**Ruth “Pat” Matthews Howard**

Ruth Marie “Pat” Matthews Howard was born in Oberlin, Ohio on October 7, 1918. She was one of four children born to George Leroy Field and Marvyl Berry Fields. She met her husband Rev. Wesley S. Matthews at Wilberforce University when she was a freshman and he was a graduate returning for homecoming. It was he who nicknamed her “Pat” (calling her “Pat the Lamb”). She dropped out of college to marry him, and after he completed seminary at Payne Theological seminary, they moved in 1941 to Yellow Springs, where he had his first pastorship at Central Chapel A.M.E. Church. They were married for over thirty-five years.

Mrs. Matthews worked as a school teacher, secretary, and for the *Yellow Springs News*, where she was well known for her column “Chat with Pat.” A reporter with the *Yellow Springs News* in the 1940s, she was the first black person hired in a a downtown office. Her desk was by the front window and people walking past “made faces” at her, she said. Mrs. Matthews and her husband founded the first integrated community center in Yellow Springs in the 1940s, and the two helped integrate the local movie theater. While living in Springfield, Ohio in the 1950s, she and her husband were among the handful of black people who elected to send their children to Highland Elementary School, a formerly all-white school, immediately after the Brown vs. Board of Education Supreme Court decision calling for school integration.

Mrs. Matthews was active in the civil rights movement and was interested in the history of blacks in Yellow Springs, helping a class write a book on local black history, and interviewing older members of the black community. She served on the Human Rights Commission in Yellow Springs, and worked at Morgan Middle School in Yellow Springs. A strong believer in higher education, she returned to Wilberforce in the 1970s, graduating with a degree in education. After the death of her husband in 1979, she married Houston Howard, a Springfield pharmacist, and she moved with him to Clifton, Ohio, but retuned to Yellow Springs when he died five years later.

Through funding from the Scripps Foundation, Matthews Howard wrote down and taped the voices of the village’s oldest residents, to save forever the memories of history. Scripps money was financing a transportation needs study, and the foundation’s director Dr. Fred Cottrell asked that the oldest residents be interviewed to learn why they settled in Yellow Springs and what work they did. Matthews Howard heard reminiscences from Maurice Pemberton—who while not a senior citizen yet- shared his childhood memories with his grandparents, Squire J.T. Hornaday, an Antioch College graduate and for 30 years a Justice of the Peace, and Mrs. Hornaday, the first Negro member of St. Paul Catholic Church. Matthews Howard claimed to have been the first to publicize through her *YS News* column the fact that Wheeling Gaunt, the man who donated the land for Gaunt Park, was a former slave. She was instrumental in seeing that a stone was installed at the park to memorialize Gaunt.

Matthews Howard obtained information about underground railroad stops in the village and learned that a senator of pre-Civil War days used his influence to get the underground railroad to come through Yellow Springs instead of Clifton. The senator was a trustee of the newborn Antioch College, which was struggling to become established. Howard also made a map of Negro-owned business and lands of the 19th century. The lands covered about half of the village and its environs, showing large holdings by the Perry, Pettiford, Pinkston, and other families, as well as three haymarkets and other businesses typical of the day.

Matthews Howard died on April 21, 1996. She was survived by four daughters, Domina Matthews, Kriza Jennings, Westina Matthews, and Barbara Matthews, and a son, Wesley Matthews, II.

*Westina Matthews Shatteen, Domina Matthews Page*

Sources: Obituary for Rev. Wesley Matthews, *Yellow Springs News,* June 6, 1979; Obituary for Pat Matthewes Howard, *Yellow Springs News,* April 24, 1996; Memorial Service Bulletin, Dr Wesley S. Matthews, June 2, 1979; Mremorial Service Bulletin, Ruth “Pat” Matthews Howard, May 11, 1996; Pioneer Portrait, YS Senior Center, <http://www.seniorcitizenscenter.org/YSSC_WesleyM.htm>;The Matthews-Howard Family Papers MS-248, Department of Special Collections and Archives, Wright State University, <https://www.libraries.wright.edu/special/collectionguides/files/ms248.pdf>; *Xenia Dailty Gazette,* April 7, 1971, page 14