

Black Emporia

Emporia, KS, was formed by The Emporia Town Company in 1857. It has a tradition of diverse communities within its boundaries since the 1850s. Emporia's first African-American family, the Adair family, moved here in 1863 from Fort Smith, AR. By 1880, the African-American population had grown considerably and participated in a variety of industries, including agriculture, business, railroad, domestic services, and professionals. As is still true today, the Church was an important part of the black community that formed in Emporia. Services were often conducted in the Lyon County Court House until churches were erected by the community. Emporia also has a rich educational history. Two early schools in Emporia, Century School and Congress Street School, were integrated schools serving all members of the community. The history of Emporia's east side neighborhood, locally known as "Stringtown," is rich with memories and oral histories, some of which are memorialized in the manuscript collection compiled by Dr. Carol Marshall, *Black Emporia: Interpretations and Connections*, and others are memorialized at Emporia's Eastside Memorial Park. The park was created to commemorate the area that formed "Stringtown" and the diversity it brought to the community of Emporia.

Mount Olive African Methodist Episcopal Church was originally erected in 1870 at Second Avenue and State Street. In 1882, a new location was purchased at the corner of Sixth Avenue and Congress Street, which is the present site. The original structure was constructed and used until it was destroyed on Christmas Eve in 1923. The present building was rebuilt by October 1925.



Black Emporia, 2006

Church of the New Covenant was formed by Rev. Chester Morris on July, 17, 1994. It is at its third location at 2300 East 6th Avenue in Emporia.

