Historic photos tell story of Syracuse's black community

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African-American contributions to Syracuse lore have many facets, and it's taken a while for some of them to be fully appreciated. Photographs from collections at the Onondaga Historical Association and Carrier Library at Syracuse University capture the African-American community in Syracuse.

The photographs include everyday occurrences. The local barber shop of the 1920s, the 1930s, and the 1940s, for example, the life of a black young man who grows up to be a father, the life of a married couple on the dance floor.

This type of work is known as vernacular photography, the chronicle of changes that take everyday life and make it

The photographs are not simply images of people's lives — they are also iconic images that

So what makes these photographs special? To the photographer and those portrayed, they probably didn't have special meaning. To us, photographers, they're a big deal. These are images of people's lives — to understand them and their communities better.

In 1962, the Syracuse chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) protests the demolition of the city's 15th Ward, which would have meant relocating its residents.

The Williams brothers — Charles, Thomas and George — opened the Williams Bros. grocery store at Washington and Irving streets in 1919. The store remained in operation until 1944.

George Stephens outside a grocery store at 945 McBride St., date unknown. Photo