

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT PERSON: Ophelia Paine, 259-5027

Eighth Annual Afro-American Culture and History Conference

Nashville's eighth annual conference on local Afro-American culture and history will be held February 8, at the Avon N. Williams, Jr., Campus of Tennessee State University, 10th and Charlotte.

Sponsored by the Metropolitan Historical Commission and the Department of History at Tennessee State University, the Afro-American Conference is a one-day event held in recognition of Black History Month. The conference begins at 8:30 a.m. and concludes at 3:30 p.m. A \$5 registration fee (\$3 for students and Senior citizens) includes lunch and publications.

Begun in 1981, the Afro-American Conference brings together historians, students, and individuals interested in the contributions of Afro-Americans to the culture and history of Middle Tennessee.

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Afro-American Conference, page two

A highlight of the conference this year will be a performance by The Fairfield Four, a Nashville-based a cappella gospel singing group honored at the 1988 Gospel Arts Day celebration for their outstanding role in the history of gospel music. The Fairfield Four have performed at Carnegie Hall and twice for the Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife. Mr. Doug Seroff, historian and project director for Gospel Arts Day in Nashville, will introduce the group.

The performance, made possible by the joint support of the Tennessee Arts Commission and the National Endowment for the Arts, will take place at 11 a.m. and is free and open to the public.

The following presentations are also scheduled for this year:

"Oral History: A Conversation with Mrs. James A. Meyers, Former Director of the Fisk Jubilee Singers," Miss Louise Davis, The Tennessean

"Good Jelly Jones: Black Entrepreneur and Grassroots Politician," Mr. Francis Guess, Fulton Governmental Group

"Influence on Food from Slavery Until Now," Dr. Lou Pearson, Meharry Medical College

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Afro-American Conference, page three

"Rare Film Footage of Nashville During the 1950s," Mr. H. Richard Gordon, Metro Codes Department

"Black Historical Markers in Tennessee," Dr. James B. Jones, Jr., Tennessee Historical Commission.

An exhibit of sculpture by local Afro-American artists Ted Hatchet, Bill Johnson, Ted Jones, Gregory Ridley, and Viola Wood will be mounted in the lobby.

Continuing a series of publications on black American leaders, this year's publications will profile Deford Bailey, Merritt Day, William D. Hawkins, Sr., Randall B. Vandavall, and Carrie J.R. White. A second edition of "Bibliography of Holdings" will also be published.

Contributors to the conference include First Baptist Church, Capitol Hill, Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, National Baptist Publishing Board, and Spruce Street Baptist Church.

For more information or to register for the conference, call the Metro Historical Commission at 259-5027.

MAY DEAN  
Please print  
& erase

January 12, 1989

Mrs. May Dean Eberling  
WTVF-Channel Five  
500 James Robertson Parkway  
Nashville, TN

Dear May Dean:

Here's the list for the taping on Tuesday, January 17, at 8 PM. I have told everyone to be there by 7:30. The individuals and topics are listed in a possible order of appearance. It made sense to me to begin by talking about the conference itself and end, just before The Fairfield Four, with a final announcement of the event, place, and number to call. What do you think?

The people who have agreed to come are:

1. Ophelia Paine, Metro Historical Commission, and Reavis Mitchell, Executive Assistant to the President and professor of history at Fisk. We will talk about the conference itself and Black History Month.
2. Viola Wood and Ted Jones, art professors at Tennessee State University. Both are sculptors, and Viola is also the coordinator of the exhibit of sculptures by Local Afro-American Artists. The exhibit will be set up in the Atrium of Avon N. Williams, Jr., Campus at TSU the day of the conference.
3. Frances Guess, Fulton Governmental Group. His paper is: "Good Jelly Jones: Black Entrepreneur and Grassroots Politician."
4. Doug Seroff, black-gospel music scholar and project director for 1988 Gospel Arts Day, and selected members of The Fairfield Four. Mr. Seroff can talk about the group's history and the history of black gospel music in Nashville in general.

(Would it be possible to insert here or at some other point a printed screen with the name and date of the conference and a number to call for information?? What do you think? I was thinking that it might provide a transition to the performance by The Fairfield Four.)

5. The Fairfield Four, Mr. Henry Hill, manager, and four other singers: Rev. Sam McCrary, Rev. W.L. Richardson, Robert Hamlett, Wilson Waters, and Isaac Freeman, unless the names have changed since last summer. They will need five microphones.

