

Town of Greenburgh
**ASSISTANT
TOWN HISTORIANS**
SURVEY MONKEY COORDINATORS



— felicia barber + riley wentzler —

*Making Martin Luther King Jr's
Dream Come Alive the Success Story of
the Parkway Homes/ Parkway
Gardens Community:*

By: Riley Wentzler & Felicia Barber

Greenburgh is proud to have one of the largest middle class African American Communities in The United States. It's possible it could be the largest. Two neighborhoods: Parkway Homes and Parkway Gardens have been home to some very famous residents.



Cab Calloway (1907-1994):

Cab Calloway was a famous jazz singer and musician. Cab Calloway was born on December 25th, 1907 in Rochester, New York. He spent his childhood in Baltimore Maryland, before moving to Chicago Illinois to study law at Crane College. His heart was never really in it however, his true passion was singing. He frequently performed at Chicago's famous Sunset Club as part of The Alabamians. After meeting Louis Armstrong and learning the style of scat singing, he dropped out of law school, left Chicago, and moved to New York to pursue a full-time career as a singer. In 1930, Cab Calloway and his Orchestra were regular performers at one of the most popular clubs in New York, Harlem's Cotton Club. His most famous song, which sold more than one million copies, is "Minnie the Moocher" (1931) (<https://www.biography.com/people/cab-calloway-9235609>). In 1955, he moved to Greenburgh and settled into a 12 room House on Knollwood Avenue. While there, he performed in the famous opera, "Porgy and Bess" (<https://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/14/nyregion/nyregionspecial2/14cabwe.html>). He received the National Medal of the Arts in 1993 and died a year later in Hockessin, Delaware (<https://www.biography.com/people/cab-calloway-9235609>). He is buried in Ferncliff Cemetery located on 280 Secor Road Hartsdale, NY 10530. Jazz music is deeply rooted in the cultural DNA of Parkway Gardens/ Parkway Homes because in addition to Jazz singer Cab Calloway, jazz pianist Hazel Scott also lived there.



Hazel Scott (1920–1981):

Hazel Scott was a jazz musician, actress, political activist; and the first black woman to host her own television show. She was born on June 11, 1920 in the city of Port of Spain, on the Caribbean island of Trinidad. She began playing piano in Port of Spain at the age of three. In 1924, she immigrated with her family to Harlem, New York (<https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/scott-hazel-1920-1981/>).

Sometime before her eighth birthday, she traveled to New York City to perform at Lincoln Center. At age eight, she won a scholarship to the Juilliard School of Music (Balfour in MICROSOFT ENCARTA, Reference Library 1993-2003). In the 1930s, she starred in many Broadway Shows and in several movies, she also continued to perform as a concert pianist. As a strong advocate of racial equality, she refused to perform in segregated theaters as an actress or segregated music halls as a concert jazz pianist. She frequently used her fame as an opportunity to speak out against racial discrimination in hiring and pay as well as to campaign vigorously against segregation in all institutions. In the next decade, she made history as the first black woman to host her own television show. Unfortunately for her, by 1950, Senator Joseph McCarthy and the Republican Party had managed to convince many Americans that the cause of racial equality was tied to communism. Therefore in 1950, she was falsely accused of being a communist sympathizer which led to her television show being canceled. She was shocked and outraged by this development, and therefore left the United States for five years. Then in 1960, she returned to America and was able to resume her television and musical career

both of which lasted until her death on October 2, 1981. She died in New York City. (Balfour in MICROSOFT ENCARTA, Reference Library 1993-2003). While Cab Calloway and Hazel Scott used jazz music to attack racism, not all of the Parkway Homes/ Parkway Gardens residents were musically inclined, those that weren't had to use other talents as weapons in their war on racism. Moms Mabley used her incredible sense of humor.

Moms Mabley (1894–1975):

Moms Mabley was a famous African American comedian. Her real name is Loretta Mary Aiken. She was born in Brevard, North Carolina. Her father was a firefighter; he died in the line of duty when she was eleven. She began her career as a comedian with the African-American Vaudeville Circuit at the age of fourteen. In the 1920s, she became a regular performer at Harlem's Cotton Club. She used her standup comedy routines as a way to reveal and undermine the systemic racism that existed all over the United States at that time. Her subtle yet hilarious routines resonated with African Americans throughout the country. Her most successful comedy albums include: *The Funniest Woman Alive*, *Moms Mabley at the Playboy Club*, and *Moms Mabley at the UN*. In addition to her primary career as a comedian, she also was an actress. She performed in the Broadway show *Fast and Furious: A Colored Revue in 37 Scenes* (1931). Her acting career was so successful that she performed at The Apollo Theater more than any other performer in the 1930's. She also acted in all of the following movies: *The Big Timers* (1945), *Boarding House Blues* (1948), and the musical revue *Killer Diller* (1948) Sometime in the 1950s, Mabley moved to the Town of Greenburgh where she stayed until her death in 1975(<http://www.greenburghny.com/Cit-e-Access/news/index.cfm?NID=47278&TID=10&jump2=0>) Like Cab Calloway, she is also buried in Ferncliff Cemetery.

