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## Town of Collierville

**For Immediate Release**  
Town of Collierville Public Information Office  
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### Continuing the Conversation *Uncovering Black History in Collierville*

In the summer of 2014, Ashley Carver, Director of the Morton Museum of Collierville History, was planning future exhibits for the Museum. With February being Black History Month, she wanted to highlight African American history that occurred within the Town.

"During my research I discovered that one of the African American Civilian Conservation Corps camps was located in Collierville," said Ashley. "With a few articles from the *Collierville Herald* and one picture, there isn't very much recorded about our local camp."

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) provided unskilled, manual labor jobs to unmarried men ages 17-24 years old that had difficulty finding work during the Great Depression. As part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, the public work relief program also served as a natural resource conservation project. The CCC was a popular, yet temporary, program that was disbanded in 1942 largely due to the draft for World War II.

Discovering more about CCC camps from the National Archives, Ashley pieced together the Museum's latest exhibit: *Collierville's Soil Soldiers - The Untold Story of the New Deal in Collierville*. Along with the historical overview of the camps, the exhibit touches on the community's response to having an African American camp in Town as well as the positive impact to the local farming economy.

While Ashley has uncovered most of the history involving the Collierville camp, there is much more to be found.

"The Museum is looking for descendants of those who served in the Collierville CCC Camp," said Ashley "A father, uncle or someone who may recognize some of the people in the group photograph from our camp."

On February 3, 2015 Ashley met with lifelong area residents Tom Brown, Charlie L. Taylor, and Charlie's daughter, Linda Brown. The purpose was to talk about this part of the Town's history, preview the exhibit and open a discussion to expand upon African American history in Collierville. Tom Brown has been an area civil rights activist for years serving as the area NAACP president as well as founding the Collierville Civic Club. Charlie L. Taylor has also been very active in the community serving as the Collierville Police Department's first African American police officer and founding the area Negro Baseball League.

When asked if anyone knew someone involved in the Collierville CCC Camp, both Tom and Charlie brought up one of their church members, Woodrow Brown, whose father, RD Brown, worked in the camp for a few years before enlisting in the Army in 1941.

"I just saw the picture of Woodrow's dad in his uniform last week!" said Linda. Tom added that he would follow up with Woodrow to collect pictures for the museum to borrow and pass along any information about his involvement in the camp.

The conversation continued with stories of the past and possibilities of sharing these stories in the future.

"That's why part of the exhibit asks if anyone knows friends or family who worked in this camp," said Ashley. "We want to record these stories before they're gone... before they're forgotten."

*Collierville's Soil Soldiers* opens on February 17<sup>th</sup> and will run until May 4, 2015. On February 16<sup>th</sup> at 7pm, the Morton Museum is hosting the local NAACP meeting featuring guest speaker, Dr. Beverly Bond, African American Studies Professor at the University of Memphis, who will be speaking about the local CCC camps. In addition to the NAACP meeting, Dr. Bond will be giving another lecture on March 12<sup>th</sup> at 11am at the Morton Museum. Always free, the Morton Museum is located at 196 Main Street; visit [colliervillemuseum.org](http://colliervillemuseum.org) for further information.



*Pictured is R.D. Brown; after his work in the Collierville CCC Camp from 1935-1937, he enlisted in the US Army in April 1941. His son, Woodrow Brown, provided the Museum with this photograph after the search began to identify Collierville's "soil soldiers."*



*(L-R) Ashley Carver, Charlie L. Taylor and Linda Brown discuss black history in Collierville.*



*Ashley Carver (L) points out an unidentified photograph from the National Archives to Tom Brown (R). Rosters were not often kept in the camps, which leaves many people in the pictures unknown.*