

# PROFILES OF AFRICAN AMERICANS IN TENNESSEE



*revised 2021*

# ***Profiles of African Americans in Tennessee***

*Second Edition*

Bobby L. Lovett

Linda T. Wynn

and

Caroline Eller

Editors

Nashville, Tennessee

2021

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*Bobby L. Lovett, Linda T. Wynn, and Caroline Eller, Editors*  
For the Annual Local Conference on  
Afro-African Culture and History

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## Dedication

This book is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Wendolyn Bell, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and Ms. Viola Woods, Assistant Professor of Art, at Tennessee State University; the latter was a member of the planning committee for the Local Conference on Afro-American Culture and History. For many years, these Tennessee State University women supported the conference with their time and talents and assisted in making the annual day-long meeting a stimulating and edifying exchange of African American culture and history.

This book also is dedicated to Lois C. McDougald, T.S.U. Professor of History Emerita and long-time resident of Nashville, until early December of 1995, when she returned to her home state of North Carolina. As a teacher, she demanded excellence; as a mentor, she inspired and supported her students; as a member of the Local Conference planning committee, she kept us focused and committed and as a friend, she epitomized friendship.

As we dedicate this second edition in 2021, we must also acknowledge and celebrate several individuals who played key roles in this publication and in the enduring legacy of the conference. This includes the founding members of the planning committee: Bobby L. Lovett (Tennessee State University), Lois C. McDougald (Tennessee State University, *dec.*), May Dean Coop Eberling (Metropolitan Historical Commission, *dec.*), and Linda T. Wynn (Tennessee Historical Commission). In memoriam, we also recognize the many contributions of Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr. (Fisk University), who served on the committee from 1984 until his death in 2020.

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Emma W. Bragg is a retired college professor, granddaughter of Carrie J. R. White, and great niece of Susanna McGavock Carter.

Ronald E. Brewer is a resident of Chattanooga and a regional manager for the Tennessee Valley Authority.

The late Roberta Church (1914-1995) was a Memphis political and civil rights leader, writer, and the last third-generation descendant of the Robert R. Church family of Memphis.

Herbert Clark received his doctorate of arts from Middle Tennessee State University and served as a history teacher in Metropolitan Nashville schools.

Virginia Edmondson is a former administrator of the Tennessee Vocational School for Colored Girls.

Mary Evans Hawkins Barnes is the only surviving family member of the late William Daniel Hawkins, Sr.

Haywood Farrar is a former assistant professor of history at Fisk University.

Carmelia D. Gregory is a counselor at Whites Creek High School in Nashville.

Helen R. Houston is professor of English at Tennessee State University and a noted local literary commentator.

Beth Howse is the librarian for special collections at Fisk University.

Bobby L. Lovett received the Ph.D. in history at the University of Arkansas and serves as a founder and chairman (1981-) of the Nashville Annual Local Conference on Afro-American Culture and History. He is professor of history and Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Tennessee State University.

Perre MacFarland Magness is a journalist and resident of Memphis.

Joe E. McClure is a former manager of Greenwood Cemetery.

Lois C. McDougald is a retired associate professor *emerita* of Tennessee State University and a founder and member (1981-) of the Nashville Annual Local Conference on Afro-American Culture and History.

Willie A. McGowan is president of the Bradley Academy Historical Association in Murfreesboro.

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Reavis Mitchell, Jr., is an associate professor of history and Dean of Academic Affairs at Fisk University and a member of the planning committee (1983- ) for the Nashville Annual Local Conference on Afro-American Culture and History.

Ophelia Paine is a member of the planning committee for the Nashville Annual Local Conference on Afro-American Culture and History and director of special programs for the Metropolitan Nashville Historical Commission.

F. Dovie Shuford is a resident of Nashville.

Malcolm J. Walker is a resident of Chattanooga.

Ronald Walter is a television executive, local historian, author, and resident of Memphis.

H. Henryne D. White is a Nashvillian and surviving relative of Ernest R. Alexander.

Jamye Coleman Williams is a retired professor of communication of Tennessee State University and an editor of *The AME Review*.

Linda T. Wynn received a bachelor's and two master's degrees from Tennessee State University and in 1974 was the first African American to join the staff of the Tennessee Historical Commission, where she serves as assistant director for state programs. She is an associate adjunct professor of history at Fisk University and is a founder and committee member (1981- ) of the Local Conference on Afro-American Culture and History.

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## **African-American Members of the Tennessee General Assembly 1873-2021**

Representative Sampson W. Keeble	(R-Nashville)	1873-1875
Representative John W. Boyd	(R-Tipton County)	1881-1885
Representative Thomas A. Sykes	(R-Nashville)	1881-1883
Representative Thomas F. Cassels	(R-Memphis)	1881-1883
Representative Isham F. Norris	(R-Memphis)	1881-1883
Representative Samuel A. McElwee	(R-Haywood County)	1883-1889
Representative David F. Rivers	(R-Fayette County)	1883-1887
Representative Leonard Howard	(R-Memphis)	1883-1885
Representative Greene E. Evans	(R-Memphis)	1885-1887
Representative William A. Fields	(R-Memphis)	1885-1887
Representative William C. Hodge	(R-Hamilton County)	1885-1887
Representative Styles L. Hutchins	(R-Hamilton County)	1887-1889
Representative Monroe W. Gooden	(D-Fayette County)	1887-1889
Representative A. W. Willis, Jr.	(D-Memphis)	1965-1969
Senator J. O. Patterson, Jr.	(D-Memphis)	1967-1975
Representative Dorothy Brown	(D-Nashville)	1967-1969
Representative R. B. Sugarman, Jr.	(D-Memphis)	1967-1969
Representative M.G. Blakemore	(D-Nashville)	1967-1971
Representative Harold Love	(D-Nashville)	1969-1995
Representative Alvin King	(D-Memphis)	1969-1993
Senator Avon Williams, Jr.	(D-Nashville)	1969-1991
Representative Ira Murphy	(D-Memphis)	1969-1983
Representative Robert Booker	(D-Knoxville)	1960-1973
Representative James I. Taylor	(D-Memphis)	1969-1971
Representative Charles Pruitt	(D-Nashville)	1971-1985
Representative Harold Ford	(D-Memphis)	1971-1975
Representative Lois DeBerry	(D-Memphis)	1972-2013
Representative Harper Brewer	(D-Memphis)	1973-1987
Senator John Ford	(D-Memphis)	1974-2005
Representative C.B. Robinson	(D-Chattanooga)	1975-1993
Representative Teddy Withers	(D-Memphis)	1975-1985
Representative Emmitt Ford	(D-Memphis)	1975-1981
Senator Ed Davis	(D-Memphis)	1979-1994
Representative Rufus Jones	(D-Memphis)	1981-1996
Representative Roscoe Dixon	(D-Memphis)	1983-1994
Senator Roscoe Dixon	(D-Memphis)	1995-2005
Representative Charles Drew	(R-Knoxville)	1983-1989
Representative Charles J. Walker	(D-Nashville)	1985-1985
Representative Mary Pruitt	(D-Nashville)	1985-2013
Representative Larry Turner	(D-Memphis)	1985-2009
Representative Ulysses Jones	(D-Memphis)	1987-2010
Representative Joe Armstrong	(D-Knoxville)	1989-2016
Senator Thelma Harper	(D-Nashville)	1991-2018
Representative Tommie F. Brown	(D-Chattanooga)	1993-2012



Representative Henri E. Brooks	(D-Memphis)	1993-2007
Representative Bretran Thompson	(D-Memphis)	1993-1994
Representative Larry Miller	(D-Memphis)	1993-Present
Representative Kathryn I. Bowers	(D-Memphis)	1995-2005
Representative Edith T. Langster	(D-Nashville)	1995-2006
Representative Joe Towns, Jr.	(D-Memphis)	1995-Present
Representative John J. DeBerry, Jr.	(D-Memphis)	1995-2021
Representative Barbara Cooper	(D-Memphis)	1997-present
Representative Johnny Shaw	(D – Bolivar)	2001-present
Senator Kathryn I. Bowers	(D – Memphis)	2005-2006
Representative Karen Camper	(D – Memphis)	2007-present
Representative G.A. Hardaway	(D – Memphis)	2007-present
Senator Brenda Gilmore	(D – Nashville)	2007-present
Representative Antonio Parkinson	(D – Memphis)	2011-present
Senator Raumesh Akbari	(D – Memphis)	2013-present
Representative Harold Love, Jr.	(D – Nashville)	2013-present
Representative London Lamar	(D – Memphis)	2019-present
Representative Yusuf Hakeem	(D – Chattanooga)	2019-present
Representative Vincent Dixie	(D – Nashville)	2019-present
Senator Katrina Robinson	(D – Memphis)	2019-present
Representative Jesse Chism	(D – Memphis)	2019-present
Representative Sam McKenzie	(D – Knoxville)	2021-present
Representative Torrey Harris	(D – Memphis)	2021-present

## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

As we celebrate 40 years of highlighting the history of African Americans in Tennessee, the Nashville Conference on African American History solemnly invokes the memory of enslaved Africans and their descendants who made freedom possible for those who would eventually be known as African Americans. We also acknowledge those who, by nature of citizenship restrictions and cultural identity, are Black but not African American. As a collective, Black people in Nashville and Middle Tennessee painstakingly and courageously laid a foundation for thriving communities and cultural institutions that continue to shape the Music City. Indeed, even the Music City's iconic moniker owes a debt to the legacy of Black Nashvillians.

This conference, intended to highlight the history and achievements of generations of Black Nashvillians, began as the Annual Local Conference on Afro-American Culture and History in September of 1981 at Tennessee State University's downtown campus. The inaugural conveners of the conference included Dr. Bobby Lovett and Professor Lois C. McDougald of Tennessee State University (TSU); May Dean Eberling, Executive Director of the Metropolitan Historical Commission; and Linda T. Wynn of the Tennessee Historical Commission. The inaugural conveners received support from their respective institutions and agencies. Through the years, TSU's Deans of the College of Liberal Arts Drs. Wendolyn Bell, William Lawson, and Gloria Johnson actively participated in and supported the conference, as well as Herbert L. Harper, executive director of the Tennessee Historical Commission. The conference continues to attract scholars from the region and around the country to share their insight into Nashville's rich history and its connections to Middle Tennessee and beyond. We are proud to celebrate four decades of this memory-keeping endeavor.

In the twenty-five years since the publication of the first edition of *Profiles of African Americans in Tennessee*, the annual conference has grown in ways reflective of its history as a local endeavor with national resonance. Now in its fortieth year, the conference enjoys generous support from Tennessee State University, Fisk University, the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, and numerous community partners. It is an honor to receive sustained support from institutions dedicated to uplifting these legacies and promoting the well-being of Nashville's current population. These collaborations are reflective of the communal spirit that ensured the growth and survival of this city and remind us to attend to those within and beyond our communities.

Initially chaired by Bobby L. Lovett from 1981 to 2002, the committee welcomed Reavis L. Mitchell Jr. and Linda T. Wynn as co-chairs from 2003 until 2020. Now in our fortieth year, we pause to thank Bobby Lovett and Linda Wynn for their loving and tireless efforts on behalf of the conference. As Linda Wynn steps down as lead chair after seventeen years of dedicated service to our mission, we would like to enthusiastically welcome Learotha Williams, Jr. as the incoming co-chair of our committee. A

longstanding champion of North Nashville, Williams is poised to lead the conference in new directions that honor the foundation laid by its prior chairs.

With heavy hearts, we offer posthumous tribute to Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr. and Kwame Lillard, two lights who continue to guide us with the important lessons they imparted. Others who guided us over the years and faithfully served on the committee include TSU Professor Lois C. McDougald, Special Collections Librarian Vallie Persley, artist Viola Wood, and TSU and Fisk University artist Greg Ridley. Although they are no longer among us, their illustrious lights continue to shine and influence the planning committee. Some debts can only be paid forward, and we offer this fortieth commemorative edition of the profiles in memory of our ancestors for their work in celebration and defense of Black Nashville. It is our sincere hope that you find something nostalgic, something new, and something inspiring in these pages. Nashville's history is our legacy, and it is an honor to celebrate Black Nashville with you.

Onward,

*Linda T. Wynn*

*K.T. Ewing*

January 2021

***\*Editor's Note:*** While all profiles and original content have been subjected to minor technical edits, original nomenclature has been preserved so the pieces retain their author's intended voice and message. Academic opinion on the appropriacy of certain terms may have changed since their original publication. Examples include the use of such terms as "slaves" rather than "enslaved persons" or "Afro-American" rather than "African American." The annual conference moniker reflects this shift in popular vocabulary—in 2003, the Afro-American Culture and History Conference was renamed as the Nashville Conference on African-American History and Culture. For more information about the conference, visit the Metro Historical Commission website or the new conference website, [www.NCAAHC.org](http://www.NCAAHC.org).



## **PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION**

This publication is a project of the planning committee for the Annual Local Conference on Afro-American Culture and History. The project is an effort to collect and publish nearly seventy one- to two-page historical profiles presented at the Local Conference from 1983 through 1995.

Through the efforts of Representative Rufus Jones, representing House District 86 in Memphis, some funding was provided by the Tennessee General Assembly. Representative Harold Love, representative for House District 54, and Senator Thelma Harper, representing Senatorial District 19, were very supportive of the project from its inception. Members of the Tennessee Caucus of Black State Legislators, as well as other General Assembly members, gave support for funding this project. General Assembly funding became a special appropriation to Tennessee State University, where the co-editor and the Conference were headquartered.

The Annual Local Conference on Afro-American Culture and History (ALCACH) began in September of 1981 at Tennessee State University's downtown campus. The founding members were Bobby L. Lovett (Tennessee State University), Lois C. McDougald (Tennessee State University), May Dean Coop Eberling (Metropolitan Historical Commission), and Linda T. Wynn (Tennessee Historical Commission). The purpose of the conference was to hold an annual all-day meeting for presentation of papers, projects, and activities related to local and Tennessee black culture and history. During its second conference in February of 1983, the ALCACH began publication of one- to two-page profiles of black historical personalities and institutions.

The Conference published four or five profiles for distribution at each annual meeting, totaling nearly seventy profiles by the Fourteenth Annual Conference in February of 1995. The conference's profiles and additional ones gathered from across the state during 1994-1995 serve as the main body of this publication.

*Bobby L. Lovett*  
December 15, 1995

# RESOLUTIONS HONORING 40 YEARS OF THE NASHVILLE CONFERENCE ON AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE

## Metropolitan Nashville and Davidson County, TN Legislation

Resolution: RS2021-778

A resolution recognizing and honoring the Nashville Conference on African American History and Culture for forty years of research, publishing and educational outreach.

WHEREAS, the Metropolitan Historical Commission and Tennessee State University organized the first Local Conference on Afro-American Culture and History in 1981; and

WHEREAS, the conference has educated Nashvillians of all ages about the diverse and significant contributions of African Americans to our state and local history; and

WHEREAS, over 290 performances and papers have been presented, and over 130 *Profiles of African Americans in Nashville and Tennessee* have been published since the conference's inception; and

WHEREAS, Fisk University, the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, Middle Tennessee State University, the Tennessee Historical Commission, Tennessee State University, and private supporters have contributed resources ensuring the success of the conference; and

WHEREAS, the Conference on African American History and Culture celebrated its fortieth anniversary on February 12, 2021; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting and proper that the Metropolitan Council recognize the Conference on African American History and Culture for forty years of outstanding work in educating the public about the considerable contributions African Americans have made to Nashville and Davidson County.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY:

Section 1: That the Metropolitan County Council hereby recognizes and honors the Conference on African American History and Culture for forty years of research, publishing, and educational outreach.

Section 2: The Metropolitan Council Office is directed to prepare a copy of this resolution to be presented to the Metropolitan Historical Commission and Tennessee State University for inclusion in the 2021 commemorative program.

Section 3: This Resolution shall take effect from and after its adoption, the welfare of The Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County requiring it.

Mayor

  
John Cooper

Date

FEB 17 2021



# Tennessee Senate

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CLERK

## SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 5

By Gilmore, Campbell, Yarbrow

### A RESOLUTION

to honor the Nashville Conference on African American History and Culture for forty years of research, publishing, and educational outreach.

WHEREAS, the Metropolitan Historical Commission and Tennessee State University organized the first Local Conference on Afro-American Culture and History in 1981; and

WHEREAS, the conference has educated Nashvillians of all ages about the diverse and significant contributions of African Americans to our State and local history; and

WHEREAS, more than 290 performances and papers have been presented, and more than 130 *Profiles of African Americans in Nashville and Tennessee* have been published since the conference's inception; and

WHEREAS, Fisk University, the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, Middle Tennessee State University, the Tennessee Historical Commission, Tennessee State University, and private supporters have contributed resources that ensure the success of the conference; and

WHEREAS, the Conference on African American History and Culture celebrates its fortieth anniversary on February 12, 2021; and

WHEREAS, it is most appropriate that we recognize the Conference on African American History and Culture for forty years of outstanding work in educating the public about the considerable contributions African Americans have made to Nashville and Davidson County; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, that we hereby honor and commend the Conference on African American History and Culture for forty years of research, publishing, and educational outreach and extend our best wishes for much continued success in its future endeavors.

Adopted: February 25, 2021

  
Senator Brenda Gilmore

  
Speaker of the Senate





# INTRODUCTION

## *A Profile of African Americans in Tennessee History*

In every significant chapter of Tennessee's history, black men and women have played important roles. Yet few of the many books published on Tennessee's history attribute significant roles to the state's African-American citizens.

Except for chapters on slavery, the aftermath of slavery, and civil rights, the books written by most European-American authors generally ignore social and cultural African-American history in Tennessee. Therefore, the majority of history books on Tennessee are inadequate and incomplete for the full study of the state's rich history and culture, because in the nineteenth century African Americans comprised fully a quarter of Tennessee's citizens--which should mean that they would be included in at least twenty-five percent of the state's history. That is not the case and in Tennessee, in particular, early black history is sorely lacking.

Not until the twentieth century were real attempts made to complete studies on Tennessee's African-American history. Caleb P. Patterson published his thesis, *The Negro in Tennessee, 1780-1865* (1922), and Chase C. Mooney of Vanderbilt University published his master's thesis and Ph.D. dissertation into a book entitled, *Slavery in Tennessee* (1957). Although these studies by white graduate students contributed greatly to the study of Tennessee's black population, the books focused on blacks as mere workers and objects. Precisely because of this national problem, black historian Carter G. Woodson, the second black American to receive a Ph.D. in history, joined with other concerned black leaders in Washington, D. C., to form the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, Inc. (ASNLH), in 1915.

During the period from 1916 through 1941, the American black history movement began as African Americans increased their understanding of race, culture, and the idea of blackness. For instance, in 1916 the ASNLH began publication of its quarterly *Journal of Negro History*. In 1929, the graduate students and social-science professors at Fisk University and other black colleges began interviewing former slaves through a federal Works Progress Administration project. These interviews began the "Slave Narratives," which eventually were published in several volumes by Greenwood Press of Westport, Connecticut. The slave narratives (volume 19 for Tennessee) gave different (black) perspectives of slavery. The former slaves saw themselves differently than the white historians, who previously presented a sterilized story. They especially would make no judgments about fellow white men and women who perpetuated the evil institution of human bondage. The Fisk slave narratives were entitled, *God Struck Me Dead: Unwritten History of Slavery* (1941). Despite the existence of the black narratives on the slave states, including Tennessee, still there was no scholarly study of African Americans in Tennessee history by blacks.

Between 1929 and 1941, however, a Tennessee study from the black perspective was researched and published by Fisk University's dean and historian, Alrutheus Ambush Taylor. He and other local black historians came under the influence of Carter G.

Woodson, who spoke in Nashville on several occasions. Taylor titled his study, *The Negro in Tennessee, 1865-1880* (1941). Taylor's book not only complemented the one by Patterson, but the study went beyond slavery and covered Reconstruction history and various aspects of black life, including business and politics. Taylor's classic was published and distributed by The Associated Publishers, an affiliate of the ASNLH. Also, as a result of ASNLH's influence, Professor Merle R. Eppse of Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State College published his book, *The Negro, Too, in American History* (1938).

With the introduction of graduate studies to Fisk University and Tennessee A & I State College (Tennessee State University), many master's theses appeared. These small studies (which are available at the institutions' libraries) encouraged more writing about Tennessee's black history, including theses and dissertations at white colleges and universities. The civil rights movement of the 1960s produced a demand for scholarly studies and books on black Americans, causing white historians to enter the market for such books. After a black professor of history at Tennessee State University, Mingo Scott, published his *Blacks in Tennessee Government and Politics* (1975), two white professors published their doctoral dissertations: *The Triumph of Jim Crow: Tennessee Race Relations in the 1880s* (1976) by Joseph H. Cartwright and *Black Tennesseans, 1900-1930* (1977) by Lester C. Lamon. Both authors attempted to take Tennessee's black story a few chapters beyond A. A. Taylor's 1880 stopping point.

In 1978, Bobby L. Lovett's Ph.D. dissertation, *The Negro in Tennessee, 1865-1866: A Socio-Military History of the Civil War Era*, appeared as a paperback and a hardback by University Microfilm International of Ann Arbor, Michigan, and addressed the neglected history of black Tennesseans during the Civil War period. Lovett, a Tennessee State University history professor, concentrated on the Civil War period because it was a chapter of Tennessee's history that had been purposely distorted by white southern historians. Lovett's dissertation was preceded by his scholarly article, "The Negro's Civil War in Tennessee, 1861-1865," which was published in the ASNLH's *Journal of Negro History* (1976).

Then in 1981, under the auspices of the Tennessee Historical Commission, Lester C. Lamon attempted to bring synthesis to the black story in Tennessee by publishing a small book entitled, *Blacks in Tennessee, 1791-1970*. In 1985, John Cimprich published his doctoral dissertation, *Slavery's End in Tennessee, 1861-1865*. Other books and scholarly articles by blacks and whites followed, until an extensive picture of African-American history in Tennessee was generally clear by 1995.

More than 100 years passed after the neo-Confederate writers took control of the state's history, causing black history to become "lost, stolen, or strayed" (to quote actor Bill Cosby) from Tennessee's history books. In their zeal to cleanse the evil chapter of the Confederacy and redeem their Confederate ancestors, many white writers contributed consciously and unconsciously to deficits and distortions in Tennessee's history. They painted a colored canvas, using one color (white) to sterilize slavery and glorify the Confederacy. Reading their books and articles, including works from the public sector (i.e., the state *Tennessee Blue Book*), children in particular could conclude erroneously that all blacks were slaves, all whites were slave owners, the Confederates won the Civil War, and freedmen contributed nothing to the intellectual, the cultural, and the economic society of Tennessee. So, the writing of articles and books (like this one) exclusively

devoted to black history became necessary to provide researchers and writers the information needed to write a more complete history of Tennessee. And the movement started by Carter G. Woodson and the association for the Study of Negro Life and History that was spread to Tennessee under the tutelage of such persons as Fisk University's Alrutheus Ambush Taylor and Tennessee A & I State College's Merle Eppse during the 1920s and 1930s surely continues today.

The African-American history of Tennessee generally begins with the settlement of North Carolina and proceeds with the transformation of that state's western territory into the state of Tennessee in 1795-96. Historical documentation, including Ivan Sertima's *They Came Before Columbus* (1976), indicates clearly that blacks entered the future Tennessee territory with the earliest of European explorers and probably before Europeans arrived in America. When the results of the American Revolution ended British control of the territory west of the Appalachian Mountains in 1783 (and a few years before that date), white settlers from the Carolinas and Virginia rushed into the rich Tennessee Valley, many bringing slaves with them. By 1791, the Tennessee territory, now under the auspices of the new United States Congress, held 35,691 people, including 3,417 (9.6 percent) blacks. By 1860, African Americans constituted over twenty-five percent of Tennessee's population.

Yet the early history of Tennessee was not wholly about the story of slaveholding whites and black slaves. Fort Nashborough (Nashville), which was settled in 1780, had approximately twenty percent black population, mostly slaves but also several free blacks, among the original settlers. A black man was among the small party of men who explored and selected the Fort Nashborough site in the winter of 1779. Knoxville and East Tennessee, which were settled before Nashville, had as many free blacks as slaves. Whereas some 5,000 blacks served in the various armies of the Revolutionary War, some free blacks, too, came into the Tennessee territory just as white veterans also sought land grants and economic opportunity in the Old West. Tennessee was populated mostly by free and slave African Americans and non-slaveholding European-American yeomen and free farmers.

Although Tennessee was a slave state, it was not a large one. However, its small slaveholding population was a powerful slavocracy. Neighboring Arkansas (a younger state by far) had a median slaveholding of 23.4 slaves compared to Tennessee's median of 15.1 slaves in 1860. Less than twenty percent of the families in Tennessee ever could afford to own slaves, some worth more than \$855 dollars each in 1846 and then \$1,350 each by 1860. Even in a wealthy area like Davidson County, most white male Tennesseans owned no slaves and many had no land. Among the powerful Tennessee slavocracy some ninety-two percent of slaveholders owned land. Slavery hurt most white Tennesseans because cheap slave labor and the domination of the state's best lands by the slavocracy impoverished many white families, leaving some of them in an economic existence barely above that of slaves.

Yet conservative writers often glossed two important Tennessee stories: (1) since the 1790s Tennessee had supported a large anti-slavery element, and (2) most Tennesseans were not slaveholders. For more than a generation after the American Revolution, Tennessee was a notable manumission state. The early Tennessee General Assembly facilitated voluntary manumission of slaves by their owners. By 1819 Elihu Embree, a

white Quaker (member of the Society of Friends), published *The Manumission Intelligencer* and then *The Emancipator* (1820) in Jonesborough, Tennessee. Quaker Charles Osborn and other religious leaders, including some Presbyterian ministers, also began a movement to rid the state of the evil institution of human bondage (slavery). Anti-slavery societies existed in most regions of the state, and the American Colonization Society (an effort to colonize freed slaves in Liberia, Africa) operated openly in Tennessee after 1821, later receiving some support from the General Assembly.

After the 1831 slave rebellion in Virginia caused Negrophobia to sweep the region and Tennessee, slaveholders and aspiring slaveholders found reason enough to tighten the controls on slavery. They forced many outspoken antislavery men to flee Tennessee. Negrophobia and the movement against domestic and northern abolitionists engulfed Tennessee's society between 1834 and 1861. Suspected white abolitionists, like Amos Dresser (a member of an Ohio abolitionist group), were tarred, feathered, and forced to flee Tennessee in 1835. Also, in the preceding year, the Tennessee Constitution was changed to exclude free blacks from voting rights.

It is likely that the blacks' support of the Whig party and Negro opposition to Andrew Jackson's Democratic party gained few political friends for free black Tennesseans. Moreover, antebellum politics soon focused on the issue of slavery. In the South, the debates about slavery involved mainly the Whig and the Democratic parties, particularly in Tennessee. The Democratic party attracted many persons who were aspiring entrepreneurs and future slaveholders, men who desired one day to exploit Tennessee's rich natural resources. Therefore, the Democratic party became fanatical about protecting slavery to the point of treason and rebellion, even though the Whig party really had more slaveholding members. Yet the Whigs were ready to compromise with the North to keep the institution of slavery in some milder form.

The poorer whites, who felt altogether excluded from the American dream and economically depressed in the Age of Jacksonian Democracy, hated the blacks ("the neggars") and resented the economic dominance of slavery. Many non-slaveholding whites (indeed, poor European immigrants who began to arrive in Tennessee's cities during the 1840s and 1850s) feared any social and economic advantages for free blacks. After the 1830s, white workers in the cities persuaded the governments to pass municipal codes to protect their jobs against slave and free black competitors. Some white workers attacked prosperous free blacks and quasi-independent (self-hired) slaves during Nashville's race riot in December of 1856. In Memphis in 1860, the city's 4,339 poor Irish immigrants disliked black competitors.

Neither free Negroes nor slaves had any respect for landless, poor whites ("po'white trash"). Slave children frequently made fun of their poor, malnourished white playmates. In Nashville, some slave and free black youngsters angered poor white children by name-calling and reminding the white youngsters that "yo daddy is too po' to even have a servant." The gulf between poor white Tennesseans and blacks persisted through postbellum times and made it difficult to develop a winning black-white political coalition against the elite whites, even during the Populist party movements in Tennessee (1880s-1890s).

Because it was controlled by the slavocracy and dominated by the presence of the institution of slavery, antebellum Tennessee likewise was an autocratic, undemocratic,

oppressive republic. By 1860, when slaves numbered 275,719 persons and slaveowners constituted 36,844 of the state's 826,722 white citizens, the slaves represented 24.8 percent of Tennessee's population, not including over 7,300 free blacks. Although small in numbers, the slaveholders comprised some 58 percent of Tennessee's landowners and held the state's real economic, political, and social power in their hands.

After slavery spread rapidly across Tennessee between 1820 and 1860, the oppressive slave society became worse for most Tennesseans. After 1818, when Andrew Jackson and other speculators concluded treaties with the Native Americans and forced them to move westward, white entrepreneurs and planters rushed into West Tennessee. Although the area really was not opened until 1820, the fertile lands of West Tennessee became home to over 70 percent of Tennessee's black inhabitants, followed by Middle Tennessee and then East Tennessee. With its rocky and less fertile plateaus, East Tennessee held few slaves, but Middle Tennessee's counties (particularly in the basin area) held many slaves because the soil could sustain crops of cotton and tobacco, mining, shipping, and commercial activities that fully utilized black workers. Middle Tennessee, the state's wealthiest area, had many large plantations, including Belmont, Overton Place, the Hermitage, Belle Meade, and Wessyngton. Businessman Montgomery Bell also maintained huge holdings of slaves, and some 300 slaves worked Bell's iron industries in Davidson and Dickson counties. John W. Jones of Fayette County held over 250 slaves, growing cotton and other products. The plantations often involved attempts by their owners to experiment with improved social organization of the slave community.

Tennessee's slaves experienced a harsh existence, living mostly on small farms instead of large plantations. There was no such thing as a "good master." Members of the slavocracy enslaved other human beings and confiscated the fruits of their labor for the selfish enrichment of the elite class. Organized slave patrols were authorized by the General Assembly to keep the slaves under constant observation and in perpetual fear. Farms were few and far between each other, creating isolation. It was difficult for the slaves to communicate with one another. Still, many slaves rebelled by purchasing their freedom, running away, breaking tools, making mules go lame, being disobedient, and even attacking and killing some masters. Between 1844 and 1859, public hangings of slaves for either murder or conspiracy to commit murder of their masters were not uncommon. Many slaves escaped via the Underground Railroad through Middle Tennessee, then across Kentucky, and into Ohio.

Tennessee became an active slave-trading state, with Memphis second only to Louisville, Kentucky, as a slave market in the Upper South. In Nashville, slave brokerage houses were plentiful near Cherry Street (present Fourth Avenue, North) and Cedar (now Charlotte) Street. There one also could borrow the money at six percent per annum to buy slaves. In Middle Tennessee, John Overton, John Armfield, and Isaac Franklin made fortunes buying and selling black human beings as slaves. In Memphis, Nathan Bedford Forrest and other white men made fortunes telling, buying, and renting slaves. From Tennessee, the slaves were sold into notorious frontier lands like Alabama, Mississippi, Texas, and Florida. The hiring of slaves became big business, resulting in a quarter of the slaves being hired out in many towns, bringing the owners as much as \$150 a year. The first of January was a dreadful day for blacks because it was the time each year when Negroes were sold and rented to other masters, breaking up the slave families. Even free

blacks feared for their lives and freedom when “Negro stealers” (poor whites) made their living kidnapping blacks and selling them into the Deep South.

When the whites tightened the controls on slavery, while fighting their wars of propaganda against northern abolitionists and antislavery literature, more white hatred was generated against free blacks. In Nashville, the city council passed laws that excluded free blacks from engaging in the meat industry (increasingly controlled by German immigrants), operating lucrative freight wagons, and owning stalls in the Market Street (now Second Avenue, North) commercial district. The latter jobs were preferred by Irish and Jewish immigrants. To stop the rapid increase in the free black population, owners could not manumit their slaves without permission of the county courts and manumitted blacks could not remain in Tennessee without approval of the courts. Any free blacks remaining in Tennessee had to carry papers (proof of freedom) on them at all times. The Tennessee General Assembly passed legislation to help transport manumitted-slave volunteers to Liberia, Africa, under the auspices of the American Colonization Society. No more than 2,000 freed blacks left Tennessee, voluntarily and involuntarily for the Liberia colony. Further legislation unsuccessfully attempted to force free blacks to assume white masters or leave Tennessee by 1859--such legislation actually passed in Arkansas.

