

Jackson County's Black History Makers
By Joanne Anderson
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Moss Point's first black aldermen were **Louis Jackson, J.R. Spillers** and **Willie Williams**.

Evelyn Barial was the first black poll worker in Jackson County. She was appointed by Judge Robert Oswald who was chairman of the Jackson County Democratic Executive Committee at that time in 1962.

Lt. Col. Leonelle Anthony Bonham of Pascagoula was a member of the Tuskegee Airmen during World War II. They were the first Black pilots in the Air Force.

J. B. Carter of Moss Point was the first black to: 1) integrate the Pascagoula Mississippi Employment Security Commission as an interviewer, 2) run for public office in the City of Moss Point, 3) be employed in Ingalls Labor Relations, and 4) serve as Justice Court Administrator for Jackson County.

Alphonse "Baby Ray" Ellis of Moss Point founded the Moss Point Monarchs, a segregated baseball team of the 40's and 50's that would be considered a Class A team today in the opinion of sportswriters of that day.

The Rev. Carl A. Fisher, S.S.J., of Pascagoula, was appointed the first black bishop in the western United States.

Jared Paul Fisher was the first African American Valedictorian at Pascagoula High School, Class of 2002.

Joseph Thomas Fisher was the first African American to graduate in Naval Architecture, Mississippi State University, Class of 1971.

Earnestine Fountain of Moss Point was the first black to serve as principal of an integrated school.

Litterial M. Green was the first black from Jackson County drafted by the NBA.

Julia Holmes of Moss Point was the first black at the Pascagoula Public Library by then Director Kathleen S. McIlwain. Holmes retired recently and was the library's reference librarian.

Calvin Huey was the first black from Jackson County to attend the U.S. Naval Academy.

Joseph Lawson Howze, was appointed in 1976 as Bishop of the Diocese of Biloxi, becoming the first black bishop in the Catholic Church in this country in the 20th Century. Jackson County is in the Biloxi Diocese.

Louis Jackson was the first black mayor of Moss Point.

Thomas Isaac Keys (1861 –1931) was Ocean Springs' first black postmaster. Initially appointed by the Republican Administration in 1889, he held the position off and on until 1911, depending on the party in office. The Keys family moved in 1910 to a home at Cash Alley and DeSoto Street and Keys had a store next to the house.

Maxine Lawson-Conway was the first black elected as Youth Court Judge.

The Rev. William L. Norvel of Pascagoula in 1971 was the first African-American to pastor a Catholic Church in Washington, D.C.

Fred Robinson was the first black county supervisor, representing District 2, Jackson County, and the first black Justice Court Judge.

Dave Rush was the first black in Jackson County to serve as a constable. He was District 2 constable in the Pas-Point area from 1984-86 and was also the first black to serve as an officer with the Mississippi Constable Association. He was vice-president. He is now employed at the Mississippi Welcome Center near the Franklin Creek exit as a security guard.

Toni Seawright of Moss Point was the first black Miss Mississippi and fourth runner-up in the 1988 Miss America Pageant.

Dorothy Myles Shaw, well known civic and community leader, has a long list of firsts: first woman and first black to be manager of Labor and Employee Relations at Ingalls; first black woman to chair the Jackson County Democratic Executive Committee, first black woman to serve on the Moss Point School Board, first black and first woman to serve as chairman of the Jackson County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, first black to serve as campaign chairman and Board Chairman for United Way of Jackson County, and first black woman to serve as Jackson County Port Commissioner.

Annie Wimbs was the first Negro Home Demonstration Agent.

This list is a work in progress and contributions to it are welcome.