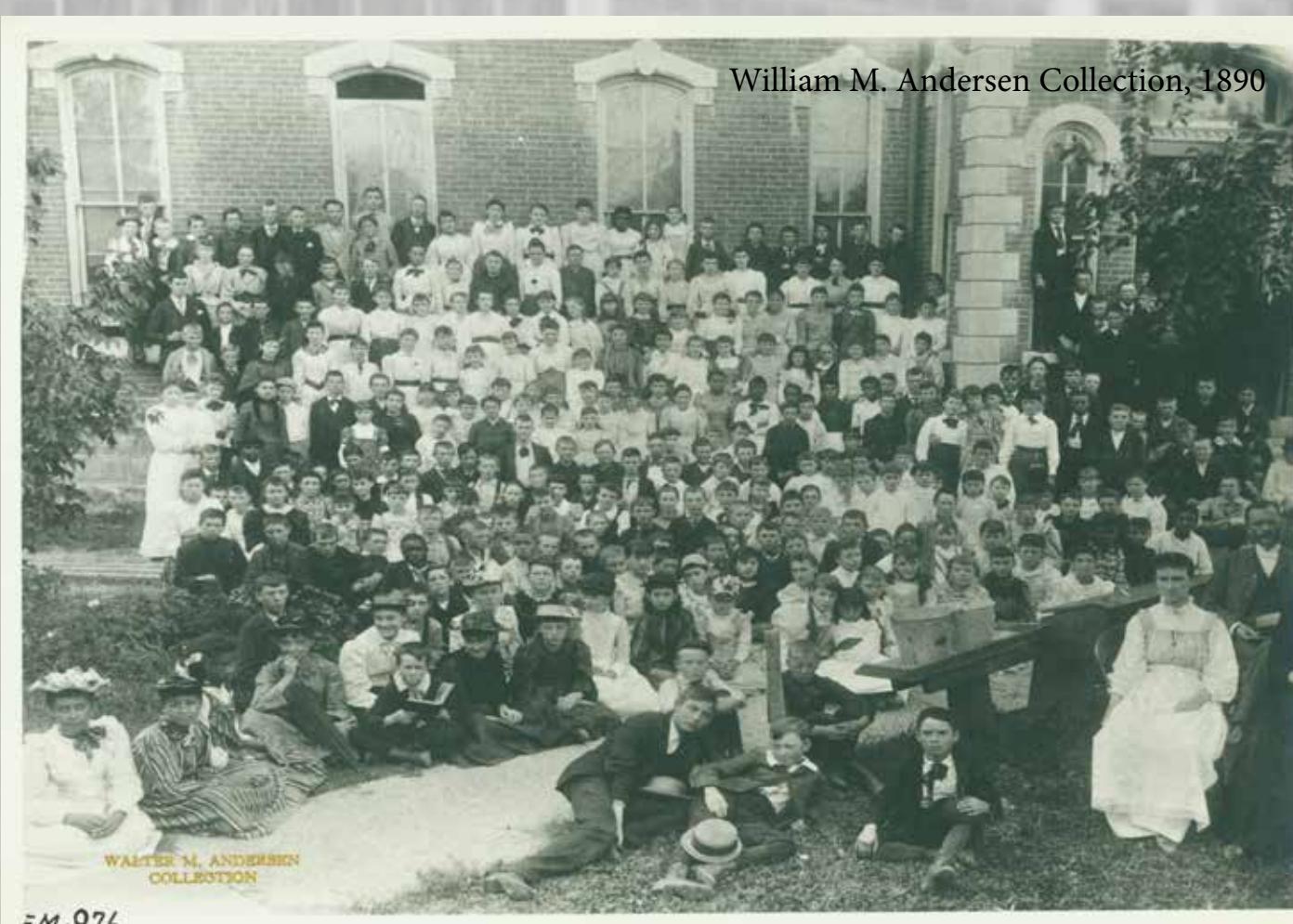


Black Emporia, 2006

Voices featured in *Black Emporia: Interpretations and Collections*

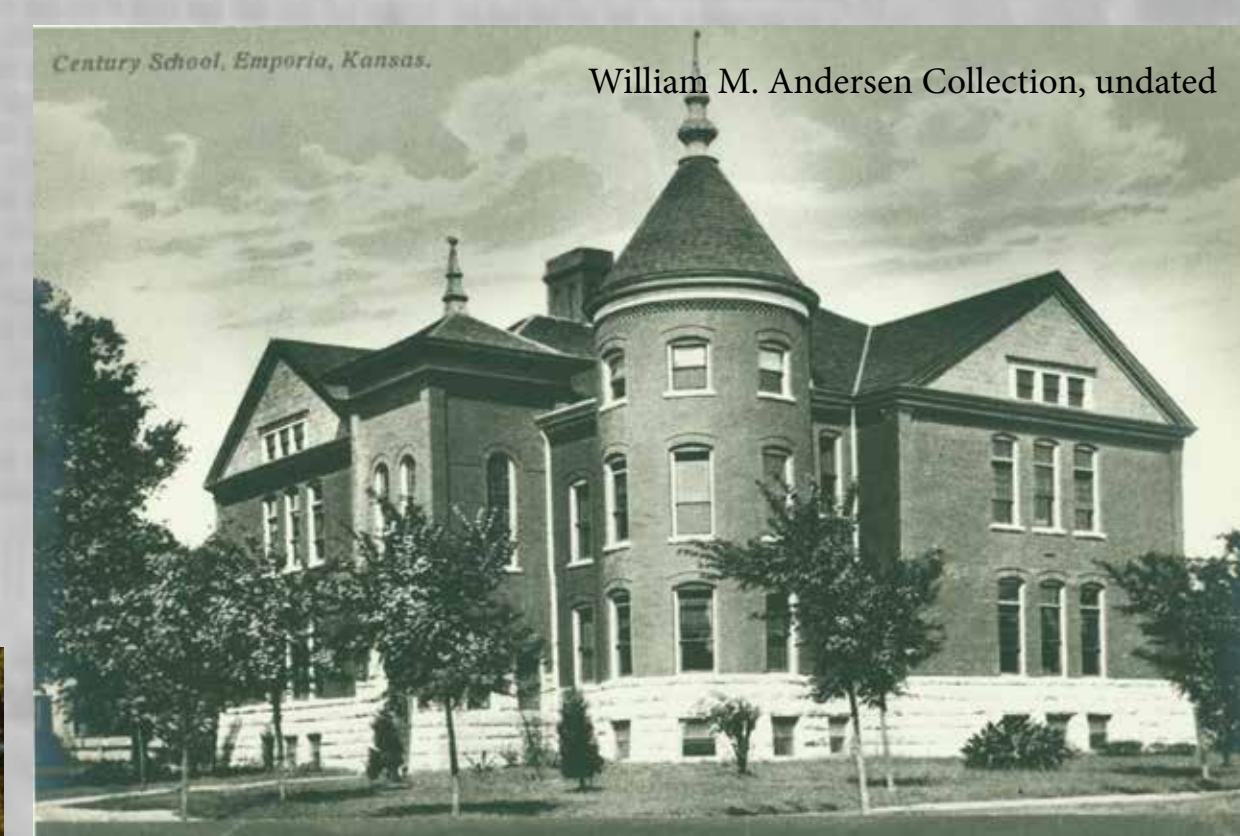
- E. J. Alexander
- Samuel K. Moses "Bud" Brooks
- Dorothy Brooks
- Catherine Williams Carter
- William Curl
- Moris Dell
- Josephine Dell
- Mark Essex
- Nellie Essex
- Lorin Henson Flowers
- Mary Louise Flowers
- Velma Hutcherson
- Wes Level
- Mary Lou McClain
- Neal Morrow
- Lillian Morrow
- John Jordan "Buck" O'Neil Jr.
- Bert Rich
- Paul Terry
- Elizabeth Williams
- Rex Williams

The Second Baptist Church was established in 1872 at 8th Avenue and Constitution Street. On March, 17, 1880, the trustees purchased lots on Commercial Street and a frame building was moved onto the lot to serve as the church. It took several years for a church to be built on the lot, but the cornerstone for the building was finally laid on May 25, 1895. In 1901, Rev. Price changed the name of Second Baptist Church to St. James Baptist Church which it is still known as today. The current church is located at 730 Sylvan Street here in Emporia.



William M. Andersen Collection, 1890

Congress Street School was an integrated school active during the 1890s that held classes in a church at 6th Avenue and Congress Street.



Century School, Emporia, Kansas.

Century School was another integrated school built in 1900. It was located at 10th Avenue and Commercial Street until 1912, when it was replaced by Union School. Century School provided an education to both white and black children of the Emporia community regardless of race.



Eastside Memorial Park was the vision of the Emporia Eastside Community Group (EECG), a group that has been devoted to the improvement of the community since it was founded in 1998. The Eastside Memorial Park is located on the corner of East Street and 9th Avenue and serves as the only park in a forty-eight block area between 6th and 12th Avenue. The park serves as a memorial to those who live and have lived in the community that used to be known as "Stringtown." "Stringtown" was a term coined by William Allen White to describe the African-American community that resided in the eastern side of Emporia. There is an obelisk in the park to commemoates this community.

Background: Mount Olive A.M.E., William M. Andersen Collection, 1974