Although white society was oppressive for free Negroes in heavily black West Tennessee, blacks enjoyed a free environment in East Tennessee. By 1860, most of the 457 black residents were free persons in Knoxville. There the free blacks lived peaceably but not prosperously. When several free blacks migrated from neighboring North Carolina to Tennessee after the Nat Turner rebellion, whites in Friendsville (a Quaker community) welcomed them to Tennessee.

Middle Tennessee enjoyed moderate race relations, at least until the 1840s when there was a heavy influx of immigrants and non-slaveholders. More than half the free blacks were mulattoes (of half-white and half-black ancestry), who were related by blood to members of the white slavocracy. Because of this relationship and their small numbers, free blacks enjoyed a benevolent and paternalistic alliance with the wealthy, elite whites who protected them, often employed them, and allowed free Negroes privileges that violated antebellum race rules. In Nashville, over 719 free blacks comprised nearly twenty percent of the town’s black population and another twenty-five percent of the local blacks were quasi-independent slave persons, whose masters allowed them to hire out their time and even live in their own rented quarters and houses.

Between 1833 and 1857, Nashville’s free blacks operated their own schools, because they were excluded from the city’s public schools, which opened in 1853. Free black teachers like Alphonso Sumner, Daniel Wadkins, Sarah Porter, Joseph Manly, and Rufus Conrad became Tennessee’s pioneers in providing education for black people. There were no free black schools in Memphis, but there the blacks enjoyed simple lessons taught in the Sabbath schools until 1856, when reactionary whites demanded an end to teaching Negroes to read.

The free blacks owned businesses, including monopoly of the barbering trade (giving whites baths, shaves, and teeth-pulling services). Mulatto Frank Parrish (a quasi-independent slave) was so popular as a barber that Nashville's newspapers allowed him to place advertisements for his business. Free blacks controlled the hack (taxi) service in large Tennessee towns like Nashville. By 1860, some thirty-eight free black women, for

example, owned \$249,400 in total real property holdings in Tennessee. Sarah Estell of Nashville owned and operated the town's most famous ice-cream parlor before the Civil War. And Nashville's Joseph Manly operated a popular bakery in the same city. Postbellum racial segregation eventually destroyed the black entrepreneur's white customer base.

Some of Nashville's free blacks became nationally prominent leaders after slavery. James T. Rapier attended the free black schools in Nashville and became Alabama's first black U. S. Congressman after the Civil War. James's grandmother, Sally Thomas, was a quasi-independent slave, who operated a boarding house and laundry in downtown Nashville. Her son, Rapier's father, was purchased and freed by his white employer's will before moving to Alabama to become a wealthy barber and owner of real estate. Rapier's uncle, free black James P. Thomas, also became a prosperous barber and owner of real estate in Nashville before moving to St. Louis in 1856 and later writing his autobiography, *From Tennessee Slave to St. Louis Entrepreneur*. The book manuscript was discovered at Howard University (Washington, D. C.) and edited and published in 1984 by historian Loren Schweninger, who also wrote *James T. Rapier and Reconstruction* (1978).

James C. Napier (1845-1940), born a free mulatto in Davidson County, also attended the clandestine free black schools in Nashville, recalling that Daniel Wadkins' classes could not meet many days because whites were watching the place. Napier attended Oberlin College in Ohio and became Nashville's first formally-educated black lawyer, being graduated from Howard University in 1872 along with a black classmate from Memphis. In 1878, Napier married the daughter of Reconstruction leader John Mercer Langston. Napier was elected to Nashville's city council for five terms (1878-1885). He served as Register of the United States Treasury (1911-1913) under Republican President William Howard Taft. Napier also served on the state executive committee for the Republican party of Tennessee and was a delegate to several National Republican Party Conventions. When he died in 1940, Napier was still serving as a member of the Nashville Housing Authority and as cashier (manager) of Nashville's Citizens Savings and Trust Company Bank.

Samuel Lowery, also born free in Davidson County, was a product of Nashville's free black schools and a local college (Franklin Institute) where the liberal white proprietor allowed a few free blacks to work and study their lessons apart from the white students. After the Nashville race riot of 1856, Lowery became a minister in Cincinnati, Ohio, and Canada, before returning to Union-occupied Nashville as a missionary teacher of black Union army soldiers, and then a lawyer and notable inventor of silkworm culture and manufacturing. He and his father, Samuel Lowery (a wealthy free black), and others founded the Tennessee Manual Labor University, modeled after the Franklin Institute, on December 10, 1867.

No doubt Tennessee's urban slaves had advantages over the rural slaves, who toiled on isolated, small farms and large plantations. Free blacks and urban slaves attended the attractions of the age, including circuses, theater shows, dances, cock fights, and horse races. Black musicians (slave and free), including Jordan McGowan and James ("Jim") Hill, catered music for the finest white balls and dances. James P. Thomas recalled that he and other blacks attended the rare performances in Nashville by the famous singer Jenny Lind a Swedish operatic diva. Blacks danced the "Rubin Rede, the Juba, and



Jumping Jim Crow,” said Thomas. Even the slaves visited the towns during the Christmas season. In his autobiography, James P. Thomas wrote:

In Nashville before Christmas would be posted in conspicuous places ordinance for the regulation of “slaves,” “free Negroes” and “Mulattoes.” Nevertheless, all were expected to have a good time in the city and country. Feasting and dancing were indulged in freely. I was at the Hermitage [Andrew Jackson’s plantation] during the Christmas week and they (the Genls men and women of all work) commenced dancing in the morning. Some played cards, while others would seek some secluded spot for Cock fighting around the city.

Whereas about ten percent of the slaves lived in towns and cities, another ten percent or so helped build businesses and industries in Tennessee. Slave artisans were Tennessee’s craftsmen, building fine mansions for whites, making shoes, crafting wagons, and doing the jobs of blacksmiths, stonemasons, coopers, and boatmen. Over 10,000 slaves served as principal workers at Tennessee’s iron and mining industries, centered in Nashville and stretching into the Rim counties of Dickson, Hickman, Lawrence, Montgomery, Stewart, Wayne, and even some parts of Cheatham, Maury, and Williamson, which held less-concentrated deposits of iron ore. Near Patterson (or Pattison) Forge in Davidson County--now part of Cheatham County--a village housed the hundreds of slave iron workers, according to the Tennessee Department of Conservation’s Division of Archaeology publication, *A Cultural Resource Survey of Tennessee’s Western Highland Rim Iron Industry, 1790s-1930s* (1988). Nashville held many of the iron region’s foundries, furnaces, and machine shops that produce a variety of iron products. James C. Napier’s white grandfather, Elias Napier, was one of the largest employers of slaves in Tennessee’s iron industry. Slaves also worked the riverboats and waterways and helped build Tennessee’s first railroads.

Antebellum blacks also maintained churches. These institutions were controlled by white congregations, mostly in towns and cities (i.e., Columbia, Knoxville, Memphis, and Nashville). Slave Christians existed throughout slavery and enjoyed the privileges of baptism, official membership, and the Lord’s Supper with the white members. They also experienced excommunication.

And then there was the “invisible” black church. Services were operated by slave preachers, like Dick Ham, in clandestine places, like Nashville’s Buck’s Alley. To gather their flocks and watch for slave patrols, the members of the invisible black churches used singing codes such as lyrics of *Steal Away to Jesus*; announcements of *Weevils in the Wheat* warned against white knowledge of any impending meeting; and “Raid Foxes” were designated among swift young runners to decoy white patrollers away from the sacred “brush arbors.”

Slave religion became formalized during the 1830s, when the southern churches began an evangelical movement to Christianize more slaves and their owners. This was an effort to counter the northern abolitionists’ arguments that slavery was evil, un-Christian and should be abolished immediately. Most slaveholders were not church members, and generally they were crude and uncultured men who forbade the slaves to gather for any meetings, including church services. More than a few slaveholders

fornicated with their enslaved workers, committed adultery against their white wives, raped abused black women and slave children, reared their white children with their illegitimate black siblings, and sold their own mulatto children and grandchildren. As a result of the southern evangelical movement, by the 1840s some Baptist and Methodist churches included many slaveholders and had more black members (slaves) than white ones.

To relieve overcrowding and to respect the desire of some non-slaveholding whites to remain socially above black people, many integrated Tennessee churches began to separate their black Christians into separate (evening) services and some into quasi-independent congregations led either by white ministers or white-supervised black preachers. Nashville had several quasi-independent black church congregations: Capers Colored Methodist (1832), First Colored Baptist Mission (1848), First Colored Christian (Disciples of Christ) Church (1855), and Central Baptist Church's African Mission (1861). Columbia had the oldest black-church building, Mount Lebanon Baptist Church (1843), which was turned over to the blacks after the whites built a new one. In Memphis, where 109 free blacks and 2,362 slaves lived by 1850, a white man named Silas T. Toncray operated a church for blacks. The black congregation ran the church after Toncray's death around 1847, but whites forced the church to close in late 1856. That was the year that a race riot hit Nashville and fear of a regional slave rebellion swept from the iron districts of Middle Tennessee and southern Kentucky into West Tennessee. Yet, in Memphis the whites of Wesley Chapel allowed a Negro preacher to instruct the congregation's black members.

In many antebellum churches in West Tennessee, the whites feared the great numbers of slaves. Most masters preferred to keep the blacks in integrated congregations, often seating the blacks in newly constructed balconies and rear pews. Many slave masters began to encourage preachers to "speak" to their slaves, often to make the blacks more obedient. Both slave and free black preachers, including Daniel H. Jones, Pompeii, Edmund Kelly, and Nelson G. Merry, became notable speakers among Tennessee's antebellum black Christians. Nelson G. Merry, a slave who was freed in 1845, became the first black to be ordained (November of 1853) and placed over a black congregation as "moderator" (pastor of the First Colored Baptist Mission). After gaining a taste of religious freedom, the black Christians tired of the white ministers' devilish sermons: "If a man is a slaveowner when he becomes a Christian, let him remain a slaveowner; if a man is a slave when he becomes a Christian, let him remain an obedient slave." Blacks also tired of the quasi-independent churches, which were controlled by white congregations. In 1859, some blacks in Memphis began Collins Chapel Methodist Episcopal Church.

The Civil War brought an end to spiritual enslavement of black Christians by white Christians who worshipped a degenerate southern religion: New Testament theology, southern nationalism (regionalism), and racism. The black churches gained their independence during and after the war and took various names (even charters), including First Colored Baptist Church of Nashville, Capers Memorial Colored Methodist Episcopal Church of Nashville, First Colored Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Nashville, First Baptist Church of Chattanooga, Mount Lebanon Baptist Church of Columbia, Collins Chapel Methodist Church and Beale Street Baptist Church of Memphis, and the Colored Methodist Church of Knoxville. One of Memphis' most famous black preachers, former slave Morris Henderson (1802-1877), founded and built the Beale Street Baptist Church

(now listed in the National Register of Historic Places). Memphis Avery Chapel A.M.E. Church was founded by a black Union soldier. In 1866, Nashville had eight black churches, Memphis had as many, Knoxville had at least two, and Chattanooga had one.

The Civil War era became an important but also the most convoluted period of African-American history in Tennessee. Because of the protracted effort by so many white writers to cleanse Confederate history and redeem the “Lost Cause,” this period (1861-1865) also became the most distorted chapter in Tennessee’s history. Almost all Tennessee history books treat the Civil War blacks as non-participants, noncombatants, and docile onlookers--*something* to be studied, but not respected as men and makers of history. From these books, a reader could form the impression that the Confederates won the Civil War and the evil Confederacy was good and glorious, but these were falsifications of Tennessee’s history. The historical *truth* is:

- (1) Tennessee Confederate military forces were easily defeated by a powerful Union army;
- (2) Black Tennesseans played a pivotal role in the Union Army’s victories and its control of Tennessee;
- (3) Men and women who supported the rebellion against the United States of America constituted a numerical minority of Tennessee’s black and white inhabitants.

Among some 1,140,000 Tennesseans, nearly 700,000 of them did not give support to the Confederate rebellion against America. In 1861, almost all 290,000 black Tennesseans naturally supported the Union cause. Despite slavery and racial discrimination, African Americans remained notoriously loyal to the country, from Revolutionary War times through modern times. Tennessee’s pro-Confederates were outnumbered by the whites who opposed the rebellion, the whites who refused to become involved, plus the hard core Unionist whites of East Tennessee and some in Middle Tennessee, and, of course, over a quarter of a million blacks. Among nearly 850,000 white Tennesseans, a high estimate is that 115,000 men served in the Confederate armies, and half of the white Tennesseans--which included soldiers’ families--gave at least spiritual support to the Confederate cause. But spiritual support was not enough for the Confederacy to win either the war in Tennessee or the regional war in the South.

Most Tennesseans (white male voters) opposed attempts to secede Tennessee from the Union of American states. This opposition persisted even after the November 1860 election of Republican Abraham Lincoln caused South Carolina to lead a campaign to establish a southern nation. Slaves outnumbered whites in South Carolina, and the white minority there was notorious for its black codes, brutality against humanity, and racism. In Tennessee, a moderate white leader in Nashville, William F. Cooper, rightly said that unless the North moved decisively before Lincoln’s inauguration (March 4, 1861), “the secession feeling is on the increase.” Surely Governor Isham G. Harris had no reservation about committing treason against America, and he--like his counterpart in neighboring Arkansas--persisted in maneuvering Tennessee toward an alliance with the Confederate States of America. On January 1, 1861, Harris played the race card and said that “the President-Elect [Lincoln] asserted the equality of the black with the white race.” Despite the opposition from a majority of free Tennesseans, Harris issued an “executive order” to

withdraw Tennessee from the Union. On February 9, 1861, the voters (white males) rejected the governor's action. After fighting broke out in South Carolina, however, in April of 1861, the Tennessee General Assembly voted to secede. The participating voters ratified secession on June 8, 1861, but in the face of great opposition.

Instead of staying home and assuming (like most voters) that Governor Harris' Confederate movement would win anyway, nearly 50,000 Tennesseans voted against secession and treason. The East Tennesseans even held a Union Convention and started a movement to secede from Tennessee, with the intention of establishing a separate state that would remain loyal to the American Union as the West Virginians successfully did. But Harris' administration sent troops and scattered the East Tennessee leaders. Most non-slaveholders dared not voice too much opposition to the powerful minority Confederates in West and Middle Tennessee. Although they hated Lincoln and the abolitionists, not all slaveowners were disloyal to the Union; and some slaveholders refused to support the Confederacy. One owner, John Trimble of Davidson County, not only opposed the southern nationalists' war, but near the end of the war he voluntarily freed his slaves, became a leader in the local Republican party, and sold much of his land to Nelson Walker, a black barber and businessman. Walker used the land to begin Nashville's oldest surviving black neighborhood: Trimble Bottom. Meanwhile, the Confederates raised their Rebel flag over the State Capitol in Nashville on June 16, and the Confederate States of America included Tennessee by June 22, 1861.

Although the Tennessee Confederates were outnumbered by the combination of pro-Union whites, black Tennesseans, and rebellious whites in East Tennessee, they continued to take effective measures to protect slavery and maintain illegal control of the state. Slave patrols were greatly increased to restrict the usual movement of slaves and free blacks. Around Christmas time, when slaves traveled into the towns in great numbers to shop and visit relatives and friends, the 1861 slave patrols became heavy, abusive, and notorious. To control the pro-Union whites, the Tennessee Confederates imposed conscription acts, loyalty tests, and domestic terror.

Despite its coercive and intolerable acts against pro-Union whites and blacks, the Tennessee Confederate government had too little popular support to fight an effective war against a powerful Union army and a wealthy American nation. Tennessee's capable Confederate General Sidney S. Johnston struggled heroically, but he failed to build an effective Confederate Army of Tennessee. In heavily Unionist northwest Tennessee, the citizens refused to sell provisions and forage to the Confederate government. In East Tennessee, Confederate troops went hungry because supplies did not reach them in a timely way. The Confederate army's quartermaster (in charge of supplies) and engineering departments offered to hire slaves at fifty cents per day or twenty-five dollars per month plus rations, clothing, and quarters, but most slaveowners refused to lend their valuable slaves for military work. The Confederate military was forced to confiscate slave laborers and draft free blacks.

Several military commanders petitioned the General Assembly to recruit free blacks "to do such menial service as they are competent to perform." On June 28, 1861, the legislature authorized a draft of free black men. This order affected some 2,000 blacks, but most free black men evaded the Confederate draft and the local sheriffs who tried to capture them. The draft yielded few results because free black males of military age

(eighteen to forty-five years) were so few in numbers. Some free blacks (like J. C. Napier and his family) left Tennessee. Others fled to antislavery Quaker and German settlements and Union territories. William Scott, a free black migrant from North Carolina to Knoxville, later fled to Friendsville, near Knoxville, and then to Union-occupied Nashville to prevent Confederate impressment of his son. In 1865, Scott started the state's first black newspaper in Nashville, *The Colored Tennessean*.

By February 16, 1862, the Tennessee Confederates--despite their pretending to be all-powerful--were easily defeated at Fort Henry and Fort Donelson. Confederates from neighboring states answered Harris' call for more soldiers; nevertheless, a large Union army emerged from the Ohio Valley under General Ulysses S. Grant and compelled the Confederates to abandon the gateways to the Mid-South. The Confederates' calls for "loyal southerners" to rise against America's loyal soldiers did no good: most Tennessee citizens stood outside the doors of their cabins and houses and watched in silence (sometimes the women waved their handkerchiefs) when the beaten Confederate soldiers and their tattered battle flags made their humiliating retreat toward Nashville. After all his proclamations and promises, Governor Harris himself caused unnecessary public panic when he went galloping foolishly through Nashville's streets shouting, "The Yankees are coming!"

Once General Johnston, his army, and engineers retreated southward and arrived at Nashville, they decided to abandon the "indefensible" city and flee east to Murfreesboro. Nashville citizens panicked and cursed General Johnston, but he had no real support and no acts. Governor Harris beat the main army out of town and followed Johnston's army, often serving as the General's courier to take desperate messages from one brigade to another. Then some elder men, who had attached military stripes to their trousers and pranced about Nashville with spiteful announcements against the United States, quickly changed clothes and hid their empathy for the Confederates. Confederate casualties were rushed to military hospitals in Chattanooga, and Rebel stragglers looted Nashville's warehouses. Many pro-Confederate citizens loaded wagons and trains to head south to safety.

A week later, when the advance Union army regiments camped on the opposite bank of the Cumberland River, Nashville's officials rowed across and surrendered the city, rather than have it destroyed by the Union gunboats. Only seven months had passed since Harris and his minority Confederate party had forced the Tennessee government to join the rebellion against America. On February 23, 1862, the Union gunboats arrived, displaying bold armor; belching steam, smoke, and ashes; and generally showing America's economic and military might. It was a proud sight to loyal blacks and Union whites. A regimental band disembarked and proudly marched up Broad Street, playing *Hail Columbia!* amidst a crowd of jubilant white and black Unionists dancing in the streets. Black children ran ahead, shouting, "The blue man's coming!" At the Capitol, William Driver, a Unionist citizen and former sea captain, tearfully asked that his American flag (which he named "Old Glory") be hoisted in place of "that damned Rebel flag." The Confederate flag (a symbol of slavery, treason, and racism) was lowered from the state Capitol--the Rebel emblem never again would be the official flag of Tennessee.

After some early victories against poorly organized Union armies in the eastern theater, the Confederate war effort took a turn for the worse in mid-1862. Although his

Confederate state government was in exile and incapable of giving adequate resources to the Confederate army, Governor Harris continued to tag along when the Confederate Army of Tennessee lost the infamous Battle of Shiloh on April 6-7, 1862. Although they fought gallantly, General Johnston's hurriedly trained soldiers were forced to retreat into neighboring Corinth, Mississippi. Johnston's junior officers were no more competent (contrary to postwar myths fabricated by southern historians) to lead brigades than President Jefferson Davis and his ineffective cabinet were culpable of administering a regional "defensive war" (as they and other southern nationalists called it). Then Grant's forces took Corinth, Mississippi, and secured the rail lines into Memphis and West Tennessee. Union gunboats forced Memphis to surrender on June 6, 1862, forcing Governor Harris' state government and the notoriously racist *Commercial Appeal* newspaper staff to flee to Mississippi. Then black Memphians also danced in the streets.

Meanwhile, the Confederacy lost control of the southern railroads, roads, and the important river systems. In the eastern theater of the war, the Confederate South's most able general (Robert E. Lee) began his famous retreat from Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, enabling President Lincoln to later present his famous "Gettysburg Address." By early winter, the Confederate Army of Tennessee was forced to retreat from Kentucky to Murfreesboro, Tennessee, where it lost the Battle of Stones River in early January. The Tennessee Confederate soldiers then retreated east to Chattanooga, where they lost successive battles; they were forced to flee to northern Georgia (above Atlanta) for refuge. In quick succession the Confederates lost Vicksburg, Mississippi, and Helena and Little Rock, Arkansas, by September 10, 1863.

Many slaves realized that the Civil War meant the collapse of the slavocracy's power. It also meant a revolutionary change in race relations and the *de facto* end of slavery in Tennessee.

Like hundreds of other teenage black males, Wilson County slave George Knox was taken by his Confederate master to serve as a military laborer. When he and his fellow black Confederate servants heard that the Union army was winning the Battle of Stones River, Knox recalled, "I put on a long [sad but false] face as possible ... but I was secretly rejoicing at the success of the Union army." After reluctantly kissing his girlfriend goodbye, Knox escaped into Union lines near Murfreesboro. There he became a federal teamster. Knox later followed some Union soldiers on furlough to Indiana, where he settled and became a barber and an operator of an Indianapolis newspaper. Knox's autobiography (printed in various issues of his newspaper) was edited by Williard B. Gatewood, Jr., and published under the title, *Slave and Freeman* (1979).

Like Knox, many slave laborers shed their "Sambo" personalities, abandoned the Confederate camps and farms, and headed for Union army camps. At first most Union commanders allowed "loyal" slaveowners in Tennessee to retrieve their slaves from Union camps, but many black bondsmen heard via the black "grapevine" that they could qualify for freedom under the federal Contraband Act (August 6, 1861), which forbade the use of slaves and other contraband goods for making war against America. When the black refugees came into the Union camps, they quickly learned to say, "My master is a damned Rebel and fighting in the Confederate army." Then President Lincoln issued his Emancipation Proclamation (a psychological weapon) on September 22, 1862, which declared slaves free in territories still in rebellion against the United States by January 1,

1863. Although the Proclamation did not apply to Union-held Tennessee, the state's slaves were practically free any way. Nashville's black leaders celebrated their first Emancipation Day anniversary a year later.

Comparatively, in Texas (Tennessee's sister state), where the Civil War battles never reached the vast interior, the slaves did not receive word of Emancipation until June 19, 1865 ("Juneteenth"). In many southern states, including parts of Tennessee, some slaves remained on the farms either because of total isolation, ignorance, and loyalty to the master's family or fear of military activities and the outside world. In order to act like a free person, one needed to experience "living free."

Throughout the war, Tennessee's slaves continued to arrive by the thousands at Union camps. They frequently arrived with the master's wagon, mules, tools, and even bales of cotton to sell for the support of their slave families. Runaway slaves ignored the white mistress's empty threats and pleas to stay and help her with the farm. When pursuing the defeated Confederates in August of 1862 and traveling through West Tennessee, so many destitute fugitive slaves surrounded General Grant's federal army that he ordered Chaplain John Eaton to establish a contraband-camp system throughout the Mississippi Valley to house and feed the contrabands and put them to work on abandoned lands. Eaton established the first contraband camp at Grand Junction. By 1864, there were large contraband camps at Clarksville, Pulaski, Brentwood, Hendersonville, Edgefield, Nashville (two camps), Knoxville, Chattanooga, Memphis (three camps), Somerville, Brownsville, and throughout the Mississippi Valley. The "Shiloh" Contraband Camp in Memphis alone had over 300 log cabins and 2,000 inhabitants. Memphis' "New Africa" and "Camp Dixie" contraband camps held just as many black refugees. So many black faces surrounded the federal armies that it seemed a flood was about to drown the white man's fragile existence in the South. Unlike whites in West Tennessee, Mississippi, South Carolina, and many other parts of the South, the white Yankees had never before seen this phenomenon.

The contraband camps became military processing stations where fugitive slaves were transformed into freedmen, wage earners, and precious labor for the Union army. There they received shelter (tents, log cabins, and plank houses), army rations (pork, corn meal, flour, beans, sugar, coffee, vinegar, salt, star candles, and potatoes), clothing, medicines, military or agricultural jobs, and wages. The army employed the contrabands as laborers at ten dollars per month for women and ten to thirty dollars a month for boys and men. More than 2,700 Union black laborers worked on Fort Negley (the largest Union fort west of Washington, D. C.) and twenty-three other redoubts and forts to protect Nashville. In the Memphis area alone, thousands of black laborers (including 800 at Fort Pickering) built Union forts and river fortifications. By March of 1864, thousands of black laborers and free blacks completed the Northwestern Military Railroad, a strategic line running seventy-five miles from Nashville to the Tennessee River, where northern steamers deposited huge quantities of military supplies in preparation for the Union army's attack on Atlanta, Georgia.

By summer of 1863, the flood of fugitive slaves overwhelmed the Union army, causing the federal commanders to invite help from northern churches and missionary societies, including the American Missionary Association. More than a dozen organizations, including the African Methodist Episcopal Church, answered the call to "toil in the



vineyards” of Tennessee. The black and white northern missionaries helped to establish freedmen’s institutions such as churches, schools, hospitals, and benevolent societies. These social welfare functions were assumed by the federal Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands (Freedmen’s Bureau) in March of 1865. Also, the Freedmen’s Bureau began the process of legalizing the blacks’ marriages and recording them in the county records by 1865 (see Freedmen’s Marriage, 1865-1866, in various county records).

Although the Union army tried to prevent it, the black tide flowed from Tennessee’s farms and plantations, as well as from northern Georgia, northern Alabama, northern and central Mississippi, eastern Arkansas, and southern Kentucky. Even free blacks from the North came to Tennessee to fill non-commissioned officers’ positions in black regiments and to seek economic and political opportunities in Reconstruction Tennessee. By 1864, thousands of blacks jammed Tennessee’s Union camps and the cities; the Clarksville camp held over 3,000 contrabands and several missionary schools. In late 1865, the Freedmen’s Bureau began a program to relocate “idle freedmen” from the urban areas back to the farms. The approximate number of relocated freedmen included 6,000 from Memphis and 4,000 from Nashville, with hundreds from Knoxville and Chattanooga.

<b>Approximate Black Population Increases, 1860-1865</b>		
<i><b>City</b></i>	<i><b>1860</b></i>	<i><b>1865</b></i>
Nashville	4,000	12,000
Memphis	4,000	17,000
Knoxville	752	2,609
Chattanooga	457	2,776

Black migration into Tennessee’s towns and cities continued at a steady pace. Although by 1890 most black Tennesseans still lived in the rural areas, the state’s black citizens soon became urbanized because of the Civil War. The sites of former contraband camps became black neighborhoods like Edgehill and Edgefield in Nashville and South Memphis (“Fort Pickering”) in Memphis. In Knoxville and Chattanooga, too, former contraband sites became the foundation of urban black neighborhoods.

Despite the presence of the Freedmen’s Bureau, little economic opportunity developed for rural blacks during and immediately after the war. Almost all 355,731 acres of land confiscated from Tennessee’s Confederates were returned to whites after 1866. Slaves were transformed into landed serfs, working white farms for shares (sharecrops) and wages barely enough for the necessities of human existence. In Giles County, 20,500 blacks engaged in sharecropping in 1866. In Wilson County, the blacks owned less than thirty of the 10,997 acres. In Fayette and Haywood counties in West Tennessee, the white

minority allowed little land to fall into black hands. No more than 400 black Tennessee farmers owned their land by the end of 1866. By 1910, compared to most white Tennessee farmers, only 25.7 percent of Tennessee's black farmers owned their own land.

A positive effect, however, of the Civil War was the Union army's transformation of blacks into Union army soldiers. Tennessee had over 55,000 black males of military age. On September 10, 1863, the Bureau of U. S. Colored Troops (USCT) opened at 38 Cedar Street in Nashville. Soon, recruiting stations existed throughout Tennessee. Among America's 179,000 USCT, some 20,133 were raised in Tennessee. Thousands more of Tennessee's blacks served on Union naval ships on the Cumberland, the Tennessee, and the Mississippi River systems. Black Tennesseans also served as military laborers and spies in white Union regiments, and some 3,737 black men served in Tennessee's "Home Guards" militia units. By comparison, some 31,092 white Tennesseans served in the Union Army of Tennessee, and an estimated 115,000 Tennessee men served in Confederate military units.

#### **Tennessee's USCT Units, 1863-1866**

<b><i>Infantry Regiments</i></b>	<b><i>Heavy Artillery</i></b>	<b><i>Light Artillery</i></b>	<b><i>Cavalry</i></b>
11 <sup>th</sup> , 12 <sup>th</sup> , 13 <sup>th</sup> , 14 <sup>th</sup> ,	1 <sup>st</sup> USCHA	2 <sup>nd</sup> USCLA, Batt A	3 <sup>rd</sup> USCC
15 <sup>th</sup> , 16 <sup>th</sup> , 17 <sup>th</sup> , 18 <sup>th</sup> ,	4 <sup>th</sup> USCHA	2 <sup>nd</sup> USCLA, Batt F	
40 <sup>th</sup> , 42 <sup>nd</sup> , 44 <sup>th</sup> , 55 <sup>th</sup> ,	6 <sup>th</sup> USCHA	2 <sup>nd</sup> USCLA, Batt I	
59 <sup>th</sup> , 61 <sup>st</sup> , 63 <sup>rd</sup> , 68 <sup>th</sup> ,	9 <sup>th</sup> USCHA		
88 <sup>th</sup> , 100 <sup>th</sup> , 110 <sup>th</sup> , and			
111 <sup>th</sup> .			

Free blacks helped with the formation of USCT units. Nelson Walker and other black Nashvillians organized a company of the 17th USCT Infantry Regiment, complete with an outstanding musical band. Samuel Lowery returned from the North and served as army chaplain and teacher for the 2nd U.S. Colored Light Artillery, Battery A, in Nashville. The 3rd USC Cavalry was organized in Memphis but served mostly in Mississippi and Arkansas.

Tennessee's 20,133 USCT served in every major skirmish, battle, engagement, and town within and around Tennessee during 1863-1866. Not only did Tennessee USCT units accompany Union General William T. Sherman to his Chattanooga staging base and then on to the famous and successful "March through Georgia," they also engaged enemy troops at Moscow (December of 1863), Fort Pillow (April of 1864), Brice's Crossroads (June of 1864), Tupelo (July of 1864), and Nashville (December of 1864).

At Fort Pillow in West Tennessee, a black detachment from Memphis' Fort Pickering suffered a massacre at the hands of recalcitrant Confederate troops under General Nathan B. Forrest. General Forrest and some southern historians denied the massacre, but Forrest admitted that he enforced Confederate government policy to give black soldiers "no quarter" and treat all USCT as escaped, traitorous slaves. It was hypocrisy, however, that Confederate soldiers charged former slaves in the Union army with "treason," but denied after the war that service in the Confederate army was an act of treason against the United States of America. After the Fort Pillow massacre, the USCT in Memphis (whom native whites considered to be an arrogant bunch of black men) proudly pranced about town with medal badges that read, *Remember Fort Pillow*.

