

## Black Wall Street: Business is Booming



Where do you and your family shop for food and supplies? Can you imagine a time when there was no online shopping? Or when people could not go to one store for everything?

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, skin color also determined where people could and would shop. Laws and discrimination made it difficult for African Americans to succeed in business. And it made it difficult for them to shop where they wanted.

Durham, North Carolina was a little different for a while. In Durham, African American business grew and was successful for many years. Parrish Street became the site of a strong and wealthy black-owned business district. The Hayti neighborhood, located next to Parrish Street, shared in the success.

It had many black-owned businesses and homes.

The Parrish Street area is now known as Black Wall Street. It was home to many different Black-owned businesses. The area received the name in the 1950s. It was a reference to its success and Wall Street, in New York City. Wall Street is the center of New York's financial district and the American stock market.

You can see Durham's North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company, a black-owned business, in the picture above. It was started by John H. Merrick and Aaron M. Moore in 1898 and they moved their building to the center of Parrish Street in 1904. The company grew into one of North Carolina's most successful businesses. It was the first black-owned insurance business in the state and the largest in the United States.

Other businesses included doctors and dentists, lawyers, newspapers, and grocers. At those businesses, African Americans could buy groceries, clothes, furniture, and household supplies. They could also find any services they wanted like a barber or a tailor.

For decades these businesses provided important services to Durham's African American community. Desegregation and the construction of NC Highway 147 devastated the Black business district. Yet, in 2003 the state placed a marker on Parrish Street to honor the vibrant center for small businesses. Today community leaders hope more small business owners will return to the neighborhood.

What kind of businesses do you think your community needs? How can you and your classmates support local businesses today?

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What are some of your family's favorite local businesses to shop at? Can you name three that are close to your home?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_



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