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**IN THE DAYS** when schools were segregated, the McCallop family ran a fleet of school buses to transport Johnson county blacks to black schools in Wyandotte County.

## Family's story is the story of blacks in Johnson County

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Harrison McCallop knows a lot about the history of blacks in Johnson County because he and his family members lived it.

As a member of the third Kansas generation of one of the most influential black families in Shawnee, and maybe even in the county, he has an interesting viewpoint of the evolution of civil rights in the Shawnee area.

But the number of people who have actual memories of the early family history is dwindling. McCallop has watched the older generations of his family, and even the members of his generation, pass away, until only he and a cousin in Lenexa remained.

"At one time, we were as many as the trees," McCallop said.

The McCallops are probably most well-known for Harrison's uncle, Robert L. McCallop, who started the McCallop bus company in the 1930s to transport black

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The fleet of buses eventually expanded to 13, and the bus line began picking up children from the Kansas City, Kan., neighborhoods like Argentine and Rosedale. Robert, his sons and even his daughter-in-law served as drivers.

children to school during the years of segregation. But the family came to the area more than 135 years ago, and the McCallops have been recognized by the Johnson County NAACP for their contributions to the community.

Harrison is named for his grandfather, a former slave and decorated Civil War veteran of the 12th Regiment U.S. Colored Infantry, who came to Shawnee from Tennessee in about 1870. He worked in the Shawnee area for a few months before sending for his wife, Nellie, and his daughter, at first settling in the Wilder area in western Shawnee.

"He wanted a better life," Harrison said of his grandfather. "He had looked at too much of life before the Civil War."

The family, which eventually grew to 14 children, soon moved to a 20-acre farm near the present-day intersection of Johnson Drive and Renner Road, in what was then known as the Greenwood area.

The McCallops attended the old Greenwood school, now the home of the Johnson County History Museum, a uniquely integrated grade school in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The elder Harrison McCallop died in 1899, and when his children were grown, they spread throughout Johnson County.

The elder Harrison's second-youngest child, Robert McCallop, moved "into town," settling near the Flint Elementary School on 57th Street in Shawnee. Robert found work as a truck driver, bringing in loads of coal for St. Joseph Catholic Church and hauling sweet corn feed to Zarda Dairy.

Robert's children attended the Dunbar School, the black school off 57th Street and Nieman Road. But when his children began to graduate, they had nowhere to attend high school — Shawnee Mission High School, now Shawnee Mission North, was not integrated.

So in 1934, Robert converted his truck into a school bus and started the McCallop Bus Company to transport Johnson County's black children to the black secondary schools, Sumner High School and Northeast Junior High, in Kansas City, Kan.

lives in Fontana, was one of the children on the buses his family operated. His parents had moved to Holliday, where he attended the George A. Robinson School. He remembers the peculiar process of enrolling in high school before desegregation.

"You would go to North and get expelled, and they would pay your tuition and for your transportation to Sumner Academy," Harrison McCallop explained.

The ride to high school on the McCallop buses was frustrating for the children, who were reminded of the unfairness of segregation when they looked out the school bus windows.

"We'd pass about six high schools to go to school," McCallop said.

In 1954, when Johnson and Wyandotte county schools were desegregated, the McCallop bus company continued to operate. The company bused children to several other schools until 1977, including St. Joseph grade school and high school and the Shawnee, Flint, Bluejacket and Rhein Benninghoven elementary schools in Shawnee.

Harrison McCallop now recalls the years before desegregation and the Civil Rights movement with a certain sadness, saying that Johnson County had "a unique kind of prejudice."

"I won't say that Johnson County was prejudiced; they just didn't do anything for race relations," McCallop said.

The black families of early Johnson County all knew each other and looked out for each other, McCallop said. He remembers each black family in Olathe, Holliday, Shawnee and South Park (now Merriam).

He said that the white residents of Shawnee did help the black families, adding that his uncle Robert was good friends with the Amos family of Amos Family Funeral Homes.

He remembers friendly relations but the same segregation in Holliday. McCallop recalled that the pastor of the white church would always bring by a basket of goodies for his family after the church's Christmas party.

"You couldn't go to their church," McCallop said, "but he had a special place for you."