However, the USCT regiments in Middle Tennessee were the ones who avenged Fort Pillow. The USCT (stationed in Chattanooga) who accompanied General Sherman saw the Confederate Army of Tennessee driven out of Atlanta, Georgia, in September of 1864. The Confederates and their General John Bell Hood headed west for an attack on Nashville, hoping to draw Sherman's 100,000-man army out of Georgia. That was not to be the case. On the bitterly cold days of December 15-19, 1864, about 13,000 USCT and 29,000 white Union troops under General George H. Thomas defeated Hood's Army of Tennessee (approximately 36,000 men) in the decisive Battle of Nashville. Thomas' two USCT brigades suffered 575 dead and hundreds wounded. In one place, at the bottom of icy Overton (Peach Orchard) Hill, the USCT's dead and wounded were piled "five deep."

The Confederates lost their last major army in the Upper South. They suffered some 6,000 casualties and the loss of six generals at the preceding Battle of Franklin (about thirty miles south of Nashville) on November 30, 1864. Then some 10,000 casualties (dead, wounded, and prisoners) were suffered on the Nashville battlefield just two weeks later. Some barefooted and shivering Confederate soldiers were glad to be captured by black soldiers. General Hood headed the remnants of his confused army south across the Tennessee River, then through Alabama into Oxford, Mississippi, where he resigned in humiliation by January 15, 1865.

The commanding Union general at Nashville, George H. Thomas, said: "The blood of white and black [Union] men has flowed freely together for the great [American] cause, which is to give freedom. Colonel Charles H. Thompson of the 12th USCT Regiment and his brigade of Colored Troops exhibited courage and steadiness that challenged the admiration of all who witnessed the charge." The Nashville *True Union* reported, "The hills of Nashville will forever attest to how desperately the despised slave will fight when he strikes for freedom." When the USCT marched from the battlefield, the men sang a moving rendition of John Brown's Body ("Glory, Glory, Hallelujah! His soul is marching on!"), leaving few spectators without tears.

John Brown, a fanatical white abolitionist, and his black and white vigilantes attacked Harper's Ferry, Virginia, on October 16, 1859, and fired the first shots of the coming Civil War in a futile effort to free and arm the local slaves. Brown, his son, and the black and white vigilantes lost their lives either in the battle or by hanging. Brown's memory and heroic efforts were preserved in the melodious songs of black people.

Before the last black regiments were mustered out of service in 1866, about 5,107 USCT casualties were suffered from capture, disease, wounds, and death in Tennessee. The graves of the USCT still can be found in various national cemeteries: Nashville

(1,909); Memphis (4,208--including the "Fort Pillow" section); Chattanooga (103); Knoxville (663); Cumberland River (12); and Stones River (186). After the war, some blacks made annual pilgrimages (even as late as 1979-1995 in Nashville) to the local national cemeteries to honor the black Union soldiers and view their tombstones marked distinctively USCT .

There was a category of "black Confederates." Nearly 2,000 blacks (some voluntarily, but most involuntarily) served the Confederate Army of Tennessee in various capacities, including impressed servants, cooks, laborers, herders, and teamsters. When the Tennessee General Assembly amended the 1906 Confederate Pension Law in 1921 to include former ("loyal") black Confederate workers, there were several black applicants. Recorded in the file of Caesar Hays are his words: "I stayed with my master until we were captured, and that was all I could do." Richard Lester of Wilson County could get no pension because he escaped when his master was captured at Fort Donelson. Monroe Stephenson of Maury County remained with Company B, 9th Tennessee Cavalry, until the last surrender.

The Confederates in Richmond tried to organize black regiments. After receiving written support from General Lee, the Confederate Congress passed a law to organize slave soldiers in March of 1865. On the same day that President Lincoln made an impressive review of 25,000 black Union army soldiers on the James River, the Confederates precipitously paraded a slave regiment in Richmond, where they hoped that "our loyal slaves" would fight as effectively for the Rebels as the USCT then performed for the Yankees. But it was too late for a dying and desperate Confederacy.

Blacks were of no real use to the Confederate war effort. There were too many barriers for the Confederates to overcome: their deep racial hatred for blacks; the slaveowners' opposition to the military use of valuable slaves; and the blacks' loyalty to the Union. All these factors negated any real gains the Confederates could realize through forced black participation in a white southern rebellion. In his book, *Southern Negroes, 1861-1865* (1938), southern historian Bell I. Wiley wrote, "It hardly seems likely that slaves who greeted the Yankees and grasped freedom with such alacrity under ordinary circumstances would by the donning of Confederate uniforms have been transformed into loyal and enthusiastic fighters for the establishment of the institution of slavery" (p. 162.) The slavocracy moaned that the "slaves trusted most" were often the first to flee to the Yankee side.

After four years of running around in circles, mostly in his home state, General Lee suffered the humiliation of surrendering the major Confederate army in Virginia on April 9, 1865. To make Confederate humiliation worse, President Lincoln and General Grant gave the USCT regiments the honor of being the first Union troops to occupy Richmond, the Confederate capital. Warned in advance by Lee, President Jefferson Davis and his officers commenced their desperate escape toward Mexico. Near Memphis, the 3rd USC Cavalry boarded Union gunboats and sped south on the Mississippi River to cut off Davis' escape. A jury of black and white men was set to try Davis for treason, but he later was released. After the Civil War, a white commander of the 14th USCT (which served in Gallatin, Chattanooga, and Pulaski, Tennessee), Colonel Thomas Jefferson Morgan, said:

If the records of their [USCT] achievements could be put into such shape that they could be accessible to the thousands of colored youth in the South, they would kindle in their voting minds an enthusiastic devotion to liberty and manhood.

The black soldiers were not mean toward Confederate sympathizers, and black leaders sought no revenge against the slavocracy. When the USCT arrived in Richmond, the soldiers faithfully guarded the house of Davis' ailing wife, who had been left behind. Over in Tennessee, to mark the end of the Civil War, the Reverend Nelson Merry and other black Nashvillians held a mass meeting in the First Colored Baptist Church to pray for peace and to "forgive and forget the past." Throughout Tennessee, blacks prayed for peace, cheered for the Union victory, and took no revenge against their former masters. As late as July 5, 1875, black preacher Hezekiah Henley held a racial unity celebration in Memphis and invited some former Confederate generals, including the notorious Nathan B. Forrest. General Forrest, "the devil himself," said that he had been maligned and misunderstood by black people: "I assure you that every man who was in the Confederate army is your friend; and why should we not be brothers and sisters?" Forrest's words were ones of heartless and hollow utterances.

The period of Reconstruction became the most arduous one in the African-American history of postbellum Tennessee. Reconstruction in Tennessee began in March of 1862 when Tennessee's loyal U. S. Senator, Andrew Johnson of East Tennessee, was appointed military governor and arrived in Nashville to assume control of the government. A black leader, Elias Polk--a former servant to President James K. Polk--was among the local Unionist delegation which traveled to Murfreesboro to meet Johnson's train as it approached Nashville. When he spoke at the dedication of the Northwestern Military Railroad at Johnsonville on the Tennessee River in March of 1864, Governor Johnson urged Unionists to "go to the ballot box" and vote slavery dead in Tennessee. In the fall of 1864, black leaders organized a torchlight parade to honor Governor Johnson and petition for application of the Emancipation Proclamation to Tennessee. Johnson proclaimed himself "your Moses" and declared slavery dead in Tennessee. Blacks not only supported Johnson and Lincoln's policy, they held mock elections in November of 1864 for the reelection of Lincoln, with Johnson as vice presidential candidate.

On January 2, 1865, nationally known black leader John Mercer Langston gave the address for Nashville's Second Annual Emancipation Day Celebration program. Three days earlier, Langston had visited thousands of triumphant USCT regiments that had returned to the city after pursuing the remnants of the Confederate army into Alabama after the Battle of Nashville. Later in January of 1865, the Tennessee General Assembly amended the state's constitution to prohibit slavery; voters ratified the amendment in February. In March, black Tennesseans held parades to celebrate the official end of slavery, and on April 5, 1865, the General Assembly ratified the Thirteenth Amendment to the U. S. Constitution. The amendment abolished slavery throughout the country by December 13, 1865.

To effectively organize themselves to participate in the Reconstruction of Tennessee, on May 27, 1865, black leaders issued the call for their first State Colored Men's Convention. They met for several days in the early fall at Nashville's Saint John's African

Methodist Episcopal Church. Some black leaders from Nashville and Memphis had been delegates to the National Colored Men's Convention in Syracuse, New York, during the summer of 1864, where they learned to articulate black issues and organize the freedmen. According to Scott's Nashville-based *The Colored Tennessean* of August 12, 1865, the first Tennessee State Colored Men's Convention called for final ratification of "the 13th National Amendment, as well as citizenship and black suffrage." A militant delegate, Sergeant Henry J. Maxwell (representing the Memphis 3rd LT. S. Colored Heavy Artillery, Company B), said:

We shall be heard before the Congress and before the legislature. For rights we labor; for them we will die. We have gained one – the [Union army] uniform is its badge. We want two more boxes besides the cartridge box – the ballot and the jury box. We shall gain them.

In vain the black leaders petitioned the all-white Tennessee General Assembly, but conservative whites controlled the legislature, even though most of them were Republicans. Nightriders terrorized loyal East Tennessee and rural black communities throughout the state. White terror and anarchy caused General George H. Thomas to bring more Union soldiers into Tennessee. The legislature passed an "act to define the term 'person of color,'" but not to give blacks full citizenship rights. Black leaders successfully petitioned the Congress to deny Tennessee's return to the Union.

On May 26, 1866, the General Assembly did give persons of color the rights to make contracts, sue, inherit property, and have equal benefits with the whites under the laws and for protection of life and property. But this measure was passed only after the Memphis race riot of May 6, 1866, left forty-eight blacks and two whites dead. Congress passed the Civil Rights Bill of 1866 and overrode President Andrew Johnson's veto on July 16, granting citizenship to the blacks. About the same time that Congress acted, the Tennessee General Assembly ratified the Fourteenth Amendment to the U. S. Constitution, which eventually (1868) provided constitutional guarantees for (1) full citizenship; (2) equal protection under the laws; and (3) due process for former slaves. As a result of state ratification, Tennessee was readmitted on July 24, 1866, into the united American states.

Yet, blacks still could not vote. On June 13, 1866, black leaders issued the call for the second Tennessee State Colored Men's Convention, to meet on August 6, 1866, in Nashville's Saint John's African Methodist Episcopal Church. Delegates arrived from Bedford, Blount, Davidson, Dekalb, Giles, Hamilton, Knox, Marshall, McMinn, Montgomery, Robertson, Rutherford, Shelby, Sumner, Williamson, and Wilson counties. Among the black leaders were Sampson W. Keeble, Daniel Wadkins, Nelson G. Merry, Nelson Walker, Nelson McGavock, Berber Alexander, George King, Edward Merriweather, Adolphus Smith, Alfred E. Anderson, Samuel and Peter Lowery, William Sumner, Benjamin Holmes, Charles Mullins, and E. D. Livingston. These black men were mostly educated, articulate, and brave in their campaign to assure voting rights for black Tennesseans.

In pursuit of black suffrage, the State Colored Men's Convention delegates organized a Tennessee chapter of the National Equal Rights League. Then Tennessee's black leaders

organized crowds to demonstrate daily at the General Assembly's chambers "until a black suffrage bill is passed." The *Knoxville Whig* of February 6, 1867, reported that so many blacks sat in the legislature's gallery, that it looked like "The gathering clouds of dusky humanity..." On February 25, 1867, the Tennessee legislature granted blacks the right to vote (and hold office), and the governor signed the bill the following day. In March of 1867, the blacks held their first political meetings to organize the black vote. Black Nashvillians first voted in the city's election of September 1867, and elected two black councilmen, of whom one--Daniel Wadkins--was not seated. For reasons unknown, a white man was appointed to fill Wadkins' seat. Black Tennesseans voted in their first presidential election (since 1832) during the November 1868 election and cast almost all their votes for General Ulysses S. Grant for President of the United States.

As a result of their newfound political power, black Tennesseans gained several public offices and enjoyed a marriage with the Republican party for more than three generations after Emancipation. In September of 1868, Nashville elected five blacks to the city council. Through the 1880s, blacks not only occupied city council seats in Nashville and other towns, but held city and county positions, including magistrate and justice of the peace. Due to the political skills of black leader Edward Shaw, Memphis had as many as six black councilmen during the 1870s. Edward Shaw obtained the lucrative job of wharfmaster. In 1876, Knoxville's William F. Yardley became the first black man to campaign for governor of Tennessee.

The rising political power of the blacks and the Republicans caused a violent reaction from native whites, who believed that the Radical Republicans were taking racial equality too far. The Ku Klux Klan, a white supremacy organization headed by former Confederate General Nathan B. Forrest, began a campaign of terrorism in 1866. The KKK murdered white Unionists, lynched outspoken black leaders, and burned many freedmen's schoolhouses and churches. Despite the terrorism, black voters continued to turn out in huge numbers all over the state, and federal troops and state militiamen launched effective police action against organized white violence. Finally, in 1869, Forrest personally dissolved the Klan after a highly publicized "KKK Convention" in Nashville. However, white supremacists, Democrats, and Conservatives soon returned to political power.

As early as the September 1869 elections, the triad of white supremacists, Democrats, and Conservatives regained power in Nashville. The black voters divided themselves into three political factions: (1) Elias Polk and former-slave house servants, who supported the native elite white Democrats (Conservatives); (2) Randal Brown and black street-crew bosses and others, who supported the Radical Republicans (carpetbaggers) in Davidson County; and (3) Nelson Walker, Henry Harding, and other elite black entrepreneurs, who backed the native (moderate) Republicans. In 1870, the Democrat and Conservatives won the state elections because of more divisions in Tennessee, Republican party and because white Conservatives controlled the county registrar positions. From Memphis to Knoxville, the Conservatives employed white hoodlums and tactics of intimidation and violence against the freedmen at the polls to "redeem" state government. Several former Confederates also won public office; even former Confederate Governor Isham G. Harris eventually won election as a U. S. senator from Tennessee. The new Tennessee General Assembly quickly repealed the State Militia Act and the anti-terrorist acts, thereby



removing obstacles to the white Radicals' violent anti-black attacks and lynching activities.

Still, by the mid-1880s some thirteen blacks won election to the Tennessee General Assembly. Nine of these men came from five heavily black counties in West Tennessee. In East Tennessee, Hamilton County sent two blacks to the legislature, although that county's black population was only thirty percent of the total citizenry. Among the early black legislators were Sampson W. Keeble and Thomas A. Sykes of Davidson County; Thomas F. Cassels, Isham F. Norris, Leonard Howard, Greene E. Evans, and William A. Fields of Shelby County; John W. Boyd of Tipton County; Samuel A. McElwee of Haywood County; David F. Rivers and Monroe W. Gooden of Fayette County; and William C. Hodge and Styles L. Hutchins of Hamilton County. Another black man, J. M. H. Graham of Clarksville, was elected to the House of Representatives in 1896, but the white members refused to seat him. Six decades would pass before any other blacks were elected to the Tennessee General Assembly.

Once they regained control of the state, the white Conservatives imposed poll taxes and other electoral laws that gradually disenfranchised most black voters in Tennessee; the disenfranchisement of black Tennesseans was nearly complete in the rural areas by the early 1900s. Even the Tennessee Republican party began a "lily-white" movement (as black leaders called it) to exclude blacks and attract more whites to the party. Black leaders resisted the "lily-white" movement and continued to support "good Republicans" on the state and national levels, but they voted for fusionist and moderate Democratic candidates on the city and county levels. A few blacks continued to run for public office, and some of them were elected to minor offices. A black attorney, Solomon Parker Harris, won a Nashville city council seat in 1911--the first since 1885.

After the Civil War, blacks feverishly engaged in efforts to build a black political economy. Black Nashville had its first black-owned drug store by 1886, as well as six blocks of black businesses housed on the town's Cedar Street by the 1950s. Between 1865 and 1874, four Freedman's Savings and Trust Company Bank branches operated in the state in Chattanooga, Columbia, Memphis, and Nashville. The Freedman's Bank at Nashville was the largest and most prosperous one in Tennessee, and in 1872 it built its own building, Liberty Hall, at 44 Cedar Street. The economic depressions of the 1870s and fraud by white managers of the main branch in Washington, D. C., caused all Freedman's banks to collapse in March of 1874. Between 1870 and 1884, blacks like William Sumner and Henry Harding operated their own hotels in downtown Nashville. In South Memphis ("Fort Pickering"), too, black businesses dotted the black neighborhoods.

Despite hard-won advancement after the Civil War, thousands of blacks joined the Black Exodus out of Tennessee because of poor economic conditions and campaigns of terrorism by radical whites. Only seventy-nine percent of the blacks remained in Tennessee after the war, compared to ninety-five percent in Arkansas and eighty-eight percent in Texas. After 1890, black migration (caused by economic, political, and racial oppression) was directed toward the industrial towns of the North. Tennessee's black population declined from twenty-six percent to only sixteen percent by 1995.

Because of economic oppression and the white Conservatives' rapid return to political power, by 1869 some of Nashville's black leaders encouraged the former slaves to join the

Black Exodus to Kansas and western homestead lands. Black Nashvillians held a meeting on September 11, 1869, where black city councilman Randal Brown urged black people: “let us go where we can grow lawyers, doctors, teachers, and other things; where we can be as good as anyone in society.” Brown and four other black councilmen had just suffered defeat by the white Conservatives in the September elections. But some black leaders, notably the conservative Reverend Daniel Wadkins, feared a black exodus from Tennessee “when the [white] people are trying to procure [Chinese] laborers....” to replace black workers.

Benjamin “Pap” Singleton, a fifty-two-year-old mulatto and former Davidson County slave, forged ahead with plans to take black settlers to the West (i.e., Kansas). Singleton noted that even though blacks comprised one-third of Middle Tennessee’s population, only six percent of black families owned any land by 1870. Although by 1886 black Tennesseans owned taxable property worth \$211,768,438, as late as 1910 only twenty-five percent of black farmers owned their lands. In West Tennessee, where blacks comprised nearly forty percent of the population, they were mostly sharecroppers and laborers.

Around 1870, Singleton joined forces with the Reverend Columbus M. Johnson of Sumner County and Abram Smith of Nashville to form the Edgefield Real Estate and Homestead Association. Johnson, Smith, and Singleton had been skilled slave artisans. They sent a committee to study settlement in Kansas in 1872 and petitioned the 1873 Tennessee State Colored Men’s Convention for support. The 1875 Tennessee State Colored Men’s Convention discussed the issue of black migration to the West and formed the Colored Emigration Society of Tennessee. The convention’s delegates blamed the freedmen’s misfortunes on the “white people of Tennessee...[where]..the color line is so closely drawn as...to prevent us from sitting on juries...”

By holding dances, parties, and fairs, Singleton and the Association raised money to help transport thousands of blacks to Kansas. Singleton personally directed nearly 8,000 blacks via steamboat and train to Kansas. By June of 1879, he had founded the Dunlap colony in Morris County, Kansas. Although the exodus stopped around 1881, from Nashville alone the out-migration of blacks during the Black Exodus period numbered 2,407 persons. In addition, thousands of blacks migrated from West Tennessee into Arkansas to seek homestead lands and higher farm wages. The Black Exodus from Tennessee was but one strategy by blacks to achieve equality and economic rights. Most black Tennesseans chose to stay and fight racism at home, as Frederick Douglass so eloquently advised them when he spoke in Nashville in September of 1873.

Between 1881 and 1921, black Tennesseans led their second civil rights movement--one that sought equal rights under the new Jim Crow (so named for an early nineteenth-century minstrel show character) system. As if to provoke the blacks toward this second movement, in 1881 Tennessee passed the nation's first Jim Crow (racial segregation) law. The law segregated railroad trains and caused black Nashvillians to lead their first freedom-ride demonstration by buying first-class tickets and attempting to board the cars. Jim Crow legislation flowed from the southern legislatures until the crescendo reached a climax in the 1890s. The U. S. Supreme Court sanctioned the Jim Crow system in 1896, when it ruled in the case of *Plessy v. Ferguson* that “separate but equal” public facilities did not violate black citizens’ rights under the Fourteenth Amendment. By 1900, most black Tennesseans tolerated the southern Jim Crow system. Many elite black leaders

embraced Booker T. Washington's philosophy, which compromised and accommodated the whites' racial feelings in exchange for separate black schools, institutions, and economic concessions.

However, some black leaders continued to protest against Jim Crow's unfair practices. The leaders of this civil rights movement were elite blacks, who ironically supported Booker T. Washington's accommodationist philosophy yet opposed Jim Crow laws which denied equal (first-class) accommodations to upper-class blacks. The whites, however, did not recognize classes among Negroes, although some blacks were educated and wealthy. When the General Assembly passed a Jim Crow streetcar law in March of 1905, elite blacks launched public protests and even operated the Union Transportation Company in Nashville (1905-1907) and a streetcar company in Chattanooga, rather than ride in segregated cars. The early streetcar boycotts died because the elite blacks could not evoke the participation of the black masses, as grassroots civil rights leaders later would do successfully during the third civil rights movement in the post-World War II era. Still, the second civil rights movement continued with intensity through the 1920s.

By 1911, a branch of the National Urban League was operating in Tennessee, in an effort to improve the social conditions of urban blacks. Soon there were active branches of the Colored Young Men's Christian Association in some Tennessee cities. In the North in 1910, former Tennesseans Mary Church Terrell and Ida B. Wells-Barnett were founding members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). In 1918, Robert Church, Jr., and other blacks formed the Memphis chapter of the NAACP; a Nashville chapter followed in January of 1919; and soon Nashville's James C. Napier led a large public march to present the governor with a petition against racial lynchings. William J. Hale, head of the Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State Normal School for Negroes, and other black leaders helped moderate whites form the Commission on Interracial Cooperation. By 1921, Chattanooga had a branch of Marcus Garvey's more militant Universal Negro Improvement Association.

Racial oppression, however, continued in Tennessee, and more Jim Crow legislation flowed from the Tennessee General Assembly after 1921: the elite whites approved it, and the middle- and professional-class whites passed the laws to enforce it. It was the radical whites who used violence to keep blacks behind the Jim Crow line. The elite whites enjoyed a return to power and a sense of royalty. Then, just as in the days of slavery, neither the poor and middle-class whites nor the blacks (even the elite ones) could threaten elite white society.

Between 1890 and 1950, racial lynchings plagued Tennessee. Approximately 235 black Americans lost their lives to lynch mobs in 1892, and 204 blacks suffered lynchings in Tennessee between 1890 and 1950. Frederick Douglass came to Nashville on May 20, 1892, to speak at First Colored Baptist Church just after the brutal lynching of a black in Goodlettsville and another one on Nashville's Woodland Street Bridge. A Memphis black schoolteacher, Ida B. Wells, wrote a stinging article in her newspaper, the *Memphis Free Speech* against a recent lynching. The result was that the whites burned the newspaper office in March of 1892 and forced Wells to flee to the North to live in exile. Wells and Douglass became America's most able speakers and international crusaders against lynching.

Thousands of black Tennesseans began the Black Northern Migration around 1890, when they headed to industrial centers like Indianapolis, Chicago, Cincinnati, Milwaukee, Cleveland, and Detroit. Because of the Black Northern Migration and the immigration of whites to Nashville, the city's black population decreased from forty percent in 1890 to only twenty-two percent by the 1970s. In Memphis, the blacks lost their majority and did not regain it until the 1980s. Just as early twentieth-century black Southerners fled to the North to seek justice and jobs, some four million poor white southerners joined them in the North. Then race riots soon became modern phenomena in northern cities. From 1870 to 1930, Tennessee's black population declined from 25.6 percent to 18.3 percent.

Despite the out-migration of many capable and ambitious blacks from Tennessee, the state's black communities continued to make social and cultural progress. Most large black communities had newspapers, including Nashville's *Colored Tennessean* (1865-66), *Tennessee Star* (1880s), and *Globe* (1905-60); Memphis' *Free Speech* (1880s-92), *Moon Illustrated Weekly* (1905), and Ed Shaw's *The Memphis Planet*; and Chattanooga's *Blade* (early 1900s) and the *Observer*. In Nashville, there were three large black religious publishing houses: AME Sunday School Union (1882- ), National Baptist Publishing Board (1896- ), and Sunday School Publishing Board of the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Incorporated (1915- ).

In addition to being the founder of the NBPB, the Reverend Richard H. Boyd helped other black leaders push a progressive business movement in Tennessee, urging blacks to "buy black," to vote for "good Republicans," to start businesses, and to purchase homes. Several chapters of Booker T. Washington's Negro Business League operated in Tennessee after 1902, and Nashville's J. C. Napier became president of the National Negro Business League. By 1910, there were black owned-and-operated banks, insurance branches, real estate agencies, and recreational parks in Tennessee. Memphis' Bert Roddy organized the Negro Southern Baseball League. Robert R. Church, Sr., built a recreational park for blacks on Beale Street in 1899. By 1905, Nashville's Preston Taylor had opened his huge Greenwood Park on Lebanon Road. In July of 1912, Nashville opened the nation's first public park for blacks (Hadley Park) and a Negro Carnegie Library.

Black Tennesseans also enjoyed a cultural renaissance. Between 1898 and 1915, several black printing companies published many books and treatises to advance the black man's cause. The Baptist minister Sutton E. Griggs wrote and published thirty-three books while living in Nashville and later Memphis. In 1915, black companies in Tennessee had published dozens of books, and Fisk University started its own University press. (This renaissance spirit was revived in 1976, with publication of Alex Haley's highly popular, Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *Roots*.)

Postbellum Tennessee had several major black colleges: Roger Williams University--formerly Nashville Normal and Theological Institute (1866-1929); Fisk University (1866- ); Walden University--formerly Central Tennessee College (1868-1922); Tennessee Manual Labor University (1868-1874); LeMoyne College--now LeMoyne-Owen College (1869- ); Knoxville College (1876-); Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State College--now Tennessee State University (1912- ); Meharry Medical College--formerly part of Walden University (1915- ); National Baptist Training School and Theological Seminary (1918-1934); and American Baptist Theological Seminary--now American Baptist College (1924- ).

In 1920, Tennessee took center stage in the women's suffrage movement, as women across the nation sought the thirty-sixth state needed to ratify the Nineteenth Amendment to the U. S. Constitution, granting women the right of "full franchise." In Nashville, black women such as J. Frankie Pierce and Mattie E. Coleman formed coalitions with white women to secure female suffrage. Dr. Coleman, a Meharry Medical School graduate and community leader during World War I, was the impetus behind the September 3, 1918, formation of the Women's Missionary Council of the Christian Episcopal Church. Coleman became the new organization's first president. Frankie Pierce was among Nashville's first black public school teachers in the 1880s, founder of the City Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, and a founder of the Tennessee Federation of Colored Women's Clubs. On May 18, 1920, Pierce addressed the first meeting of the Tennessee League of Women Voters in the chambers of the Tennessee House of Representatives, saying:

Yes, we will stand by the white woman....We are interested in the same moral uplift of the community in which we live as you are. We are asking only one thing -- a square deal. It remained for the [First World] war to show what the [N]egroes could do. We bought bonds, we gave money, we made comfort kits, we prayed....We want recognition in all forms of this government....We want a state vocational school and a child welfare department of the state, and more room in state schools.

After Tennessee ratified the Nineteenth Amendment on August 18, 1920, and removed the immediate poll tax for female voters, black women voted in their first election in Nashville during the fall of 1920. According to newspaper accounts, black women voters tuned out in greater numbers than did black male voters. Among the black female leaders who cheered the result was Nettie Langston Napier, who had worked the Republican polls on the black side of town (as many black women did, with badges pinned to their dresses) since the 1870s. Like the male members of their families, the black suffragists remained Republicans, but they voted Democratic on the local level. As a result of women's new political influence and Frankie Pierce's tireless efforts, the General Assembly passed a bill creating the Tennessee Vocational School for Colored Girls (to be located on Nashville's Heiman Street) on April 7, 1921.

Economic depression plus white racism (Jim Crowism) left most black Tennesseans and their offspring unable to compete in a post-World War I society dominated by white Conservatives. Memphis' one black bank collapsed in 1927. Nashville's Peoples Savings and Trust Company Bank closed in 1930; the city's Citizens Bank was bailed out of financial trouble by the New Deal's Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. Black barber shops, beauty shops, and funeral homes seemed immune to the economic depression. Certainly, black death rates (i.e., infant mortality) far exceeded white death rates, and black prison and jail rates, as well as health statistics, were shameful in Tennessee. After slavery (1866), blacks had lower arrest and jail rates than whites, but by the 1880s black arrests and imprisonment exceeded those for white Tennesseans, partly due to racially unfair police and court systems.

Indeed, a combination of economic and social Jim Crowism, plus political impotency, left black Tennesseans too weak to be competitive with whites in the twentieth century. Only twenty-five percent of black Tennesseans were skilled or professional workers by 1930, and during the 1930s only, some 900 black Tennesseans were graduated annually from high school. Although Memphis had twenty-three teachers and five black schools in 1885, there was no black high school until the 1920s. Nashville's blacks gained a high school (Meigs) by the late 1880s, but only after public protest. Many Tennessee counties had no public schools for blacks beyond the middle grades until the Julius Rosenwald Fund provided money to build them. In a city as progressive as Nashville, the all-white school board allocated only seven dollars per black pupil, compared to more than thirteen dollars for the education of each white student.

As early as 1940, half of black Tennesseans performed domestic and menial service jobs. Rural blacks mostly sharecropped or picked cotton for two to three dollars per hundred, earning less than four hundred dollars per year as late as the 1950s. In Memphis until the 1950s, crowds of blacks stood on street corners before daybreak, waiting for buses to transport them to cotton fields in rural West Tennessee, northern Mississippi, and eastern Arkansas to earn two to three dollars a day picking cotton. Entire urban black families made their seasonal earnings this way. Therefore, after successful military service in World War II (repetitive of military achievements during World War I), black Tennesseans began a third phase of their civil rights movement.

Black Tennesseans first launched an attack on educational Jim Crow during the 1940s. They used the federal courts to sue for desegregation of the graduate school at the University of Tennessee, equal pay for black and white public school teachers, and equal curricula in black schools. Blacks in Clinton successfully filed a federal court suit to desegregate the town's schools in 1951, causing white Radicals to bomb the school in 1958. After the U. S. Supreme Court ruled in the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* case that separate but equal was unconstitutional, Nashville's A. Z. Kelley (a barber and parent) and black attorneys Z. A. Looby and Avon N. Williams, Jr. successfully sued the Nashville Board of Education after black children were denied admission to a white public school in the fall of 1955. This success also caused white Radicals to bomb an integrated school. In Memphis ("the capital of Mississippi," as militant young blacks often expressed their cynicism), the public schools did not desegregate until 1961, although Memphis State University began "gradual desegregation" during the 1955-1959 era. Rather than attend public schools with black people, white Memphians (many of whom, indeed, had their roots in Mississippi) created one of America's largest private school systems, leaving Memphis' public schools almost all black by 1995.

Black Tennesseans also took aim at social Jim Crow. In 1959, the Reverend Kelly Miller Smith (pastor of Nashville's historic First Colored Baptist Church), the Reverend James Lawson (divinity student), and local college students began training for sit-in demonstrations. They intended to bring civil disobedience to bear as a weapon to dismantle Jim Crow in public places. Smith, a friend of the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., believed in the social activism of the black church. Beginning in February of 1960, the students and the Nashville Southern Christian Leadership Conference continued months of public demonstrations until Mayor Ben West and the city's leaders voluntarily desegregated downtown public facilities, making Nashville the first southern city to voluntarily end segregation.