Attached are resumes and other information on the speakers and their presentations.

Please call me if you need anything further.

Sincerely,

Ophelia Paine

Frances Guess

Henry Anderson "Good Jelly" Jones was the last of the old-time ward-healers. He was a dominant political force in North Nashville in the 1940s and 50s and could be counted on for 300-500 votes in any given election. That block of votes could "put the mayor in" according Miss McDougald.

Naturally, during election time, Good Jelly was in demand by anyone seeking political office. He always got his people to the poll (Hadley Park) and repaid them by finding food for the hungry, jobs for the jobless, lawyers for people in trouble, and even hospital care for the sick.

Good Jelly was also a bootlegger and jack of all questionable trades. He was involved in a feud between Mayor Ben West and Judge Andrew Doyle and was frequently getting in trouble with the police and gaining release in Judge Doyle's court. This would be something to ask about.

Good Jelly's influence declined with Urban Renewal and the beginning of Metro Government.

February 8, 1989  
Avon N. Williams, Jr. Campus  
10th and Charlotte

# Afro-American Culture & History

## 8th Annual Local Conference

8:30-8:55 AM	Registration and Refreshments, Atrium
9:00-9:20 AM	Opening Remarks Dr. Annie W. Neal, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Tennessee State University Ms. Ann Reynolds, Executive Director, Metro Historical Commission Dr. Bobby L. Lovett, Interim Dean, Tennessee State University
9:25-9:55 AM	"Oral History: A Conversation with Mrs. James A. Meyers, Former Director of the Fisk Jubilee Singers." Miss Louise Davis, <i>The Tennessean</i>
10:00-10:35 AM	"Good Jelly Jones: Black Entrepreneur and Grassroots Politician." Mr. Francis Guess, Fulton Governmental Group
10:40-10:55 AM	Break and Refreshments, Atrium
11:00-12:00 NOON	"Black Gospel Music: Introduction and Performance." Mr. Doug Seroff, Greenbrier, Tennessee <i>The Fairfield Four</i> , Nashville*
12:00-1:00 PM	Lunch (free with registration), Atrium
1:05-1:35 PM	"Influence on Food from Slavery Until Now." Dr. Margaret K. Hargreaves, Meharry Medical College
1:40-2:10 PM	"Rare Film Footage of Nashville During the 1950s." Mr. H. Richard Gordon, Metro Codes Department
2:15-2:50 PM	"Black Historical Markers in Tennessee." Dr. James B. Jones, Jr., Tennessee Historical Commission
2:55-3:25 PM	General Discussion
All Day, Atrium	Art Exhibition: Sculptures by local Afro-American Artists Professor Viola Wood, Tennessee State University, Coordinator

\*The performance by *The Fairfield Four* is made possible through the joint support of the Tennessee Arts Commission and the National Endowment for the Arts.

**Planning Committee:**

James Baxter  
Bobby L. Lovett  
Lois C. McDougald  
Reavis Mitchell  
Ophelia Paine  
Vallie Pursley  
Viola Wood  
Linda T. Wynn

**Financial Support:**

First Baptist Church, Capitol Hill  
Holy Trinity Episcopal Church  
National Baptist Publishing Board  
Spruce Street Baptist Church  
The A.M.E. Review

**Sponsors:**

Tennessee State University  
College of Arts and Sciences  
Metro Historical Commission

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8th ANNUAL LOCAL CONFERENCE ON AFRO-AMERICAN CULTURE AND HISTORY

Registration fee: \$5 (adults); \$3 (students) — includes lunch and publications

Make check payable to: TSU Foundation: Local Conference  
Mail form and check to: Metropolitan Historical Commission  
701 Broadway, B-20  
Nashville, TN 37203 Phone 259-5027

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

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Metropolitan Historical Commission  
701 Broadway, B-20  
Nashville, TN 37203

# Afro-American Culture & History

## 8th Annual Local Conference

# Afro-American Culture & History

## 8th Annual Local Conference

Tennessee State University and the Metropolitan Historical Commission are the sponsors of the eighth in an ongoing series of annual conferences which coincide with Black History Month. The conference will bring together historians, educators, students, and other interested individuals for a program on local Afro-American history and culture. The conference will be held at Tennessee State University's Avon N. Williams, Jr., Campus, Downtown, 10th and Charlotte, Wednesday, February 8, 1989.

