

Observer
Local ... Preserving Memories
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Keeping recollections alive through literature, photos and tour helps sate hunger for black-Charlotte history

By **BOB MEADOWS**
Staff Writer

Juan Whipple developed a tour. Ruth Sloane wrote a play. The Rev. D.G. Burke, educator Elizabeth Randolph and former uptown library manager Pat Ryckman helped create photo essays.

All had the same goal: preserving Charlotte's African American history.

"Charlotte has a habit of tearing down historical sites, which I can understand. You have to make way for progress," said Whipple, who created the Black Heritage Tour in 1992. "But there's not a lot of landmarks left. People have a tendency to forget over the years where things were located."



T. ORTEGA GAINES/Staff

Juan Whipple's 2 ½-hour Black Heritage Tours take patrons to 15 sites around Charlotte.

Now is the perfect time to be reminded, since February is Black History Month.

Whipple and the other chroniclers help keep the memories alive. His 2½-hour tour takes patrons to 15 sites, including historically black Johnson C. Smith University, McDonald's Cafeteria and Inn, the Charlotte Post newspaper and the statue of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

He developed his tour after hundreds of hours of research and whittling down the list of sites, he said.

"There was so much information, but I didn't want to make it too long, or too short," Whipple said. "I did want to give a feel for the economic prosperity that used to exist among blacks here. One thing I noticed in my research was how entrepreneurship wasn't a problem back then."

Blacks owned their own stores and businesses because segregation prevented them from shopping at places whites patronized.