The attack on political Jim Crowism was in progress by 1948. Nashville blacks formed the “Solid Block” and published the *Solid Block* newspaper in 1949, in an effort to force the General Assembly to repeal the poll tax. After extensive debate and having received many petitions, the legislature repealed the tax, and as a result, in 1950, two black men (Robert L. Lillard and Z. Alexander Looby) were elected to Nashville’s city council. In rural Fayette County during 1959-1965, John and Viola McFerrin led blacks in revolt against the Jim Crow voting system, causing whites to evict thousands of black sharecroppers from their homes. In 1965, the rural blacks regained the right to register, vote, and hold local public offices. In Memphis, black leaders Russell Sugarmon, Benjamin Hooks, A. W. Willis, Jr., and others led a renewal of black politics under a new banner: the Democratic party. Although they lost their first elections, the experience left the black leaders with political acumen and organizations that eventually would gain black political power. In 1965, Memphis sent a black man, Archie W. Willis, Jr., to the state House of Representatives—he was the first black elected to the General Assembly since Fayette County Democrat Monroe Gooden (1887-89). Between 1966 and 1971, the General Assembly included ten other blacks: Senator J. O. Patterson and representatives Dorothy Brown, Russell B. Sugarmon, Jr., M. G. Blakemore, Harold Love, Alvin King, Avon N. Williams, Jr., Ira Murphy, Robert Booker, and James I. Taylor. Representative Love served faithfully for more than a quarter of a century. The black civil rights movement (which included demands for economic justice) continued to sweep across Tennessee, ostensibly to culminate in 1968 with the murder of national civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr., during the black sanitation workers’ strike in Memphis. In 1969-70, however, black Memphians led their successful “Black Mondays” to boycott the public schools and force the city to change its at-large school board seats to districts, so that blacks also could serve on that governing body.

Yet Tennessee remained a state where descendants of Confederates and slaveholders and their supporters waved the bloody flag of Civil War. For example, over the objections of black citizens led by Leo Lillard and others, conservative whites and neo-Confederates placed a bust of the former head of the Ku Klux Klan, Nathan B. Forrest, in the Capitol rotunda. They also supported monuments and state pensions for participants in the “Lost Cause,” daring others to speak against such historical foolishness. Because of their political allies in the General Assembly, their operative heritage organizations, and their aggressive intimidation of “pro-Union” writers and speakers, the neo-Confederates of Tennessee managed to postpone the placement of a statue of President Andrew Johnson until one was erected at last on the State Capitol grounds on October 18, 1995. Ironically (for the sake of accurate history), a Republican governor presided over the ceremonies. The correct revision of Tennessee’s history remains underway.

Through the 1970s, black Tennesseans continued to redeem their rights and bring equity and justice into an unfair Tennessee society, where citizens of color were assigned positions on the bottom. After the federal court ordered the reapportionment of Tennessee’s political districts, Memphis’ Harold Ford, former state representative and graduate of Tennessee State University, became in 1974 the first black to represent Tennessee in the U. S. Congress, where he has served twenty years. To advance desegregation efforts, Tennessee State University (formerly Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial) and the University of Tennessee’s Nashville branch campus were merged in July of 1979 under the name Tennessee State University. Ten years of court cases (*Geier*



*v. Tennessee*) by a group of black and white plaintiffs and attorney Avon N. Williams, Jr., had resulted in this historic pairing. An ironical outcome of the *Geier v. Tennessee* case was that in the 1980s and 1990s it initiated a movement by middle-class whites and white Conservatives to dismantle “racially identifiable” public colleges (i.e., Tennessee State University) and oppose “special privileges” (affirmative action programs) for any racial group.

All the aforementioned changes helped transform Tennessee’s black communities for better and worse by 1995. African Americans earned less than half the average income for local white families in 1960. White businessmen and governmental officials continued to shut African Americans out of the state’s economic prosperity, except as cheap laborers. In 1967, only one hundred and sixty-eight blacks were employed by the Tennessee Valley Authority in the Knoxville area, whereas poor and less-educated whites received TVA employment in greater numbers. By 1970, some thirty-eight percent of Tennessee black families lived below the poverty level. The percentage of black high-school graduates ranged from fifty-four percent in Davidson County (a percentage higher than that for whites in many Tennessee counties) to only 16.6 percent in Cheatham County by 1980. By 1986, however, approximately 27,514 blacks attended the state’s colleges and universities.

Through the mid-1990s, black Tennesseans continued to make slow progress. In the *State of the Black Economy*, a report to the Twenty-first Annual Legislative Retreat (November 16-19, 1995), it was shown that Tennessee’s black population increased by 1990 to sixteen percent (778,000), with forty-six percent of the total (360,000) living in Shelby County and the next largest percentage (119,000) residing in Davidson County. (pp. 1-7). Fayette County (44.19%) and Haywood County (49.65%) also had large black population percentages. In 1995, blacks comprised over fifteen percent of the students in Tennessee’s colleges and universities. Yet only fifty-nine percent of blacks twenty-five and older were high-school graduates and some ten percent had completed college, compared to sixty-eight percent and seventeen percent, respectively, for white Tennesseans. In further comparison, some sixty-three percent of America’s black adults completed high school, and eleven percent were college graduates by 1990. As in the nineteenth century, over half of black Tennesseans remained in lower-skilled jobs, and black households earned only sixty-three percent of the income earned by white Tennessee households by 1989 (some 32.4% of blacks and only 12.5% of whites in Tennessee lived in poverty by 1989).

In the 1990s, however, black Tennesseans moved toward the twenty-first century without hesitation. A black man, W. W. Herenton, became mayor of Memphis, Tennessee’s largest city. Other blacks held the mayor’s job in other towns, including Jonesborough in East Tennessee. A black man, James Walker, became president of the white Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro, and several of Tennessee’s state commissioners were black men and women. Otis Floyd, former president of Tennessee State University, became chancellor of the Tennessee Board of Regents. Across the state, black men and women engaged more than 10,000 small and large businesses in the fields of technology, manufacturing, communications, health care, finance, and other services and products. By 1993, black businesspeople annually added about \$6,000,000,000 to Tennessee’s economy.

To sustain this progress and overcome persistent obstacles, an active and influential caucus of black state legislators provided leadership in identifying problems and solutions for gaining economic equality for Tennessee's black citizens. At the Annual Black Caucus Retreat each November, citizens from across Tennessee met to discuss problems and develop legislation and solutions. The meetings' serious tone was reminiscent of the old State Colored Men's Conventions of 1865-1885: perhaps African-American history had come full circle in Tennessee.

Thus, by 1995 African Americans in Tennessee--whose legacy is a long story of triumph over human slavery, tragedy, Jim Crow, and racism--stand poised on the threshold of the twenty-first century to continue to make significant contributions to Tennessee history.

*Bobby L. Lovett, 1995*

## Nashville Conference on African American History and Culture Profiles

<b>Topic/Name:</b>	<b>Year:</b>	<b>Author:</b>
Richard Henry Boyd	1983	Lois McDougald
Nelson G. Merry	1983	Linda T. Wynn
James C. Napier	1983	Herbert Clark
Preston Taylor	1983	Joe E. McClure
Fisk University	1984	Reavis Mitchell and Haywood Farrar
John Wesley Frierson	1984	Reavis Mitchell
Sutton E. Griggs	1984	Helen R. Houston
Z. Alexander Looby	1984	Linda T. Wynn
Samuel Lowery	1984	David Mills and Bobby Lovett
Roger Williams University	1984	Bobby Lovett
Tennessee State University	1984	Lois McDougald and Bobby Lovett
Arthur Melvin Townsend	1984	Linda T. Wynn
Citizens Savings Bank and Trust Company	1985	Linda T. Wynn
First Colored Baptist Church	1985	Linda T. Wynn
McKissack and McKissack Architects	1985	Linda T. Wynn
Meharry Medical College	1985	Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr.
J. Frankie Pierce and the Tennessee Vocational School for Colored Girls	1985	Virginia Edmondson
Robert Fulton Boyd	1985	Linda T. Wynn
Walden University	1985	Bobby Lovett
Avon Nyanza Williams, Jr.	1985	Linda T. Wynn
William Edmonson	1986	Linda T. Wynn
National Baptist Publishing Board	1986	Linda T. Wynn
Kelly Miller Smith, Sr.	1986	Linda T. Wynn
Union Transportation Company	1986	Linda T. Wynn
Henry Allen Boyd	1987	Bobby Lovett
Capers Memorial CME Church	1987	Carmelia D. Gregory
William Jasper Hale	1987	Vallie P Pursley
Ella Sheppard Moore	1987	Beth Howse
John W. Work III	1987	Linda T. Wynn
Blue Triangle YWCA	1988	Carrie R. Hull and Linda T. Wynn

First Baptist Church East Nashville	1988	Bobby Lovett
Charles S. Johnson	1988	Reavis Mitchell
ST. John AME Church	1988	Jamye C. Williams
Willa Ann Hadley Townsend	1988	Linda T. Wynn
DeFord Bailey	1989	Linda T. Wynn
Meredith William Day	1989	Lois C. McDougald
William Daniel Hawkins	1989	Mary Evans Hawkins Barnes
Carrie John Richardson White	1989	Emma White Bragg
Randall B. Vandavall	1989	Bobby Lovett
Elder Zema W. Hill	1990	Reavis Mitchell
Fisk Jubilee Singers	1990	Kay Beasley
Sampson W. Keeble	1990	Linda T. Wynn
Benjamin "Pap" Singleton	1990	Bobby Lovett
The Stone Sisters	1990	Emma White Bragg
Ernest Raymond Alexander	1991	H. Henryne D. White
Josephine Groves Holloway	1991	Harriette Allen Insignares
Georgia Gordon Taylor	1991	Emma White Bragg
Susanna McGavock Carter	1992	Emma White Bragg
Nashville Sit-Ins	1992	Linda T. Wynn
Mother Mary Magdalena L. Tate	1992	F. Dovie Shuford
Meredith Ferguson	1993	Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr.
Fort Negley	1993	Bobby Lovett
Robert Emmitt Lillard	1993	Linda T. Wynn
Pearl School	1993	Linda T. Wynn
Robert Reed Church, Sr.	1994	Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr.
Coyness L. Ennix, Sr.	1994	Bobby Lovett and Lois McDougald
Hulda Margaret Lyttle-Frazier	1994	Linda T. Wynn
Freedman's Bank	1995	Bobby Lovett
Mount Ararat and Greenwood Cemeteries	1995	Bobby Lovett
Nashville's 1905 Streetcar Boycott	1995	Linda T. Wynn
Blacks in Union Army of Tennessee	1995	Bobby Lovett
Dr. Lemuel Arthur Bowman	1995	Linda T. Wynn

Jubilee Hall Fisk University	1996	Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr.
Knoxville College	1996	Robert J. Booker
LeMoyne-Owen College	1996	Perre M. Magness
Spruce Street Baptist Church	1996	Linda T. Wynn
Wessyngton Plantation	1996	John Baker
A. M. E. Sunday School Union	1996	Jamye C. Williams
American Baptist College	1996	Bobby L. Lovett
Austin High School	1996	Robert J. Booker
James and Ethel Beck	1996	Robert J. Booker
Bethlehem Centers of Nashville	1996	Linda T. Wynn
Arna Bontemps	1996	Linda T. Wynn
Bradley Academy	1996	Willie A. McGowan
Robert T. Burt	1996	Linda T. Wynn
Lucie Campbell-Williams	1996	Linda T. Wynn
Charles W. Cansler	1996	Robert J. Booker
Church Park	1996	Ronald Walter
Robert Reed Church, Jr.	1996	Roberta Church and Ronald Walter
William H. Franklin	1996	Robert J. Booker
Alex Haley	1996	Linda T. Wynn
Green P. Hamilton	1996	Roberta Church and Ronald Walter
William Henry Hastie	1996	Linda T. Wynn
Julia A.B. Hooks	1996	Roberta Church and Ronald Walter
Lane College	1996	Lane College
Crawford B. Lindsay	1996	Bobby L. Lovett and Rachel O. Lindsay
Martin Hotel Site	1996	Ronald E. Brewer
James Mason	1996	Robert J. Booker
Samuel McElwee	1996	Linda T. Wynn
James H. Presnell	1996	Robert J. Booker
Walter C. Robinson	1996	Malcolm J. Walker
William O. Smith	1996	Linda T. Wynn
Sunday School Publishing Board	1996	Linda T. Wynn
Swift Memorial College	1996	Linda T. Wynn
Tent Cities of Fayette & Haywood Counties	1996	Linda T. Wynn
Mary Church Terrell	1996	Roberta Church and Ronald Walter
Ida B. Wells-Barnett	1996	Linda T. Wynn
Emma R. Wheeler	1996	Linda T. Wynn

John Lee "Sonny Boy" Williamson	1996	Linda T. Wynn
Negro Branch of Carnegie Library	1997	Linda T. Wynn
Wilma Rudolph and the TSU Tigerbelles	1997	Bobby L. Lovett
Tennessee Centennial Exposition	1997	Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr.
African-American Builders of Sevier County	1998	Robbie D. Jones
Aaron Douglas	1998	Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr.
Harold M. Love	1998	Pamela Smoot
Theodore "Ted" Rhodes	1998	Linda T. Wynn
Jefferson Street	1999	Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr.
People's Savings Bank and Trust Company	1999	Linda T. Wynn
Luther Plato Carmichael	2000	Linda T. Wynn
Marshall Keeble	2000	Linda T. Wynn
Patti Julia Malone	2000	Mary Glenn Hearne
Tennessee Rural African-American Church Project	2001	Caneta Skelley Hankins
Eva Lowery Bowman	2001	Linda T. Wynn
Vivien T. Thomas	2001	Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr.
Clinton High School Desegregation	2004	Linda T. Wynn
C.E. "Curlie" McGruder	2004	Pamela Lane-Bobo
Southeastern Conference Desegregation	2004	Linda T. Wynn
Economic Withdrawal during the Nashville Sit-Ins	2005	Linda T. Wynn
Frances Euphemia Thompson	2005	Leslie N. Sharp
Gregory D. Ridley, Jr.	2006	Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr.
Nashville Student Activists and the 1961 Freedom Rides	2006	Linda T. Wynn
Pearl High School Basketball	2007	Linda T. Wynn
<i>Kelley v. Board of Education</i>	2008	Linda T. Wynn
Henry Alvin Cameron	2008	Donald L. Johnson
James Raymond Lawson	2008	Crystal deGregory
Fisk's Stieglitz Collection Controversy	2008	Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr.

Cameron School	2009	Donald L. Johnson
100th Anniversary of the NAACP	2009	Linda T. Wynn
Nashville Sit-Ins	2010	Linda T. Wynn *revised from 1992
Walter S. Davis	2010	Crystal deGregory
Carl T. Rowan	2010	Tara Mitchell Mielnik
Stephen J. Wright	2010	Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr.
Mattie E. Coleman	2011	Linda T. Wynn
Nashville's Jefferson Street	2011	Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr. *revised from 1999
Nashville Student Activists and the 1961 Freedom Rides	2011	Linda T. Wynn *revised from 2006
Tennessee State University at the Centennial	2012	Tara Mitchell Mielnik, Lois McDougald, Bobby Lovett
Tennessee State University's Aristocrat of Bands	2012	Linda T. Wynn
Coach Ed Temple and the Tigerbelles	2012	Yildiz Binkley, Reavis Mitchell, and Tara Mitchell Mielnik
Metropolitan Consolidation and Nashville's African-American Community	2013	Carole Bucy
Emancipation Proclamation in Tennessee	2013	Linda T. Wynn
Hiram Van Gordon	2013	Learotha Williams
Aaron Douglas	2013	Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr. *revised from 1998
Beth Madison Howse	2014	Crystal deGregory
James Weldon Johnson	2014	Linda T. Wynn
Thomas Washington Talley	2014	Tara Mitchell Mielnik
Fort Negley	2014	Krista Castillo *revised from 1993
Elbert Williams	2015	Linda T. Wynn
John McCline and Clover Bottom Farm	2015	Steven Rogers
Samuel Yette	2015	Pamela Foster
Wessyngton Plantation	2015	John A. Baker, Jr. *revised from 1996
Juliette Derricotte	2016	Linda T. Wynn
Fisk University Historic District	2016	Tara Mitchell Mielnik

John Hope Franklin	2016	Learotha Williams
Roland Hayes	2016	Pamela Bobo
Matthew W. Kennedy	2016	Gloria Haugabook McKissack
Coach Edward S. Temple (1927-2016)	2017	Fletcher F. Moon
Lillian "Lil" Hardin Armstrong (1898-1971)	2017	K.T. Ewing
Alberta Hunter (1895-1984)	2017	Linda T. Wynn
The First Day of (Desegregated) School in Nashville, Sept. 9, 1957	2017	Tara Mitchell Mielnik
Remembering the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (Jan. 15, 1929-April 4, 1968)	2018	Linda T. Wynn
Edgehill Neighborhood	2018	Joel Dark
George Edmund Haynes (1880-1960)	2018	Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr.
Nettie Langston Napier	2018	Learotha Williams, Jr.
Nashville and Davidson County Public Schools Named for African Americans	2018	Linda T. Wynn
DeFord Bailey (1899-1982)	2019	Linda T. Wynn *revised from 1989
Interstate 40 and the Decimation of Jefferson Street	2019	Linda T. Wynn
Lewis Winter, Nashville Entrepreneur (1839-1911)	2019	Gloria Haugabook McKissack
Zema W. Hill (1891-1970)	2019	Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr. *revised from 1990
Lest We Forget: Remembering African Americans during the 1960s in Nashville	2020	Linda T. Wynn
Josie E. Wells, M.D.	2020	Learotha Williams, Jr.
Lynching in Davidson County, Tennessee: 1892-1924	2020	Gloria McKissack
"When and Where I Enter": the 19th Amendment and African American Women	2020	Linda T. Wynn
J. Robert Bradley	2021	Linda T. Wynn



Charles O. Hadley	2021	Caroline Eller
Rep. John Lewis	2021	Caroline Eller
Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr.	2021	Linda T. Wynn
Jackie Shane	2021	Caroline Eller
Rev. C.T. Vivian	2021	Linda T. Wynn

## 100<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE NAACP

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) celebrates its one-hundredth anniversary in 2009. With mission geared towards "making democracy work," the nation's oldest civil rights organization was founded on February 12, 1909, the centennial year of Abraham Lincoln's birth. The NAACP has been instrumental in improving the civil rights, economical, educational, legal, and political and lives of African Americans for a century. Depending on the judicial system as a means to secure these objectives, NAACP officials focused on eliminating inequalities in public education up to the mid-twentieth century, including but not limited to its most famous *Brown v. Board of Education* case (1954), which most historians agree denoted the first phase of the



modern Civil Rights Movement. Throughout its one hundred years of existence, the NAACP has labored to fulfill its goals of civil and human rights, the right of enfranchisement, and the cessation of segregation and racial violence. From its inception, people and events with a Tennessee connection played an important role in the nation's premier civil rights organization.

Established by an interracial group of black and white activists, the association was organized in response to the August 1908 race

riot in Springfield, the capital of Illinois and the birthplace of Lincoln. An out-growth of the Niagara Movement founded by W. E. B. Du Bois and others, the association's organizers were horror-struck by the violence perpetrated against African Americans. To address these concerns, social worker Mary Ovington White and Oswald Garrison Villard (both descendants of abolitionists) among others issued a call for a meeting to discuss racial injustice. Over sixty people signed "The Call," including seven African Americans. Of that group, Du Bois, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, and Mary Church Terrell, all of whom had Tennessee connections, were signatories.

According to Nina Mjagkij, editor of *Organizing Black America, An Encyclopedia of African American Organizations*, conferees combined the esprit de corps of nineteenth-century abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison with the Niagara Movement strategy of civil rights activists Du Bois and newspaper editor William Monroe Trotter to protest black disfranchisement, social segregation and educational inequities. They sought to advance race relations through agitation, court action, and federal legalization. The like-minded assemblage envisioned a comprehensive association with local chapters throughout the country, including the South, designed to rectify "national wrongs," especially those due

to the intimidating effects of the U.S. Supreme Court's *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) decision that ruled "separate but equal" provisions for black and white Americans were constitutional and served as the foundation for nation's apartheid system of Jim Crow.

The NAACP established its national headquarters in New York City, named a board of directors and Moorfield Story, a white constitutional lawyer and former president of the American Bar Association, as national president. Other officers included William English Walling, Chairman of the Executive Committee; John E. Milholland, Treasurer; Oswald Garrison Villard, Disbursing Treasurer; Frances Blascoer, Executive Secretary; and W. E. B. Du Bois, Director of Publicity and Research. In 1910, the only African American among the NAACP's executives, Du Bois established *The Crisis: A Record of the Darker Races*, the organization's official organ, which was named after James Russell Lowell's popular poem, "The Present Crisis." In *The Crisis*, Dubois promoted black literature, culture, history, gender equality, and aided in forming public opinion.

The Association's early court battles included a victory against a discriminatory Oklahoma law that predicated voting upon a grandfather clause (*Guinn & Beal v. United States*, 1915) that enfranchised only those black males whose ancestors voted in 1866. Ruling in favor of the NAACP and its plaintiffs, the nation's highest tribunal decreed that Oklahoma violated the Fifteenth Amendment to the U. S. Constitution. This case helped to establish the NAACP as a legal advocate, a role it would play with enormous success. The same year, the civil rights organization boycotted the New York screening of D. W. Griffith's inflammatory film *Birth of a Nation*, which was based on Thomas Dixon's 1905 bigoted melodramatic staged play, *The Clansman: An Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan*, the second volume in a trilogy. The subject matter of the film caused immediate criticism for its racist and "vicious" portrayal of blacks, its proclamation of miscegenation, its pro-Klan stance, and its endorsement of slavery.

As the United States fought to make the world safe for democracy in World War I, the NAACP aided black victims and defended participants in the 1917 race riot in East St. Louis, Illinois. It also protested by organizing a mass demonstration against racial violence with a silent parade of thousands in New York City. Throughout the 1920s, the civil rights organization fought against lynching. It passionately supported the Dyer Anti-lynching Bill in the United States Congress. Although the Dyer Bill never passed, the NAACP entered the legal arena and exposed the heinous crime of lynching. Many credit the public discourse, kindled by the organization's report *Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States, 1889-1919*, with significantly reducing the frequency of lynching. As membership grew and under the directorship of James Weldon Johnson, the association's first black field secretary, NAACP branches were established in the South.

In June 1917, Robert R. Church Jr., the younger brother of Mary Church Terrell, established Tennessee's first NAACP chapter in Memphis. Two years later, James C. Napier organized a chapter in Nashville and later led 2,000 people to the governor's office to protest lynching. Before the decade ended, chapters were organized in Chattanooga, Knoxville, and Jackson. The organization slowly moved into rural counties. In 1936, Ollie

and Mattye Tollette Bond established a local NAACP chapter in Brownsville. According to the Tennessee State Conference of the NAACP--chartered in 1946 after members of the Chattanooga, Knoxville, Memphis, and Nashville branches came together to aid black citizens of Columbia, Tennessee, following a race riot that killed several and injured many others--there are seven chapters in East Tennessee, eleven chapters in Middle Tennessee, and seventeen chapters in West Tennessee.

As celebratory events are held across the nation, it is impossible not to note the diversity of the NAACP's founders and those persons and events associated with Tennessee. Du Bois, Wells-Barnett and Terrell joined forces in a national effort for increased racial equality. Wells helped in a petition drive to use the one-hundredth anniversary of Lincoln's birth to protest and improve the conditions of African Americans. James Weldon Johnson, the association's first black field secretary (1916) who served as a professor of creative literature at Fisk University from 1930 to 1938, established thirteen southern branches including the five early branches in the Volunteer State. Tennessee also provided Thurgood Marshall, the head of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, his closest encounter with violence. In 1946, he traveled to Columbia to assist the defense of African Americans accused of participating in the race riot that summer. At the conclusion of the trial, Marshall was driving from Columbia to Nashville with attorney Z. Alexander Looby when local police, who separated the two attorneys, stopped him. Looby refused to drive away. Instead, he followed the police car that had taken Marshall, probably averting violence against the future United States Supreme Court justice. From school desegregation, to the first voter registration drives in Haywood and Fayette Counties, to the Nashville sit-ins, and all civil rights issues in between, all drew upon NAACP support. From 1977 to 1993, Benjamin J. Hooks of Memphis was the NAACP's executive director.

The courageous leadership of NAACP officials and members provided a foundation for the Civil Rights movement in Tennessee. Throughout its one hundred years of existence, Tennesseans both well-known and unknown alike have fought among its legions of members for equality and justice for all of America's citizenry.

*Linda T. Wynn, 2009*

### **“WHEN AND WHERE I ENTER”: THE 19TH AMENDMENT AND AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN**



In the summer of 1920, the state of Tennessee captured the attention of the nation, as those who favored women gaining the right of the franchise (suffragists) and those who opposed women gaining the right of the franchise (anti-suffragists) descended upon the Volunteer State to

campaign for their respective positions. The Tennessee General Assembly was poised to consider ratifying the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, giving women the right to vote. Thirty-five of the thirty-six states needed had ratified the amendment. Eight states rejected the amendment and five states had taken no action. Most southern states rejected the woman's suffrage amendment because of the bigoted and racist calculation that the entitlement would also include African American women. Anti-suffragists used this same reasoning in Tennessee. Suffragists considered Tennessee as their last and best chance for ratification before the presidential election of 1920. If Tennessee ratified the amendment, approximately 27 million women would be eligible to cast a ballot in the next presidential election. Governor Albert H. Roberts called a special session of the General Assembly on August 9, 1920 to consider the issue of women and the vote. However, the road to the 19th Amendment to the U. S. Constitution began long before its ratification. It was the culmination of almost a century of activism, agitation, and protest for woman's suffrage.

The right to vote had been an issue at variance with America's founding principles since its beginning when those who penned the lofty document wrote "We the People." It is impossible to commemorate the centennial of women's suffrage without looking at the sesquicentennial of the 15th Amendment to the United States Constitution, which was ratified February 3, 1870, giving African American men the vote, and its impact on both the pro and anti-suffragists. It is important to emphasize that from the beginning, African Americans, both women and men, were involved in the almost century-long struggle to gain the right of the franchise for women.

During the early 19th century, African Americans and white women organized around the abolition movement. Bostonian Maria Stewart, a pioneering African American activist and the first woman to speak before a mix-gendered audience, spoke out for both the rights of African Americans and women. On July 19–20, 1848, in Seneca Falls, New York at the first women's rights convention in the United States, Elizabeth Cady Stanton waged her discontent by rewording the most famous phrasing in the American political creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident. That all men and women are created equal." She further proposed a resolution that called for women's right of the franchise. One of the few men and the only African American to attend the Seneca Falls Convention, universal suffragist Frederick Douglass supported Stanton and her call to giving women the right to vote. He argued that "the ballot was the guarantor of all other rights, the key to liberty, and women must be bold." Formerly enslaved, Douglass described himself as a "Women's Rights Man." He knew first-hand the injustices superimposed upon the enslaved and understood that women, like free and enslaved African Americans, were all constrained by American law and custom. Douglass remained committed to women gaining the right to vote throughout his life even when consternation began to stir with the pending passage of the 15th Amendment that gave African American men the vote.

Three years after the Seneca Falls convention, on May 29, 1851, Sojourner Truth (formerly known as just Isabella or Isabella Baumfree), an abolitionist and formerly enslaved black woman, addressed a Women's Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio. Her address has often

been referred to as “Ain’t I A Woman.” However, this speech was written and published in 1863, twelve years after Truth gave the “Ain’t I A Woman” speech, by a white abolitionist named Frances Dana Barker Gage. She not only changed all of Truth’s words but represented her speaking in a stereotypical ‘southern black slave accent,’ rather than Truth’s distinctive upper New York State low-Dutch accent. The most authentic version of Sojourner Truth’s, “Ain’t I A Woman,” speech was first published in 1851 by Truth’s good friend the Rev. Marius Robinson in the *Anti-Slavery Bugle* and was titled, “On Woman’s Rights.”

The American Civil War disrupted the woman’s suffrage movement as many continued championing the abolition of enslavement. Once the war ended, and as talk of the 14th and 15th Amendments increased, many women hoped to be granted the same rights of citizenship that would be granted to those previously enslaved. The Fourteenth Amendment, Section 2 added the first mention of gender into the Constitution, which stipulated that all male citizens over twenty-one years of age should have access to the ballot. Simply stated, the 14th Amendment defined “Citizens” and “voters” exclusively as male. Later, Congress passed the 15th Amendment, which was ratified February 3, 1870. It granted African American men the right to vote and caused consternation among women who had sought the right of the franchise. Throughout the 19th century, the “woman question” was at the core of movements against enslavement and for civil rights. By the end of second decade of the 20th century, Nashville, the state of Tennessee, and woman’s suffrage captured center stage. Almost from the beginning, woman’s suffrage was entangled with the issue of race and this entanglement played out in Nashville, fifty-five years after the Civil War’s last battle. Despite racism being front and center in Nashville among both the suffragists and the anti-suffragists, African American women were among those who favored women having the right to vote.

Unlike white women activists, who often created their own institutions separate from men, African American women often organized within already existing institutions—churches, political organizations, mutual aid societies, and schools. The first convention of the National Association of Colored Women (NACW—founded in 1896) held its first convention in Nashville in 1897. Nettie Langston Napier (wife of J. C. Napier) served as treasurer of the national organization. Other members included Minnie Lou Crosthwaite, Dr. Josie E. Wells, Dr. Mattie E. Coleman, Juno Frankie Pierce, Hattie S. Jackson (wife of the Rev. G. L. Jackson), and Georgia Bradford Boyd (wife of Henry Allen Boyd). These women not only enjoyed local support but also through such organizations as the NACW and with African American communities in Tuskegee, Atlanta, and Washington, D.C. By 1919, as people in Tennessee worked for or against becoming the 36th state to ratify the 19th Amendment, the suffrage movement was mostly segregated, especially in the Jim Crow South. However, during a meeting of white women in Nashville, which Coleman was asked to attend, she offered support for the reforms of white activists and reminded them that “12,000 negro [sic] of the state are organized and are seeking a vocational school for their girls.”

African American women's clubs worked with white women's clubs on several social issues, and these connections promoted an association in Nashville on women's suffrage. African American women worked with the white suffrage organizations to get out the vote in the 1919 municipal elections. During that year they helped to get 2,500 African American women to vote in the city's first election in which black women were eligible to vote. The chair of the Tennessee Equal Suffrage League, Catherine Kenny, was awed with Pierce's organizational skills and invited her to address the first convention of the Tennessee League of Women Voters in the State Capitol's lower chamber in May 1920. "What will the Negro women do with the vote?" the daughter of a free father and an enslaved mother, asked her audience. "We will stand by the white women...We are asking only one thing—a square deal...We want recognition in all forms of this government. We want a state vocational school and a child welfare department of the state, and more room in state schools." The League adopted the school as part of its legislative agenda and lobbied extensively for its passage and realization. Through their actions, African American women echoed Anna Julia Cooper's declaration "When and where I enter...then and there the whole Negro race enters with me."

After the resolution passed the Tennessee State Senate, both suffragists and anti-suffragists desperately lobbied to secure votes in the House of Representatives where the vote was close. Representative Harry T. Burn of Niota changed his vote in support ratification, thereby breaking a tie in the House of Representatives and subsequently making history. The Tennessee General Assembly ratified the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution on August 18, 1920. Opponents worked to rescind the ratification vote on constitutional technicalities. Some anti-suffrage legislators even fled the state in an attempt to prevent a quorum in the General Assembly. Their efforts failed. On August 24, 1920, Governor Albert H. Roberts certified Tennessee's ratification of the 19th Amendment. Two days later, U. S. Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby issued a proclamation that officially declared the ratification of the 19th Amendment and made it part of the United States Constitution. Tennessee provided the 36th and final state needed to ratify the amendment to the U.S. Constitution that gave women the right to vote.

The passage and ratification of the 19th Amendment did not guarantee African American the right of the franchise, as racial segregation and Jim Crow laws prevented many African American women from voting. It would take the civil rights crusades of the 1960s before African American women realized full suffrage through the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

*Linda T. Wynn, 2020*

## **50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF FREEDOM RIDERS OF 1961**

On May 17, 2011, the Freedom Riders from Nashville and those cognizant of the modern Civil Rights movement timeline will pause to remember and commemorate the fiftieth

anniversary of the Nashville student activists' entrance into the Freedom Rides of 1961. Because of their heroic actions and refusal to relent to the demands of government officials, the Kennedy administration ultimately directed the Interstate Commerce Commission to issue regulations prohibiting racial segregation in all transportation facilities. The Freedom Rides were not a new tactic of the 1960s Civil Rights struggle. Fourteen years earlier, in 1947 the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) organized and implemented the interracial Journey of Reconciliation throughout the Upper South to test the United States Supreme Court's decision in the *Morgan v. Virginia* (38 U.S. 373 [1946]) case, which mandated interstate bus desegregation.

