

## **Title Page & Abstract**

An Interview with Laura Van Buren

SAA-A-D-2003-005

Conducted by the Springfield African-American History Foundation  
For the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library

Laura Van Buren was born in Springfield, Illinois on March 3, 1915. She discusses growing up in Springfield and the types of stores she would shop at in her childhood neighborhood. She also talks about some of the jobs she has held throughout her life, including working at the Department of Transportation, taking the civil service exams, and some of the discrimination she faced in the job market.

Interview date(s):	December 8, 2003
Interview Location:	Springfield, Illinois
Interview Format:	audio cassettes
Interviewer:	Barbara Dickerman
Transcription by:	_____
Edited by:	_____
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Interviews are archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential  
Library in Springfield, Illinois.

## Abstract

**Laura Van Buren**  
**SAA-A-D-2003-005**  
**Springfield African-American History Foundation Project**

**Biographical Information and Synopsis:** Laura Van Buren was born on March 3, 1915 and was raised in Springfield, Illinois. She attended Feitshans High School and attended Brown Business School for one year after graduation. After she finished business school, Laura applied for multiple jobs in Springfield, including the library and the Department of Transportation, where she worked for most of her adult life. She talks about the discrimination she and others faced while hunting for a job, noting that many of her classmates were forced to go out of state for their education or for job opportunities.

Laura also talks about what she did for entertainment growing up. When she was younger, she took piano lessons at her church and occasionally played for the choir there. She also talks about various black entertainers that would play in Springfield, especially at the Orpheum Theater, including Duke Ellington, Count Basie, and Cab Callaway. She also notes that the YWCA provided her and her friends a place to socialize, join various clubs, or attend programs and workshops designed for high school students.

Laura Van Buren and her husband met and married in Springfield and had one daughter, Janice, who went on to become a registered nurse. She talks about her grandchildren, both of whom have degrees, one from Rutgers University and one from the University of Illinois.

**Topics Covered:** Springfield, 1920s – present; Department of Transportation; Feitshans High School; Brown Business School; Orpheum Theater; YWCA; St. John's Hospital; John Hay Homes

**Note to the Reader:** Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

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