

1-26-2022

## Moses Moore: Community Needs

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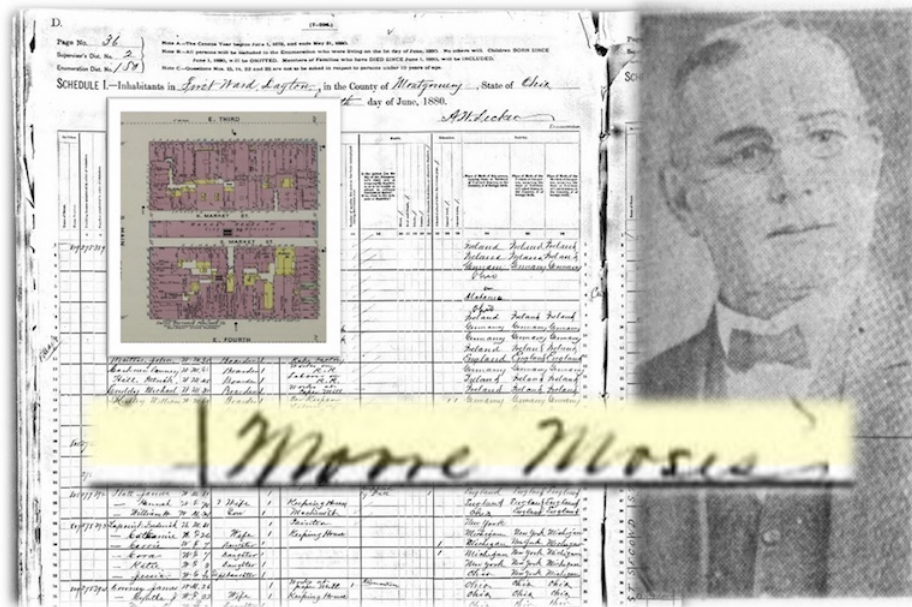
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Gauder, Heidi, "Moses Moore: Community Needs" (2022). *University Libraries Blog Archive*. 432.  
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THURSDAY JANUARY 27, 2022

# Moses Moore: Community Needs

By Heidi Gauder

*Last of six installments in a documentary biography of Moses Moore, who became known as the wealthiest Black man in Dayton in the late 1800s. Librarian Heidi Gauder pieced together his history from census records, maps, newspaper clippings and local histories. You can read the other installments on the Roesch Library blog:*

- [Moses Moore: A Documentary Biography](#)
- [Moses Moore: Political Action](#)
- [Moses Moore: Business Grows](#)
- [Moses Moore: Entertainment and Sports](#)
- [Moses Moore: Building Portfolio](#)

Throughout the decade of the 1910s, newspaper stories about Moses Moore, by then in his 60s, built a profile of a man focusing his efforts to enhance the African American experience in Dayton. Meanwhile, Dayton's African American population continued to grow: The 1920 census recorded 9,025 African Americans in a city of 152,559, making up 6% of the city population — an increase of nearly 50% in 10 years. This marked the start of the Great Migration, a period when 6 million African Americans left the South to escape poor economic conditions as well as the racial segregation and discrimination brought about by Jim Crow laws.

## AN ANSWER TO EXCLUSION: A NEW THEATER

Racial segregation occurred in the North as well. In Dayton, African Americans experienced segregation in entertainment venues, among other places, and were excluded from downtown theaters in the early 1920s. A National Register of Historic Places nomination form for the Classic Theater notes, "Blacks could sit in the small

## PREVIOUS POST

Reflection,  
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Inspired by Martin Luther King Jr., Ione Damasco calls the University community to study, discuss and take part in the continuing pursuit of equality, equity and social justice.

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## NEXT POST

**Moses Moore:  
Building  
Portfolio**

Part 5 of 6 in a documentary biography of Moses Moore, who became known as the wealthiest Black man in

balcony of the old Keith Theater, but only when an all black cast vaudeville was performing, the back balcony of the Colonial Theater, or they could use the white owned Midget Theater.” Once again, Moore identified a community need and endeavored to answer it: In February 1921, he purchased a lot on Fifth Street to construct an African American movie theater, though no further mention is made about the building’s progress, and it appears that the project was not completed. However, two African American theaters were constructed on Fifth Street during this decade; one of them was the Classic, built by Carl P. Anderson, who married Marion Moore following Moses Moore’s death in 1927. Despite efforts to save it, the Classic Theater was torn down in 1991.

Dayton in the late 1800s.

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## EMPOWERING WOMEN: AFFORDABLE CHILD CARE

During the 1920s, Moore and his wife worked to support another issue facing the African American community: suitable child care for working parents. Parents — mothers in particular — who worked outside the home had few choices for the education and care of children who were too young to attend school. The need was great; according to the 1920 census, Dayton had 2,837 African American women over the age of 16. Of this number, about 1,500 of them were employed, with the vast majority — 1,300 — in domestic service occupations.

