

# The Berkshire Eagle

## MCLA prof to discuss black history in Berkshires

**Berkshire Eagle Staff**

Sunday February 21, 2010 WILLIAMSTOWN - Frances Jones-Sneed, professor of history at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, will discuss "African Americans in Berkshire County" in celebration of Black History Month at the Orchards Hotel here on Monday.

The event, which includes a luncheon at Gala Restaurant, will take place from noon to 2 p.m.

Jones-Sneed will discuss her book, "African American Heritage in the Upper Housatonic Valley," which chronicles the histories of more than 100 African Americans between Pittsfield and northern Connecticut.

She also will introduce her latest project, "African American Heritage Project in the Northern Berkshires," which will gather the histories of African Americans living in Northern Berkshire County. Notable individuals include baseball player Frank Grant of Williamstown; Robert Hawkins of Adams, who was called "the Father of Negro Golf"; Thomas Dawkins of North Adams, who worked as a Pullman porter on the region's trains, and Abe Bunter of Williamstown, who had an illustrious local history, according to Jones-Sneed.

"What we're seeing is there were a number of black businessmen. They owned barbershops, transportation businesses and catering companies.

They didn't work directly for the factories, but had their own small businesses. That's kind of unique," said Jones-Sneed.

African American Heritage Project in the Northern Berkshires (AAHNB) consists of a group of educators, students, community members, local historians and librarians who formed an ad hoc cluster to research, write and publicize the role of African Americans in this area, from colonial times through the 20th century.

The group intends to identify, preserve, share, and celebrate the African American heritage in the Northern Berkshires, through the creation of an annotated bibliography of primary and secondary resources in libraries, historical societies, and other repositories in the area, plan related interpretive materials for exhibits and public programs, and develop a guide book to African Americans in Northern Berkshire.

Jones-Sneed has taught and researched local history for over 25 years.

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