

Movers of Edinboro



*Community Fondly Remembers LeRoy and Beatrice Smith Family,
for Breaking Racial, Cultural Barriers While Leading by Example*

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JEFFERSON
EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY

June 2021

Editor's note: This research project, updated in 2021, is being published by the Jefferson Educational Society. It was made possible through a Preserving Pennsylvania's African American Heritage Technical Assistance Grant awarded to Edinboro Area Historical Society by the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission. Funding for PHMC's grant program is provided by the National Park Service's Preserve America Program.

In 1948, when LeRoy and Beatrice Smith made the decision to start their family in the rural community of Edinboro, Pennsylvania, they had no idea they were part of a great migration. Their choice came from a desire to raise their children outside of segregation.

Between 1915 and 1970, more than six million African Americans moved from the South to the Northeast, Midwest, and West. The migration was not the result of a national movement or a group decision, but involved millions of people making individual decisions, just like the Smith family. They were driven from their homes by unsatisfactory economic conditions and strict segregation laws and were drawn to other areas of the country by educational and employment opportunities and the economic and social freedoms that came with them. At the beginning of the 20th century, approximately 90 percent of the United States' African American population lived in the South. By 1970, at the end of the Great Migration, the figure dropped to 50 percent. [1]

The reasons why individuals and families chose to migrate vary and are as diverse as the people themselves. For the Smith family, its conviction for leaving the South was rooted in its experiences. Following is the Smiths' story collected from personal interviews with family and friends and supported by primary and secondary research.

LeRoy Benjamin Smith was born December 28, 1917, in Reserve, Louisiana, just 30 miles west of New Orleans on the Mississippi River. He came from a large family. LeRoy's Creole father, Ozeme, and his mother, Alice Nicholson, both had children from previous marriages. Ozeme had three sons (Morris, Preston, and Wallace), Alice had two daughters (Estelle and Helen Antoine), and together they had nine more children (Adeline, Lowiska, Julian, Clara, Ozy, Bessie, LeRoy, Mary and Jeannette). [2]

Ozeme worked as a laborer at the Godchaux Sugar Refinery, the largest sugar refinery in the U.S. in the early 20th century. Those who worked at the refinery, built homes nearby creating the town of Reserve. The refinery was the economic base for the community until it closed permanently in the 1980s. [3]

Educational opportunities for LeRoy in Reserve were limited, with only the Leon Godchaux Grammar School offering children a primary school education. At age 11 and with his mother's blessing, he moved into his half-sister Estelle's home at 2315 Felicity Street in New Orleans. Estelle, LeRoy's NaNan, enrolled her brother in McDonogh #20, where he completed the fifth grade. [4] He went on to attend Thomy LaFon School for sixth and seventh grades, Hoffman Jr. High School for eighth and ninth, and he completed his secondary schooling at McDonogh #35 Senior High School.

An entrepreneurial spirit and sincere work ethic made it possible for him to attend college. In his late teens, LeRoy asked his friend and neighbor Val Saint Gauff to build him a snow cone stand in the side yard of Estelle's home. The enterprise was so successful it funded his education at Xavier University of Louisiana in New Orleans. LeRoy ran the business until he enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Force in 1942.

For four years LeRoy attended Xavier University, a historically Black, Catholic university, and commuted daily from Felicity Street to campus by streetcar. [5] His interest in the medical field and ambition to become a physician led him to major in Biology, but it would be another 10 years before his degree would be put to use in a medical setting. In the years following his college graduation, LeRoy attended night classes at a local business college to learn how to type and worked as a milk tester at a dairy.

aftermath of Pearl Harbor, the country formally entered World War II and initiated expansion of the military. Between December 1941 and December 1942, the number of aircraft nearly tripled, and the number of Army Air Force (AAF) personnel increased from 354,161 to 1,597,049. [6] Believing that being called into

service was inevitable, LeRoy volunteered and spent the duration of the war stationed at Hammer Field in Fresno, California. [7] Skills he learned at the business college proved useful to LeRoy and the military, as he rose to the rank of sergeant while working as a personnel classification specialist.

It was during his time at Xavier that LeRoy met the love of his life, Bessye Beatrice Shelby. Bessye, or Bea as she was known to friends and family, was born November 16, 1922, in Freeman Township, Woodruff County, Arkansas. At a very early age, her parents Greenville and Carrie Kendrick Shelby moved the family to New Orleans. While her father took a job as a porter in a restaurant, Carrie cared for their seven children and made sure each understood the importance of education. [8] Carrie herself was a college graduate. She graduated from Knoxville College in Knoxville, Tennessee and Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical University in Normal, Alabama and taught school in Clarksdale, Mississippi prior to starting a family.

