



More suitable for duck hunting than for human habitation, the swampy area was known as “Mud Lake” to hunters and as “Hogs Swamp” to the farmers who began to settle the western region of Chatham during the 1860s. Population growth and residential expansion in Chatham began in earnest in the 1880s and the 1920s brought dramatic increase in both property values and the population. Chatham has the “distinction of being the only neighborhood in Chicago that developed from a European American middle-class community into one composed of middle-class African Americans.” The shift happened in the 1950s when these middle-class African Americans were drawn to the area because of the strict zoning codes and property standards, high levels of community organization, and good schools. African American residency of Chatham was less than 1 percent in 1950, but by 1960 it jumped to over 63 percent.

The racial transition, while rapid, was smooth compared to other parts of the city undergoing the same type of demographic change. For example, “several area churches welcomed blacks into their congregations, and the Chatham–Avalon Park Community Council began to include African American residents in their organization” in 1955. When the changeover was completed, African American residents worked “diligently to maintain the middle-class character of their community.”

### Population Demographics

- **Total Population: 37,000**
- **Median Age: 41.8**
- **Black: 95.3%**
- **Hispanic or Latinx: 1.3%**
- **Asian: 0.6%**
- **White: 2.0%**

### Economic Profile

- **Owner Occupied: 30.2%**
- **Renter Occupied: 51.8%**
- **Median Household Income: \$31,828**

### Education Statistics

- **No Highschool: 12.9%**
- **Highschool: 28.2%**
- **Associate’s Degree: 7.6%**
- **Bachelor’s Degree: 13.2%**
- **Graduate Degree: 8.5%**

#### QUEEN OF GOSPEL

Mahalia Jackson, American gospel singer, and civil right leader lived at 8358 South Indiana Avenue from 1956 until her death in 1972

#### BLACK BUSINESSES

Some of the most successful black businesses have been in Chatham, including the Johnson Products Company (Ultra Sheen Hair Products).

#### A RAISIN IN THE SUN

Chatham was the birthplace of writer Lorraine Hansberry, author of the critically acclaimed, poignant play A Raisin in the Sun.