*The Blue Triangle YWCA  
1927*





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# Leaders of Afro-American Nashville

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MEREDITH WILLIAM (M.W.) DAY

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Meredith William (M. W.) Day, entrepreneur, editor/publisher, community/civic leader, churchman, and family man, was born in Franklin, Kentucky, on March 15, 1893. He received his early education in Franklin's public schools and later attended Roger Williams University. During World War I, Day served in the United States Army.

Day's career as an entrepreneur began when he attended Roger Williams University and became a receiver and a distributor for Zibart Brothers Wholesale Dealers for books and magazines. He continued this occupation for a number of years. He and Arthur Turner co-founded the National Motor Assurance Company in 1930. The company offered "AAA"-like services for black automobile owners in five southern states including Tennessee. Also in 1930, Day established the Brown Belle Bottling Company to manufacture and distribute cola, ginger ale, grape, orange, and peach soft drinks. He also distributed a drink called BoGo Chic, "A Great Straight Drink and a Good Mixer." The bottling company was located at 313 Jo Johnston Avenue until destroyed by the urban renewal projects.

M.W. Day became an active leader in black Nashville. He served the NAACP in 1937 and chaired the Colored Division of the March of Dimes in 1940. He chaired the executive committee of the local NAACP for many years before becoming its president in 1950. For years, he was

executive secretary of the Colored YMCA. He was a charter member of the Frontier International civic club whose members helped firmly establish the Urban League in Nashville and served in the forefront for the construction of the Bordeaux YMCA.

During World War II, Day and attorney J. F. McClellan founded the *Nashville Independent* (1942). This paper merged with the *Globe* in 1944. Day continued to work with the *Globe-Independent* until the paper ceased publication in 1960.

Day became known as an activist leader, a renaissance man. He convinced Nashville's Big Brothers organization to allow blacks to help with its outstanding work with the needy. He served on the executive boards of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity (Eta Beta Sigma Chapter), American Red Cross, Family and Children's Service, Metropolitan Beautification Bureau, and Boy Scouts of America. He received honors from many organizations including the NAACP, Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, and Mt. Olive Baptist Church among others. Day was an honorary Sergeant-At-Arms for the Tennessee State Senate.

M.W. Day died on May 22, 1981, at the Veterans Hospital in Nashville. He was funeralized at Mt. Olive Missionary Baptist Church on May 25, 1981, and interred in Nashville's National Cemetery on May 26, 1981. His wife, Thelma Davidson Day, passed in 1973.

Lois C. McDougald

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This publication is a project of the 1989 Nashville Conference on Afro-American Culture and History. The authors compiled the information. Tennessee State University's Department of History and Geography edited the materials. The Metropolitan Historical Commission completed the design and printing.

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# Leaders of Afro-American Nashville

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WILLIAM DANIEL HAWKINS, SR.

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William Daniel Hawkins, Sr., was born February 5, 1872, in Jasper, Tennessee. Hawkins was among that first generation of blacks born after slavery. Notwithstanding that he and his generation matured during the oppressive years of legal racial segregation, Hawkins became a banker, an educator, a prominent layman in the Methodist Episcopal Church (United Methodist), and a prominent leader in Afro-American Nashville. Hawkins was educated at Morristown Junior College near Knoxville, Tennessee. Later, he received the bachelor of science and law degrees at Nashville's Central Tennessee College (Walden University). He taught mathematics, English, Greek, and Latin at Central Tennessee College and served as a trustee of the institution.

After leaving Central Tennessee College, Hawkins served as cashier and president of the People's Savings Bank and Trust Company. This was Nashville's third black banking institution, founded in 1909. He served as secretary-treasurer at Mt. Ararat Cemetery, Nashville's oldest black cemetery, and managed the Star Realty Company. He was a member of the Masons, the Odd Fellows, and Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity. Hawkins also belonged to the National Bar Association, the Agora Assembly, and the Methodist Church. He served as a delegate to many general conferences for the church.

William D. Hawkins, Sr., was married to Sarah H. Martin of Macon, Georgia, in 1904. They had seven children: Emily Christina, William D., Jr., Lloyd Wilson, Mary Evans, Aubrey Martin, Nellie Ruth, and Charles Leonard. Three of the children preceded their father in death. William, Jr., served as the last cashier of the People's Bank. The bank became a casualty of the Great Depression in 1929.