Bea attended Gilbert Academy, a premier private college preparatory school affiliated with Dillard University. After high school graduation, she attended Straight Business College and graduated with the class of 1941. She excelled in shorthand and key punch, and, although her stated ambition was to be a journalist, she soon found work at the Pentagon and moved to Washington, D.C.

While Bea was still in high school, she met LeRoy at his church. During an interview session, LeRoy, at age 95, described their first encounter and how their relationship blossomed.

I gave my life to the Lord since I was twelve years old, and God has been working in my life. Just in these last ten or twenty years, I have really seen how he has worked in my life, but at that time, I was just a youngster and I was active in the church from school-age right up through college: the church choir, a Sunday School teacher, I worked in youth groups and anything like that that had Christian living. So, all through my life I had this influence. We had some friends who invited Bessye Beatrice to come to a service at my church, and at that time I was singing in the choir. She was coming from a background similar to mine. She was active in her church. Active, but a leader, especially in youth groups and children. She just seemed to attract young children to her. She'd play games with them where she was the teacher and she would teach them various things, you know. She was just like a magnet and that was one of the things that attracted me to her, just to see how other people were attracted to her. But, anyhow, she went to a service at my church. I knew her sister-in-law and her brother, but I didn't know her. That's how she got introduced to me. Bessye B. "There's this guy I want you to meet at that church. Why don't you come and take a look? I want you to see this guy." "I don't think ... it wasn't her brother that said that, but I knew the sister-in-law, and I am just sure it was she who made the invitation to her and so she came this particular Sunday, and she came to the service and I was introduced to her. The sister-in-law's name was Dorothy. I think she's gone to be with the Lord, now. She and I were very good friends. And a friendship was started between us and we kept it alive via telephone. The friendship grew and from year to year I am getting older, and she was getting older and we fell in love. [9]

LeRoy visited Bea in Washington, D.C. during one or more of his furloughs. Concerned that the war and their time apart would be lengthy, LeRoy and Bea decided to marry. They married August 11, 1944, at Metropolitan Baptist Church and, afterward, Bea's family in Washington hosted a reception for the newlyweds. LeRoy joined Bea in Washington after his discharge from the AAF in 1946.

LeRoy immediately made plans to resume his study of medicine and began taking classes at Howard University, but his studies were once again set aside when Estelle suffered a stroke while vacationing in Idabelle, Oklahoma. Estelle was transferred to a hospital in Little Rock, Arkansas. LeRoy traveled to Little Rock and then followed the ambulance transport to New Orleans, where he and Bea cared for his beloved sister for two short months.



LeRoy and Bea's wedding photograph, August 11, 1944.



LeRoy raised squab at his sister's Felicity Street house in New Orleans.

After Estelle's death, LeRoy and Bea found themselves in New Orleans without employment and without a plan. The young couple discussed their choices. As a boy, LeRoy developed a passion and talent for raising squab (pigeon). He kept squab at the house on Felicity Street. LeRoy devised a business plan to raise the delicacy and sell to restaurants and hotels. But the plan was contingent on securing a small farm, a farm located in either the western or northern U.S. By this time, LeRoy and Bea had already made the decision to leave Louisiana.

LeRoy described how he came to find property in Washington Township near Edinboro, Pennsylvania:

In this particular magazine ... 'small family farm, 40,' no, it was 38 acres, 'four-bedroom home, flowers, strawberry garden, trees.' Each thing I read I could hardly control myself just reading it. Oh man, this is just what I want. I said to you previously that my wife and I had made it a matter of prayer. It isn't just between us. We turned it over to the Master, you know. 'Lord, we

recognize that You are the source of our life. In You we live and move, have our being and Your hand is upon our life and You see the condition we are in and we have to start making preparations for our family, if we are going to have a family. Now, please direct us. Please direct us.' And that was basically how we prayed, and we prayed and we believed and so there was an address and a telephone number in the advertisement. So, I called and I asked the man if this particular farm was still available. [10]

Keeping in mind Bea's request, LeRoy was interested in a house located on a hill. The farm described in the Farmer's Almanac seemed promising and LeRoy made preparations to visit the property. He telephoned Edinboro realtor Ben Skelton to confirm that the farm was still available and to make arrangements for a tour. LeRoy made the trip with a man he remembers only as Nick, a distant cousin and friend. The two found lodging at the Downtown Erie YMCA. LeRoy had been a member of the New Orleans YMCA for many years and used this connection to make sleeping arrangements prior to their arrival.

During one of his interviews, LeRoy shared his first impression of the farm.

