

A Text Book Couple

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By PAT HOLCOMBE

Editor's note: The following story about Jamestown residents Lula and Vivian Taylor includes details about their lives. It takes a look at how their lives mirrored that of the country from the 1920s to the 1990s.

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Jamestown residents Vivian Taylor and Lula Mae Miles Taylor are living documentaries of the African American experience in the 20th century.

In 1926, two years after he was born and two years before she was born, the study of African American history formally began in the United States with establishment of "Negro History Week." Today, the month of February nationally designated "Black History Month." It is a time when the Taylors will display their own **Black History** exhibit at the YMCA in Jamestown. But hear their life story as like opening a text book of real life experiences.

Within the "Roaring 20s," baseball, jazz music and the beginning of "The Black Renaissance," Vivian Alexander Taylor was born in Walter Reed

to do what you wanted, but you had to get involved and make a difference. I think that was the message."

By the time Vivian reached high school, he began to spend his summers with an uncle and aunt in Jamestown. George and Carrie Russell lived at 169 Fluvanna Ave. He was a construction worker and she was a waitress at the Moon Brook Country Club.

"I went to Jamestown and I worked," he said. "I saw a different world. There were opportunities and you knew just walking down the street that something was different here."

"There were factories all over and jobs for anyone who wanted one. Only two companies, Martin Rockwell and Malheable Iron, hired blacks. They were good jobs with benefits and unions."

Mrs. Taylor said she, too, had ventured to Buffalo with other teen-age friends one year.

"I said, 'Oh, I like it here.' I could tell the difference just by watching people talk to each other," she said. "You had black and white going about their business so easy. It was a new world."

Back in North Carolina, Taylor graduated from high school. He enrolled in the Stillman Institute in Alabama on a scholarship from a white Presbyterian



Vivian and Lula Taylor of Jamestown created this **Black History** exhibit, held at the YWCA on Fourth Street in Jamestown. Below, the Taylors take a break in the City Council chambers.

P-1 photos by Jennifer S. Randall