As was done in 1947, the May 1961 Freedom Rides tested another Supreme Court decision, *Boynton v. Virginia* (364 U.S. 454 [1960]), which extended the Court's 1946 directive to all interstate transportation facilities, including terminals, waiting rooms, restaurants, and other amenities. The Court's decision made it unconstitutional to racially segregate waiting rooms, restrooms, and lunch counters. The South, known for its racial rigidity, often dismissed Supreme Court decisions as they related to racial desegregation. James Farmer and CORE were determined to make sure that both the South and the new Kennedy administration recognized that the Court's decision in *Boynton v. Virginia* could not be disregarded. While the 1947 and the 1961 rides were comparable in that they both tested decisions handed down by the nation's highest court, John Lewis asserts that the 1961 rides had been designed to be more cogent, bolder, and to move further into the deep South. In his *Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement*, Lewis states, "It would be a bolder title as well -- nothing so tame and accommodating as 'reconciliation,' which is how Farmer came up with the phrase 'Freedom Ride.' There was a tone of demand in that phrase, a sense of proclamation, of no more waiting."

On May 4, 1961 CORE sent two buses and an assembly of thirteen Freedom Riders (seven black men, three white men, and three white women) on what was intended to be a two-week trip, traveling through the deep South from Washington, D.C. to New Orleans, to



test their right to intermingle blacks and whites in the region's bus stations. CORE officials notified the United States Justice Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) of their schedule, which was also transmitted to local police forces, and in Alabama, through them to the Ku Klux Klan. The interracial group encountered only a few problems during their first week of travel. However, when they reached Anniston, Alabama, on that fateful May 14, the Freedom Riders met a vicious horde of more than 100 angry whites, who



brutally beat them and firebombed the bus. In Birmingham, a mob toting iron pipes and other weapons greeted the riders where they were battered, knocked unconscious, and hospitalized. While the violence garnered national and international attention, it also caused Farmer to terminate the ride.

Although not the progenitors of the Freedom Rides of the 1960s, Nashville's student activists, under the leadership of Diane Judith Nash, became their driving force. Despite the Kennedy administration's prodding of CORE to abort their plans to ride to New Orleans, Nash and the Nashville student contingent moved into action upon hearing the news about the assault on the Freedom Riders. They felt the ride must continue. In their opinion, the movement's future was at stake. If the rides were terminated, as Diane Nash said, "it would prove that violence could overcome nonviolence." The students comprehended the importance of continuing the Freedom Rides after the Alabama attacks, and strengthened their resolve that the Klan could not be left triumphant to claim control of the streets. On May 17, 1961, recruits left Nashville for Birmingham, on the seventh anniversary of the Supreme Court's unanimous *Brown v. Board of Education* decision.

When the Nashville student contingent arrived in Birmingham, Theophilus Eugene "Bull" Connor, the city's racially-intolerant chief of police, ordered the new Freedom Riders taken to the Birmingham jail. The following night, he released them at the Tennessee-Alabama state line. Within days, they regrouped and rejoined the route at Montgomery, undeterred by the mob violence in Birmingham or the threat of it that mounted as they approached Montgomery. However, the law enforcement presence that had accompanied their trip suddenly fell away at the city line. It was in Montgomery, the "Cradle of the Confederacy," that the Freedom Riders rode into the national and international consciousness as the media broadcast the mayhem perpetrated upon them by a mob of Klan members and other angry whites. These merciless attacks on those riding for freedom and justice forced the national government to act.

As stated in Mary L. Dudziak's *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*, "President Kennedy was angered by the Freedom Riders' persistence." In *President Kennedy: Profile of Power*, Richard Reeves asserts that the President was disconcerted in some measure because the viciousness against the Freedom Riders was "exactly the kind of thing the Communists used to make the United States look bad around the world." Embarrassed by the fiasco of the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba, Kennedy was preparing to meet Nikita Khrushchev, the leader of the Soviet Union, for the first time at a summit conference in Vienna. It was Kennedy's hope to draw attention away from the Bay of Pigs and establish himself as a global leader. The Freedom Rides obstructed these aims. According to Harris Wofford's *Of Kennedy and Kings: Making Sense of the Sixties*, Kennedy "supported every American's right to stand up or sit down for his rights but not to ride for them in the spring of 1961."

The students' single-mindedness to carry on the Freedom Rides had major consequences for the southern Civil Rights movement. The Freedom Rides continued for the next four

months with student activists in the forefront. While segregationists' vindictive show of aggression only served to make the tightly-knit group of trained student activists more resolute to bring down the nation's bastions of racial segregation, it also forced the federal government into action. On September 22, 1961, in response to the Freedom Rides and under pressure from the Kennedy administration, the Interstate Commerce Commission promulgated regulations eliminating racial segregation in train and bus terminals. These regulations went into effect on November 1, 1961.

*Linda T. Wynn, 2011*

## **AFRICAN-AMERICAN BUILDERS OF SEVIER COUNTY**

The architectural landscape of Tennessee's rural areas, small towns, and large cities is comprised of hundreds of historic buildings designed and built by African Americans. One rural county in East Tennessee has an extraordinary history of African-American builders. Established in 1794 along the North Carolina border, Sevier County has never featured a large black population; however, black builders constructed nearly every important late nineteenth and early twentieth century private and public building in the county. The county's African-American population never exceeded 700 people, but its tight-knit black community produced at least a dozen black brick masons, prolific all-black construction companies, and an exceptional black carpenter and furniture maker. Until recently, their amazing story remained untold.

In the late 1860s, Isaac Dockery (1832-1910) built a brick kiln near Sevierville and established a brick masonry business. Dockery, who was born a free Black, moved to Sevierville to work as a merchant clerk for a white businessman, Henry M. Thomas, before the Civil War. After the war, Dockery became instrumental in establishing the brick masonry tradition within the African-American culture of Sevier County. Often, he inscribed his initials, "I.D.," and sometimes a date on his bricks as a trademark. Dockery taught his brick masonry craft to his sons, his sons-in-law, and his grandsons. Dockery constructed brick foundations and chimneys for many dwellings throughout the county, but his most notable buildings were located in Sevierville. Recognized as Sevier County landmarks, these buildings include the New Salem Baptist Church (1886), the original Murphy College building (1891), the Sevierville Masonic Lodge (1893), and the elaborate Sevier County Courthouse (1896). Dockery moved to Newport in adjoining Cocke County in 1898 and died at his son's home in Knoxville in 1910. He was buried in the public cemetery for African Americans near Sevierville.

Several members of Dockery's family also became well-known brick masons in Sevier County, including Paris Witt McMahan (1852-1929), a former slave who established the Riverside Steam Brick Company that operated near Sevierville until the 1930s; George and Stewart Burden (1890-1988), who established a highly productive collection company in the early twentieth century; Bill Coleman, who moved to neighboring Jefferson County; and Joe Leak McMahan, Sr. (1881-1964). Fred McMahan (1895-1980),

perhaps the most notable of Dockery's descendants, attended Knoxville College in the late 1910s and earned his master's degree in Architectural Engineering at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana. Around 1920, he returned to Sevierville and established the J F & N McMahan Construction Company with his brothers, James and Newt McMahan.

One of the most prolific black builders and brick masons in the state, McMahan and his construction company were responsible for scores of Sevier County buildings, beginning with the Pleasant View Rosenwald School in 1921-22. The company built landmark buildings throughout the county and in adjoining counties between 1920 and 1960, including dwellings, churches, schools and college campus buildings, automobile showrooms and service stations, a WPA-funded post office, and commercial buildings. One of the most important buildings that Fred McMahan constructed may be the Dwight and Kate Wade House, which was finished in 1940 at Sevierville. This house was designed by Verna Cook Salomonsky, a leading female architect from New York City, and is a replica of an avant-garde exhibition dwelling at the 1939-40 New York World Fair's Town of Tomorrow exhibit. McMahan's own home still stands outside Sevierville.

Perhaps the most significant African American builder in Sevier County's history was not a brick mason, but a highly-skilled carpenter, cabinetmaker, and house builder. Lewis C. Buckner (1856-1924), who was born a slave, had a white father and an African-American mother. During the years following the Civil War, Buckner most likely learned his trade in Sevierville as an apprentice to Christian H. Stump, a white furniture and cabinetmaker originally from Michigan. It was in Sevierville that he began his cabinetmaking business in the 1870s. By the late nineteenth century, the African-American artisan was building houses throughout Sevier County that featured robust Italianate and Queen Anne style architectural elements. Using his unique interpretation of national architectural styles acquired from patternbooks and published journals, Buckner's original work is extremely creative. Rarely were two pieces rendered exactly alike. The country artisan's well-crafted architectural detailing features vernacular renditions of Victorian patterns that include naturalistic elements such as a unique flower motif that became his signature trademark.

Nearly twenty examples of dwellings exhibiting Buckner's extraordinary craftsmanship still exist in the county. Buckner built these houses between 1880 and 1921, and he embellished them with the flamboyant architectural elements indicative of Victorian-era ebullience. Buckner usually built an entire dwelling and lived at the building site during its construction; however, he also traveled the countryside in order to construct decorative details, such as porches, staircases, and mantels for otherwise ordinary farmhouses. Buckner also crafted elaborate and ornate furniture, such as bedroom suites, cupboards, bureaus, washstands, cabinets, and even picture frames. Many of his works are prized family heirlooms. Buckner's own house, which he built in 1894 outside Sevierville, still stands. He was buried in an unmarked grave at the Union Hill Cemetery nearby.

The dozens of examples of well-crafted buildings and the extraordinary furniture, crafted by talented black brick masons and carpenters serve as historic reminders of the exceptional impact that African Americans had on the rural communities of East Tennessee, especially Sevier County.

*Robbie D. Jones, 1998*

### **LEST WE FORGET: REMEMBERING AFRICAN AMERICANS DURING THE 1960s IN NASHVILLE**

In 1960, Nashville's African American community and the city in general, experienced events that changed the timbre of race relations in the Athens of the South. In many ways, Nashville and its contributions to the overall narrative of the Civil Rights Movement are barely recognized. Nashville student leaders, whose fearless resolve allowed them to travel throughout the South to wage war on racial discrimination, with the exception of a few are scarcely mentioned in the Modern Civil Rights storyline. Their seeds of courage, faith, determination, and resolve, were planted, watered, and nourished in the ethos of the nonviolent, direct-protest classes they attended at Clark Memorial United Church under the Reverend James Lawson, Jr., a graduate student at Vanderbilt's School of Divinity who came to Nashville at the urging of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In the dorm rooms of the city's Historical Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and the Nashville Student Movement Office on 21st Avenue North and Jefferson Street, students at American Baptist Theological Seminary (now American Baptist College), Fisk University, Meharry Medical College, and Tennessee Agricultural & Industrial State University (now Tennessee State University) were leaders in challenging racial segregation at its core and helped construct the foundation of the freedom movement.

From staging some of the modern movement's earliest sit-ins, to helping to organize the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), to continuing the Freedom Rides, to participating in voter registration drives, to the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, to the Selma-to-Montgomery March for voting rights, Nashville student activists participated and in many cases were in the forefront as leaders. Nashville students met weekly during the months of September, October, and November of 1959. During those months, Lawson introduce the student activists to the philosophy of Jesus Christ, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, and Henry David Thoreau, among others. Lawson and others, the Reverend C. T. Vivian among them, gave the students a view of nonviolence by role-playing experiencing violence being perpetrated upon them. As Diane Nash, one of the student leaders noted, one of the movement's goals was to "be respectful of the opposition and try to keep issues geared towards desegregation, not get sidetracked."

On February 13, 1960, Nashville students launched their sit-in movement, when they gathered at Kress, Woolworth's, and McClellan stores at 12:40 p.m. in downtown Nashville. The students continued the sit-ins over the next three months, expanding their targets to include lunch counters at the Greyhound and Trailways bus terminals, W. T. Grant's, Walgreen's Drugstore, and major Nashville department stores, Cain-Sloan and Harvey's. The first violent response to the protests came on February 27, 1960, which Lawson called "big Saturday." Eighty-one protestors were arrested and charged with disorderly conduct. However,



they all refused to pay fines and remained incarcerated as a continuation of their protest. The first phase of the Nashville Sit-in Movement continued until a resolution came to the forefront on May 10, 1960.

On April 19, 1960, lawyer Z. Alexander Looby's Meharry Boulevard home was destroyed by dynamite. Looby had gained prominence in 1946 when he, Maurice Weaver and Thurgood Marshall were hired by the National Association for the

Advancement for Colored People (NAACP) to represent the African Americans charged with murder following a race riot in Columbia, Tennessee. During the sit-in demonstrations and civil rights marches of the 1960s, Looby and other black attorneys provided money and legal services for local college students arrested and jailed. The bombing of Looby's home caused a definitive moment for Nashville's Civil Rights Movement. It served as the catalyst for a silent march later that day when a diverse group of 3,000 people marched to City Hall where Mayor Ben West met them on the steps of the plaza. After questioning by Nash and Vivian, West stated that lunch counters should be desegregated. A watershed moment, this admission by West paved the way for the beginning of desegregated lunch counters making Nashville the first southern city to do so.

As regional desegregation sit-ins led by African American college students grew, Ella Josephine Baker, a student at Shaw University—an HBCU in Raleigh, North Carolina—persuaded the SCLC to invite southern university students to the South-wide Youth Leadership Conference at Shaw University on Easter weekend in 1960. This was a gathering of sit-in leaders to meet, assess their struggles, and explore the possibilities for future actions. At this meeting the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was formed. Baker saw the potential for a special type of leadership by the young sit-in leaders who were not yet prominent in the movement. She believed they could revitalize the Black Freedom Movement and take it in a new direction. To this end she worked to

keep the students independent of the older, church-based leadership. While many of the student activists thought Nashville Student Movement leader Diane Nash would be elected as the first president of SNCC, it was her fellow student and colleague at Fisk University, Marion Berry who became the organization's first president. "Diane was a devoted leader...but she was the wrong sex," said John Lewis. "There was a desire to emphasize and showcase black manhood."

SNCC aided in the coordination of sit-ins and other acts of nonviolent civil disobedience throughout the South. In the fall of 1961, following the United States Supreme Court decision in *Boynton v. Virginia* (1960) ending racial segregation of public transportation and eating facilities within those locations, SNCC members confronted violent opposition as Freedom Riders on buses that carried integrated groups of passengers from Washington, D.C. and Nashville through the Carolinas, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. The first group of Freedom Riders, sponsored by the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and traveling in two groups on Trailways and Greyhound buses, met unmerciful violence and CORE abandoned the rides. The Nashville Student Movement, under the direction of Nash and others, decided that "we can't let violence overcome nonviolence. We are coming into Birmingham to continue the Freedom Ride." Members of the Nashville Student Movement left Nashville on May 17 for Birmingham. Upon their arrival, Theophilus Eugene "Bull" Conner, city commissioner of public safety, ordered the new group of Freedom Riders taken to jail. The Riders were released the following day at the Alabama state line. Three days later, despite the governor's pledge of protection, approximately three hundred white segregationists attacked the new group of Freedom Riders, which included thirteen students from Tennessee A&I State University, four from American Baptist College, two each from Fisk University and George Peabody College, and one student from Atlanta's Spelman College, as well as John Seigenthaler, the U.S. Justice Department representative of the Kennedy administration, as they pulled into at a bus depot in Montgomery. The Riders remained indomitable and started out again four days after the Alabama assault. When the Riders arrived in Jackson, Mississippi, no fanatical white mobs awaited them. However, as they entered the whites-only waiting room, police immediately steered them into police vehicles and whisked them away to jail. On September 22, 1961, in response to the Freedom Rides and under pressure from Attorney General Robert Kennedy and others in the Kennedy administration, the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) promulgated regulations prohibiting racial segregation in train and bus terminals, effective on November 1, 1961. Nashville student activists continued to toil in the civil rights vineyard fighting for all to be treated with dignity and the rights as articulated in America's governing documents.

Lest you forget, the 60th Anniversary of the Nashville Sit-in Movement, the bombing of Z. Alexander Looby's home, the silent march in protest against white supremacists, the desegregation of Nashville lunch counters and other public accommodations, and the Freedom Rides, remember Nashville activists also played key roles in the 1963 March on Washington, the Birmingham campaign of 1963, their frontline leaders during the Mississippi Freedom Summer of 1964, and the struggle to gain voting rights in Selma, all events at the apogee of the modern struggle for civil and human rights. As the late

historian and Fisk University alumnus John Hope Franklin said of them, they were “probably the most courageous and the most selfless” civil rights workers.

*Linda T. Wynn, 2020*

### **ERNEST RAYMOND ALEXANDER (1892- )**

Ernest Raymond Alexander was a prominent contributor to the Nashville Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and a member of the Fisk University board of trustees. He was born in Dixon Springs, Tennessee, on June 21, 1892. After his family moved to Nashville, young Ernest attended Meigs School in 1910. He completed Fisk University in 1914.

Alexander attended the University of Minnesota's medical school but completed his medical degree at the University of Vermont (1919). While at Vermont he was awarded "Honor Man in Medicine," the first prize for "Special Merit in Medicine," and the Woodbury prize for "Clinical Proficiency in Medicine." He worked in the fields of dermatology and syphilology.

Dr. Alexander opened his medical practice in Harlem during the summer of 1920 and he joined the staffs at Bellevue Hospital and Harlem Hospital. He completed post-graduate studies at Columbia University and additional work at New York University and the Bellevue Hospital Medical College by 1925. He was a member of many professional organizations and author of several medical articles.



Dr. Alexander became involved in the advancement of black people. He was an active member of the Abyssinian Baptist Church and a contributing member to the YMCA, the National Urban League, and the NAACP. He was one of the first life members of the NAACP. He also was an advisor to the Boy Scouts of America and received the Silver Beaver Award (1949) and the Silver Antelope Award (1954).

Dr. Alexander's wife, Lillian, donated the E. R. Alexander Collection of Negroana to the Fisk University Library and gave a matching endowment of five thousand dollars to support it. Mrs. Alexander was a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of Minnesota. When visiting Nashville, the Alexanders attended First Baptist Church of East Nashville. Dr. Alexander had great influence on developments in black Nashville, especially through his Negroana collection

at Fisk University, where black achievement and culture are displayed through the Alexanders' efforts.

*H. Henryne D. White, 1991*

### **AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION (1882- )**

In 1787 in the city of Philadelphia, Benjamin Franklin, John Hancock, Alexander Hamilton, and others gathered to frame the Constitution of these United States. At the same time and in the same city, Richard Allen, Daniel Coker, and others were meeting to organize what has become the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church. It was not established because of any theological differences with the Methodist Church, of which the founders were a part. Rather, it was established as a protest against segregation and discrimination which these founders had experienced in St. George's Methodist Church. With the increase in numbers of these black churches in the Philadelphia and Baltimore areas, the first General Conference was held in 1816 and the African Methodist Episcopal Church became the first black denomination in the United States.

In 1818, Richard Allen, the founder and first consecrated bishop, realized that it was necessary to initiate a method of disseminating information if there were to be growth of this embryonic church. The first department, therefore, to be established was Publications, with its Book Concern becoming the "oldest publishing house of any



importance owned by Negroes." It was designed to print the discipline, hymnals, church supplies, study courses for young ministers, and church materials such as books, newspapers, and magazines.

In 1847 the A.M.E. Church, which had become interested in the development of Sunday schools, considered several proposals for a Sunday School Union to organize and develop Sunday schools. It was not until 1882 that the Reverend Charles S. Smith of Bloomington, Indiana, projected a plan that brought into existence the Sunday School Union, at which the first Sunday school literature by African Americans was published. The department, first located at Bloomington, moved to Nashville in 1886, where the Reverend Smith, the first secretary-treasurer, purchased a five-story brick and stone building at 206 Public Square. Upon the election of Smith to the bishopric in 1900, the Reverend William D. Chappelle became the second secretary-treasurer, serving until 1908.



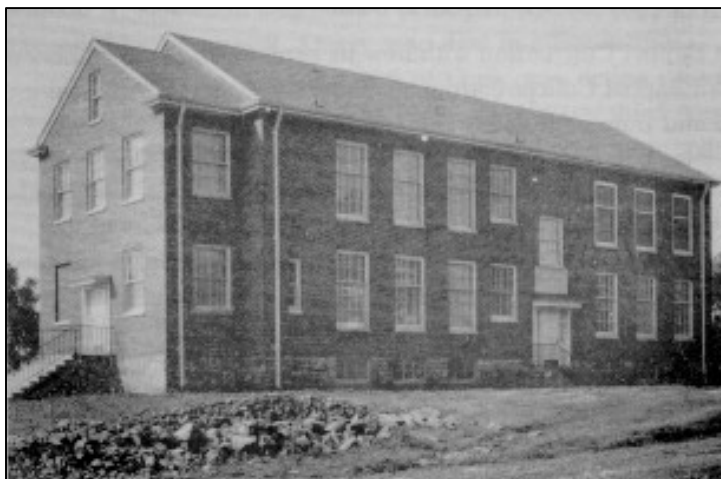
Ira T. Bryant, the first layman to hold the position of secretary-treasurer, was elected in 1908 and served until 1936. During his twenty-eight-year tenure a larger building at 404 Eighth Avenue, South, was purchased; a modern printing plant installed; and additional property acquired. When he was defeated for office by E. A. Selby in 1936, Bryant contested the election and was able to retain the connection's property for five years, until the case was decided by a federal court. It was not until eight years later that the Church was awarded several pieces of contested property and given a monetary settlement. During Selby's twenty-eight-year tenure, the Department of Publications and the Book Concern, which was in reality a book agency, merged with the Sunday School Union.

Elected in 1964, the Reverend Charles S. Spivey, Sr., served until he retired in 1972. Reverend Henry A. Belin, Jr., who became the secretary-treasurer in 1972, was responsible for the building of a much-needed publishing house at 500 Eighth Avenue, South, which was dedicated In November of 1977.

When Belin became a bishop in 1984, the Reverend A. Lee Henderson was elected. Henderson, who had a successful publishing background, added brilliant color and creative graphics to give the Sunday school literature and other publications a new look. The A.M.E. Sunday School Union continues its mission of publishing for the purpose of disseminating information to churches and the general public.

*Jamye C. Williams, 1996*

### **AMERICAN BAPTIST COLLEGE (1924- )**



American Baptist College is located at 1800 Whites Creek Pike in Nashville. The institution offers the B. A. and the Th.B. degrees in humanities, biblical and theological studies, and church vocations. The idea for such an institution began as early as September of 1895 when the National Baptist Convention (NBC) and its Educational Board were founded. However, not until 1913 did the National Baptist Convention form a seminary

committee and secure support from the white Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). In 1915, the plans were further delayed when the National Baptist Convention split into opposing factions: National Baptist Convention of America, Unincorporated (UNBCA), and National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Incorporated (NBCI).

The opposing black National Baptist Convention factions proceeded to open separate seminaries. The National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Incorporated, opened the National Baptist Theological Seminary and Bible Training School in Howe Institute in Memphis in 1916, and the National Baptist Convention of America, Unincorporated, founded the National Baptist Seminary and Missionary Training School (1918-1931) in Nashville's former white Boscobel College campus. The National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Incorporated, moved its school from Memphis in 1918 and located the classes in the Roger Williams University facilities on Whites Creek Pike.

With help from the Southern Baptist Convention, the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Incorporated, purchased land next door in 1921 and constructed facilities by 1923. On September 14, 1924, the American Baptist Theological Seminary opened its doors. The school struggled under presidents William T. Amiger (1924-25) and Sutton E. Griggs (1925-26). After the adjacent Roger Williams University closed in 1929, the seminary moved to quarters rented on Meharry Medical College's First Avenue South campus, where it remained during 1931-1934. Meanwhile, white Trevecca College occupied the former campus on Whites Creek Pike. In September 1934, the Seminary moved back to the Whites Creek property, and Trevecca relocated to the former campus of Walden College (a black school operated during 1868-1922) near Murfreesboro Road.

In 1936, the Convention placed a Missionary Training School for Women next door, in the old Roger Williams University buildings. The co-ed classes, as well as night and summer classes, were begun. The Southern Baptist Convention agreed in 1937 to help finance the budget. Thirty-eight students--the largest class ever--were graduated in 1948. The training school and the seminary merged by 1957. Under President Charles E. Boddie, the institution gained accreditation in 1971. By 1995, the Southern Baptist Convention withdrew its support and its members of the board of trustees. American Baptist College continued, under the leadership of President Bernard Lafayette, to educate and train church workers, ministers, and other students.

*Bobby L. Lovett, 1996*

### **LILLIAN “LIL” HARDING ARMSTRONG (1898-1971)**

Acclaimed musician “Lil” Hardin Armstrong was born in 1898 to William and Dempsey Hardin in Memphis, Tennessee. In the late 1900s, Memphis was a city that flowed with the pace of the Mississippi River. Sometimes peaceful, at times turbulent, always in motion, the Bluff City was home to a significant black population that grew larger after the Civil War. The Hardin family was among the residents who relocated there in hopes of a better life. Lil grew up in a home with her parents and her grandmother, a woman who had intimately known slavery. As the shadow of Jim Crow grew darker over the South, Priscilla Martin resolved that her granddaughter would have a better future than anyone imagined possible.

After recognizing her daughter's keen interest in an old harmonium, Dempsey invested in music lessons with Ms. Violet White, a private tutor. Young Lil took quickly to formal instruction and soon outgrew Ms. White's teaching. Pleased by her daughter's progress, Dempsey enrolled her in the Hooks School of Music, headed by Mrs. Julia Britton Hooks. Mrs. Hooks, a well-known civil rights activist, founded the school as an extension of her mission to provide young black children with the best possible opportunities to excel. Lil's talent continued to flourish, and she generously referred to herself as a child prodigy in later interviews.

The Hooks School of Music was not Hardin's only influence. Swirling, strong, and pulsing with rhythm, Beale Street was a nexus of black Memphis. It was home to everything from legitimate commerce to illicit crime. It served saints and sinners alike. Beale Street was also the perfect place for mid-Southerners to listen to the growing blues genre. Like fellow Memphian Alberta Hunter, Lil was fascinated with the sounds of W. C. Handy's band slowly strolling down Beale, playing tunes that would shape the sounds of the city for decades to come. However, the street's reputation did not sit well with Dempsey. She forbade her daughter to visit Beale Street.

In the fall of 1915, Lil made the two-hundred-mile journey from Memphis to join Fisk University's college preparatory program in Nashville, Tennessee. By the time she arrived, the university had a reputation for excelling in music, most notably because of the Jubilee Singers. In addition to the school's musical reputation, its stringent adherence to Christian moral principles appealed to Dempsey's urge to keep her young daughter away from the temptations of Beale Street. Lil chafed under the strict rules at Fisk, but she also



grew as a musician. One of her biggest disappointments was learning that she'd been taught incorrect techniques at the Hooks School. In spite of her progress at Fisk, she withdrew from the university in search of more adventure.

Lil found another opportunity to pursue music when her family relocated to Chicago with her stepfather. The petite teenager secured her first job in the Windy City as a music demonstrator at Jones Music Store on State Street. When an employee was unable to impress her with his performance of a piece of sheet music, Lil asked to play it for herself. She surprised him and the store owner with her ability to read and flawlessly perform sheet music on the spot. Not only could Lil read sheet music, she could also quickly memorize and play any song by ear. These talents served her well as she climbed

the city's entertainment ladder. She worked a series of entry-tier entertainment gigs until she landed bigger opportunities at the De Luxe Café and the Dreamland Café. She was enamored with the big city. However, remnants of the South met her in the Midwest. Coincidentally, she played accompaniment for another Memphis native, Alberta Hunter, at the Dreamland. Though their careers eventually drove them in different directions,

they would continue to cross paths and praise each other's artistry, aesthetics, and professionalism.

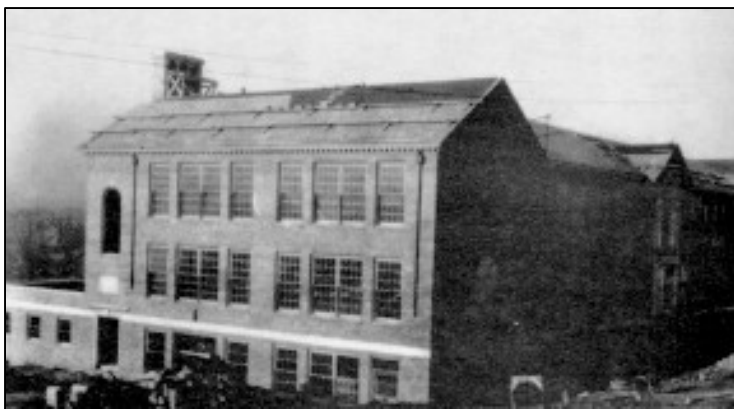
Lil also met another talented musician at the Dreamland. When he arrived in Chicago, Louis Armstrong was playing second trumpet to bandleader King Oliver in his Creole Jazz Band. Lil initially paid little attention to Louis until King Oliver mentioned his superior skills. Professional appreciation soon turned into romantic love, and the hot new couple became the band's centerpiece. Lil and Louis Armstrong married in 1924. Rightfully credited with identifying Armstrong's potential for stardom, Lil Hardin's legacy is often mentioned only in relation to Louis. However, her music catalog and business acumen speak for themselves. These accomplishments stand on their own artistic and professional merits.

For roughly fifty years Lil's entertainment career included work as an accompanying pianist, band leader, and soloist. She cut several records for large companies such as Decca Records and Riverside Records. She composed a number of original songs, most notably "Just for a Thrill," "Struttin' with Some Barbecue," "Perdido Street Blues," and "I'm Not Rough." Ray Charles amplified the popularity of "Just for a Thrill" in his 1959 rendition of the song. In 1961 Lil reunited with Alberta Hunter and Lovie Austin, another entertainment veteran, to record *Chicago: The Living Legends*. The album, a reflection on the impact of black women in music, was one of her last.

Following Louis Armstrong's death in July 1971, Lil Hardin Armstrong collapsed at her piano during a tribute concert for him in Chicago in August. She died on August 27, 1971 and is interred in Lincoln Cemetery in Chicago. The City of Chicago renamed a community park in her honor in 2004. She was posthumously awarded with induction to the Memphis Music Hall of Fame in 2014. Her music catalog remains among the most influential in jazz history.

*K. T. Ewing, 2017*

### **AUSTIN HIGH SCHOOL (1879-1968)**



On July 3, 1994, Knoxville's Austin High School Alumni celebrated the 115th anniversary of the school. Founded in 1879, it was the first public high school to educate the city's black youngsters and was the great-great-grandmother of the present Austin East High school.

When Miss Emily Austin, a white woman of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, came to Knoxville in

1870, there were various classrooms for black children in church basements and lodge halls, as well as one-room schoolhouses scattered here and there. With her connections in the North, she was determined that black children would be offered a decent education. After teaching these children in grade school for eight years, she felt the time had come to open a black high school. She returned to the North, raised \$6,500 among her friends, and asked the Knoxville Board of Education to contribute another \$2,000 to make the school a reality. Austin High School opened during the fall of 1879.

The first black principal of the school, John W. Manning, arrived in the fall of 1881. A native of Edenton, North Carolina, he had been graduated from Yale University earlier that year. He structured the school's curriculum and graduated its first tenth-grade class in 1888. He retired as principal in 1912. Charles Warner Cansler, known as a "mathematical wizard" and a teacher at the school since 1900, became its principal in 1912. He had read law and had been admitted to the Knoxville Bar in 1892. He was a Republican candidate for the state legislature in 1894, but he decided to give up politics and law for a career in education.

Austin High was originally established on Central Street in an area which, by the turn of the century, was called one of the city's worst vice districts. After much clamoring by local blacks, the school was moved to Payne Avenue in 1916 and renamed Knoxville Colored High School. In just twelve short years this building, too, was overcrowded and outdated for the city's growing black population.

In 1928 a new Austin High School was built just a few blocks away on Vine Street. William A. Robinson was named principal. He moved to Atlanta two years later and was succeeded by Thomas R. Davis, who died in office in 1948. Fannie C. Clay, the Dean of Girls, was acting principal until Otis T. Hogue was appointed principal in the fall of 1949. By 1952, a third Austin High School building was under construction just a block away. It would offer more space and programs for a modern education. It officially opened in the fall of 1952.

