

Edenton continues to celebrate Black History Month

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CELEBRATING

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

We continue to acknowledge and celebrate the diverse voices that have shaped Edenton and call it home today.



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EDENTON -- The Town of Edenton continues to acknowledge and celebrate Black History Month as we move through the month of February. While we recognize the importance of celebrating

Black voices year-round, it is particularly special to highlight the history of African-American impacts here locally during Black History Month.

From the renowned story of Harriet Jacobs' escape from enslavement, to other local figures such as Evelina Badham, Dr. J.H. Horton, Reverend Simeon Nathaniel Griffith, Willie Charlton, and Josephine Napoleon Leary, Edenton has an incredible African-American community that has helped to shape this town we call home. We will always salute the impacts this community has had in Edenton, and the lasting legacies still on display.

"The hands of the Badham Family built Kadesh Church, one of the most celebrated churches in Edenton," said Tyler Newman, Public Information Officer. "Josephine Leary, one of the most prominent and wealthiest businesswomen in Edenton history, became a local real estate magnate, and later oversaw the construction of the J.N. Leary Building. This building, which is still standing today, is one of the most striking and beautiful commercial structures in downtown, and is now occupied via mixed-use: our local newspaper, an esthetician, and residential apartments all call Ms. Leary's heirloom home."

Across Edenton, African-American history is on full display. The impact of Reverend S.N. Griffith's work in Edenton to improve housing opportunities and educational experiences for local schoolchildren inspired the name of "Griffith Park," for the popular gathering place and basketball courts at the corner of Freemason and Oakum streets, for example.

To the northwest, lies the Golden Asro Frinks House. A window into the past of perhaps Edenton's most notable Civil Rights activist, Mr. Frinks' persistence and activism for northeast North Carolina inspired nonviolent movements in Edenton, nearby towns, and across the region. His friendship with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. eventually led King to visiting Edenton for a rally at the old National Guard Armory on Broad Street. The 40th anniversary of this rally later led the Mayor and Town Council in 2002 to rename West Albemarle Street between Mexico Road and Granville Street as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue. Mr. Frinks later passed in 2004.

Dr. J.H. Horton, a veteran and Howard University alumnus, was frequently involved in civic service and leadership when not at his local dental practice. He was elected to the Edenton-Chowan Board of Education, served on the Board of Chowan Credit Union, and was appointed to a Cabinet Committee on Education by President Richard Nixon, where he offered leadership to solving educational and desegregation issues. Dr. Horton was appointed to the Board of Trustees of Elizabeth City State University by Governor James Hunt, and was a lifelong member of St. John the Evangelist Episcopal Church. He passed in 1994, but not before providing Edenton with incredible civic service for decades.

"These names are just some of the countless many in the Black community that have stood up and not only pushed for better quality of life in Edenton, but were inspiring by way of their leadership, contributions and memory," Newman added. "We honor them all this month, and

every month."

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