

4 Southern Woods Park 600 W. 12th Ave.

Over the decades, the community has used Southern Woods Park as their green space. Though the park now has modern drainage systems, for decades it was a plain field with some trees. Nearby Stillwater Creek would often flood the area, and any structures within it therefore would be at risk of being washed away. Yet, Southern Woods Park was and remains a place where the community comes together. After school, church, or other events families gather here to eat, drink, and chat with one another. Additionally, the space often hosts pot-lucks and block parties.

The park embodies special memories for community members. Karen Washington, a longtime 'Ville resident, remembers hiding behind trees in the park as a child whenever her family called her in for Sunday school.



WHS Football team on the original field on 12th and Hester, unknown date. StillwaterLiving, courtesy of Gloria Thomas Bailey.

5 D's Down Home Bar B Que 823 W. 11th Ave.

This community restaurant has been in its original spot for decades. Located next to Southern Woods Park, D's Down Home Bar B Que was the late-night successor to community park gatherings. Youth could dance along to the restaurant's music but as the evening drew long, kids and youth were sent home while the adults remained to eat and drink.

When the restaurant was facing a bleak financial future, the congregation of Mt. Zion Baptist Church raised funds to purchase the business, allowing the owners to remain and keeping the restaurant operating.

Presently, D's Down Home Bar B Que is open Wednesday-Saturday, from 11am-7pm.

Special thanks to:

Karen Washington

Elnora Sanders

Mary Louis

Gloria Thomas Bailey

Mt. Zion Baptist Church

D's Down Home Bar B Q

Stillwater History Museum at the Sheerar

Stillwater's African-American Heritage Oral History Project, OSU Digital Collections

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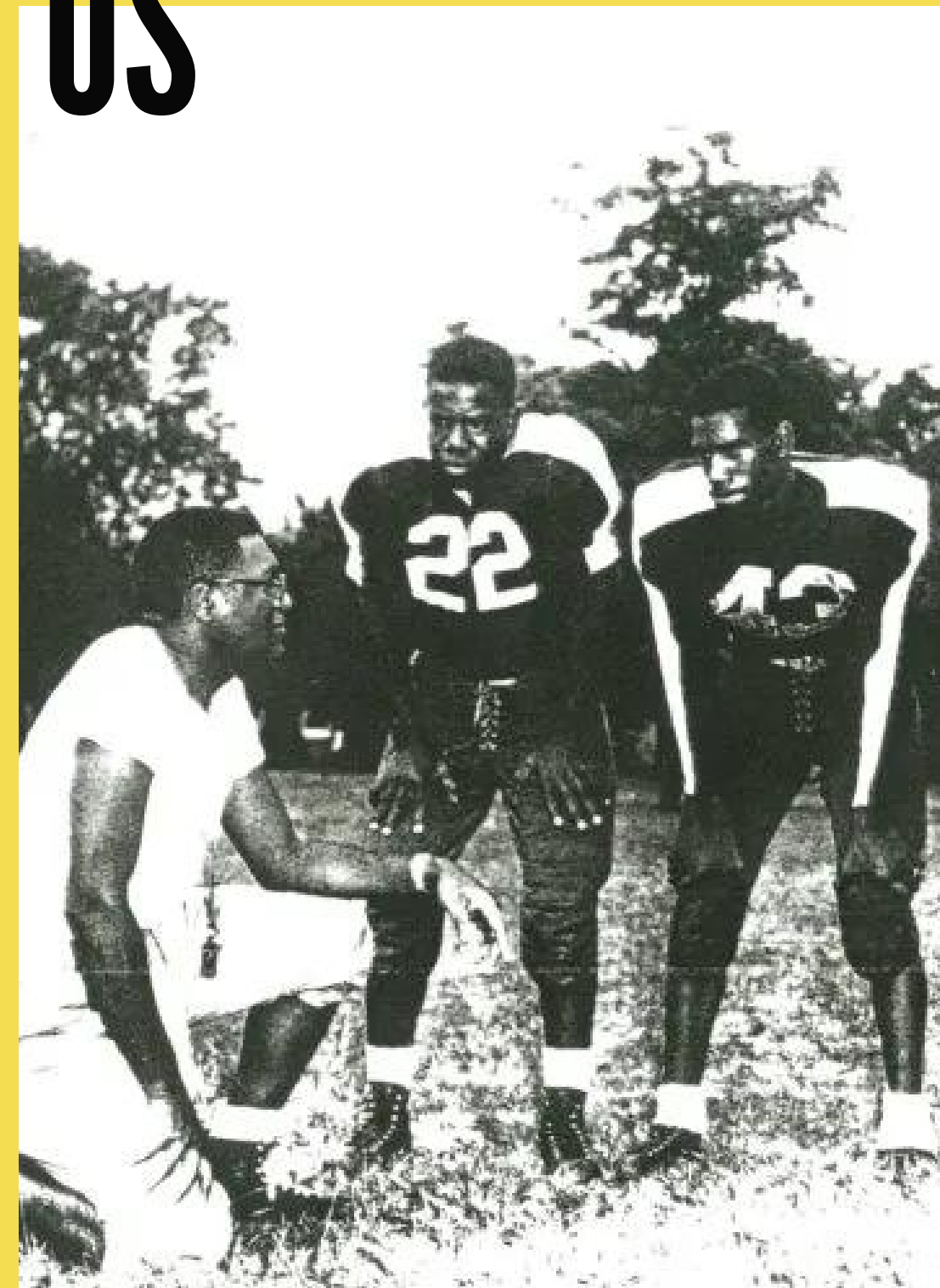
Cover: Washington High School Football Team, c. 1940s, StillwaterLiving, courtesy of Gloria Thomas Bailey

