



# Hamilton Park: A Planned Black Community in Dallas (Creating the North American Landscape)

*William H. Wilson*

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World War II brought staggering changes to Dallas, Texas, as the city became a banking, commercial, and transportation center. The growing population strained available housing and put particular pressure on already overcrowded African-American neighborhoods. In *Hamilton Park*, William Wilson brings to light the stirring history of how both black and white citizens of Dallas worked together to create a thriving African-American planned community. Through interviews with pioneer residents and development planners coupled with research into the politics and problems they faced, Wilson traces the evolution of Hamilton Park from idealistic plans to true residential community.

Placing this movement by Dallas blacks to obtain decent housing into the broader context of rapid postwar growth in the United States, Wilson examines how the assault on housing segregation waged by Dallas's black leadership matched the struggles of African-American leaders throughout the nation. He outlines the dilemma of identifying and procuring a suitable tract of land—one large enough, near African-American employment, and far enough from whites' neighborhoods that the development would not be opposed. He also examines individual struggles, from procuring utilities in the new neighborhood to arranging financing for new home buyers to choosing street names.

Beyond these practical issues faced by early planners and pioneer residents, Wilson meticulously describes and evaluates the evolution of the community of Hamilton Park. He looks at the roles that neighborhood covenants—and residents' challenges to them—as well as civic organizations, garden clubs, public schools, and churches played in defining and redefining a dominant culture in Hamilton Park. His short biographical sketches of residents and of white elites add a compelling personal narrative to traditional landscape history and the history of planning. *Hamilton Park* will interest scholars of Texas history, urban studies, environmental studies, American studies, African-American studies, and sociology.

Published in cooperation with the Center for American Places, Harrisonburg, Virginia.

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