I see this house and it is up on this hill. And I don't know what Nick thought. He must have thought I lost my mind or something, but I just lost it. I just raised my hands, "Lord, thank you. Father, thank you so much." We hadn't seen the house. I didn't know. But I just knew that my wife and I had been praying so much and "Oh, Thank you Lord." Excuse me. But then we went on and he (Ben Skelton) drove up and he parked and showed me around. That was just the way the description in the ad ... that's the way it was, and the strawberries were blooming and there were trees, beautiful trees ... fruit trees. There

was no garden there on the farm. I put the garden in but there was no garden on it, just trees and flowers and a strawberry patch. [11]

The decision to leave family and the familiar so far behind was not an easy one, but the two were driven to create a new life for themselves and their budding family. LeRoy recalled what must have been one of many experiences with segregation that prompted him and Bea to move.

We had this idea that we don't want to bring our children up in a segregated area. Sometime during our lives, we ought to move away from Louisiana and go up North or West somewhere but get out of this segregated section. Let me give you a little story about something that really helped us to come to this decision. A nice park it was in the way that the areas were separated, Colored and White. In the Colored section there was this beautiful park. It was named Shakespeare Park. And in the white section there was a park, the Audubon Park. And that would be really like any big city main park – Audubon Park. Well, Black people you could go in those parks, in Audubon Park. In the white park you could take a tour. What was prohibited ... like everybody else, you take a picnic basket to the park ... and you have a picnic. And you couldn't do that. So, we went for a holiday or something. We went to Audubon Park and I was showing the kids certain things. Something ... I can't remember. It's been so long. And they had brought a picnic. I had never had this experience before. So, we had a picnic basket packed and we were going to have a little picnic. So, when we got all settled in an area where we're going to have the picnic ... after our little tour after we sat on the grass and have a little picnic. Just as we got settled, here comes an (the park was not supervised) officer. It was his responsibility to make a round of the park, you know, and he did it not on foot but on horseback. Just as we got settled, here comes this big horse coming and the policeman says, "What's going on here?"

"We're just going to have a picnic."

"Oh, no, you can't have a picnic here. There's a park down in. Go and have your picnic in Shakespeare Park."

There were the kids, and they were all excited. We just packed up and went home because all of the excitement was gone. Plus, that was very embarrassing and I don't know how they felt, but boy it sure did something to me. A guy come and say you can't go down and your park is there, you know. [12]

The Smiths purchased the Washington Township farm in 1948 and made the move in the spring with Bea four months pregnant with their first child. They brought with them Edward Cosey, LeRoy's nephew. [13]

Unbeknownst to LeRoy and Bea Smith, they were making history.

Edinboro is surrounded by Washington Township, Erie County, the northwesternmost county in Pennsylvania. It is a college town with a summertime lake resort surrounded by farmland and forests. The Borough traces its roots to 1801 when William Culbertson built a gristmill near the outlet of Conneautee Lake and subdivided a section of his 500-acre tract for the establishment of a town. As more and more land was cleared for use as farmland, the town grew in support of the surrounding farms, and Edinboro was incorporated in 1840. An academy was started in 1855, which became the State Normal School in 1861, then later became Edinboro State Teachers College, and, to-date, has evolved into Edinboro University of Pennsylvania. Today, Edinboro has fewer than 7,000 permanent residents and a significant transient population. The university enrolls 8,200 undergraduate and graduate students. [14]

Historically, the rural community attracted a very small number of African Americans. Census records from 1860 to 1920 show that few African American individuals and families resided in Washington Township. Typical of the era, occupations for men ranged from barber to farmhand to teacher, and, for women, laundress, seamstress and domestic servants. The Smiths were the lone African American family to reside in

the township for a decade or more.



Aerial photograph of farmhouse and property at 3050 Rice Road in Edinboro, Pa.

At the time of the move, the property at 3050 Rice Road included the farmhouse, a barn, pump house, generator house and shed. [15] The outbuildings seemed well-suited for raising squab, and LeRoy shipped his inventory of 100 birds by train from New Orleans to the City of Erie, which is located 23 miles north of Edinboro along the shore of Lake Erie. After visiting several area hotels and restaurants, he found that most of the cooks were unfamiliar with his product. Unable to successfully market and sell his squab, LeRoy stored the fowl in a frozen food locker in the neighboring town of Cambridge Springs, and he and Bea ate through the inventory over a period of months.

With the squab farm no longer a viable enterprise, LeRoy needed to find employment. In June 1948, ground was broken for a new Veterans Administration Hospital in Erie (at East 38th Street and Old French Road). The planned \$7 million, 208-bed facility would be state-of-the art and require an administrative and medical staff of 250 people. [16] LeRoy applied for a position. Initially, he was hired to work in the kitchen and laundry service, but when an opening in the radiology lab became available, he was accepted to work in the lab. He supplemented his income by working part-time as an X-ray technician at Hamot Hospital. LeRoy spent 30 years at the VA Hospital, and his work was acknowledged often with certificates of meritorious service. [17] He retired from the radiology lab in 1980. [18]