A social wrong like racism can never be righted unless its horrors are made accessible to all parts of the population. While comedy and music are both powerful forms of art and therefore powerful agents for change, the music of Cab Calloway or Hazel Scott and the comedy of Moms Mabley would never be able to make racism's horrors accessible to the deaf, in 1930-1957, only photography could do that. Therefore, New York was very lucky to have an extremely talented photographer in Parkway Homes/ Parkway Gardens. His name was Gordon Parks.

Gordon Parks (1912–2006)

Gordon Parks was a highly successful African American photographer. He was born in Fort Scott, Kansas on November 30th 1912 (<https://www.biography.com/artist/gordon-parks>). In 1925, at the age of fifteen, he moved to Minneapolis, Minnesota (Grundlberg in MICROSOFT ENCARTA, Reference Library 1993-2003). He supported himself with a wide variety of jobs including: bellhop, waiter, and piano player.

He continued shifting from job to job until 1937 when he bought a camera and taught himself photography. While he began taking photos in 1937, it wasn't until 1943 that he got his first job as a professional photographer. During World War II, the Office of War Information hired him to take photos of fighter pilots in training. After the war ended he put his experience to good use and was hired as a photographer by Life Magazine, becoming the first African-American they ever hired. He worked there from 1948 to 1971.

He is best known for his photograph *American Gothic*, depicting an African American cleaning woman holding a mop and standing in front of an American flag, and his numerous photos of Malcom X. While he is primarily known as a photographer he was also, a movie director, he directed *Shaft* (1971) and a choreographer. He choreographed the 1989 ballet based on the life of Martin Luther King Jr, called *Martin* (Grundlberg in MICROSOFT ENCARTA, Reference Library 1993-2003). He died on March 7th 2006(<https://www.biography.com/artist/gordon-parks>).



About the Authors:

We are both Assistant Town Historians at Greenburgh Town Hall and we are engaged to be married and are currently looking for permanent employment.

Riley Wentzler:

I was born and raised in a small rural town in central Pennsylvania. In high school, I took every honors course available including four years of Spanish. I received A's in all of them. I graduated third in my class of 146 students. This brought me to Edinboro University of Pennsylvania. Once there, I continued my trend of academic excellence. I graduated summa cum laude in Political Science with a minor in Spanish and a Master's in Communication Studies, with a G.P.A of 3.94. It was also there that I met my lovely fiancée, Felicia Barber. My Master's in Communication has promoted public speaking, teamwork, and customer service. My Political Science degree has developed my research skills using computer-based tools and provided me with experience using the Microsoft Office products. My minor in Spanish has facilitated my bilingual capabilities. During my internship at Greenburgh, I created the petition for the State Roads project using website tools. My diverse education and areas of interest have provided me with a wide range of skills. I look forward to finding a career opportunity in business or government. **To suggest a topic for next week's article, you can contact me at assistanthistorian@greenburghny.com, or to help me find employment, you can contact me at rjwentzler413@gmail.com**

Felicia Barber:

I was born in New York City and raised in Hartsdale, New York. I graduated from Ardsley High School. I recently earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Graphic Design at Edinboro University of Pennsylvania. It was here that I met my fiancé, Riley Wentzler. As a result of my academic excellence, I won a scholarship every year. I learned and applied many graphic design skills to projects during my summer internships and at school. I am proficient in using Adobe graphic design applications including Photoshop, Illustrator and InDesign. For my Identity/branding course at Edinboro, I created logos to appear on the tee-shirts of Physical Education majors. For a veteran's upcoming event, I used a typeface to focus the reader to the soldier in the poster. For the State Roads Legislative Campaign project, I created the embedded graphic-photo that accompanied the petition I am looking for a job to utilize my skills as a Graphic Designer in an agency, print shop, company or government **To suggest a topic for next week's article, you can contact me at assistanthistorian@greenburghny.com. To learn more about my artwork or to help me find employment you can contact me at feliciadbarber@gmail.com.**

Two Interviews with the authors:

<https://riverjournalonline.com/around-town/a-love-of-history-and-each-other/13708/>

<https://wcbs880.radio.com/articles/news/stories-main-street-couple-cerebral-palsy-brings-manytalents-town-greenburgh>

References

Balfour, L. (1993-2003), (NOT GIVEN) (NOT GIVEN). Scott, Hazel in MICROSOFT ENCARTA, Reference Library . Redmond , Washington , United States of America

Biography.com Editors . (2019 , April 12). Gordon Parks Biography . Retrieved from Biography.com : <https://www.biography.com/artist/gordon-parks>

editors, B. (2014, April 2). Biography . Retrieved from Cab Calloway Biography: <https://www.biography.com/people/cab-calloway-9235609>

Grundlberg, A. (1993-2003), (NOT GIVEN) (NOT GIVEN). Parks, Gordon in MICROSOFT ENCARTA, Reference Library . Redmond , Washington , United States of America

Mack, D. (2007, January 19). Hazel Scott (1920-1981). Retrieved from Black Past: <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/scott-hazel-1920-1981>

Kelly, K. (2015, (Not Given) (Not Given)). America Comes Alive. Retrieved from Jackie “Moms” Mabley (1894-1975): Trailblazing Comedian: <https://americacomesalive.com/2014/02/26/jackie-moms-mabley-1894-1975-trailblazing-comedian/>