Center: WHS Football team on the original field on 12th and Hester, c. 1940s, StillwaterLiving, courtesy of Gloria Thomas Bailey.

Inside right: Washington High School Junior and Senior Class of 1947 and 1948, StillwaterLiving, courtesy of Gloria Thomas Bailey

WALK WITH US

BLACK STILLWATER WALKING TOUR



WALK THE 'VILLE

PARKING: If you are driving, park at Southern Woods Park near D's Down Home Bar B Q. The short tour will loop back to your vehicle!

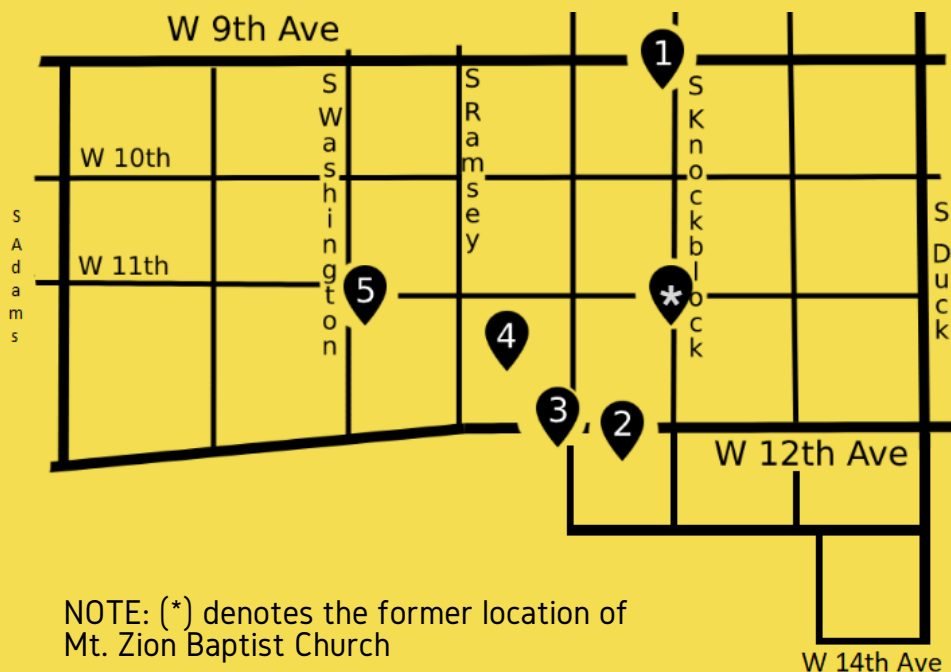
The tour will take approximately 20 minutes.

