

Rachel Heggen  
Communications Manager  
Town of Carrboro  
[Rheggen@townofcarrboro.org](mailto:Rheggen@townofcarrboro.org)  
919-918-7314  
984-484-0130



## Our Roots Run Deep: Reflecting on Orange County's First Married Interracial Couple



Alvin and Omelia Garner  
PHOTO CREDIT LEONEDA INGE

In the late 1960s, Carrboro residents Alvin and Omelia Garner met while working at a local restaurant. They immediately fell in love, and it wasn't long after that they decided to marry. However, not everyone was supportive of the upcoming covenant: Alvin is white and Omelia is black, and marrying outside one's own race was illegal at the time. It wasn't until 1967 that the United States Supreme Court ruled that laws prohibiting interracial marriage were unconstitutional.

One year after the Supreme Court ruling, Alvin and Omelia chose to marry. In June of 1968, Alvin and Omelia Garner became the first interracial couple to receive a marriage license in Orange County. The two were wed at St. Joseph CME Church parsonage in Chapel Hill.

Though the ceremony was small and intimate, the couple walked out of the parish to find the streets lined with people. Some were likely there to protest, but many came to show their support and witness this historic moment. "We got in our car and started driving off, and nobody was saying anything as far

as, you know, heckling or anything like that. People started blowing horns. We blow our horn back,” said Omelia Garner in a 2008 interview with NPR’s Scott Simon.

Forty years later, the Garner’s decided to renew their vows and have the wedding they always wanted. The couple was joined by family and friends at the Faith Tabernacle Oasis of Love. “You don’t grow up realizing your parents are different colors. You just grow up knowing that they are your parents,” said Alvin Garner II in an interview with WUNC reporter Leoneda Inge.

True to their vows, the couple’s marriage lasted over 50 years. On January 3, 2020 Omelia Garner passed away in their home while holding Alvin’s hand.

This Black History Month the Town of Carrboro would like to recognize The Garners for their perseverance, and for showing the world that love does conquer all.