William D. Hawkins, Sr., died tragically as the result of a hit-and-run traffic accident. He was funeralized at the Seay-Hubbard Methodist Church and interred in the Mt. Ararat Cemetery, located on Elm Hill Pike. Hawkins, Sr.'s wife, four children, and a sister - Lydia Hight - survived him. Now the only surviving member of his family is the author of this article who resides in Washington, D.C.

Mary Evans Hawkins Baines

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DEFORD BAILEY

Deford Bailey was born in 1899 at Carthage, in Smith County, Tennessee. His mother died when he was a little more than a year old, and his father's sister and her husband reared Deford. Stricken with infantile paralysis at the age of three years, the bedridden child was given a harmonica as a means of amusement. Bailey overcame polio, although he had a deformed back and never grew taller than four feet, ten inches. However, his skill with the harmonica and Bailey's musical talent gained him renown in the field of country music.

Bailey's impressionable years were spent around the rural communities of Newsom's and Thompson's stations, located near the railroad, where Bailey composed many of his tunes on the harmonica. Deford had to go under a train trestle on the way to school. Bailey said he would wait for the train to go over, then "I would get under it, put my hands over my eyes, listen to the sound, and then play that sound all the way to school." Bailey became famous for recreating the sounds of rushing locomotives.

During his teenage years, Bailey worked for a white storekeeper in Thompson's Station and played the harmonica, to the delight of the customers and the proprietor. He remained with the storekeeper for some time before joining his family in Nashville where he held several jobs, while continuing to play the harmonica.

On December 6, 1925, Deford won second place with his rendition of "It Ain't Gonna Rain No More" in a French harp contest on radio station WDAD. Soon thereafter, Bailey made his first appearance on WSM Radio, after overcoming some racial opposition from the station's director. The young black performer was given the title "Harmonica Wizard."

Deford played a role in the naming of the "Grand Ole Opry." In 1926, the WSM Barn Dance followed an hour of symphonic music, and one evening its programming concluded with a selection by a young composer from Iowa reproducing the sounds of a train. Bailey opened the country music program with his rendition of "Pan American Blues." The difference in the musical genres caused the director, George D. "Judge" Hay, to observe, "For the past hour we have been listening to music taken largely from grand opera, from now on we will present 'The Grand Ole Opry'."

Bailey toured with other stars of the Opry including Roy Acuff, Uncle Dave Macon, Bill Monroe, and others. During his travels throughout the South in the 1930s, he was well received by the country music public, although racial segregation laws caused Bailey problems in hotels and restaurants. To get a hotel room, on some occasions either he posed as a baggage boy for the white performers or pretended to be Uncle Dave Macon's valet.

In April 1927, Bailey teamed with the black Golden Echo Quartet to make his first recordings of "Pan American Express" and "Hesitation" for Columbia Records in Atlanta. The Columbia recordings were never released. Two weeks later he recorded eight titles for Brunswick label in New York. On October 2, 1928, Deford recorded for Victor records during a Nashville session. "Ice Water Blues/Davidson County Blues" became so popular that the Victor label released it three times.

Bailey's popularity peaked and waned within fifteen years. During the height of his popularity, he was allowed a 20-25 minute performance on the three-hour

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Opry show. By 1941, he was off the Opry and beginning a thirty-year career of shining shoes at his shop on 12th Avenue, South. Apparently, WSM dropped Bailey because of his limited repertoire and his failure to convert to new tunes and written music. Bailey denied that he refused to learn new tunes; he claimed that the audience and the director insisted on hearing the old tunes.

During the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, Bailey's career was remembered. He made an appearance on a local syndicated blues television show, "Night Train," and in 1965 he made a rare concert appearance at Vanderbilt University. He appeared on the Opry's old-timers show in 1974 at the Ryman Auditorium. On

December 14, 1974, Bailey celebrated his 75th birthday by appearing in the new Grand Ole Opry House and playing several of his old tunes. He played for the homecoming show on April 3, 1982.

Deford Bailey died at the age of 82, on July 2, 1982. On June 23, 1983, the country music industry celebrated Deford Bailey as the first African-American star of the Grand Ole Opry. The mayor unveiled a plaque in Bailey's honor, and a monument was placed at his grave site in Greenwood Cemetery. Bailey's memorabilia was presented to the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum.