The 'Ville is a neighborhood bounded by 9th Avenue in the north, 14th Avenue in the south, Duck Street in the east, and Adams Street in the west. Here Black families have lived and continue to thrive in a vibrant community locally known as "the 'Ville".

Black residents in Stillwater have overcome many challenges. While the 'Ville has been well-loved by its residents, for much of its history the neighborhood lacked outside support due to segregation. For instance, Stillwater police and firefighter services were withheld from the 'Ville for many decades. As such, whenever a building caught fire, the neighborhood's residents used buckets of water to extinguish the blaze.

Additionally, Stillwater Creek, found just south of Booker T. Washington School, would frequently flood much of the neighborhood. As such, families often had to evacuate their homes. Further families were disrupted when urban renewal projects in the 1960s displaced them. Despite the danger and destruction, Black residents persevered.

Regardless of the hardships, residents of the 'Ville remain a close-knit community. The neighborhood has changed, and continues to change, but its roots will be forever tied to the Black residents that have long called the area home.



NOTE: (*) denotes the former location of Mt. Zion Baptist Church

1 Mt. Zion Baptist Church Currently: W. 9th and S. Knockblock Formerly: W. 11th and S. Knockblock*

One site important to Stillwater's Black community is Mt. Zion Baptist Church. Although originally located on W 11th and S. Knockblock, community members raised funds to move the congregation to its present location on 9th and Knockblock. The old church, now an empty corner lot, was a center of life every Sunday. Despite having no A/C, a leaky roof requiring church folks to catch rain in buckets, and many churchgoers having to sit in chairs outside due to a lack of space, nearly everyone in town attended church here or at the nearby Church of God in Christ on 11th & Hester.

"IT WAS LIKE THEY SAY 'IT TAKES A VILLAGE TO RAISE A CHILD.' I BELIEVE THAT BECAUSE WE HAD A VILLAGE RAISING US, EVERYBODY WAS INTERESTED IN THE WELL-BEING AND THE SAFETY OF US."

- Elnora Sanders, community member

2 Booker T. Washington School W. 12th and Hester St.

Oklahoma's constitution was the only one in the Union that mandated Black children and White children attend separate schools. As such, the Booker T. Washington School was created to serve the city's Black community. Named after Booker T. Washington, a famous Black educator, the school was established in 1900 with eleven students and one teacher. Until 1935, the school only taught 1st-8th grades, requiring students to move elsewhere to continue their education. One common destination was Guthrie, which had the nearest Black high school.

The school was recognized for its excellence, receiving a number of state honors for Black schools. In 1954, segregation was declared unconstitutional and schools began to integrate across the nation. In the following years, many students were sent to other Stillwater schools, resulting in Washington School's closure. Afterwards, the school was used for some years as a community center, where public plays and celebrations could be held. The school is currently vacant, though there are ongoing efforts to preserve the site.

Some sources state Washington School also served as an important hub for the LGBTQ+ community after the building ceased to function as a school, as its auditorium was one of few spaces in Stillwater open to this marginalized group.



Washington High School Junior and Senior Class of 1947 and 1948, StillwaterLiving, courtesy of Gloria Thomas Bailey

3 Haskell's Grocery W. 12th and Hester St.

Located just west of Washington School was Haskell's Grocery. Owned and operated by local Black residents, the store provided staples to the community. When it later closed, the space became a gathering spot in the evenings for neighbors to chat, sing, and play instruments together.



Point your camera at this QR code to hear Mary Louis reminisce on her childhood in the 'Ville.