In an effort to bring about full racial integration in Knoxville's high schools, the city Board of Education in 1968 decided to combine Austin High with all-white East High, some eight or ten blocks away. Austin students moved to the East High building in the fall of 1968. The school was renamed Austin East High School.

*Robert J Booker, 1996*

### **DEFORD BAILEY (1899-1982)**

DeFord Bailey was born on December 14, 1899 at Carthage, 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 his musical talent gained Bailey 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. He had to go under a train trestle on the way to school, and 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 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. He continued 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 after, 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."

Bailey 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 sound 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 of 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 over the next fifteen years. During the height of his popularity, he was allowed a twenty-five-minute performance on the three-hour Opry show. By 1941, he was off the Opry and beginning a thirty-year career of shining shoes at his shop on Twelfth 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 revived. 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 oldtimers 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 historical marker in Bailey's honor, and a monument was placed at his grave site in Nashville's Greenwood Cemetery. Bailey's memorabilia was presented to the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum.

*Linda T. Wynn, 2019*

#### Further Reading:

"DeFord Bailey: A Legend Lost," *Nashville Public Television*, 2002.

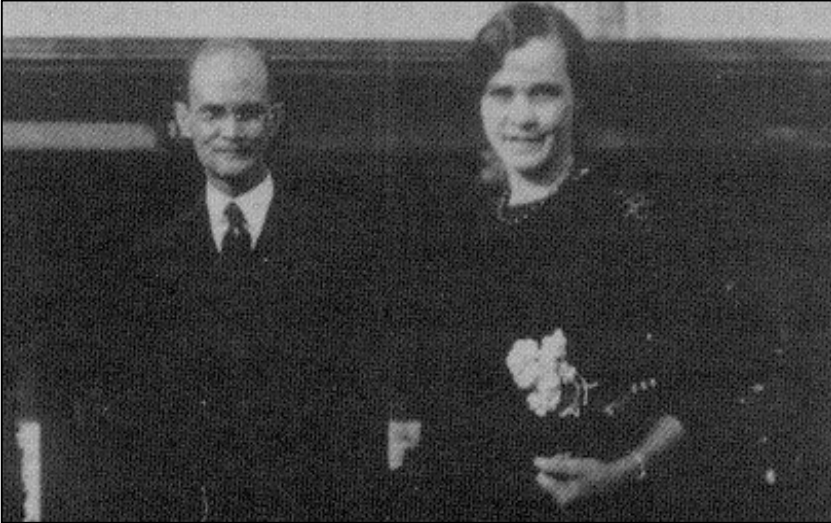
David C. Morton, with Charles K. Wolfe, *DeFord Bailey: A Black Star in Early Country Music*. Knoxville, Tenn.: The University of Tennessee Press, 1991.

### **JAMES GARFIELD BECK (1881-1969) ETHEL BENSON BECK (1896-1970)**

James Garfield Beck and Ethel Benson Beck were two of the most glamorous and influential members of Knoxville's black community during the 1920s, '30s, and '40s. They were in the forefront of most civic, church, and social activities. They were extremely attractive, had money, and were athletic.

Beck was an intellectual, while his wife had a business mind. He came to Knoxville in 1898 from Camden, Alabama, to attend the Knoxville College Normal School, which he finished in 1902. He was graduated from Knoxville College in 1906. In college, Beck distinguished himself in several sports, and he was particularly good in baseball. After graduation, he taught at several schools, including Austin High in 1910. He also served as the first athletic director at Knoxville College.

Mrs. Beck was a native of Morristown, Tennessee, and received her early training at Morristown College. It is possible that the Becks first met when he played baseball against the Morristown team. They were married in 1913, the same year he became the first black postal clerk in Tennessee when he was hired by the Knoxville Post Office. Over the years, they amassed a fortune in real estate.



The Becks were involved in the establishment of the Knoxville Colored Orphanage in 1919. That summer a group of citizens saw the need to care for and protect unfortunate black children and formed a board of management to organize an orphanage. A popular subscription raised about \$7,500 and property near Knoxville College was

purchased for the project. After several months, the project seemed doomed to failure, until Ethel Beck was elected to head the board. Within two years, she had wiped out all debts and announced that she intended to build a first-class brick building to cost approximately \$10,000. She made good on that promise, and by 1941 the name of the orphanage was changed to the Ethel Beck Home for Children.

James Beck was a life-long Republican, who served as a sergeant-at-arms at the 1940 National Republican Convention. He was one of the chief organizers of the Knoxville Branch NAACP in 1919. He was a candidate for city council in 1951.

Ethel Beck was active with the Order of Eastern Star and served as Honored Grand Conductress for eight years. She was president of the Tennessee State Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers. Being a sports enthusiast, she played in a national tennis meet in Bordentown, New Jersey, in 1928. She was the superintendent of the playground at the popular Cal Johnson Park for four years. The Beck Cultural Exchange Center in Knoxville is named for the Becks.

*Robert J. Booker, 1996*

### **BETHLEHEM CENTERS OF NASHVILLE (1894- )**

Beginning in 1894, a group of Nashville women associated with the Methodist Church assisted many immigrating families, and two years later they established the Door of Hope Mission which offered early child-care services and a rescue mission for girls. The



Methodists in Nashville had been immersed in the “social gospel” since the 1870s. In 1901, they led the way when the City Mission Board established the first full-fledged settlement home on Claiborne and Fillmore streets in South Nashville. Two years later it was named Wesley Community House, and its programming was modeled after Jane Addams' Hull House in Chicago, Illinois. Its programs for the disadvantaged ranged from educational to recreational services. In 1913, after numerous moves, the Wesley Community House moved into new facilities on Wharf Avenue, where it remained until 1957. Officials of Wesley House developed the J. C. Napier Center in 1956 to serve the African-American community.



In 1908, the Warioto Settlement House began for mill workers at the Morgan and Hamilton Bag Company's Warioto Cotton Mill. These were white, predominantly rural migrant workers, who lived in Kalb Hollow, in North Nashville. Young Methodist women from the Methodist Training School of Nashville canvassed the community and invited mill workers to the new settlement. Warioto settlement services ranged from activities for pre-school children to

sewing and cooking groups, to mothers learning the newest techniques of childcare, diet, and the prevention of disease. From funds raised through the Methodist Centenary Drive, the Warioto Settlement House moved to Monroe Street in 1919. Two years later, a new building was erected and Warioto was given the name Centenary Methodist Institute.

Another Methodist settlement was encouraged by Sallie Hill Sawyer, an African American, who in 1907 approached the Methodists at the Training School and urged them to extend services to Nashville's indigent African Americans. A graduate of Fisk University, Sawyer was a former schoolteacher and a member of Capers Memorial Colored Methodist Church. In 1913, Estelle Haskins, of the Missionary Training School, and Sallie Sawyer began a kindergarten, well-baby clinic, sewing circle, and recreation programs for African Americans in the basement of St. Andrews Presbyterian Church. In 1914, with funds from the Tennessee Conference Woman's Missionary Society, a building for Bethlehem Center was built at Tenth and Cedar streets for African Americans. A year later, the center, with an interracial staff, moved to Eighth and Cedar streets. During World War I, Nashville's African-American women were organized for Red Cross work on August 31, 1917, under the name of the Unit Auxiliary. The Bethlehem Center served as the headquarters for all “colored workers” of the Red Cross.

In 1929, six years after Bethlehem Center moved to its present location (1417 Charlotte Avenue), forty-eight acres of land were purchased in Cheatham County and given to the center. Camp Dogwood was built and became the first location in Middle Tennessee for African-American youngsters to attend camp. Bethlehem Center conducted a comprehensive program of individual and group services, including out-reach programs to residents of Andrew Jackson and John Henry Hale public housing communities. Bethlehem Center, like other settlements, was an early training center for college students.

In 1969, Bethlehem Center was admitted to the United Givers Fund (now United Way). The following year, the organizational structure changed, and the three settlement houses were consolidated under the name of the United Methodist Neighborhood Centers, with Bethlehem Center serving as the administrative agency. In 1921, the board of directors changed the name of the agency from United Neighborhood Centers to Bethlehem Centers of Nashville.

On February 19, 1994, the Tennessee Historical Commission recognized the significance of Bethlehem Centers of Nashville to the state's social history when it approved the placement of a historical marker commemorating the centers' 100 years of service to the Nashville community.

*Linda T. Wynn, 1996*

## **BLACKS IN THE UNION ARMY OF TENNESSEE (1861-1866)**

Black Tennesseans were active participants in the American Civil War. They contributed immeasurably to the Union victory. In 1860, Tennessee had 275,719 slaves, who represented twenty-five percent of the population. Tennessee also had 7,300 free blacks in 1860, but they suffered racial discrimination and second-class citizenship without the right to vote. The slaves were owned by 36,894 persons, less than twenty percent of Tennessee's white families. The majority of non-slaveholding whites belonged to the yeoman class (farmers and the poor, landless white class). Many white (*i.e.*, East) Tennesseans opposed slavery and wanted it stopped.

After the Civil War hostilities began at Fort Sumter, South Carolina in April 1861, Tennessee's radical Democrats, slaveowners, and southern nationalists led a campaign for secession. The voters defeated the first secession ordinance. But in May 1861, emotions and pressure by the pro-Confederates ran high after Fort Sumter, causing the secession ordinance to pass. Still the Confederates were no more than a vocal minority because white Unionists (thirty-five percent) and blacks (twenty-six percent) outnumbered them. However, the Confederate minority used conscription acts, loyalty requirements, intimidation, racist propaganda, outright oppression, and occupation of East Tennessee to control most Tennessee inhabitants.

The illegal control of Tennessee by the minority Confederates was short-lived. They never had real support among the people in the countryside and could not command the state's resources to effectively prosecute the war. In great paradox, even the slaveowners generally refused to furnish slave labor for the Confederate army. The Confederate General Assembly passed a law to draft free blacks as military laborers in June of 1861.

However, a large Union army arrived in February of 1862, when General Ulysses S. Grant's Union army easily defeated the Confederates at Fort Donelson. Nashville was surrendered quickly on February 23. Then the powerful Union army pushed the Confederates from Shiloh into Mississippi and occupied all Tennessee regions by late 1863. The state Confederate government and the secessionist leader, Governor Isham G. Harris, fled into exile.

The slaves no longer feared slave patrols, empty threats from the plantation mistresses, and movements of Confederate armies. By the fall of 1862, a flood of fugitive slaves caused the federal government to begin a contraband camp system at Grand Junction. Throughout Tennessee, tens of thousands of contraband camp dwellers became an essential labor force for the Union army. They helped to build huge forts like Nashville's Fort Negley and Memphis' Fort Pickering. From Memphis to Nashville, to Chattanooga, to Knoxville, and even to Bristol, black men and women laborers repaired roads, bridges, and railroads, and served as teamsters, common laborers, military hospital workers, servants to officers, cooks, laundresses, cattle herders, assistant surgeons, blacksmiths, and military spies.

In the spring of 1863, the Union began to recruit and organize black soldiers. By war's end, some 20,133 black Union army soldiers served in Tennessee within the following United States Colored Troops units:

**Infantry** -- 11th USCT, 12th USCT, 13th USCT, 14th USCT, 15th USCT, 16th USCT, 17th USCT, 18th USCT, 40th USCT, 42nd USCT, 44th USCT, 55th USCT, 59th USCT, 61st USCT, 63rd USCT, 68th USCT, 88th USCT, 100th USCT, 101st USCT, 110th USCT, and 111th USCT; Heavy and light artillery -- 1st USCHA, 2nd USCHA, 3rd USCHA, 6th USCHA, 9th USCHA, 2nd USCLA (Battery A), 2nd USCLA (Battery H), 2nd USCHLA (Battery F), and 2nd USCLA (Battery 1); **Cavalry** -- 3rd USCC.



Another 3,000 blacks served in Tennessee's Home Guards militia units. Tennessee's USCT units fought in every major skirmish, engagement, and battle in the area. Some Tennessee USCT units assisted General William F. Sherman with his successful "March through Georgia" (in the summer of 1864), and they fought in Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. In the West Tennessee area, the USCT fought in the battles of Moscow, Brice's Crossroads, Memphis, Tupelo, and the Fort Pillow Massacre. At Fort Pillow (April of 1864), Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest and his larger army massacred black soldiers and black families who sought to escape or surrender. Forrest's racially motivated

Confederate troops yelled and waved their pro-slavery symbol (the Confederate battle flag) and swore to give "no quarter" to former slaves who joined the Union army. After Fort Pillow, the Memphis USCT wore medal badges defiantly inscribed with the words, *Remember Fort Pillow*. Eight months later, revenge came in the decisive Battle of Nashville (December 15-19, 1864), when nearly 13,000 USCT soldiers participated in the humiliating defeat of the confederate army of Tennessee (including Forrest's unit). The war ended with a Union victory just four months later. Memphis' 3rd U. S. Colored Cavalry joined the pursuit of CSA President Jefferson Davis when he made an unsuccessful attempt to escape to Mexico.

One can find the graves of many of Tennessee's USCT at the national cemeteries in Tennessee: Nashville (1,909), Memphis (4,208)--which includes the "Fort Pillow Section"-- Chattanooga (103), Knoxville (663), Cumberland River and Stones River (186). Their gravestones are marked distinctively with *USCT*. These men and women constitute some of Tennessee's real heroes who defied evil Confederate principles: racism, treason, and rebellion against the United States.

*Bobby L. Lovett, 1995*

## BLUE TRIANGLE YWCA (1919-1974)



The Blue Triangle League of the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) opened its doors to black girls and women in Nashville on June 1, 1919, in the Napier Court Building at 411 Fourth Avenue, North. The nucleus of the Blue Triangle League came from black women who were members of the Fireside School, a group that met regularly for Bible Study and to make items needed by the black soldiers of

World War I. Mrs. Arch Trawick of the Central (white) YWCA and director of the Southeastern Region of the War Work Council, a national organization for women during the war under the direction of the National YWCA, secured \$2,000 for the League's operation. Negro women raised \$1,000 through Blue Triangle memberships, block parties, and other entertainment to establish the program to assist young women employed in war industries and conduct recreational activities near soldiers' camps. The committee on management became a permanent organization, with Marian Hadley as paid secretary and J. F. Pierce as committee chairperson. Classes and recreational programs were held at local colleges, Bethlehem House, Hadley Park, and on private lawns.

In November of 1920, a three-story residence at 436 Fifth Avenue, North (where the Municipal Auditorium now stands), was purchased. The first floor had one large room for meetings, special affairs, offices, kitchen, and restrooms. The other floors included living space for newly arrived working women. Within seven years, the mortgage was paid on this property. The Blue Triangle Branch's programs included residence for young single women, full Girl Reserve (later called Y-Teens), camping, USO activities, employment services, religious vespers, business and professional clubs, forums, BHW clubs, industrial clubs, interracial committees, leadership training classes, typing, and shorthand classes.

In 1953, a new building was constructed at 1708 Pearl Street, following a successful capital fund drive. Mrs. Maxey Jarman chaired the Central YWCA, and Mrs. D. H. Turpin headed the Blue Triangle. The goal was \$65,000 to be raised by the Central YWCA and \$25,000 by the Blue Triangle Branch. Dedication ceremonies were held on October 25, 1953, when Ceceila N. Adkins chaired the Triangle. All the rooms were furnished by local sororities, clubs, and Blue Triangle Branch committees. The new building became an active center, where women and girls taxed the facility's capacity. A register of approved homes was

kept on hand because white hotels, motels, and even the Central YWCA practiced racial segregation.

Some of the popular classes at the Blue Triangle Branch included drapery and upholstery, sewing, tailoring, typing, slimnastics, culinary art, hat making, floral arrangement, bridge, adult literacy, and special forums. Additionally, the Blue Triangle's Y-Teen program enriched the lives of many black girls at local schools. The faculty of these schools cooperated and served as advisors to help give the girls leadership skills, moral values, camping experiences, and the opportunity to travel and attend YWCA conferences.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the branch facilities were available to the total community. Then, in the midst of the civil rights struggle, the YWCA experienced difficulties in race relations when black applicants for housing were refused admittance. Consequently, the Nashville YWCA's board of directors voted in 1963 to add selected black members of the Blue Triangle to its membership. These first local YWCA board members included Mary D. Shane, Anna G. Sasser, and Carrie R. Hull. The Blue Triangle became known as the Pearl Street Center in 1969. This center closed in 1974, and the facility was sold to the Grace M. Eaton Day Home.

*Carrie R. Hull and Linda T. Wynn, 1988*

### **ARNAUD WENDELL BONTEMPS (1902-1973)**

Arnaud ("Arna") W. Bontemps was born to Paul Bismarck and Maria Carolina (Pembroke) Bontemps on October 13, 1902, in Alexandria, Louisiana. Three years after Bontemps' birth, as a result of several racial incidents, his father moved the family to Los Angeles, California. Reared in California, Bontemps received his primary and secondary education in both the public and private schools of the state. He was graduated from Pacific Union College with an A. B. degree. On August 26, 1916, Bontemps was married to the former Alberta Johnson, and they became the parents of six children (Joan Maria, Paul Bismarck, Poppy Alberta, Camille Ruby, Constance Rebecca, and Arna Alexander).

In 1943, he earned the M.L.S. degree from the Graduate School of Library Science, University of Chicago. The year following his graduation from Pacific Union College, Bontemps' literary career began when his poem "Hope" was published in *Crisis* magazine, a periodical of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). In 1924, Bontemps moved to New York and began teaching at the Harlem Academy. Two years after his move to the epicenter of the "Harlem or Negro Renaissance," Bontemps' poem, "Golgotha Is A Mountain," which was later set to music by John W. Work, III, won the *Opportunity* (publication of the National Urban League) Alexander Pushkin Award for poetry. In 1927, he again was the recipient of the *Opportunity* award for poetry and was the first place winner of the NAACP's *Crisis* poetry contest for his poem, "Nocturne at Bethesda."

Arna Bontemps, who said that he “had watched the Harlem Renaissance from a grandstand seat,” became one of its most prolific contributors. In the late 1920s, Bontemps focused his literary attention on the writing of prose. His first work of fictional prose, *God Sends Sunday*, was published in 1931. This novel was later adapted by Bontemps and Countee Cullen as the stage play, *St. Louis Woman*. In 1931, Bontemps left the Harlem Academy to take a teaching position at Oakwood Junior College in Huntsville, Alabama. He continued his writing, and in 1932 successfully competed for and won the *Opportunity* prize for his short story, “A Summer Tragedy.” During the decade of the 1930s, in addition to his first novel, Bontemps published five books, including historical novels *Black Thunder* (1936) and *Drums at Dusk* (1939) and a children’s work entitled *Sad Face Boy* (1937). A master at his craft, Bontemps became one of the most successful writers of children’s books. In 1938, he received a Julius Rosenwald Fund Fellowship for a study tour in the Caribbean. Three years later, he edited W. C. Handy’s book, *Father of the Blues: An Autobiography*.



In 1943, Arna Bontemps became the head librarian of Fisk University. He procured early materials and resources on the African-American experience. Bontemps’ friendship with Langston Hughes made it possible for him to inaugurate a Langston Hughes Renaissance Collection featuring personalities Jean Toomer, James Weldon Johnson, Charles S. Johnson, and Countee Cullen into the university’s library holdings. A friend of Carl Van Vechten, the New York music critic, author, photographer, and collector, Bontemps convinced Van Vechten to donate his music collection to Fisk. Among others who made donations to the library collections of Fisk University was W. C. Handy. One of the librarian’s peerless attainments was the collection commemorating George Gershwin.

Bontemps continued to be a productive writer. Having turned his attention to the writing of biographical works, in 1945 he published a series of biographical sketches of talented young African-Americans under the title, *We Have Tomorrow*. During the same year, in collaboration with Jack Conroy, he wrote a compelling study of black migration and urbanization entitled, *They Seek A City*. This work was revised and expanded in 1966 as *Any Place but Here*. During the 1950s, Bontemps’ biographical works, *George Washington Carver* (1950), *The Story of George Washington Carver* (1954), and *Frederick Douglass: Slave, Fighter, and Freeman* (1959), were published. Later, his biography, *Young Booker T. Washington*

*Early Days* (1972) was published. In 1956, the two-time recipient of the Julius Rosenwald Fund Fellowship for writing and a John Simon Guggenheim Fellow, Arna Bontemps was awarded the Jane Addams Award for his *The Story of the Negro*. In 1958, with Langston Hughes, he edited *The Book of Negro Folklore*, as well as *The Poetry of the Negro* (1949).

In 1965, Arna W. Bontemps retired from Fisk University. For approximately one year, he served as director of university relations and as acting librarian. In 1966, Bontemps became a professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago and his *Great Slave Narratives* was published. Three years later, he went to Yale University as lecturer and curator of the James Weldon Johnson Collection. He returned to Nashville and Fisk University in 1971 as writer in residence and began penning his autobiography. Arna Bontemps edited *The Harlem Renaissance Remembered* (1972). He wrote and edited over twenty books, his poetry was collected in more than a dozen anthologies, and his periodical publications numbered more than twenty-five, including two fictional and more than fifteen non-fictional articles.

Arnaud Wendell Bontemps died suddenly on June 4, 1973, of a myocardial infarction and later was interred in Nashville's Greenwood Cemetery.

Linda T. Wynn, 1996

### **EVA LOWERY BOWMAN (1899-1984)**

Eva Lowery Bowman, a humanitarian, businessperson, civic leader, and community organizer, actively participated in the representative process to make the community and state more responsive to the needs of the African-American populace. The first African-American beauty inspector and examiner of cosmetology for Tennessee, she served in the administrations of Governors William Prentice Cooper (1939-1945), Jim Nance McCord (1945- 1949), and Gordon Weaver Browning (1937- 1939 and 1949-1953). In 1960, according to reports, Bowman became the "first Negro woman in the South to run for public office." A guiding beacon in the world that American blacks made for themselves, Eva L. Bowman illuminated the access road so that others could correspondingly ingress the thoroughfare to opportunity.

One of eight children, Eva Lowery was born on April 25, 1899, to William and Alice Lowery in Nashville, Tennessee. She received her education in the city's public schools, including Pearl High. Lowery furthered her education by attending Walden University and Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State Normal College (now Tennessee State University). Subsequently, in 1929, she studied cosmetology at Madam C.J. Walker's Lelia College in Indianapolis, Indiana. She continued her cosmetology training at the Institute of Cosmetology in Jersey City. Lowery married Dr. Leonard Cardell and later married Dr. L.A. Bowman.



Bowman established, owned, and operated Bowman Beauty and Barber College, Alice's Beauty Shoppe and Beauty School, Physiotherapy Institute, and Bowman Art School. An innovator in the beauty culture business, in 1946 she introduced the "cooler curl-a-curl without hot irons of grease." She helped to organize and became president of the Nashville Chapter of Beauty Culture. Serving for twelve years, Bowman organized approximately 7,000 beauticians across the state. During the administration of Governor William Prentice Cooper, she became Tennessee's first African-American beauty inspector and examiner of cosmetology. Bowman maintained her position for eight years and continued serving under the administrations of Governors Jim Nance McCord and Gordon Weaver Browning. Through her lobbying efforts and others, in 1951 (during Browning's administration) the Tennessee General Assembly passed legislation stating that "there shall be a Negro Chief Inspector and Examiner to the Board of Cosmetology."

As an advocate for those attending the Tennessee Vocational School for Colored Girls, she asked the state to expand the school's curriculum and include cosmetology as a course of study. The request was granted under Cooper's administration. Bowman also requested and received permission to establish a Cosmetology Institute to assist African-American cosmetologists with staying abreast of the changes, rules, and regulations governing the Cosmetology Board. Held at Tennessee A & I during the summers, beauty school owners and licensed beauticians attended the institute.

Bowman's interests extended beyond the sphere of beauty culture. In 1951, at her expense, she escorted Tennessee A & I State University's Jean Patton (1949 and 1950 Women's 100 Meters Champion) to the first Pan-American Games held in Buenos Aires, Argentina. As a humanitarian, she often used her resources to help those in need, especially at risk and troubled youth. On numerous occasions, she opened her home to troubled children. Often, Bowman Worked with the juvenile court on behalf of youth.

In 1956, after conducting a survey of the city's recreational facilities for African Americans, she concluded that more parks were needed. After organizing and becoming president of the South Nashville Civic League, Bowman demonstrated the need to the Nashville Board of Parks. As a result of her survey, the Nashville City Council passed a bond for the E.S. Rose Park and Easley Community Center. Additionally, the Frederick Douglass Community Center, Napier Park Recreation Center, Watkins Park Bath House, Hadley's Park gymnasium, and Dudley Park were opened. Under her leadership and that of the Southwest Nashville Civic League Committee, the Metropolitan Council of Nashville and Davidson County allotted \$600,000 to keep the city's swimming pools open all summer.

When blacks in America moved the structural support for civil rights and human dignity beyond the courts in favor of massive resistance by ordinary people in order to demolish the wall of segregation, Bowman became an assertive participant. Between the years of 1959 and 1960 when many of the state's African-American citizens in West Tennessee began crusading for their civil and political rights, she made many trips to Fayette County's "Tent City." Not only did she convey food and clothing to Somerville's terrorized

community of tent dwellers, Bowman secured the necessary means to bring twenty persons to Nashville for a program to benefit Tent City's cause. In January of 1960, as president of the United League and interested in improving the economic and social conditions of Nashville blacks, Bowman sought to establish a branch of the Urban league. Under the auspices of the United League, she contacted the Urban League's executive director, Lester B. Grange of New York. After working with concerned citizens, business and community leaders, the Nashville Urban League, Incorporated, was established eight years later. Later, in 1960, Bowman entered the political arena and announced her candidacy for a seat in the Tennessee House of Representatives. The first African-American woman to seek legislative office in Tennessee, she was defeated in the August Democratic Primary.

Bowman served on the boards of the South Street Center and Grace Eaton Day Home and was a volunteer panelist on WVOL' s "What Do you Think?" She was a member of the Business Women's League, City Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, the Tennessee Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, the National Council of Negro Women, the Washington Garden Club, and the Imperial Coterie. A steadfast member of the Spruce Street Baptist Church, she was an active participant in the choir, the Christian Women's Auxiliary, and as a member of the church's Scholarship Committee. As inspector for the City Beautiful Commission, in 1971 the Nashville Housing Authority cited Bowman for "exceptional service toward the betterment of the Edgehill Community."

To the end, Bowman followed her creed "to make the pathway smooth where other feet must tread." The life of Eva Lowery Bowman, a noted humanitarian, businessperson, civic leader, and community organizer in Nashville, ended at St. Thomas Hospital on September 13, 1984. Funeral services were held three days later at Spruce Street Baptist Church. The following morning her remains were interred in Greenwood Cemetery.

*Linda T. Wynn, 2001*

### **LEMUEL ARTHUR BOWMAN (1887-1965)**

Lemuel Arthur Bowman was born in Bowman, South Carolina, on July 24, 1887, to Vastine and Eliza (Richardson) Bowman. He received his early education in the public schools of Bowman. He came to Nashville and entered Walden University. In 1908, he entered Walden's Meharry Medical Department's School of Dentistry. In 1912, he was graduated from Meharry's School of Dentistry with the Doctorate of Dental Science degree. Subsequent to his graduation, Dr. Bowman pursued his career as a dentist.

By the late 1920s, Dr. Bowman had established seven business enterprises. Four of his business adventures failed. Later, he established other successful ventures in Nashville that provided employment opportunities for more than 150 persons. These businesses became very profitable and a source of pride for the prosperous entrepreneur. Dr. Bowman applied his acquired knowledge of the financial business and made discerning,

wise, and profitable investments in the East. Bowman retired from his dental practice with the intention to move into the private sphere, content to live on the income from his remunerative financial investments.



Soon after his retirement, Dr. Bowman was called upon by the secretary of the Sunday School Publishing Board of the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Incorporated. A race-conscious man, Bowman rarely refused to assist his people in developing stronger business practices and economic growth. In the fall of 1932, Bowman accepted the position of treasurer of the Sunday School Publishing Board. He devoted himself to the task and to the goal of the publishing board's administrators to make the organization one of the largest and financially strongest African-American businesses in the world. In his position as treasurer, he skillfully supervised and mastered the economic management of the corporation. Through his contacts with business leaders throughout the

country, he helped the Sunday School Publishing Board achieve sound financial footing. While guiding the Sunday School Publishing Board's fiscal affairs, Bowman managed the finances of approximately twelve other smaller African-American business establishments. A recognized expert in money matters among white bankers of Nashville and eastern capitalists, Bowman was known as the "Rockefeller" of the city's African-American community.

Dr. L. A. Bowman also served as treasurer of the denomination's Finance Commission. He was a member of the National Bath House Commission and a member of the American Baptist Theological Seminary Board of Trustees. In addition to serving the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc., in various capacities, Bowman rendered his time and service to Spruce Street Baptist Church, where he directed the church's business affairs as chairman of its board of trustees. He, along with Dr. A. M. Townsend, led the congregation as it made plans to relocate to its present site at the corner of Twentieth Avenue, North, and Pearl Street.

Dr. Bowman was a member of numerous professional, civic, and social organizations, including the Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity and the Nashville Chamber of Commerce. A life member of the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc., Bowman was one of the few lay persons ever honored for his work in the denomination's convention. At age seventy-seven, the life of Dr. Lemuel Arthur Bowman, dentist, financier, and churchman came to a close on Friday, March 26, 1965. The service of triumph was held four days later at Spruce Street Baptist Church. The remains of the preeminent financier of the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc., and chairman of the Board of Trustees of Spruce Street

Baptist Church were interred in the Bowman Family Mausoleum in Nashville's Greenwood Cemetery. He was survived by his third wife, Leora (Watkins) Bowman (now deceased), son L. A. Bowman, Jr., grandson Louis Alphonso Bowman, two brothers and three sisters.

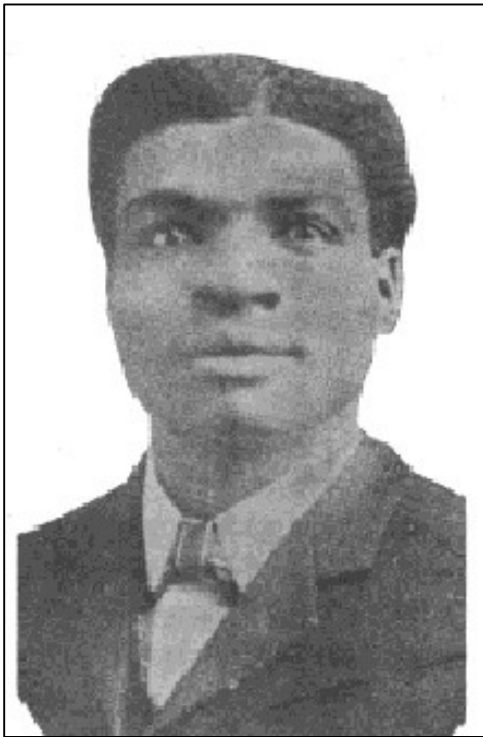
*Linda T. Wynn, 1995*

### **HENRY ALLEN BOYD (1876-1959)**

Henry Allen Boyd was born in Grimes County, Texas, in 1876. He was the son of Richard Henry and Hattie Boyd. His father came to Nashville in November of 1896 and founded the National Baptist Publishing Board. Henry Allen later came to Nashville to help his father. Before moving from his native Texas, Henry Allen served as a postal clerk in San Antonio. He became an ordained minister in 1904. Boyd served with his father as the assistant secretary of the National Baptist Publishing Board.

During the period of 1905-1910, Henry Allen Boyd became a local leader in his own right. Boyd became executive secretary of the Colored Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). Boyd and other prominent black businessmen restored the Colored YMCA in 1914 and led a drive to raise funds to buy a permanent home for the organization. Before

the end of World War I, Boyd and his group moved the Colored YMCA into a permanent home, the old Duncan Hotel on the southeast corner of Fourth Avenue, North, and Cedar (Charlotte) Street.