Linda T. Wynn

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# HISTORY·GRAM



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Winter 1988  
Number 47

## *E*ighth Annual Local Conference on Afro-American Culture & History

*The Fairfield Four*

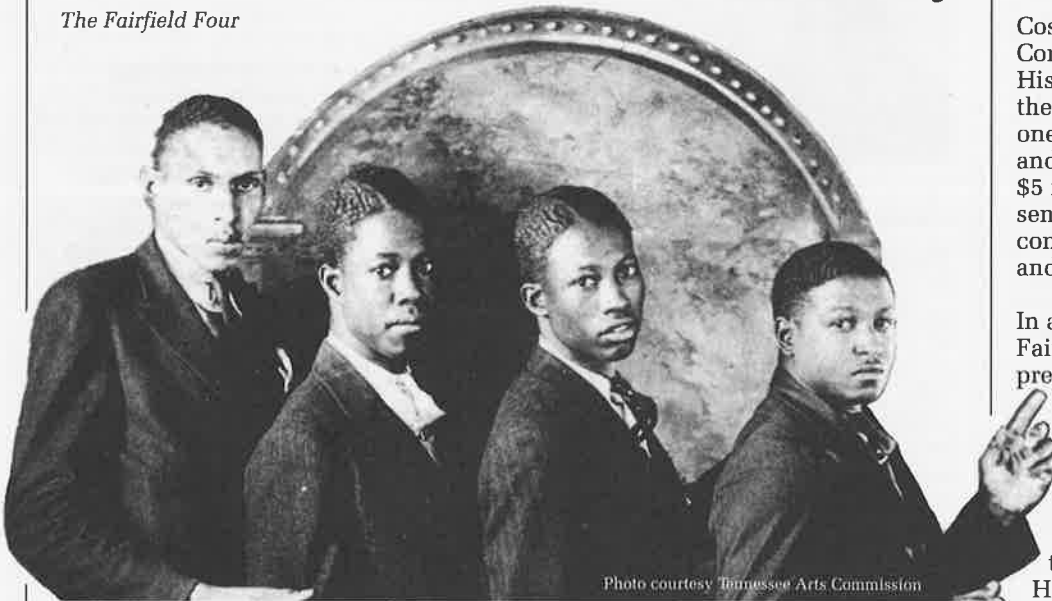


Photo courtesy Tennessee Arts Commission

The Fairfield Four, a Nashville-based a cappella gospel singing group which has performed at New York's Carnegie Hall and twice for the Smithsonian Institution's Festival of American Folklife, will bring their unique singing talents to the Afro-American Culture and History Conference on Wednesday, February 8, at the Avon N. Williams, Jr., downtown campus of Tennessee State University.

Funded by a grant from the Tennessee Arts Commission, the performance, which will take place at 11 AM, is free and open to the public. Admission to the remainder of the conference is \$5.

The Fairfield Four takes its name from the Fairfield Baptist Church formerly located on Hermitage Avenue. It was there in the early 1920s where three young men first began training under musical instructor and assistant pastor J.R. Carrethers. The trio became a quartet in 1925 and began singing at local churches and social gatherings.

In 1942, Colonial Coffee Company sponsored a contest which launched the career of The Fairfield Four. The locally popular group won a spot on WLAC radio and were so well received that they sang for WLAC, which had a national

hook-up with the CBS network, for almost ten years.

Last summer at the 1988 Gospel Arts Day celebration, the Fairfield Four were listed as the honorees for their outstanding contributions to religious music and the a cappella tradition. Mr. Doug Seroff, project director for the event, will introduce the group in February and give a brief overview of their now historic career.

Cosponsored by the Historical Commission and the Department of History of Tennessee State University, the Afro-American Conference is a one-day event beginning at 8:30 AM and concluding at 3:30 PM. There is a \$5 registration fee (\$3 for students and senior citizens) for those attending the conference. The fee includes lunch and all publications.

In addition to the performance by The Fairfield Four, the following presentations are scheduled for this year: "Good Jelly Jones: Black Entrepreneur," Francis Guess; "Influence on Food from Slavery Until Now," Mrs. Lou Pearson; "Black Historical Markers in Tennessee," James B. Jones; and the film "Nashville in the 1950s," H. Richard Gordon.

An exhibit of sculpture by local Afro-American artists Bill Johnson, Ted Jones, Viola Wood, Gregory Ridley, and Ted Hatchet will be mounted in the lobby.

Continuing a series of publications on black American leaders, this year's publications will profile Deford Bailey, Merritt Day, William D. Hawkins, Sr., Randall B. Vandavall, and Carrie J.R. White. A second edition of "Bibliography of Holdings" will also be published.

For more information or to register for the conference, call the Historical Commission at 259-5027.