As when LeRoy and Bea made the decision to move to the North, family was always at the forefront of their minds, and the farm, with its vegetable and flower gardens and fruit trees, was an environment suited for engaging and nurturing children. Bea was four months pregnant at the time of the move. The couple's first child, a girl, was born September 28, 1948, and did not survive. LeRoy's young nephew Edward became like a son to them. Edward thrived in his new environment and quickly made friends with a young neighbor Dick Windsor. The two boys enjoyed hunting and fishing and attended Edinboro High School together. Shortly before graduation, Edward dropped out of high school, left the farm and enlisted in the Air Force. Edward was the first of many children to call the Smith farmhouse home. Over the course of several



The Smith family cared for more than 75 foster children at their Rice Road farmhouse. Terry Carr and Stephen Smith are pictured.

decades, LeRoy recalled that more than 75 foster children were cared for by the family. To their foster children, LeRoy and Bea opened not just their home, but their hearts as well. During one of the family interviews, LeRoy shared the following story which is testament of their devotion to children. He described a "justified kidnapping" of two little boys carried out by him and Bea. After spending several years with the Smiths, 10-year-old Terry Carr and his brother Rodney were sent to Detroit to live with their father who was re-assigned custody. Terry, desperate to save himself and his little brother and with the assistance of a neighbor, repeatedly telephoned Bea and told of the abuse in his father's home. Bea and LeRoy somehow sent money to Terry to purchase bus tickets for him and his brother to travel from Detroit to Erie. Once they arrived in Erie, the boys were delivered to the offices of Children and Family Services, and a social worker willingly placed her career on the line to assist Bea and LeRoy with recovering the children. A court hearing was conducted where the Smiths were called upon to explain themselves and their actions. Upon hearing the circumstances, the judge ruled in favor of the family, and Terry

was permitted to stay in the Smith home. [19] Terry became an industrious young man and spent many summers working on Phil Walker’s farm in Edinboro. He now lives in Detroit, and credits LeRoy with being a wonderful role model and father, and helping him to “become the pretty level-headed 50-year-old he is today.” [20]

In addition to Edward and the foster children, LeRoy and Bea had four children of their own. Kestra Jan was born July 17, 1951, Julie Marie was born April 10, 1953, and adopted into the family shortly thereafter, Theva Loyse arrived May 15, 1959, and Stephen Lee April 20, 1961. [21] On the surface, the children experienced the kind of childhood their parents had dreamed for them. Bea taught her daughters how to care for the gardens, and can and freeze fruits and vegetables from the farm. LeRoy and Bea used tending the farm to nurture a strong work ethic in their children, and volunteerism to nurture a strong sense of community. The family volunteered together at the Erie City Mission and volunteered at and advocated for the growth of the Community Country Day



The Smith family, from left to right, Julie, Bea, Theva, LeRoy, Stephen and Kestra, c. 1961.

School, founded and run by Charles and Betty Kennedy. LeRoy and Bea also volunteered at, advocated for, and supported the work of the Greater Erie Community Action Center (GECAC), an organization to improve the quality of life for low-income residents of Erie, then headed by Dr. Alex Thompson.

Though their life at the Rice Road farmhouse was a manifestation of their dream, the Smith family was not able to escape discrimination entirely. Through the first half of the 20th century, de facto segregation was practiced openly in the North, though segregation was officially condemned and outlawed, and discrimination was widespread in both urban and rural environments. Edinboro was not an exception, as evidenced by the prevalence of racially based rules and discriminatory language in promotional materials of clubs and private organizations. Tecumseh Camp for Girls, one of the Edinboro Lake youth camps offering boating, fishing, archery, athletics, swimming and canoeing, printed on their application form, “Gentiles only accepted at Tecumseh Camp.” [22] Wilson-Geier Cottage, also located along Edinboro Lake, included the following statement in their promotional brochure, “We endeavor to maintain first class cottages, furnishing same for comfort and convenience, and cater only to Gentile people, who appreciate the comforts of a quiet place in the country.” [23] Cussewago Camp and Culbertson Hills Country Club maintained similar race-related requirements. [24]

Adding to the complexity of the circumstances, the Smith children came of age at the height of activity for the national and local Civil Rights Movement. It was an era of both change and resistance, and the family boldly confronted social and political barriers. For many years, the family worshipped at the First Church of God in Cambridge Springs, a neighboring community just south of the township line. Just days after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in April 1968, the pastor announced from the pulpit that the death of the civil rights leader was “for the best,” which marked the end of the Smiths’ fellowship at the church.

Being the only African American students in their classes presented social challenges at school, and the Smith children’s experiences with racism ranged from name calling and being chased and spit on to a general lack of awareness from school faculty and staff. In February 1969, Kestra, as President of the Student Council, suggested to the high school principal that an assembly be held for Negro History Week. Her request was politely refused with the explanation that a speaker of sufficient prestige could not be found to address the assembly. [25] Not to be denied an opportunity, Kestra contacted the office of Cleveland Mayor Carl Stokes to invite the mayor to speak at a scholastic dinner the Student Council was charged with planning a short time later. [26] Mayor Stokes was not able to attend, but sent Aurthor LeMon, a representative from his office who proved to be a “speaker of sufficient prestige.”