In response to this need, the West Side Day Nursery opened at 114 Fitch St. in 1920 with accommodations for 15 to 20 children daily, thanks to the organizing efforts of Marion Moore and other women. Financing was provided in part by the Community Chest (now known as the United Way) as well as with charity balls throughout the years, which Marion Moore chaired. Even with this start, the need for child care in the community quickly outgrew the building; in less than three years and with the financial help of Moses Moore, the nursery moved to a new location at 14 Hawthorne St., which could accommodate the care of 35 to 40 children a day. The nursery moved one more

time in 1948 to 1798 W. Stewart St. and was renamed the Melissa Bess Day Care Center in 1958; facing declining enrollment and revenues, the daycare closed in 2004.

Moore died April 5, 1927, following a three-year illness and heart disease. He was 76. His notice in the paper read, “Moses Moore, owner of race horses, dead.” Moore was also a member of the Elks, the Dayton Business Men’s league, St. Margaret’s Episcopal Church and the Knights of Pythias. He is buried in Woodland Cemetery along with his wives and children.

Moore’s will left everything to his wife except for \$1,000 allocated to his sister for her proper burial when the time arose. He had no other descendants, as his children predeceased him. His real estate holdings included a gasoline service station at 438 W. Fifth St.; a house at 217 Perry St.; residential lots on Fifth Street; his home at 59 Horace St.; properties at 35 and 41 W. Sixth St.; and another lot in Dayton. Altogether, this real estate was appraised at \$86,500. His savings and personal goods were appraised at about \$8,000, bringing a total valuation of \$94,400 — the equivalent of nearly \$1.5 million today. Given the value of this estate, it seems he was indeed one of the wealthiest African Americans in Dayton during his lifetime.

## **SUCCESS, GENEROSITY, SERVICE**

Moore led a full and active life at a time Dayton experienced rapid growth, industrialization and creativity. As a biracial person who identified with the African American community, he navigated social and economic barriers to become a leader in the Dayton community. Even though few documents and few words can be directly attributed to him, the mentions in newspapers and other documents provided documentation sufficient to reconstruct his life story. Additional testimony helps us piece together his character:

- “Mose Moore is the good genius of the colored people of Dayton. He bails them out when they are locked up

and his many unostentatious acts of charity are numbered by thousands.” (*Dayton Herald*, Sept. 25, 1886)

- “... and Moore, who is locally famous for his charities bestowed on people of his own color, took the fellow in, fed him, and gave him work.” (*Dayton Herald*, Aug. 9, 1886)
- From a 1937 recollection: “Taller than the average run of men, broad-shouldered as a professional wrestler, a complexion about like slightly-creamed coffee and as sharp as a steel trap — that was Mose Moore, king of Dayton’s Negro gambling fraternity 40 years ago, yet one of the city’s best-known and best-liked citizens.” (*Dayton Daily News*, Apr. 11, 1937)

What started as a search to verify the claim that Moore was the “wealthiest black man in Dayton before 1900” turned into an effort to understand and give recognition to a man who, until now, has received only passing mention in Dayton histories. Moore’s life story connected to so many African American experiences of the time — segregation, violence, harassment — yet he successfully carved out spaces for himself and his community within the city. It is time that Moses C. Moore receives his due.

— *Heidi Gauder is a professor in the University Libraries and coordinator of research and instruction. In locating records and information about Moses Moore and his family, she received assistance from Suzanne Dungan, Paris-Bourbon County (Kentucky) Public Library; Shawna Woodard, Special Collections, Dayton Metro Library; and Amy Czubak, Montgomery County (Ohio) Records Center and Archives. [View the sources used in this series.](#)*



# Henry Moore Anderson

Marion Henry  
Moore  
Anderson, photo  
from obituary,  
Dayton Daily  
News, April 12,  
1954.

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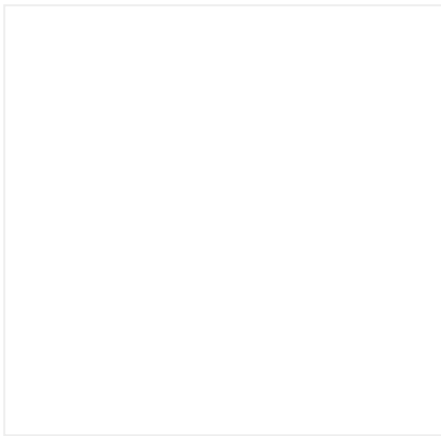
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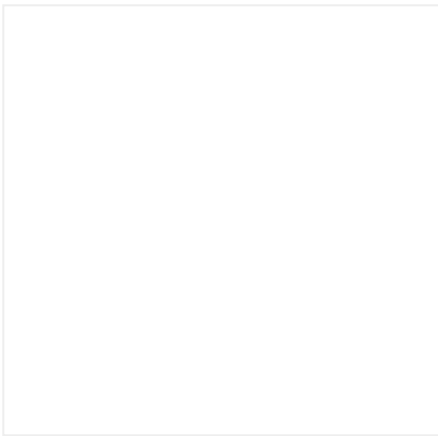
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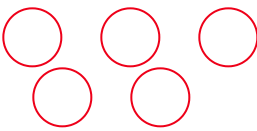
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