Beck

Earl Holiday Don Perry

Randall Newsome Brad Newsome

Cynthia Holt

John Gudgel

Yellow Springs became a destination for Black educators and professionals for several reasons. The close proximity to Wright Patterson Air Force Base, Antioch College, Wittenberg College, Wilberforce University, and Central State University became attractive to employers and participants at these neighboring locations. The atmosphere and culture of the Village benefited from the presence of these new residents, and the reciprocal results became noticeable throughout. A sample listing of a few of these highly educated residents illustrates the value of their presence at the workplace, and in the activities of the Village.

**Yellow Springs Residents**

**Employed at one time at Wilberforce University and Central State University**

Evelyn Crawford John Fleming, Ph.D.

Bryant Crawford, Ph.D. Barbara Fleming, Ph.D.

Shelbert Smith, Ph.D. David Youngblade

Jerri McGill, Ph.D. Col. Ervin Page

Cassandra Courtney, Ph.D. Edward Rice

Vernon Courtney Clark Beck

Larue Turner Edward Wingard, Ph.D.

Wilfred Ball, Ph.D. Jane Ball

Carol Cobbs Muriel Wright Brailey, Ph.D.

Helen O’Neal-McCray Wilamenia Robinson

Marcella Sampson James Morris, Ph.D.

Orlando Brown Helen Bratcher

Samuel Jackson

*Edward Wingard, Ph.D.*