Pauline Myers autographed her photograph to the "Movers of Edinboro."

Whether because of or in spite of these circumstances, LeRoy and Bea worked tirelessly to bring awareness and diversity to the Edinboro College campus for the benefit of their children and the greater Edinboro community. Locals Paul and Vesta Martinson, working in collaboration with LeRoy and Bea, brought actress Pauline Myers and her program, "The World of My America" to the campus September 13, 1968. The program was designed to inspire pride of race, and in it, Ms. Myers read from the novel "To Kill a Mockingbird," the poetry of Langston Hughes, the words of Sojourner Truth and poetry by Paul Lawrence Dunbar. The program later became a PBS special.

Before leaving Edinboro, Ms. Myers signed a photograph to LeRoy and Bea Smith, declaring them the "Movers of Edinboro." [27] The meaning of these words was clear to people who knew the Smiths and their commitment to making Edinboro a community welcoming to all.

Activities at Edinboro State College brought to the forefront the tensions that existed between white and African American students, faculty, and staff. On February 7, 1969, the student newspaper reported the closing of the Student Union due to a "fracas between Black and white students." Later that year, Professor Russell Vance drew further attention to individual and group racism that existed on campus, and, in particular, the harassment of African American students when he penned an article for the college newspaper.

African American and White students staged a sit-in at the college president's office in April 1970 in protest to the college's failure to take action against a group of students who assaulted a female African American student. Dr. John Yon, Director of Student Activities, received reports of the incident and chose not to respond. The state police were called in to diffuse the crowd after the Edinboro Police Chief's response exacerbated the situation. [28] Following the event, Bea drafted a letter acknowledging the state police for their measured response. It was presented to the state police by John Robinson, spokesperson for the African American students involved in the sit-in.



Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young poses for a photograph with Bea during his visit

Working in collaboration with Bea, Debbie McKnight, and Michael Coleman, the Association of Black Collegians organized the very first Black History Week at the college from February 11-15, 1973. The celebration included lectures, a gospel ensemble, and a skit about Harriet Tubman and was coordinated in conjunction with programs at Gannon College, Allegheny College, Alliance College, Mercyhurst College, and the Behrend Campus of Penn State University. Bea continued to volunteer with the Association of Black Collegians, and, on their behalf, regularly petitioned the Student Government Association for funds to support African American cultural presentations to campus. She was responsible for bringing several key figures to Edinboro College, including actors, directors, poets, playwrights, authors, and social activists Ruby Dee and Ossie Davis, and Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young.

Bea was not alone in her efforts to acknowledge and bridge the gap in communication and understanding that existed between African Americans and Whites. She worked with and supported many individuals and groups from both the community and college. In July of 1969, Dr. Russell Vance, History Professor and Dr. Lillian Jennings, Coordinator of Black Studies organized a workshop to train public school teachers to incorporate African American history into curriculum. [29] Later, Dr. Jennings, Dr. James McHenry, and Assistant Dean of Men Aubrey Dillon would develop the Pre-College Educational Experience Program (PRECEP), a program designed to help minority students prepare for college.

On August 17, 1982, Beatrice “moved to Heaven,” as LeRoy and her children explain, and LeRoy now lives in Cleveland, Ohio with his daughter Kestra. Today, the farmhouse at 3050 Rice Road, which sits vacant atop its hill and surrounded by fruit trees, rhododendrons, and sugar maple trees, is well-kept and serves as a reminder of the caring, devoted family that once lived there. The Edinboro community remembers Bea and LeRoy fondly and many residents can still recall their volunteer efforts. Father Robert Bower, a retired Catholic priest living in Edinboro, recalled that Bea pushed him to work on issues of social injustice and inequality. He admitted that he may not have been as engaged in the effort to improve racial tensions at Edinboro State College had Bea not encouraged him to do so. Father Bower remembered Bea as “one of the great people of my life.” “She made being good look easy,” he said. [30] In November 1983, Bea was posthumously acknowledged by the Pennsylvania Commission for United Ministry in Higher Education “In Recognition of a Caring and Nurturing Ministry as a Strategic Person.” [31]

The young couple from Reserve, Louisiana made history. LeRoy and Bea Smith had a lasting impact on the greater Edinboro community, and this is their story. [32]

This project was made possible through the Technical Assistance Grant program administered by the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission using funding awarded to the PHMC from the National Park Service’s Preserve America Program.

The activity that is the subject of this report has been financed with federal funds from the National Park Service of the US Department of the Interior. However, the contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the US Department of the Interior, nor does mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation by the US Department of the Interior.

