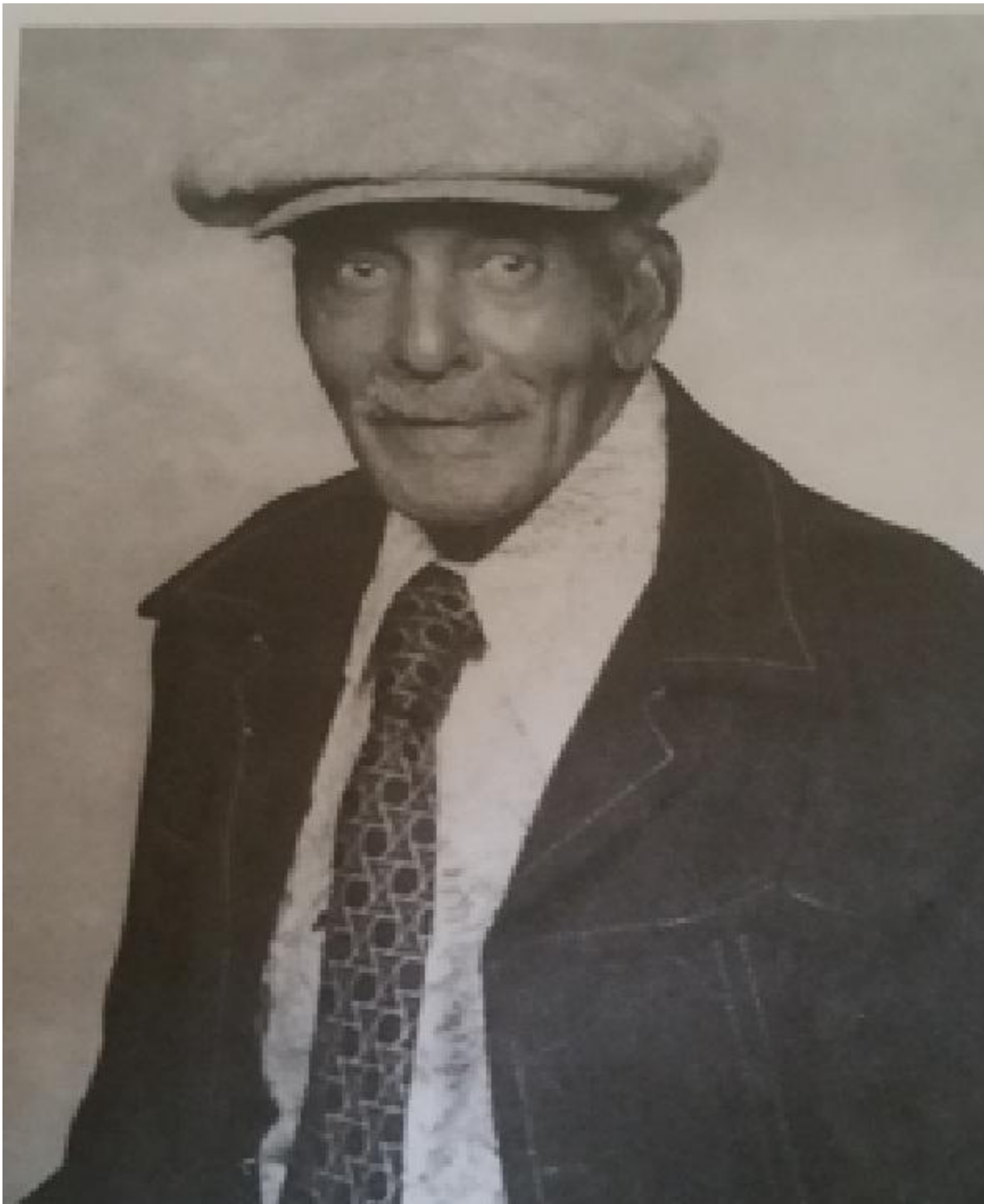




Alton's Black History: Joseph Raglin - the World's Fastest Brick Layer

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ALTON - Each brick on Alton's iconic brick streets was laid by someone's hand.

In fact, the Conley Brothers - William, John Jasper and Elijah (who would later go to push for school integration in Alton and lose his entire livelihood to racism) - were born in Kentucky and came to Alton in 1923 to subcontract brick paving jobs. They laid most of the bricks (if not all of them) in Alton from 1920-1937, and then assisted in building the Dixie Highway from St. Louis to Cincinnati.

One man working alongside the Conley Brothers was Joseph Raglin, who would become the brothers' brother-in-law. While working for the Work Projects Administration, Raglin placed the first brick on College Avenue.

In 1929, Raglin set the world record for brick-laying during a Works Projects Administration contest in East St. Louis. He was able to lay 3,472 bricks in 60 minutes, which averages to a downright insane rate of 58 bricks per minute. He still owns that record in the Guinness Book of World Records.

Raglin was later employed by Owens Illinois Gas Company, and was able to purchase a small farm just north of Alton with his wife. That farm was open to all family and friends who referred to it as "the place."