

## **Winchester Man Recalls Vibrant Business District**

“So many businesses,” “such vibrancy” and “a sense of community” are terms that were once used to describe the Poynterville community.

Portions of Broadway, North Maple, Oliver Street, West Washington, and parts of Main and Upper streets made up the center of the African American residential and business district of another era. Mostly Maple and Washington streets were areas for gathering and socializing for many during the late 1940s and into the early 90s.

Places such as George Boone’s Pool Hall, the Rev. Jackson’s Barber Shop, Arthur Gay’s Restaurant and Miller’s Taxi and Service Station were some of the many prominent businesses that once served the people of the community.

“Between Broadway and Washington was all colored people in that area,” recalls Thomas Miller, a former business owner and resident of Poynterville. “I used to carry papers. I had to stand outside because coloreds weren’t allowed inside of many places.”

Miller said the businesses and the community began to flourish in the 40s, and many prominent African Americans lived in the area. The community was so vibrant at one time, and then it just started to deteriorate, he said. He really couldn’t pinpoint how it happened. All he knows is, it happened. “I saw that coming, but never knew how that was done,” Miller said. “It still puzzles me. Drugs came in and store businesses began to fail.”

His wife believes drugs and old age were among the reasons businesses began to deteriorate in the community. “A lot of the older people died out or moved away. The next thing you know, we didn’t have any businesses,” Ann Miller said.

1998 was the last year that an African American business was opened in Poynterville, but it didn’t hinder the drive of the people of the community. The community may lack the luster and businesses that once occupied its streets, but the sense of community is still a part of its legacy.

Source: *Winchester Sun*, July 27, 2009