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Updated 2021

Behind the story

When Kestra Smith reached out to the Edinboro Area Historical Society asking if there was interest in helping her document her family's history, the answer was a resounding "yes." Her family had been one of the only – if not the only – African American families living in Edinboro during the Civil Rights Movement, and they had had strong ties to Edinboro University of Pennsylvania, then known as Edinboro State College, as well as the community. This was an important opportunity that could not be missed. Kestra's father, LeRoy, the man responsible for rooting his family in northwestern Pennsylvania, was 94 years old at the time.

In fall 2011, Society volunteer Ruth Cogan applied for and was awarded funding through the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission's Preserving Pennsylvania's African American Heritage Technical Assistance Grant, a program supported by the National Park Service's Preserve America Program, to start the LeRoy and Beatrice Smith Family Research Project. The overall goal of the project was to document and make accessible to the public information pertaining to Edinboro's African American history, with special attention going to the Leroy and Beatrice Smith family. When finished, the project would result in the creation of an exhibit, public program, archival collection, written family history, oral history interviews, and a first draft of a driving tour highlighting Erie County's African American history.

The project team included an extraordinary group of volunteers from the Edinboro Area Historical Society, faculty and students from Edinboro University, a friend of the Smith family, and several other key people. Ruth Cogan, who initiated the grant-funded project, served as the project lead in partnership with Melinda Meyer, the PHMC-contracted Technical Assistance Grant consultant for the project. Aubrey Dillon, a friend of the Smith family, assisted in gathering research materials and providing general support to the family throughout the entire project. Edinboro University archivist David Obringer assisted with research pertaining to the Leroy Smith family, as well as Edinboro's African American history post-WWII. Because the Smith family was involved in many of the University's annual Black History Month celebrations, Mr. Obringer was also able to provide access to university newsletters, photographs, correspondence, and other important documentation. Ihor Bembko, History Professor at Edinboro University, was charged with researching Edinboro's African American history pre-WWII. Oral history interviews of LeRoy Smith and his son Stephen were completed by Joe Laythe, History Professor and director of the University's Oral History Studio, and graduate student Stacey Turner. A study of the architecture and landscape of the Smith family's 100-year-old farm was conducted by Eric Schruers, Assistant Professor of Art History at Edinboro University. His study included a brief history of the building's residents/owners, details about the property on which the building is located, information about the architect, builder, etc., an analysis of the building's architectural details, and general details of the building, such as number of rooms, use of each room (and if that use has changed over the years), square footage, zoning, and updates and additions to the structure. Lastly, Mercyhurst University undergraduate student Adrianna Houseman researched and wrote the first draft of the African American history driving tour of Erie County, Pennsylvania as her senior project in partnership with public historian Johnny Johnson, and Sarah Thompson, Edinboro Area Historical Society member and author of "Journey From Jerusalem: African Americans in Erie 1795-1995," was tasked with editing the driving tour script.

Over the course of the project, Smith family members delivered more than 100 photographs and documents to the Edinboro Area Historical Society for digitization. Additional research conducted by an Edinboro University intern and a Graduate Assistant using the Society's archives and Edinboro University's archives has also added to the collection of primary source material pertaining to both the Smith family and general Edinboro African American history. Research was also done at the Veterans Affairs Hospital of Erie, where several boxes of scrapbooks, photographs and PR material were sorted through to identify materials relating to LeRoy Smith's 30-year career in the hospital's laboratory. The result of these research and digitization efforts was the Smith Family Collection, a publicly accessible collection housed in the archives of the Edinboro Area Historical Society.

The project culminated with the opening of the one-room exhibit "Movers of Edinboro" at the Society's Doucette House Museum in June 2012. The exhibit was divided into subsections addressing general

Edinboro African American history, the pre-Edinboro years for the Smith family, the family's Edinboro farm, military heritage, and the family's commitment to civic and religious organizations. Later in the year, LeRoy Smith and his daughter Kestra used content from the exhibit to create a presentation, which was shared to a packed house during one of the Society's public programs held at the Borough Office.

The "Movers of Edinboro," article was based on LeRoy Smith's oral history interview and the Smith Family Collection and provides an overview of the how the family arrived in Edinboro and became active participants in the community.

About the authors:

Ruth Cogan, Co-author. Ruth retired as director from the Union City Public Library shortly after successfully leading a capital campaign and building project in 2000. She divides her time between Boynton Beach, Florida and Edinboro, where she and her husband Bob have resided for more than 50 years. She is an active member of the Edinboro Area Historical Society serving as their volunteer librarian and maintaining both the Society's research library and archival collections.

Melinda Meyer, Co-author. Melinda has worked with and served the heritage and arts communities of Northwestern Pennsylvania for more than 20 years. She is experienced as an historian, educator, project consultant, grant writer and nonprofit administrator. She has also taught museum studies and historic preservation undergraduate courses.

