

AFRICAN AMERICAN RAILROAD WORKERS IN ROANOKE, VIRGINIA

# WE MADE COTTON, {But We Took That Cotton} AND MADE SILK.



Jennifer Davis  
McDaid



The Norfolk Southern Archives works with retired African American railroad workers to tell their stories.

The Norfolk and Western African American Railroad Heritage Group is composed of employees (both men and women) who retired prior to 1970.

African American workers made significant contributions to the building, maintenance, and operation of the railroad. The Norfolk Southern Archives is working to document their stories, past and present, through an oral history project, a book, and two exhibits through a partnership with the Virginia Museum of Transportation and the Historical Society of Western Virginia.

Cooperation and community outreach, paired with archival resources, have preserved the stories of these railroad workers, and made them available for future generations.



You have to understand something. Unless you were part of that history, it's hard for people on the outside down the road to look back and say, "Why did this happen and why didn't they do something about it?"

~ Carl Tinsley



When school started [at Hollins College], all of the luggage would come in, and some of those girls were from wealthy families. They had several trunks of clothes that you had to get to them. The guys used to really enjoy walking into that car because you got the smell of the perfumes.

~ Carroll Swain, Sr.

