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Skilled Labor in Gadsden County then and now

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Skilled Labor in Gadsden County Then and Now

Black History Month is when we celebrate the achievements of African Americans and enlighten the struggles African American people went through to have freedom and equality. Gadsden County has continuously held the status of being the only Florida county with a majority population of African Americans since 1830. From 1823 to 1861 as slaves, and from 1862 until now free men and women made up 55% of the county. Since then, the Black community has contributed significantly to the development of Florida including Gadsden County.

In Gadsden County, we have seen a huge change in African workers from then to now. During the 1850s to the 1860s, Africans were instituted into slavery causing them to work for white Americans. They worked as carpenters, cooks, blacksmiths, and domestic workers and this played a crucial role in how Florida was developed. Plantation owners referred to some slaves as “skilled slaves”, which were slaves that they saw as valuable assets. Nevertheless, Skilled slaves posed a potential threat due to their close relations to their masters and the ability to learn from experiences. — used enslaved labor for their cotton production, but as there was an increase in demand for cotton there was a decline in the use of skilled slaves. This issue was due to the economic pressures and changing labor dynamics. At the time, plantation owners relied on skilled slaves for field labor rather than skilled trades. This meant that when slave owners rented their slaves to others, they either hired them out or reallocated their tasks. Despite this, skilled slaves contributed to the development of southern culture and played a crucial role in the region's economy, mostly, in areas such as construction, agriculture, and domestic services.

Even after slavery ended, Black labor continued to have an impact on Gadsden County. Today we see a lot of black business owners, workers, and influencers who contribute to Gadsden County's continuous growth. Black business owners like Bwembya's Market, found in Historic downtown Quincy, bring Zambian art and culture to the local community. Not only is it a place of art and culture but also a place to gather and relax. The owner says, Kenya Bwembya, “We spread love and insight around issues that impact positively in the black community.” There are also restaurants that black people own to help cultivate the black culture and cuisine. Daily Bread, Soul Food and Catering, CJ's Kitchen and Catering, and Carol's Country Cooking just to name a few of the great businesses. There are educators and professionals who help inspire people. Dr. LaSalle D. Leffall Jr is an American surgeon, educator, and oncologist. He grew up in Quincy, and was the first African American President of the Cancer Society. Dr. William S. Stevens became the first African American to open a medical practice in Quincy. Dr. Jessie V. Furlow, for 24 years, practiced medicine in Gadsden County and served as the vice chair of the Florida

Commission on Minority Health. She was also once the only surgeon in Gadsden County and would help others even at no cost. These three Black American physicians earned a mural on the Historic District in Quincy, to honor their hard work and dedication to help others. A great example of hard work and dedication would be Kayla Thompson, a museum educator at the Gadsden County Art Museum. She educates and guides young inspiring artists to pursue their passion for art.

The Black community has contributed greatly to Gadsden County. Their labors have had a huge impact on the county. As a young African American who wants to inspire people through art, I've also experienced this growth. Being in what used to be a predominantly white school, I was able to be a candidate for homecoming court (Miss Munroe), which is a huge jump from then and now. Back then, black people weren't allowed to have a dream or a voice but now we are able to do the things that we love. The black community has always and will continue to inspire others through their hard work and labor

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