



THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MISSOURI

State Historical Society of Missouri hosts conversation about life in segregated Columbia for the African-American Experience in Missouri Lecture Series

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

COLUMBIA, MO, Oct. 9, 2019 – Columbia civic Leader Bill Thompson and longtime resident Sehon Williams will be part of the African-American Experience in Missouri Lecture Series. A reception and conversation talk will be held Tuesday, Oct. 15, 6 p.m., at the Center for Missouri Studies, 605 Elm St., Columbia, Missouri. The event is free and open to the public. A reception will be held a half-hour before the conversation begins at 6:30 p.m. There will be an opportunity for a meet and greet following the talk.

Born and raised in Columbia, Williams served in Italy during World War II with the 92nd “Buffalo” Division. In 1955, he began a 33-year career in management with the U.S. Postal Service. Williams will be interviewed by Thompson, who was one of the founding members of the J.W. “Blind” Boone Heritage Foundation and a historian of Columbia’s African American community. Thompson is retired from the Columbia Parks and Recreation Department.

Thompson will talk with Williams about growing up in Columbia during the era of segregation, and the legacy of the Sharp End district that was home to black-owned businesses in the central part of Columbia. Sharp End was destroyed with the urban renewal movement of the 1960s.

“Urban renewal killed many black business districts in smaller communities,” said Gary Kremer, executive director of the State Historical Society of Missouri. “Sharp End is a testament to the fact that Columbia’s black community was a vibrant part of Columbia’s civic and commercial life,” added Kremer, saying it’s important to remember Sharp End not just for nostalgia reasons, but to recognize its legacy in the form of many black-owned businesses still operating in the community.

The African-American Experience in Missouri lecture series began in 2016 to offer the public a new understanding of present-day Missouri by learning about the history of African-Americans within the state. It is sponsored by the State Historical Society of Missouri’s Center for Missouri Studies and the University of Missouri Division of Inclusion, Diversity and Equity.

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