After 1912, Boyd edited the Nashville newspaper, *The Globe* (1905-1959) and presided over the Globe Publishing Company. The most powerful and consistent newspaper black Nashville had seen, *The Globe* began with the effort to publicize Nashville's 1905 black streetcar boycott. *The Globe* became the voice, conscience, and "riot for the black community". Its pages documented the religious, social, cultural, political, and economic life of a thriving southern community. *The Globe's* editorials criticized those who oppressed black people, praised men and women who made good examples for the black race, opposed Jim Crowism and racism, promoted morality and religion, encouraged blacks to continue participating in politics, and pushed city authorities and black businessmen to improve local living conditions. In

1909 Henry Allen Boyd, Ben Carr, and others successfully helped to persuade the state to build the Negro State Normal School in Davidson County. During the Great World War,

Boyd helped to lead the black community in patriotic endeavors. He headed bond drives, visited local black troops in northern training camps, increased the Colored YMCA's services to black soldiers, and carried government advertisements in *The Globe* for Liberty Bonds and military recruits.

Upon the death of his father in 1922, Henry Allen Boyd assumed the presidency of Citizens Bank and secretary of the National Baptist Publishing Board. He became secretary of the National Baptist Sunday School Congress and a director emeritus of the Supreme Liberty Life Insurance Company of Chicago. He held memberships in the National Negro Business League, the NAACP and Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity. Boyd promoted black (Republican) politics. However, as a pragmatist, he supported local Democrats--especially Mayor Hilary Howse.

Dr. Henry Allen Boyd died on May 28, 1959. After his death, *The Globe* ceased publication. To accommodate an overflowing crowd his funeral services were moved from Mount Olive Baptist Church to the auditorium of Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State College. Nashville Mayor Ben West and other dignitaries eulogized Boyd as a great mind, a lover of mankind, a Renaissance man, a businessperson, a philosopher, a preacher, a publisher, and a writer.

*Bobby L. Lovett, 1987*

### **RICHARD HENRY BOYD (1855-1912)**

Richard Henry Boyd, preacher, missionary, entrepreneur, publisher, banker, educator, writer, and black nationalist, was born a slave to Indiana Dixon in Noxubee County, Mississippi, on March 15, 1843. Although he was christened Dick Gray by his slave master, he proudly changed his name to Richard Henry Boyd after the Civil War. He served as a Texas Confederate body servant near the Battle of Chattanooga during the war. After the battle, he returned with the Gray family to their home in Texas. Upon the death of the surviving head of the Gray family, Dick became a cowboy.

In 1869, Richard Boyd became a Baptist minister. During 1872, he helped organize the Negro Baptist Convention of Texas. During the 1880s, he attended Bishop College in Marshall, Texas. Boyd strongly believed in the ideals of black initiative and self-help for the former slaves. This ideology would later make him a life-long supporter of Booker T. Washington. In 1909, Boyd, Preston Taylor, James C. Napier, and other prominent black leaders would sponsor a state-wide tour for Booker Washington.

Boyd arrived in Nashville in November of 1896. He came to the city for the purpose of establishing a publishing house for Negro Baptists. He wanted blacks to publish their own literature, operate their own businesses, and guide the minds of their own children. Upon arriving in Nashville, Boyd solicited the aid of the pastor of Mount Olive Baptist Church and the white director of the Sunday school press of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Boyd became a member of the Reverend C. H. Clark's Mount Olive Baptist Church. The white Baptist Publishing Board loaned him printing plates to start the first publications for the National Baptist Publishing Board (in January of 1897). Until his death in August of 1922, R. H. Boyd was one of Nashville's five top black leaders and undoubtedly one of its most illustrious citizens.



Boyd's work was unending. He assisted in the work of the American Missionary Convention, the American Foreign Mission Convention, and the Education Convention. He contributed to the founding and growth of Bishop College, Guadalupe College, Boyd's Normal Institute, Central Texas College, Roger Williams University, and the National Baptist Theological and Missionary Training Seminary in Nashville (1918-1931). At the latter institution, he served on the faculty. He wrote more than fourteen denominational books, including *Plantation Melody Songs*, *Theological Kernals*, *An Outline of Negro Baptist History*, and *The Story of the Publishing Board*. He traveled to various parts of the world, including the World's Baptist Alliance Meeting in London. He was involved in organizing the One Cent Savings Bank, the *Nashville Globe* newspaper, the National Baptist Church Supply Company, the National Negro Doll Company, and the Baptist Sunday School Congress. He was a member of various fraternal, civic, and professional organizations; he also

was a leader of black Nashville's 1905 streetcar boycott and purchasing agent of the Union Transportation Company.

Richard Henry Boyd was survived by his wife, Hattie Albertine Moore (whom he had married in 1871), and by five living children: Mattie B. Johnson, Annie L. Hall, Lula B. Landers (all married), Henry Allen Boyd, and Theophilus Bartholomew Boyd. He was interred in Nashville's Greenwood Cemetery.

*Lois C. McDougald, 1983*

### **ROBERT FULTON BOYD (1855-1912)**

Robert Fulton Boyd was born July 8, 1855, to Maria Cuffey and Edward Boyd on a farm in Giles County, Tennessee. In 1866 Maria brought Robert to Nashville to live with Paul Eve, a surgeon with an international reputation. During his stay with Dr. Eve, he enrolled in night classes at Fisk University and dreamed of becoming a physician. In 1872 he hired

himself to General James H. Hickman, a real estate agent. Boyd worked half the day and attended school the other half, receiving no wages. He left in 1875 to enter the teaching profession.

Boyd began his teaching career at College Grove in Williamson County, Tennessee, returning to Giles County the following year. He soon became principal of the male school in Pulaski, and then acted as principal of the female department of Pulaski's public schools.



Robert Fulton Boyd entered the medical department of Central Tennessee College in 1880 and graduated with honors in 1882. He practiced medicine and taught school in New Albany, Mississippi. He later returned to Meharry as adjunct professor of chemistry. While teaching, he entered the new dental department at Central Tennessee College, graduating with honors in 1886. In 1887, Boyd opened an office on North Cherry Street (Fourth Avenue) to practice his professions among the less fortunate. By the turn of the century, he was treating patients in all socioeconomic classes. Dr. Boyd was particularly alarmed by the black mortality rate and in his paper entitled, "What are the Causes of the Great Mortality Among Negroes in the Cities of the South, and How is That Mortality to be Lessened?," he made some of the earliest and most astute observations regarding the physical condition of Afro-Americans. Doctor Boyd used

public forums, including Nashville churches, to instruct the Negro populace in the causes, origins, and transmission of tuberculosis and taught them ways to combat this disease.

During the summer of 1890, Boyd attended the Postgraduate School of Medicine at the University of Chicago. In 1891 he received the Master of Arts degree from Central Tennessee College. Boyd ran for mayor and for a seat in the Tennessee General Assembly as a Republican by 1893. He returned to the Chicago school in 1892, specializing in the diseases of women and children. His experiences in a Chicago teaching hospital proved highly beneficial to Meharry, as Boyd became professor of gynecology and clinical medicine there in 1893.

Central Tennessee College had been unsuccessful in securing funds for a teaching hospital, but when the city opened a hospital close to the school, students gained privileges there. Negroes constituted almost half of the patient population. For a time, the wards and clinics were opened to Meharry students, then the city abruptly suspended the

permission. This lost opportunity galvanized the resourcefulness of Dr. Boyd, and he opened Mercy Hospital in 1900, located at 811 South Cherry Street.

Ten Negro physicians and Dr. Boyd organized a national fraternity of black doctors, of which Boyd was elected president. This group was the Society of Colored Physicians and Surgeons, which later became the National Medical Association.

In the 1890s, he purchased a three-story brick house on Cedar Street for \$14,000, reportedly the largest transfer of real estate to a person of African descent in Tennessee up to that time. When Nashville's second Afro-American bank, People's Savings Bank and Trust Company, was organized in 1909, Boyd was elected its president.

Death came suddenly to Dr. Robert Fulton Boyd on July 20, 1912, following an "attack of acute indigestion." Funeral services were held in the Ryman Auditorium, and his body was interred in Nashville's Mt. Ararat Cemetery. He was survived by his mother, Maria Coffey.

*Linda T. Wynn, 1985*

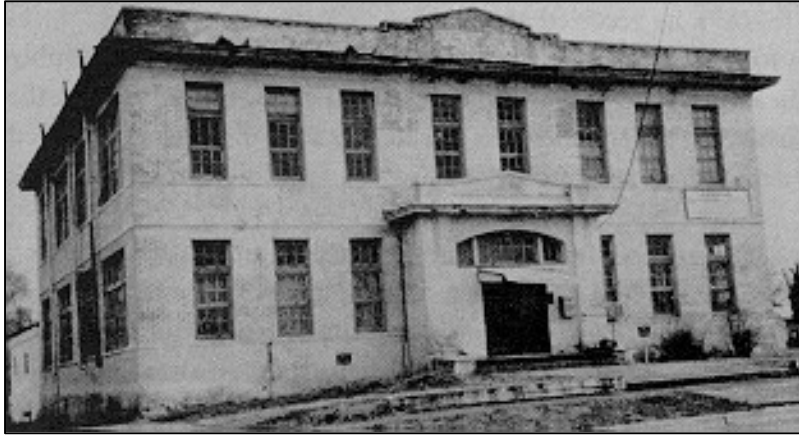
### **BRADLEY ACADEMY (1811- )**

Bradley Academy, a two-story brick building located at 415 South Academy Street in Murfreesboro, is a dominant landmark, visible for some distance from its commanding position on the hill overlooking downtown Murfreesboro. The building sits on land donated in 1811 by the Murfree family for use as a school. The first school built on the site in 1811 was log and one of the first principals was Professor Bradley, for whom the school was named.

The early nineteenth-century institution's leading scholar was Dr. Henderson, who came to Murfreesboro and founded the First Presbyterian Church. Prior to coming to Murfreesboro, Henderson was pastor of a church in Maury County where he was tutor to the children of Samuel Polk, among them James Knox Polk, who would become the eleventh President of the United States in 1844. When Henderson moved to Murfreesboro, James K. Polk followed his teacher and enrolled in Bradley Academy, delivering the commencement address in 1814. In the audience that night were Mr. and Mrs. Joel Childress of Murfreesboro and their daughter, Sarah who later married Polk.

Bradley Academy was the first school in Murfreesboro, but it was soon followed by the Female Academy in 1825, Union University in 1834, and Soule College in 1851. In 1884, Bradley Academy was designated the first school for students of African American descent. The first enrollment was 150 students, taught by three faculty members. Bradley graduated its first graduates in 1893.





The present building was constructed in 1917 and opened the following year. After Holloway High School was opened for blacks in 1928, Bradley Academy continued as a first through eighth-grade school. Although accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), when integration of

Murfreesboro schools occurred during the 1960s Bradley was closed and converted to office and storage space.

In 1988, a committee of Bradley alumni and interested citizens formed a group to preserve and rehabilitate the 1917 building. The Bradley Academy Historical Association, formed in 1990, was dedicated to "reclaim the 1917 building for use as a multi-purpose community educational, cultural, and heritage facility." In 1990 the Bradley Academy building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places. With leadership from the E. A. Davis Elk Lodge Number 1138, Bradley Academy Historical Association was formally established with its charter, by-laws, and non-profit status to rehabilitate the building as a community resource center. In 1991 the Tennessee Historical Commission erected a state historical marker at Bradley Academy. A federal grant, through the City of Murfreesboro, was secured to continue rehabilitation of the building through 1994.

*Willie A. McGowan, 1996*

### **JOHN ROBERT BRADLEY (1919-2007)**

John Robert Lee Bradley was born in Memphis, Tennessee to John and Lela Ellis Bradley on October 5, 1919. Reared by his mother, Bradley and his brother grew up poverty-stricken. His mother worked in a laundry but experienced difficulty making ends meet. In *A Wealth of Wisdom*, Bradley stated "I know what it is to be hungry. I know what it is to need shoes. I know what it is to not have a house to live in, because they had set our little furniture out on the street because my mother couldn't pay the rent." He withdrew from school around the third grade lacking the rudimentary reading and writing skills. Yet, he was gifted with a classical baritone voice.

Around age twelve, Bradley joined other children outside Ellis Auditorium in Memphis, at a National Baptist Convention Christmas Eve program where low-wealth children singing in a church choir were gifted clothes and Christmas stockings. Bradley "sang his way" into the convention hall, where he met Lucie Campbell, the convention's music

director and a pioneering gospel songwriter. In her role, Campbell introduced young promising talent and auditioned musicians to the convention's audiences such as Marian Anderson, Thomas A. Dorsey, and Mahalia Jackson. Impressed by Bradley, Campbell became his mentor, introduced him to the National Baptist Convention and made him the lead singer in her newly-organized Good Will Singers Quartet that toured nationally. Campbell chose Bradley to introduce her newest compositions and he became the best-known interpreter of her songs.

Known for his rich baritone voice, Bradley received voice lessons from Charles Faulkner Bryan, head of Tennessee Polytechnic Institute's (TPI, now Tennessee Technological University) music division. In 1938, during the era of Jim Crow segregation, Bradley met



Charles and Edith Bryan at a revival in McMinnville, Tennessee, where they were the only whites in the audience. Bradley had appeared before live audiences for years and developed a classical style. Surprised by the quality of his voice, the Bryans introduced themselves to the young baritone after the show. Charles Bryan feared that Bradley would damage his voice if he did not learn the proper technique and he offered to give Bradley lessons. The two began a week of lessons the next day, after which Bryan asked Bradley to stay in touch. As noted in Laura Clemons' article "The Missionaries of TPI," Bryan risked his own career to assist Bradley in establishing his.

In the fall of 1938, Bradley left the revival singers and moved to Cookeville, Tennessee, where the Bryans arranged for him to live with an African American pastor. Once Bradley became established in Cookeville, Bryan began teaching him on the campus of Tennessee Polytechnic Institute (TPI). However, because the campus was racially segregated, voice lessons were given covertly at night. By day, Edith Bryan taught Bradley to read and write. Ultimately, the school's president, Q. M. Smith, discovered that Bryan was giving Bradley voice lessons. Smith went against the racial mores of the day and allowed Bryan to continue working with Bradley. After a year of working with Bryan, the baritone singer left Cookeville and moved to Nashville.

In the early 1940s, Bradley decided to study classical music. With help from Lucie Campbell and Dr. A. M. Townsend of the Sunday School Publishing Board of the National Baptist Convention, U. S. A., he studied voice with Wagnerian singer Edythe Walker in New York, where he made his Carnegie Hall debut. Later, he studied classical music in London and performed for the king and queen of England in 1955 where he made his Royal Albert Hall debut. He studied at London's Trinity College and sang for BBC radio. He also performed at the World Baptist Alliance (WBA) in London, where Campbell

introduced him to global Baptist congregations throughout Europe and Scandinavia. Bradley sang her version of *The Lord Is My Shepherd*. Due to his success and numerous repeat performances at the WBA, Bradley became known as “Mister Baptist” and became one of the most visible faces of African American Baptists.

During the course of his concert career, John Robert Bradley performed at concerts across Europe and the Americas, where he sang arias, lieder and spirituals. Notwithstanding his success as a concert performer, “Mr. Baptist” continued singing in churches and gospel concerts. He always made sure to include such songs as *Amazing Grace*, *Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child*, and *You’ve Got to Love Everybody*. During the era of the Modern Civil Rights Movement, Bradley used his singing as a means of breaking down racial barriers. While whites would not listen to African American preachers, he noted, they would listen to him sing. Consequently, he was able to break down some racial impediments across the South.

The renowned singer recorded his first gospel single for the Apollo label in 1950 and went on to record for Decca. Apollo 211's sides were *Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel*, and *If Jesus Had to Pray*. At the same session for Apollo, Bradley recorded the unreleased *Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone*, *Poor Pilgrim of Sorrow*, *Lord Hear my Plea*, and a magisterial reading of *He's Got the Whole World in His Hands*. Twelve years later, Bradley recorded LP's for Battle Records (1962), Decca Records (1965), Nashboro Records (*I'll Fly Away*, 1974) and Spirit Feel/Shanachie, among others. In 1997, he recorded several cuts for Tony Heilbut's collection *All God's Sons & Daughters: Chicago Gospel Legends*, which Heilbut's Spirit Feel label released in 1999.

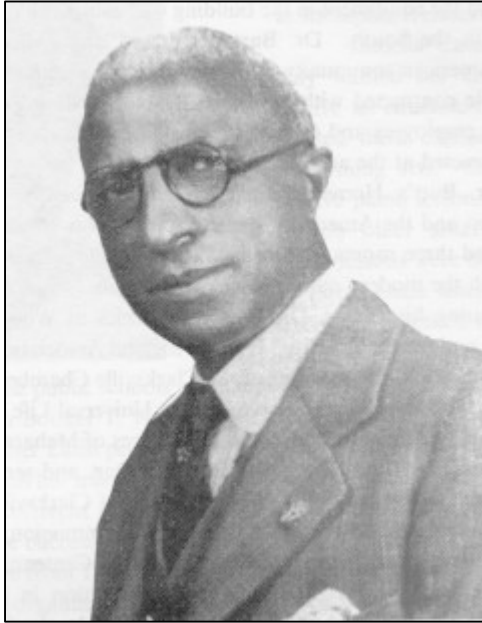
After the 1963 demise of Lucie Campbell, Bradley succeeded her as director of music for the National Baptist Convention, U. S. A., Inc. On February 2, 1972, Bradley, the National Baptist Convention's most popular singer, paid homage to the renowned gospel vocalist Mahalia Jackson, when he rendered a song at her funeral. In 1993, with assistance from the Rev. Amos Jones, Bradley's memoir, *In the Hands of God: The Life Story of J. Robert Bradley, an Autobiography*, was published by Sunday School Publishing Board of the National Baptist Convention, U. S. A. Inc. John Robert Bradley made his last performance at the National Baptist Convention in 2005.

A favorite singer of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., he was knighted in Liberia by President William Tolbert in 1975. Mahalia Jackson once noted, “Nobody need mess with ‘Amazing Grace’ after Bradley...” A member of Spruce Street Baptist Church, Sir J. Robert Bradley died on May 3, 2007. He was funeralized at Spruce Street and interred next to his mother in Greenwood Cemetery on May 7, 2007.

*Linda T. Wynn, 2021*

## **ROBERT T. BURT (1873-1955)**

Robert Tecumseh Burt was born in Attola County, Mississippi, on November 25, 1873. He was the third child of ex-slaves Robert and Sylvia (Sanders) Burt. Upon completion of his primary education at the county school, Burt walked eight miles to and from the high school in Kosciusko. Then he entered Jackson College in Jackson, Mississippi, and finished the normal course in three years. Later, he entered the teaching profession and taught in schools in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas.



In the fall of 1889, Robert T. Burt entered Walden University in Nashville, Tennessee. Things were proceeding on course for Burt until he was stricken with typhoid fever and was forced to return home to Kosciusko. After recovering from his malady, he attended Central Mississippi College, finishing the course offered there. He later returned to Nashville and received his A. B. degree from Walden University. In 1893, Burt entered Meharry Medical College; he completed his four-year medical course with honors in 1897.

Dr. Burt opened his first office in McMinnville, Tennessee. To augment his earnings and pay his education debts, Burt taught classes and held the principalship of Bernard School. In 1902, he relocated to Clarksville, where he succeeded Dr. S. P.

Livingston. Dr. Burt set up downtown offices at the rear of the Dickson-Sadler Building on Third Street. In 1904, he purchased the Current House on Front Street (now Riverside Drive) and converted it into a residence and an infirmary for African-American patients in the Clarksville area. Medical history was made when Dr. Burt opened the Home Infirmary to the public on March 6, 1906: it was the first and only hospital in Clarksville until 1916. Burt operated his hospital until the Clarksville Memorial Hospital opened its doors in August of 1954.

Robert Burt engaged in post-graduate work at Harvard University and at the E. A. Printy School of Surgical Technique; he observed new surgical procedures at Michael Reese Hospital, studied at Mt. Sinai Hospital in New York, and attended staff meetings at Bellevue Hospital and Boston City Hospital. He also observed at Mayo Clinic in Rochester and even visited a hospital in Cuba. He worked at his infirmary with a staff of five doctors and eight nurses, and the equipment in the building was comparable to that found in all but the largest hospitals in the South. Dr. Burt performed many surgical procedures. He served the African-American community in the north-central Tennessee and adjacent Kentucky border region. He contracted with the Black Diamond Mining Company to care

for its African-American employees and treated the obstetric patients at Fort Campbell before a hospital was constructed at the army base.

Dr. Burt's Home Infirmary was recognized by the National Medical Hospital Association and the American Medical Association. When the Home Infirmary opened in 1906, it had three rooms, two beds, and one nurse. By 1923, the infirmary had thirty-two rooms with the modern conveniences of the time.

During his career, Dr. Burt held clinics at Woodmen's Hospital in Hot Springs, Arkansas, and for the Tri-City Medical Hospital Association in Hot Springs, where he served as president. He was a member of the Clarksville Chamber of Commerce and a stockholder in the Northern Bank of Tennessee and the Universal Life Insurance Company of Memphis. He served as a member of the Board of Trustees of Meharry Medical College, was a member of the Examining Board during World War I, and served the Juvenile Court for many years, as well as serving on the Welfare Board of Clarksville. He was state chairman of the executive committee of the State Interracial Commission; he was appointed by Governor Gordon Browning to represent Tennessee at the Centennial in Mound Bayou, Mississippi, and at the Richard Wright Centennial Celebration in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He received the Rosenwald Award and was honored by the Clarksville community when Burt High School was named in his honor.

Dr. Robert Tecumseh Burt died on August 16, 1955, following an illness of eight years. Funeral services were conducted at St. Peter's A. M. E. Church, and he was interred in the Golden Hill Cemetery.

On July 2, 1993, at the location where Dr. Robert T. Burt established Clarksville's first hospital, a Tennessee historical marker was dedicated as a lasting memorial to this pioneering physician.

*Linda T. Wynn, 1996*

### **LUCIE E. CAMPBELL-WILLIAMS (1885-1963)**

In 1855, Lucie Eddie Campbell, the youngest of nine children, was born to Burrell and Isabella (Wilkerson) Campbell in Duck Hill, Mississippi. Burrell Campbell worked for the Mississippi Central Railroad (later purchased by the Illinois Central Railroad), and Isabella worked as a cook. Shortly after Lucie's birth, Burrell Campbell was killed in a train accident. Being the sole provider for and caretaker of her nine children, Isabella moved to Memphis, Tennessee.

Isabella Campbell not only wanted her children to receive an education, she also wanted them exposed to the performing arts. She elected to give piano lessons to Lora, Lucie's older sister. While piano lessons were being given to Lora, Lucie listened attentively and practiced the lessons on her own.

Lucie Campbell was educated in the public schools of Memphis. In 1899, she was graduated from Kortrecht High School (later Booker T. Washington) as valedictorian of her class and was awarded the highest prize for her Latin proficiency. After completing high school, Lucie passed the teachers' exam and began her teaching career at Carnes Avenue Grammar School. In 1911, she was transferred to Kortrecht High School, where she taught American history and English. Later, she earned the baccalaureate degree from Rust College in Holy Springs, Mississippi, and the master's degree from Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State College.

At age nineteen, Campbell organized a group of Beale Street musicians into the Music Club. Other members later were added to form a thousand-voice choir that performed at the National Baptist Convention. At the organizational meeting of the National Sunday and Baptist Training Union Congress held in Memphis in 1915, "Miss Lucie" was elected as Music Director. She penned songs for the Congress and wrote musical pageants exhorting the young to give their lives to Christian service. In addition to writing religious music for the Congress, she also wrote the Congress' study lessons, as well as other instructional materials.



In 1919, Lucie E. Campbell published her first song, *Something Within*, which was followed by more than one hundred others, including *The Lord is My Shepherd*, *Heavenly Sunshine*, *The King's Highway*, *Touch Me Lord Jesus*, and *He Understands*, *He'll Say Well Done*. Campbell also introduced promising young musicians such as Marian Anderson and J. Robert Bradley to the world. "Miss Lucie" introduced Marian Anderson to the National Baptist Convention and served as her accompanist. In 1955, Miss Lucie's loyalty and dedication to the Baptist Sunday School and Baptist Training Union Congress was recognized when she was named as one of the principal lecturers during the 50th Anniversary Session held in Atlantic City, New Jersey.

In 1946, she was named to the National Policy Planning Commission of the National Education Association. She was elected vice president of the American Teachers Association and from 1941 to 1946 she served as president of the Tennessee Teachers Association.

Lucie E. Campbell was an activist for civil justice. She defied the "Jim Crow" streetcar laws when she refused to relinquish her seat in the section reserved for whites, and as

president of the Negro Education Association she struggled with governmental officials to redress the inequities in the pay scale and other benefits for Negro teachers.

On January 14, 1960, Lucie Eddie Campbell married her life-long companion, the Reverend C. R. Williams. The marriage ceremony took place in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Zack Brown in Memphis. As an expression of her love and respect for her friend, business partner, and companion, Lucie Eddie Campbell-Williams dedicated her song, *They That Wait Upon the Lord*, to her husband.

The National Sunday School and the Baptist Training Union Congress of the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc., showed its appreciation to its “first lady of music” when it declared June 20, 1962, as Lucie E. Campbell Appreciation Day. While preparing to attend the celebration and banquet held in her honor, Campbell-Williams suddenly became gravely ill and was rushed to the hospital.

After a six-month bout with illness, Lucie Eddie Campbell-Williams died on January 3, 1963, in Nashville. Her body was conveyed to Memphis and funeral services were held on January 7<sup>th</sup> at the Mount Nebo Baptist Church by pastor Dr. Roy Love. She was interred in the Mount Carmel Cemetery.

*Linda T. Wynn, 1996*

### **HENRY ALVIN CAMERON (1872-1918)**

Henry Alvin Cameron was born in Nashville, Tennessee, on February 4, 1872, to Walter and Jane Bentley Cameron. The earliest known address of Henry Cameron comes from an 1880 census record of the Cameron household when he was eight years old. The family lived at 158 Line Street (currently Jo Johnston Avenue in North Nashville). There were five people living in the Cameron household at the time: Henry's father, Walter, whose job occupation was listed as a laborer; his mother Jane, a washerwoman; his older brother William and his maternal grandmother, Mary. There was also a sister named Willie who was mentioned in Henry's will that was written just days before he sailed for France to fight in World War I. (A copy of his will can be found at the Eva B. Dorsey Library at Cameron School.)

Cameron graduated in 1892 from Meigs High School in East Nashville. Among the students in his graduating class of five boys and four girls was Louise S. Brien, his future wife. In 1896, he received a B.A. degree from Fisk University and later joined the Pearl High School faculty as a science teacher. In 1898, Professor Cameron received the LL.B. degree from Central Tennessee College (which later became Walden University in 1900)--a post-secondary school for African Americans that was located at the current site of Cameron Middle School. He married Brien, his high school sweetheart, on June 7, 1899, in Nashville. Reportedly, Louise Cameron had one of the finest singing voices in Nashville and performed at many local events in the city.



Professor Cameron was a man of unusual mental ability and extraordinary physical fitness. He was an avid sports enthusiast who became the first basketball and baseball coach at Pearl High. He possessed a deep love for his students and they in turn adored him immensely. He had a multitude of dear friends, cherished his wife Louise and involved himself in an array of successful business ventures, which included a stint as president of the Capital City Baseball League, a local baseball franchise consisting of eight teams based in the Nashville area. Professor Cameron was also actively engaged in the social, political, and civic life of his community. Some of his affiliations included serving as president of the Middle Tennessee Teacher's Association; secretary of the Tennessee Aid Association; Organic Member of the Grand Lodge of Tennessee (32nd Mason); fraternal member of the Knights of Pythias; member of the

Nashville Teacher's Literary and Benefit Association; and a beloved elder of his church, St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, which was formerly located on Capitol Hill. He was often in the company of many of the prominent Nashville African-American contemporaries such as J. C. Napier, Robert H. Boyd, Preston Taylor, and John Wesley Work, Jr., to name a few. One of his closest friends was George E. Washington - mentor, teaching colleague at Pearl, business partner, and the person for whom the former Washington Jr. High School was named.

In April 1917, the United States reluctantly entered World War I in Europe against the Germans. Two months later, at age forty-five Professor Cameron, a devoted patriot, took a leave of absence from teaching at Pearl High and volunteered for the war effort. He was commissioned on October 15, 1917, as a 1st Lieutenant in the United States Army at Fort Des Moines, Iowa, which was a segregated facility established specifically for training African American officers in World War I. After completing basic training at camps in Illinois and New York, Lt. Cameron sailed for France on June 10, 1918. He was assigned to Company M, 365th Infantry, 92nd Division, one of three African American Infantry Divisions in combat during World War I. For some unknown reason, the U.S. Army reversed Lt. Cameron's first and middle names and he was listed in his service records as Alvin H. Cameron instead of Henry A. Cameron. As an officer, he was a fastidious and capable leader who always cared about the safety and well-being of the men under his command. They succeeded in winning many battles against a fierce and determined German army in the face of insurmountable odds despite the overt racism received from his own U.S. Army superiors. On October 30, 1918, during the Battle of Argonne Forest, France, Lt. Cameron was killed in action while on a scout patrol with his unit. His army comrades as well as the city of Nashville went into a state of panic upon hearing the news of his death. He was the first of only three black men appointed officers in WWI from



Tennessee and the first black officer to die from Tennessee. Cameron was buried at St. Mihiel American Cemetery in Thiaucourt, France.

In 1919, with the introduction of American Legion posts all over the country, the Henry A. Cameron Post 6 was established in Nashville in his honor. One of the first American Legion posts named after an African American, it is still operational. On November 26, 1928, the Nashville City School Board named Cameron School in tribute to this man who stood for the highest example of civic duty by giving his life unselfishly for his country. His distinguished career as an educator, businessman, lawyer, community leader, coach, churchman, soldier, and officer left an indelible testimonial of scholarship, commitment, and public service for all to follow.

*Donald L. Johnson, 2008*

## **CAMERON SCHOOL**

Nashville's Cameron School came into being on Monday night November 26, 1928 when the Nashville City School Board voted unanimously to rename Pearl Junior High School to Cameron in honor of Professor Henry Alvin Cameron, an African-American science teacher who was killed in World War I. Cameron was the fourth public school in Nashville named after an African American by the city school board.



The first Cameron School was located at 217 5th Avenue South, across the street from what is now the Country Music Hall of Fame in downtown Nashville. It was a two-story brick structure with no indoor plumbing but one that the community was proud to have. The heating source consisted of several stoves and grates located throughout the building. An annex building in the rear of the campus housed the Home Economics and Industrial Arts departments and a small cafeteria. The structure went through many designations during

its 60-year existence. Built in 1883, the schoolhouse began as Pearl Grammar School serving grades 1-8. In 1897, when the Nashville Board of Education transferred the African-American high school department from Meigs to Pearl, the building became the first Pearl High. In 1917, Pearl High moved to a new facility on 16th Avenue in North Nashville. The 5th Avenue schoolhouse remained vacant until the fall of 1924, when it

reopened as Pearl Junior High, serving grades 1-9. Four years later, on November 26, 1928, the Nashville City School Board voted to rename Pearl Junior High in honor of Professor Cameron.

President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal programs provided federal funding to Nashville throughout the 1930s, and through the Public Works Administration, Cameron moved into a new building on 1st Avenue South in the fall of 1940. This spacious Gothic Revival-style facility was designed by one of the foremost architects in the country, Nashvillian Henry Hibbs, who planned the Nashville Electrical Service building in downtown Nashville and numerous college and university structures at Vanderbilt, Fisk, Peabody, Scarritt, Belmont, Meharry and other southern schools. The new Cameron consisted of four floors with a combined area of over 106,000 square feet. It had 23 classrooms, 2 office areas, a large library, three Home Economics rooms, a clinic, two laboratories (General Science and Physics/Chemistry), two shops, a cafeteria, kitchen, boiler room, teacher's lounge, storage and janitor's rooms. The campus comprised over 7 acres and sits at the original site of the old Walden University and Meharry Medical College.