END NOTES:

- [1] In Motion: The African-American Migration Experience, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library, <http://www.inmotionaame.org> (November 2012).
- [2] 1900-1920 Census Records, The National Archives, <http://www.ancestry.com> (November 2012). Census records for these years are inconsistent. Alice Nicholson was born December 1878 and married Mr. Antoine in 1897. The three-year union produced two daughters, Estelle and Helen. Information about the marriage of Ozeme Smith and Alice Nicholson Antoine is absent.
- [3] The Life and Times of Leon Godchaux – Sugar King of Louisiana, Godchaux-Reserve Historical Society, <http://www.stjohnparish.com/grh/leon.html> (October 2012).
- [4] NaNan is a word commonly used in the New Orleans region for Godmother.
- [5] Lachoff, Irwin, Associate Archivist, Xavier University of Louisiana (December 20, 2012). LeRoy B. Smith graduated in the class of 1940 and was a charter member of Kappa Alpha Psi service fraternity.
- [6] United States Army Air Forces, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Army_Air_Forces (November 2012).
- [7] U.S. World War II Army Enlistment Records, <http://ancestry.com> (November 2012).
- [8] 1930 Census Records, The National Archives, <http://www.ancestry.com> (November 2012). Greenville and Carrie Shelby had seven children: Eva (1909), Thelma (1912), Greenville (1915), Melridge (1916), Bessye B. (1922), Cleopas (1926) and Evelyn (1929).
- [9] Smith, LeRoy B., Interview, Edinboro University of Pennsylvania Oral History Studio, Edinboro, Pa. (July 12, 2012).
- [10] Ibid
- [11] Ibid
- [12] Ibid
- [13] Clara Smith, LeRoy's older sister, married Son Cosey and had two children, Joseph and Edward. When the marriage ended, Joseph went with his father and Edward went with his mother who moved into Estelle's Smith's home at 2315 Felicity Street. Unable to care for Edward, Clara and Estelle enrolled him in Lafon Orphan Boys' Asylum (also known as Lafon Boys' Home). He remained there until Estelle's death in 1947. Smith, LeRoy B., Interview by Kestra Smith, Cleveland, Ohio (February 19, 2012).
- [14] Edinboro Borough, <http://www.edinboro.net> (November 2012).
- [15] Schruers, Eric J., Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Art History, Edinboro University of Pennsylvania, Architectural Analysis of the Smith Family Homestead, August 2012. The subject property is located at 3050 Rice Road, Edinboro, Pennsylvania. According to information provided by the family, the structure was built circa 1860 and has 1664 square feet of interior space. It is a two-story structure with seven rooms and one and one-half baths. The house includes an enclosed porch along the back of the house. There are three outbuildings, including a shed identified as being used for an electric generator, a garage, and a gambrel roof utility shed. None of the 19th century outbuildings are extant. The house is square in plan with a hipped roof. It is typical of the Italianate style that was popular in the 1850s and 1860s. There are numerous examples in Edinboro of this style including the Doucette House on Normal Street, and the Warner House on Meadville Street (across from the Taylor-Wade-Evans House), and the house that sits on Meadville Street at the intersection with Darrow Road. The Italianate style is characterized by its symmetrical, block-like appearance, with a square or rectangular ground plan and symmetrical placement of windows. Italianate houses typically had a variety of ornamental features, most common being large cornice brackets along the roof line. The Smith house has been re-sided with aluminum siding and no traces of any ornament (if there ever was any) are visible. The structure would have originally had a front porch, but this has been removed, leaving the front entrance inaccessible. The original front door has been replaced with a 1960s era maple veneer door with three windows, and includes a modern aluminum storm door and a modern aluminum awning-style canopy. The original windows that can be seen in the upper story are of a double hung type, with two panes of glass in each sash. Originally there may have been three identical windows in the upper story of the façade, the middle window that is present now is a later alteration. The double windows on either side of the front door are modern replacements for what were probably the same type of double-hung windows in the second story. Typically, the lower windows would have been located in line with the windows above them. The window arrangement on the west side of the house would have originally consisted of the two

