# King-Lincoln

## King-Lincoln: Churches

## East High School Traditions

## Historical Context and Overview

The cultural life of Columbus has religion at its roots. Churches represented religious beliefs, community and friendship, common purpose, charity, and education for the young or newly - arrived and medical help for the needy. Many of the African-American churches in King-Lincoln are well over 100 years old. The congregations may have expanded to new buildings, but the congregations are both ancient and evolving—with some new churches growing out of other ones.

The histories of the churches in King-Lincoln have deep roots in Columbus history, and so do the schools. East High School has long been known for its outstanding athletics and its spirited marching bands and its debate teams, but it also has one of the oldest and most distinguished alumni associations in Ohio. East High School had been built as part of a 10 million dollar building campaign by the Columbus Public Schools in the 1920s to accommodate all the students who were expected to attend because of the state's mandatory attendance policies. West, North, and South High Schools were also built during this period.

The early 20th century was an era of great social change in the United States. The Great Migration brought new families and new citizens to the North. There was a resurgence of fear and misunderstanding. It was widely accepted that blacks and whites could not live together in harmony. Segregation, while perhaps not the law, was expected and conformed to, leading to the establishment of Champion School in Columbus. And like the neighborhood itself, East High School and Champion turned inward to encourage its young people who came from diverse social and economic circumstances in the black community to excel in all they did.

## Standards Alignment

### Ohio's New Learning Standards: K-12 Social Studies

Grade 3: Content Statement 3: Local communities change over time
Grade 5: Content Statement 14: The choices people make have both present and future consequences.
Grade 8: Content Statement 22: Choices made by individuals, businesses and governments have both present and future consequences
HS American History, Content Statement 12: Immigration, internal migration and urbanization transformed American life
HS American History, Content Statement 19: Movements such as the Harlem Renaissance, African-American migration, women's suffrage and Prohibition all contributed to social change.

## Learning Objectives

- Analyze how traditions and legacy affect institutions and communities.
- Define what is meant by traditions and legacy, especially in relation to values.
- Discuss how churches and schools played seminal roles in carrying out traditions and legacies.
- Discuss the role of these institutions in changing social injustices.

## Discussion Questions

1. How does tradition happen? Where do traditions come from? How did both the churches and the schools of King-Lincoln reflect keeping traditions and heritage alive?

2. How did individuals and organizations work for social justice in the 1800s? Though individuals and institutions work for justice in the Civil Rights years (1960s-1980s), why does there seem to be an acceptance of segregation in the earlier 20th century?

3. In 1961, Dr. Watson Walker became the first African American in the 20th century to be elected to the Columbus school board (Reverend Poindexter had been the first in 19th century.) Walker believed other members of the board routinely neglected talking about the obvious—black schools. Walker told the story of how he won lights for the football field at East.

   "I know this was one of the things the black community was incensed about. They had been working on it for years and had been rebuffed at every turn. The only reason (white board members) didn't want lights for East was the white schools would prefer to play East at daytime because they figured if they came out in the East end and at nighttime they were going to get beat up. These were prevalent racial attitudes that had to be erased. …I asked the question, 'How many schools with football fields do you have that are not lighted?' Everything got quiet. Of course, I was playing the part of not knowing that I was asking a racially-loaded question. They finally said, 'One,' and I said, 'Which one?' And everybody got quiet again. The attitude they had was, 'Is he crazy? Does he know the answer to this or is he pulling our leg?' And I had this angelic face and they couldn't tell what was going on. They finally said, 'East High.'"

   Discuss Dr. Walker's approach to confronting the issue. What were the advantages to his approach? How could a decision to give East High lights help to advance the traditions of the school?

## Extension Activities

Interview teachers, alumni, school secretaries and community members about the traditions that surround your school. When and why was it created? Who are famous alumni? Is there a Hall of Fame (as in West High School) or could one be created? Document the findings for publication/display/creation of a school time capsule.

Using current maps, have students make a list of all churches and religious houses of worship in the area bound by the I-71 freeway and Taylor Avenue/Long Street to Mt Vernon Ave, noting addresses and exact names and denominations. Small teams of students, using the church's websites and Columbus Metropolitan Library digital Building File and Historic Photo Collection, document the following information: name, denomination, present church leader or minister and length of time he or she has been in that position, year founded and previous locations in the

city, evolved from another church or not, interesting facts or stories connected to church, number in congregation today, and outreach activities. Historic or contemporary photos would be an additional plus. Gathering documents together, students can create a directory of these institutions for the King-Lincoln district.

## Additional Resources


Jacobs, Gregory. *Getting Around Brown: Desegregation, Development, and the Columbus Public Schools*, 1998.

Neighborhood Profiles and News clippings. Columbus Metropolitan Library Main Branch. Notebooks are shelved but accessible and are not digitized.

Columbus Neighborhoods: http://www.columbusneighborhoods.org/content/king-lincoln

Columbus Neighborhood Design Center. *Columbus Neighborhoods Progress and Promise*, 2003. Hard copy soon to be updated and available electronically through Neighborhood Design website: http://www.neighborhooddesign.org/

White, Ruth. *We Too Built Columbus*, 1936



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