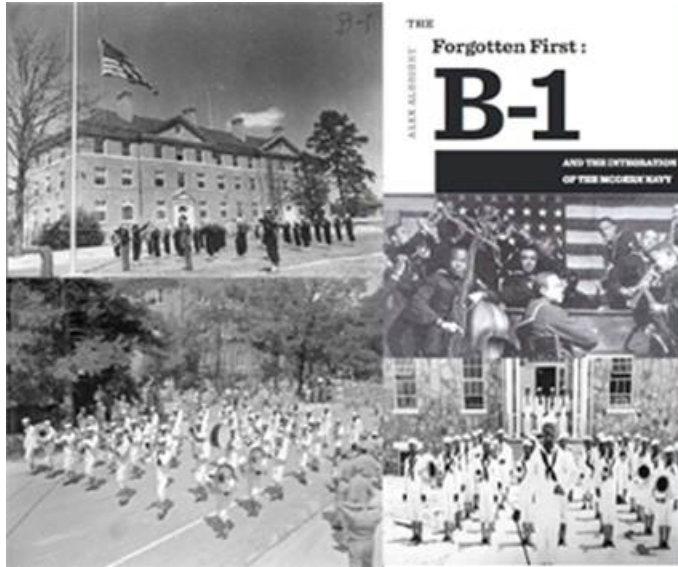


Integration Pioneers To Be Honored with State Historical Marker

A marker to commemorate U.S. Navy Band B-1 will be installed at 10 a.m. Saturday, May 27.



Chapel Hill, NC – (May 9, 2017) - The first African Americans to serve in the modern Navy at general rating will be honored with the dedication of a permanent historical marker on the 75th anniversary of their enlisting.

The marker, which will be installed at 10 a.m. Saturday, May 27 at the intersection of West Franklin and South Roberson streets, commemorates U.S. Navy Band B-1, which was attached to the Navy's PreFlight School on the UNC campus from July 1942 to April 1944.

Attending the installation ceremony will be two of the original members of B-1, Simeon Holloway of Las Vegas and Calvin Morrow of Greensboro, as well as many of the veterans' family members. Only four of the original 44 members of the band are still living.

To start the day, the Visitors Center at 501 West Franklin Street (corner of W. Franklin and Roberson streets) will be open at 8:30 a.m. for those who wish to come early and enjoy music, coffee and refreshments, " said Laurie Paolicelli, executive director of the Visitors Bureau. Parking is available behind the Visitors Center's Bentley Building. "We will have several photo displays and members of the organizing group will be on-hand to welcome guests," said Paolicelli. The Visitors Center remains open on Saturdays until 3 p.m.

After the 10 a.m. installation, a reception in B-1's honor will be held at the Hargraves Center at 216 N. Roberson Street. The marker dedication program and reception are both free and open to the public.

U.S. Navy B-1 was comprised primarily of young men who were enrolled at North Carolina A and T and Dudley High School. Enlistees also came from North Carolina Central, Hampton Institute, South Carolina State, Johnson C. Smith, and Hillside High School in Durham.

B-1 bandsmen were formally inducted into the Navy on May 27, 1942 at the Raleigh recruiting station. After training at Norfolk, they were transferred to Chapel Hill. Because of North Carolina's segregationist

laws, the bandsmen could not live or be fed on campus. They were housed in a newly constructed community building on Roberson Street that is now the Hargraves Recreation Center.

Their service included daily marches from Hargraves to the UNC campus, where B-1 played for the raising of colors for the cadets every morning. These marches were big events for Chapel Hill's black community. Rebecca Clark, longtime Chapel Hill resident and Civil Rights advocate, vividly recalled for B-1's official history how wonderful it felt to see "all those handsome young men in their uniforms" marching to work. "The kids were out at every corner watching them parade. They were the best thing that could have happened to our community."

Rebecca Clark's son, John Clark, said, "Doug and I and all the kids in the neighborhood would run out to Roberson Street when we heard the band coming, and we followed them as far as we could."

The band's marching route would have taken them by the spot where the state's historical marker will be installed.

During their service at Chapel Hill, B-1 bandsmen often played music for occasions that they would not have been allowed to attend because of their race. UNC-CH Chancellor James Moeser apologized to them in 2007 for how they were treated by the university during World War II, and at Kenan Stadium the bandsmen were made honorary members of the Marching Tar Heels.

Prior to B-1's service, blacks were limited to work in the Navy as cooks and porters. B-1 was also the first Navy band to serve without having trained at the Navy's School of Music, which did not admit blacks. B-1 bandsmen were also the first African Americans to work on the UNC campus in jobs that did not involve cooking, cleaning and laundry work.

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About the North Carolina Historical Marker Program

North Carolina's historical marker program is administered by the state's Department of Cultural Resources and the Department of Transportation. Since 1935, the program has erected over 1,500 state highway historical markers. The B-1 marker is the fourth to be installed in Chapel Hill, where markers also commemorate the founding of the University of North Carolina, the training of U.S. astronauts, and the 1947 Journey of Reconciliation. A Carrboro marker commemorating Elizabeth Cotten is about five blocks from where the B-1 marker will be installed.

Sharing release submitted by Town of Chapel Hill with addition of 8:30 a.m. event at Visitors Center Patty Griffin

Communications Director
Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau
501 W. Franklin Street * Chapel Hill, NC 27516
(919) 245-4321 * pgriffin@visitchapelhill.org
www.visitchapelhill.org * [@PattyGriffinNC](https://www.instagram.com/PattyGriffinNC)