double-hung windows in the upper story, and matching windows below. One of the lower windows has been replaced with a two double-hung window unit. The east side of the house most likely had the same arrangement of two windows on the ground floor, and two on the second floor. The upper story of the back wall of the house (north wall) retains one original window, the other having been replaced with a shorter unit. The porch that runs along the back of the house was enclosed at some point, and includes seven of what appear to be the original two-over-two double hung windows that were removed from the main part of the house. The interior of the house was not accessible, so no analysis of the floor plan or of any interior woodwork that may have survived is possible at this time. The foundation of the house shows portions of the original fieldstone foundation wall, with concrete block sections on each corner that were repaired and replaced at some point in more recent times. The property does not appear on the 1855 Erie County map of Washington Township. Rice Road was not extant at this time according to this map: <http://ancestortracks.com/ErieCounty1855/WashingtonTwp.jpg>. Rice Road and this property are identified on the 1865 Washington Township map from the 1865 Erie County Atlas. The property owner is identified as A. Gilbert, identified by the Smith family as Abraham "Abe" Gilbert. This lends credence to the circa 1860 construction date. The property is also identified on the 1876 Washington Township map from the 1876 Erie County Atlas. The owner is identified as Jere (Jeremiah) Colvin. Information from the Smith family concerning deed transfers indicate the property was transferred from Silas McGahen to Jeremiah Colvin on February 10, 1894. The McGahen property was located immediately to the west of the Smith property. The 1894 date appears to be in error, as the 1876 map already shows Jeremiah Colvin as the owner. The subject property appears to be in excellent and well-maintained condition, but due to the extensive alteration of the exterior, including aluminum siding, loss of the front porch, and replacement of most of the original doors and windows, cannot be considered to be of architectural significance. It is hoped that further analysis will be undertaken to study the details of the interior of the house.

[16] 20th Anniversary Booklet, Erie VA Medical Center, June 17, 1971.

[17] Validator, Erie VA Medical Center Newsletter, 1967-1977.

[18] Erie VA Medical Center Personnel Records, Accessed by David Jones, Communication Specialist, Webmaster and Graphic Designer (July 3, 2012).

[19] Smith, LeRoy B., Public Presentation, Edinboro Area Historical Society (September 19, 2012).

[20] Carr, Terry, to LeRoy B. Smith, July 31, 2012, Personal Files of LeRoy B. Smith, Cleveland, Ohio.

[21] Kestra Smith received degrees in Piano Performance and Music from Oberlin Conservancy and Oberlin College, respectively, and completed her Juris Doctorate from the University of Cincinnati College of Law. She is an excellent pianist. At the writing of this narrative, she was an attorney for the Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office. Julie is a mother of three, and at the writing of this narrative, was a Certified Nursing Assistant in Erie, Pa. Theva graduated high school in Germany while living with her sister Kestra whose husband was serving in the Army. She attended Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Pa. and earned a degree in Special Education and also a Masters in Special Education at Edinboro State College. At the writing of this narrative, she lived in Cleveland with her 16-year-old daughter Christin. Stephen graduated from General McLane High School in 1979. He earned a BA from Oberlin College in 1983 and a Juris Doctorate from Case Western Reserve University School of Law in 1986. At the writing of this narrative, he was Executive Director of the Harvest Center of Charlotte, NC. Smith, Kestra, Personal Correspondence, Edinboro Area Historical Society Archives, Edinboro, Pa.

[22] Tecumseh Camp, Promotional Brochure, 1932, Edinboro Area Historical Society Archives, Edinboro, Pa.

[23] Wilson-Geier Cottages, Promotional Brochure, n.d., Edinboro Area Historical Society Archives, Edinboro, Pa.

[24] Cussewago Camp, Promotional Brochure, 1937, Edinboro Area Historical Society Archives, Edinboro, Pa.

[25] Smith, Kestra, Letter, February 18, 1969, Personal Files of Kestra Smith, Cleveland, Ohio.

[26] "Carl Stokes, 68, Dies; Precedent-Setting Mayor," The New York Times, April 4, 1996. Carl Stokes was the first African American mayor of a major U.S. city, and he held office from 1968 to 1971.

[27] "Pauline Myers: Black Consciousness," Spectator, November 21, 1974, Edinboro University of Pennsylvania Archives, Edinboro, Pa.

[28] Smith, Bea, to State Police Officer, April 23, 1970, Personal Files of LeRoy B. Smith, Cleveland, Ohio. "SGA Grants Lecture Money, Black History Week Set," Spectator, February 1, 1974, Edinboro University of Pennsylvania Archives, Edinboro, Pa.

[29] “Workshop to Train Public School Teachers in History and Contributions of Black Americans,” Spectator, July 18, 1969, Edinboro University of Pennsylvania Archives, Edinboro, Pa.

[30] Father Robert Bower, Interview by Ruth Cogan, Edinboro, Pa. (November 8, 2012).

[31] Pennsylvania Commission for United Ministry in Higher Education Annual Report, 1983, Record Group 1/12, Pennsylvania Commission for United Ministry in Higher Education, Archives and Special Collections, Dickinson College, Carlisle, Pa.

[32] Smith, Beatrice, Obituary, Erie Morning News, August 20, 1982, Heritage Room, Raymond M. Blasco, M.D. Memorial Library, Erie, Pa. Bea Smith died in August 1982. At the writing of this narrative, LeRoy Smith lived with his daughter Kestra in Cleveland, Ohio, and ownership of the farmhouse at 3050 Rice Road was still in LeRoy’s name.