In the fall of 1955, finally fulfilling a long-awaited community dream, Cameron became the third African-American high school in the city of Nashville. Physical additions to Cameron, such as the McKissack & McKissack-designed East Wing (consisting of the boy's gymnasium, auditorium, band/vocal rooms and arcade) built in 1954 and the stadium which opened in the fall of 1956, provided the necessary resources for the school's new high school status. Cameron's first senior high graduating class received diplomas in June 1957.

The school's exceptional faculty, choral groups, marching band, athletic teams, science clubs, newspaper staff, player's guild and other departments won numerous city, state, and national honors. Cameron's 1958 and 1959 football teams went undefeated, and back-to-back TSSAA state basketball championships were captured in 1970 and 1971 by the men's varsity basketball team, coached by Pearl High standout Ronald R. Lawson Sr. and led by team members Freddie Lewis, Geary Jackman, Michael Edmondson, Harold Corlew, Cecil Beaird, Kenneth Cooper, Carl Baker, Larry Knight, and David Vaughn. Other notable graduates of Cameron High School include engineer Jessie Russell, financial analyst Eric McKissack, musicians Bobby Hebb, Andrew White, Jr., and Freddie Carpenter, and professional athletes Leon Moore, Cecil Beaird, Gordon Banks, and David Vaughn.

As a direct result of a federal mandate to desegregate public schools in Nashville, Cameron High issued its last diplomas in June 1971, effectively ending its status as a high school for 16 years. The school returned to Junior High status as an integrated 9th grade school in the fall of 1971. In 1978, Cameron became the pilot institution for the Metro Nashville school system as a middle school for grades 5-8. Currently, it still operates as a middle school accommodating one of the most ethnically diverse student populations within the Metropolitan Nashville system. In 2003, a \$4.5 million dollar modernization project was completed at Cameron that renovated many areas of the building. In 2005, the school was

listed in the National Register of Historic Places and the campus was designated by the Metropolitan Nashville Historical Commission as a Local Historic Landmark District. As a Middle School, Cameron continues its long-standing commitment to serve the educational needs of the students of Nashville, Tennessee.

*Donald L. Johnson, 2009*

### **CHARLES WARNER CANSLER (1871-1953)**



Charles Warner Cansler was born in Maryville, Tennessee, on May 15, 1871. His mother, Laura Scott Cansler, was Knoxville's first black schoolteacher in 1864, when she got permission from Union Army General Ambrose Burnside to open a school for free blacks during the occupation of Knoxville.

Young Cansler attended the Freedmen's Normal Institute in Maryville before enrolling in biracial Maryville College. Although he did not graduate, he taught school in several counties of East Tennessee before accepting a position in the city schools of Knoxville. At the age of nineteen, he took the civil service examination for

railway mail clerk and was hired as a substitute a few months later. Although this position paid no salary, he hoped to be eligible after six months for regular employment. Since he was the first black to be hired by this railway line, the other men expressed a great deal of resentment. "They did and said nothing to intimidate me, but instead of using me as a substitute to work for them when they had occasion to get off, if another substitute was not available, they would double, that is a clerk on his periodic day off would take the run of the man who was to be on duty," said Cansler. This effectively froze him out of making any money.

He became so disgusted with the situation that he decided to quit and become a schoolteacher. Ironically, during his summer vacations he worked as a railway clerk and as a bookkeeper in the Navy Yard at Portsmouth, Virginia. Cansler also had a desire to become a lawyer. He read law with Judge W. C. Kain and at age twenty-one in 1892 passed the Knoxville Bar. He was a Republican candidate for the state legislature in 1894. He decided to give up his law practice and involvement in politics and devoted himself to education. His influence would be felt for another half century. He began teaching at Austin High School in 1900 and became principal in 1912, the same year he organized the East Tennessee Association of Teachers in Colored Schools. He was the leader in getting

the Andrew Carnegie Foundation to establish a library for blacks in 1917. In 1919, he influenced the state legislature to pass an act enabling descendants of ex-slaves to inherit real estate.

Known as a “mathematical wizard,” Cansler traveled the country to give demonstrations of his skills in beating an adding machine by mentally adding tall numeric columns. He wrote two booklets describing his methods. In 1914, it was he who introduced adult night school classes for working people who wanted to continue their education. Charles W. Cansler retired from the school system in 1939. He died on November 1, 1953.

*Robert J. Booker, 1996*

### **CAPERS MEMORIAL CHRISTIAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH (1832)**

Capers Memorial Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church began as the "African Mission" of white McKendree Methodist Episcopal Church in Nashville. Although it was not clearly designated the African Mission until 1832, a commodious brick house was erected near the Sulphur Spring for the black members. A Methodist minister, James Gwin, started preaching to local slaves around 1828-29. Under Reverend Gwin's leadership, the African Mission continued to grow and flourish until the membership numbered 819 members in 1833. The Reverend John B. McFerrin's revivals also helped gain many black converts, and his preaching increased the white membership to 550 souls. Because of fear generated by Nat Turner's slave rebellion in Virginia and the spread of northern abolitionist activity, the Sunday school and night meetings ceased temporarily in 1836. At least two black preachers actively participated in the mission. One named Simon, a slave of African origins, gained his freedom and preached at the mission until his death in 1847. The mission's membership stood at 810 persons in 1837. The dispute over slavery caused the southern churches to organize the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in 1846. This new convention immediately approved the separation of the "African Mission" from the McKendree Church.

Nashville's black Methodists continued to worship at the Sulphur Springs location until 1851, when they purchased a lot to build a new church on Hynes Street and McCreary (Eleventh Avenue, North), near the Nashville-Chattanooga Railway Depot. Capers Church became the first local structure built exclusively for a black church. The new building was a large brick edifice paid for through the sale of the African Mission's old church, "the old campgrounds," and donations from citizens. On December 25, 1853, the dedicatory sermon was preached by Dr. John B. McFerrin, and the new building was officially named Capers Chapel in honor of Bishop William C. Capers. White ministers from the McKendree congregation continued to supervise the black mission.

The Civil War and the Union army's occupation of Nashville (in February of 1862) disrupted religious life. The Reverend Elisha Carr was pastor of the Capers congregation



during these turbulent times when black preachers gradually assumed control of the Capers Church. In 1863, they permitted a United Presbyterian Church missionary from the North, the Reverend J. G. McKee, to establish a school in the building. The Union army confiscated the Capers building to use as a brass shop, because the structure lay in the midst of the railyard complex.

After the Battle of Murfreesboro in late 1863, the army converted the Capers Church to a military hospital.

In December of 1863, Bishop Daniel A. Payne of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church arrived in Nashville to organize churches. On December 15, 1863, the Reverend Napoleon Merry and a committee of seven persons applied for membership in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The blacks' petition to Payne stated that the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, acted disloyally to the United States. Payne accepted the petition and established St. John AME Church. However, when the war ended in 1865, most Capers Church members and the church's property remained with the white Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

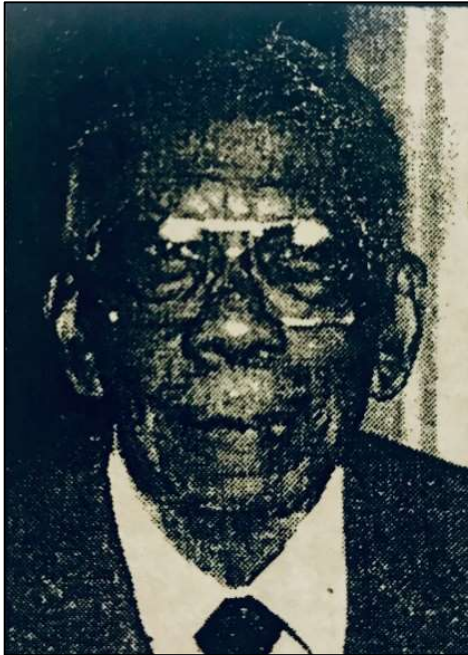
After 1866, the independent Capers Church became part of the Memphis Colored Conference (founded in November of 1867). The Colored Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in Jackson, Tennessee, on December 15, 1870. The Conference's first bishop, William Henry Miles, preached at Capers on January 1, 1871 -- Emancipation Day. Capers Church produced two elected bishops: the Reverend Elias Cottrell (1878-80) and the Reverend George Stewart (1885-87). In 1887, the congregation tore down the building on Lynes and McCreary and erected a new edifice at Twelfth and Church streets: "the church on the viaduct." The Reverend J. M. Mitchell completed the basement. Years later, the Reverend G. I. Jackson's congregation finished the structure and renamed the church "Jackson Temple." Eventually, the name was changed back to Capers Chapel.

In 1924, the city condemned the property to raise the viaduct. The congregation bought land at 319 Fifteenth Avenue, North, and completed a new building in 1925. McKissack and McKissack Architects designed and built the church building. Two more pastors were elevated to the bishopric: the Reverend P. Randolph Shy (1937-38) and the Reverend

Joseph A. Johnson, Jr. (1954-59). The Reverend Dr. Charles E. Winfrey, Sr., directed the listing of the church building in the National Register of Historic Places in 1985.

*Carmelia D. Gregory, 1987*

### **LUTHER PLATO CARMICHAEL (1905-1998)**



A pioneer in the field of black journalism, Luther P. Carmichael was born in Snow Hill, Alabama on July 1, 1905. He was the youngest of nine children born to Michael and Frances (Rivers) Carmichael. He was educated at the Snow Hill Institute where he studied music and played the bass horn, clarinet, and saxophone. During his senior year, he was a member of the school's football team. In 1925, Carmichael was graduated from Snow Hill Institute as class valedictorian. For a brief period after graduation, he found employment in print shops in Montgomery and Selma, Alabama. On September 30, 1925, Carmichael moved to Nashville and was employed as a linotyper by the Sunday School Publishing Board of the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A. Inc., where he remained for 47 years.

Carmichael began his journalistic career in 1932 and is believed to have been among the first African-American journalists to contribute to *The Tennessean*. In addition to contributing to *The Tennessean*, he wrote for the *Nashville World*, *The Chicago Defender*, the *Nashville Globe*, and the Associated Press.

Two years after beginning his career in journalism, Luther P. Carmichael united with the Spruce Street Baptist Church and became a member of the Sanctuary Choir, the Spruce Street Orchestra, and later directed the Spruce Street Men's Chorus. His baritone voice contributed to the popularity of the choir and was often compared to that of Paul Robeson. A member of several choral groups, including the Hopkins Singers, the Allegro chorus, and the Fisk Jubilee Singers, he made numerous radio and television appearances, including on the *Teddy Bart Noon Show*. Carmichael composed the music and lyrics to "Dear Ole Masons," the Alma Mater for the Mason's School of Business (1952-1982). The same year he united with Spruce Street, he met and married the former Irma Haynes on November 29. They became the parents of one daughter, Agnes Regina Carmichael Hall.

From the time he began his journalistic profession until his retirement from the Sunday School Publishing Board of the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc., in 1976, Carmichael covered athletic events at Tennessee State University. His coverage of the

university's athletic programs included the career of Forrest Strange, the university's first All-American football star, as well as a host of other athletic competitors who proved to be superior on the school's athletic courts, fields, and tracks. During the late 1960s, he served as part-time sports information director at Tennessee State University. In 1972, Carmichael began a four-year tenure as the school's Sports Information Director. He also served in the athletic department at Fisk University.

In 1997, for his contributions to the field of journalism, the National Association of Black Journalists elected Luther P. Carmichael to the Region VI National Association of Black Journalists Hall of Fame.

Nine months before Carmichael's death, the Spruce Street Baptist Church congregation recognized and honored him for his 64 years of devoted service and publicly bestowed upon him the title of Deacon Emeritus. After an extended illness, Luther Plato Carmichael died on December 16, 1998. Funeral services were held three days later at the Spruce Street Baptist Church and his remains were interred in the Greenwood Cemetery.

*Linda T. Wynn, 2000*

### **SUSANNA MCGAVOCK CARTER: A BELLE MEADE SLAVE (1812-1892)**

Susanna was born circa 1812 in Williamson County, Tennessee, of an Indian mother and an English father. Her grandmother was Jonah, a full-blooded Creek Indian, who was born circa 1780-90 and lived on Cedar Knob (Capitol Hill) in Nashville. Susanna's sisters were Ann, Jo Anna, Martha, and Fannie. Ann's father carried her to New Orleans, where they both contracted cholera and the father died. Ann returned to Nashville. (Ann was the author's paternal great-grandmother.) Ann's sisters were left in the custody of Randal McGavock, a wealthy citizen and one-time mayor of Nashville. McGavock claimed the sisters as his slaves after their father died. He gave Susanna to his daughter, Elizabeth Irwin, on January 2, 1840, when she married William Giles Harding, owner of the Belle Meade Plantation.

Susanna became Harding's trusted house servant. She married a Belle Meade slave, Isaac ("Big Ike") Carter, and had four children: "Little Ike," Joe, Porter, and Willie. Susanna was one of Harding's 140 slaves at the 3500-acre Belle Meade plantation, just west of Nashville.

Susanna sent two letters (June 3 and August 25, 1862) when her master, W. G. Harding, was in prison at Fort Mackinac Island, Michigan, for supporting the Confederate rebellion against the United States during the Civil War. The letters were remarkable, considering that slaves were not allowed to read or write or dictate letters. Her letters richly described plantation life near Nashville during the Union army occupation. The letters told her master about Belle Meade plantation, its slaves and crops, and the family's efforts to



survive the war. Her letters have been quoted in the *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* (1974) and in a number of books.



Susanna was viewed as a faithful slave. The slaves, especially house slaves and mulattoes, were mere extensions of the white families on most slave farms. Typical of a house slave, Susanna viewed herself as a member of the Harding family and was considered a member of the family by the white owners. During the Civil War, when Harding was imprisoned, she collected and hid the family silver to prevent its falling into Yankee hands. After the end of the war, she recovered the silver, polished it, and presented it to the white family members. Susanna claimed that no slaves

"disgraced themselves" by fleeing to the Yankees. However, most slaves and former slaves left Belle Meade between 1864 and 1877. Several Belle Meade slaves served in labor battalions and military regiments of the Union Army of the Cumberland. Dozens of Belle Meade slaves became fugitives in Nashville during the occupation. After the war, Harding, released from prison, opposed the establishment of a Freedmen's Bureau school on his land. During the 1870s, most of the former slaves abandoned Belle Meade plantation, where a wage system replaced slavery. Only five original slave families lived at Belle Meade by 1877.

William G. Harding died in 1886, leaving his plantation to his successors, but Susanna and her family remained attached to Belle Meade until her death, circa 1899. Susanna was noted for her famous syllabub, which consisted of whipping cream and other confectionery ingredients.

Belle Meade was sold in 1906, the year that Bob Green, the famous Belle Meade horse trainer, died.

*Emma White Bragg, 1992*

### **CHURCH PARK (1899)**

In 1899, the city of Memphis did not provide recreational facilities such as parks and playgrounds for its black citizens, nor were there any suitable places where black theatrical troupes could perform. It was to meet these needs that Robert R. Church bought



a tract of land and built on it an auditorium with funds he had accumulated since the Civil War. The park was called “Church’s Park and Auditorium” and was located on a site of over six acres on Beale Street near Fourth and Turley. The grounds were handsomely and generously landscaped, and the auditorium, equipped with the best and most modern accommodations of the time, could seat 2,200 people.



Church’s Park and Auditorium was built by Church, owned by Church, and managed by Church. It was heralded as the only business venture of its kind in America and represented an unusual business feat for anyone at any time in history. An article in the September 15, 1906 *Planter’s Journal* noted that the auditorium cost

\$50,000 and that it was well equipped and had one of the largest stages in the South, completely furnished with all modern equipment, including a fireproof curtain. The *Planter’s Journal* also pointed out that the park and auditorium were without a doubt the most beautiful of its kind in the entire country.

Beneath the stage in the auditorium was a large banquet hall and bar, and a soda fountain was located near the entrance to provide refreshments for visitors. The fire-proof drop curtain on the stage of the auditorium was a copy of an oil painting of the burning steamer, *Bulletin No. 2*, which hung in the parlor of the Church residence. In addition to the auditorium, there was a large bandstand where evening band concerts were performed for the public during the summer months. Bands of fraternal organizations and other groups played for picnics and various events held in the park. Also contained in the park was a playground with recreational facilities, including slides and swings, for the entertainment and pleasure of children.

Among the popular theatrical troupes that toured the country prior to 1920 and performed at the Church Park Auditorium were the Black Patti Troubadours, with John Rucker (known as “The Alabama Blossom”), Madame Sissieretta Jones (the famous “Black Patti”), the Smart Set with S. H. Dudley (advertised as “The Greatest Colored Show On Earth”), and the Fisk Jubilee Singers.

President Theodore Roosevelt was a guest at a reception given by the black citizens of Memphis and addressed an estimated audience of over 10,000 citizens there on November 19, 1902. Booker T. Washington and party, who were touring Tennessee, also

were guests there for breakfast in the banquet hall of the auditorium on November 24, 1909. James Shilliday, Herbert J. Seligmann, James Weldon Johnson, and Walter White, all officials of the national office of the NAACP, visited the location.

The Lincoln Republican League, founded and organized by Robert R. Church, Jr., held its meetings in the auditorium, as did the first Memphis Branch of the NAACP. The Church of God in Christ, founded by Bishop C. H. Mason, held its convocations in the Church Park Auditorium before Mason Temple was built. William C. Handy, the world famous “blues” composer and musician, was employed to play for dances in Church's Park and Auditorium. The Cotton Makers' Jubilee, the black arm of the spring Cotton Carnival festival, was held on the site. World-acclaimed musicians Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, and Cab Calloway all played jazz there. Numerous school activities, including LeMoyne-Owen College athletic games, dances, and other events were held there.

Much of Memphis' early black history took place on Beale Street in Church's Park and Auditorium. During the 1940s, a hostile City of Memphis administration changed the name of the park and auditorium to “Beale Avenue Auditorium.” Some years later, structures on the site were demolished under the government's urban renewal program. The site was empty and barren until 1987, when the park was refurbished and landscaped into a tree-shaded grassy area.

In 1993, the park was listed in the National Register of Historic Places and was made a part of the Beale Street Historic District. In 1994, Roberta Church, the granddaughter of the founder, gave the park and city a large 22,000-pound white granite and bronze memorial monument, erected in memory of and dedicated to her father, Robert Church, Jr. The monument features a bronze bust of Robert R. Church, Sr., and is inscribed with historical information.

*Ronald Walter, 1996*

### **ROBERT REED CHURCH, JR. (1885-1952)**

Robert R. Church, Jr., a political leader of color in Memphis and the nation, was born on October 26, 1885, at the family home, 384 South Lauderdale Street, in Memphis. He was one of the two children of Robert R. and Anna (Wright) Church. His sister was Annette E. Church. He was educated at Mrs. Julia Hooks' kindergarten, by private tutors, and at parochial schools in Memphis. Further education was obtained at Morgan Park Military Academy, Morgan Park, Illinois, and Berlin and the Parkard School of Business, New York. He completed his education by spending two years learning banking on Wall Street.

Robert Church, Jr., returned to Memphis, where he became the manager of Church's Park and Auditorium. He later became cashier of the Solvent Savings Bank and Trust Company, founded by his father, succeeding him as president after his death. Within a few years, he resigned this position to manage the family's extensive real estate holdings.

On July 26, 1911, Robert Church, Jr., married Sara P. Johnson of Washington, D. C., in that city. They became the parents of one child, Sara Roberta.

In 1916, Robert Church, Jr., founded and financed the Lincoln League in Memphis, which was established to organize the masses of black citizens to register and vote. It was his



conviction that the ballot was the medium through which citizens of color could obtain civil rights. The Lincoln League organized voter registration drives, voting schools, and paid poll taxes for voters. Within a few months, the League had registered 10,000 voters. A Lincoln League Ticket was entered in the 1916 election, which included a black candidate for the Congress. The ticket lost, but it established the Lincoln League as a viable and respected political force in Memphis; the League later expanded into a statewide and national organization.

In 1917, Church organized the Memphis Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the first branch in Tennessee. In 1919, he was elected to the national board of directors for the NAACP, representing fourteen southern states.

There were two factions of the Republican party in Memphis during Church's lifetime: one labeled by the daily press as the "Lily-White" (all white) wing of the party, and the other led by Church and called by the daily newspaper the "Black and Tans" (Negro and white). Robert Church, Jr., was a delegate from Memphis to eight successive Republican National Conventions from 1912-1940, having to battle each time with the white faction opposed to black participation in the party. Since Church's organization supplied the votes which carried the Republicans to victory in Memphis and Shelby County, he, as leader, was consulted by national party officials about federal patronage. Because the political climate in the South during his lifetime had not reached the point where he could recommend qualified black candidates for U. S. Postmaster, federal judge, U. S. Attorney, etc., he very carefully selected and recommended for those positions white candidates whom he thought were qualified men and who would perform their duties fairly and justly in the best interests of all segments of the population. He was requested frequently to recommend individuals for federal jobs in other southern states. He was consulted about political strategy by Republican Presidents and other high party officials so often that *Time* magazine referred to Church as the "roving dictator of the Lincoln Belt."

In the 1920s, when Robert Church, Jr., was at the height of his political influence, E. H. Crump, the Memphis Democratic leader, had not reached his political zenith. Church and Crump had totally disparate political philosophies and maintained autonomous political

organizations. When it became necessary to discuss political procedures with the city administration, such as primary or general elections, county conventions, etc., Church was represented by attorneys from his group, usually Josiah T. Settle, Jr., a Negro, and George Klepper and Baily Walsh, both of whom were white. Since it was not possible for a Republican to be elected mayor of Memphis, Church occasionally supported Democratic candidates he thought would be fair to Negroes, such as Watkins Overton, a family friend.

In 1940, when it appeared that Wendell Wilkie, the Republican candidate for President, might defeat incumbent President Franklin D. Roosevelt, in order to prevent Church's return to power (should the Republicans win the election), the city administration moved to destroy Church's political base by seizing his real estate holdings, allegedly for back taxes. At the same time, the city administration moved against two prominent Church associates: Dr. J. B. Martin, owner of the South Memphis Drug Store on south Florida Street, and Elmer Atkinson, proprietor of a café on Beale Street. City policemen, stationed at the front entrances of the men's establishments, searched all customers who entered, causing Martin and Atkinson to sustain tremendous financial losses. Atkinson had to close his café. Martin and Atkinson moved to Chicago, and Church established himself in Washington, D. C. Church Park and Auditorium was renamed "Beale Avenue Auditorium," and the family home was burned, ostensibly to test some of the City's new fire-fighting equipment.

At the invitation of his friend, A. Philip Randolph, the distinguished Negro labor leader, Church accepted membership on the board of directors of the National Council For A Permanent Fair Employment Practices Committee (now known as Equal Employment Opportunity) and worked tirelessly for the enactment of such legislation. In 1944, he organized and was elected chairman of the Republican American Committee, a group of 200 Negro Republican leaders from thirty-two states, who united to pressure Republican senators and congressmen to enact fair employment and other civil rights' legislation.

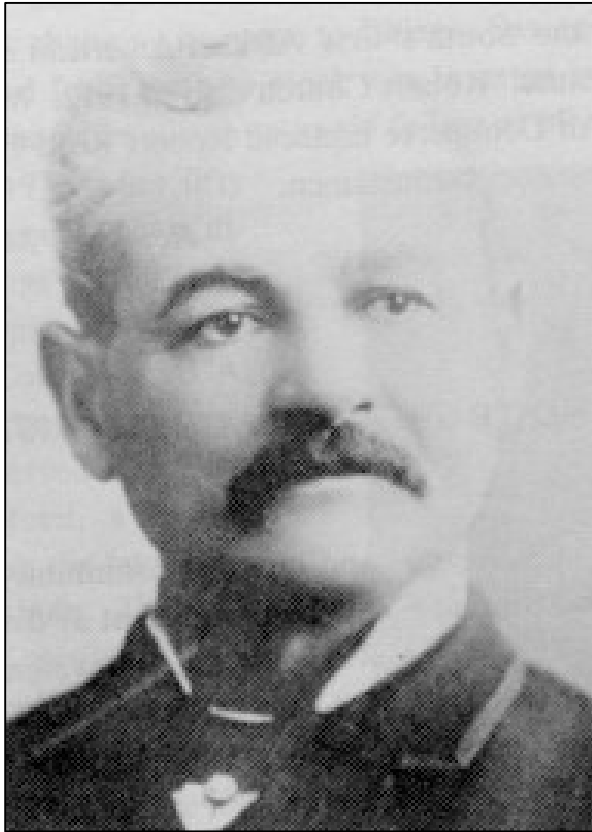
Church visited Memphis in 1952, after attending the Republican State Convention in Nashville, to promote General Dwight D. Eisenhower as the Republican candidate for President. He was talking Republican politics when he died of a fatal heart attack on April 17, 1952.

*Roberta Church and Ronald Walter, 1996*

### **ROBERT REED CHURCH, SR. (1839-1912)**

Robert Reed Church, Sr., was a business leader, a philanthropist, and a millionaire. Born in Holly Springs, Mississippi, on June 18, 1839, he was the son of a white steamboat captain, Charles B. Church, and a slave seamstress, Emmeline, who died when Robert was twelve years old. Captain Church worked his mulatto son as a cabin boy and a steward before fateful events took Robert off the river forever.

When the luxury steamer, *Bulletin No. 2*, burned and sank in 1855, Robert and his father were among the few who survived. Then, soon after the American Civil War began, federal forces captured Robert when he served as a steward on the steamer, *Victoria*. Now a fugitive slave and later a freedman, Robert settled in Memphis, where he embarked upon a career that would establish him as a successful businessman in the South.



Although real estate was Church's main interest, he engaged in other business enterprises, including a hotel, a restaurant, and a saloon. The knowledge he gained as a steamboat steward equipped him to meet the personal needs of customers in a luxurious fashion. Church operated his hotel in downtown Memphis, on the southwest corner of South Second and Gayoso streets. The hotel was advertised as the only first-class Colored hotel in the city. It had large airy rooms, a dining facility, and was furnished with the best equipment of that day.

Because the City of Memphis did not provide recreational facilities for its African-American citizens in 1899, Church opened "Church's Park and Auditorium" at a cost of \$50,000, with total property valued at \$100,000. With a seating capacity of 2,000, Church's Auditorium became the cultural

center for the region's African-American community. Here Church and local black Republicans held huge rallies and meetings. Republican President Theodore Roosevelt spoke to a gathering of 10,000 persons in Church's Park and Auditorium. The notable musician and "Father of the Blues," William C. Handy, was employed as the orchestra leader. Among other notable speakers and performers at the auditorium were Booker T. Washington, James Weldon Johnson, Walter White, and the Fisk Jubilee Singers. After years of neglect, the auditorium was torn down. In modern times, the city assumed the park property, which was added to the Beale Street Historic District (listed in the National Register of Historic Places) in 1993.

In 1908, Robert R. Church followed the lead of blacks in Nashville and members of Booker T. Washington's National Negro Business League and founded the Solvent Savings Bank and Trust Company, the first black bank in Memphis since the collapse of the Freedman's Savings and Trust Company Bank, Memphis Branch, in 1874. Church was elected president of the bank. Also in 1908, when the Beale Street Baptist Church (today's First Baptist Church of Beale Street) was facing foreclosure by creditors, Robert R. Church and

the bank came to Beale Street Baptist Church's rescue and paid off its creditors with liberal repayment terms.

A self-made man and reputedly the South's first African-American millionaire, Church gave voluntarily to every worthy cause. Robert Church died in 1912. More than a half-century later, the Memphis Chamber of Commerce honored Robert Reed Church, Sr. in 1984 by naming him one of Memphis' pioneer businessmen.

*Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr., 1994*

## **CITIZENS SAVINGS BANK AND TRUST COMPANY**

Several members of Nashville's Negro Business League and business community gathered on November 5, 1903 to consider the organization of a new bank. Present at that meeting were J. C. Napier, who was elected temporary chairman; R. H. Boyd; the Reverend Preston Taylor; J. B. Bosley; E. B. Jefferson; J. S. Ewing; J. A. Cullom; the Reverend William Haynes; and J. W. Grant. It was determined that charter members would include those who contributed at least \$100 to the capital stock. Each of the nine men in attendance pledged the \$100, with Napier expressing his willingness to raise his pledge to \$1,000 if occasion demanded. With that meeting, the One-Cent Savings Bank and Trust Company was born.

The first officers were the Reverend R. H. Boyd, president; attorney James Carroll Napier, cashier; and the Reverend Preston Taylor, treasurer and chairman of the board. The bank opened on January 16, 1904. Its first home was donated space in Napier's law office, located at 411 North Cherry Street (present Fourth Avenue, North). The proclaimed intention of the bank was to "encourage frugality and systematic savings among our people, to secure the safekeeping and proper investment of such savings, and to set in motion business enterprises." Trust in Negro institutions had deteriorated with the fall of the Freedman's Bank, so it was necessary to regain confidence to make the undertaking a success.

There were no state laws governing banking institutions when the bank obtained its charter, but the founders of the bank were very conservative in their policies. When the new banking enterprise exhibited slow growth, Boyd reminded investors that "the idea of 'getting rich quick' was never in the minds of the officers of this institution." He and other board members believed that growth was not as significant as stability and permanence. Napier maintained that it was more important to teach blacks that deposits not only earned interest but also assisted in the economic advancement of the race. Although the bank's name implied that an account could be opened with one cent, the minimum deposit accepted was ten cents. Stock could be purchased at the low price of five dollars per share, in hopes that it would be "within the reach of the common people." The day the bank opened, deposits totaled almost \$6,500; after six years of business, the deposit balance showed just under \$36,000.



The One Cent Bank insured new capital stock after World War I and was reorganized, changing its name to Citizens Savings Bank and Trust Company in 1920. The capital raised from the new stock was invested in blue chip railroad stock and a few large real estate loans, in efforts to avoid failure at all costs.

In 1972, after fifty years of occupancy, Citizens Savings Bank and Trust Company was forced from the Colored YMCA. This building had previously served as the Duncan Hotel, a leading hotel during the late 1890s and early 1900s. The bank relocated temporarily in the Morris Memorial Building. In 1979, the Citizens Bank opened its first branch office at Twenty-First Avenue North and Jefferson Street. Of the four Afro-American banking institutions in Tennessee before 1930, only the One Cent and Trust

Company of Nashville, the second oldest minority bank in the country, survived.

Citizens Savings Bank and Trust Company maintains the essence of the tenets of its founders: while it is "important to grow, it is also important to remain profitable and even more important to remain sound." Today this bank serves as a depository for many residents of the community and for some funds of the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, the State of Tennessee, and the United States Government.

In 1985, the bank moved to its new skyscraper headquarters, Citizens Plaza, on the southwest corner of Fourth Avenue, North, and Charlotte Avenue, the same site it occupied when the Colored YMCA stood there.

*Linda T. Wynn, 1985*

## **CLINTON HIGH SCHOOL DESEGREGATION**

In the early 1950s, racial segregation in the nation's public schools was the custom across America. Although all of the academies in a given school district were supposed to be equal, as enunciated in the United States Supreme Court's *Plessy v. Ferguson* case which made "separate but equal" the standard, most schools attended by African-American children were significantly substandard to the schools attended by children of European descent. On May 17, 1954, a unanimous United States Supreme Court overturned the

*Plessy* doctrine and required the desegregation of schools across the nation. While the Court's decision did not abolish segregation in other public arenas or require the desegregation of public schools by a specific date, it did affirm that the permissive or de rigueur segregation, which existed in numerous states, was unconstitutional. However, before the Court's mandated public school desegregation ruling became a reality, African Americans in a number of southern cities protested against the region's de jure practice of racial segregation in its schools, and some had previously filed suits against their respective school boards and districts.

One such case occurred in Clinton, Tennessee, where African Americans began the frontal assault on Jim Crow education when they sought redress for their children, who were bused to an all-black high school in Knoxville. Using the litigious device of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), in December 1950 attorneys Avon N. Williams, Jr., Carl Cowan, and Z. Alexander Looby filed the *McSwain v. Board of Anderson County, Tennessee* school desegregation case in federal district court. The attorneys filed the case on behalf of black families in Clinton, who asked that their children be allowed to attend Clinton High School. Tennessee's first public school desegregation case was filed four years before the United States Supreme Court handed down its unanimous decision in the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education, Topeka, Kansas* case.

The case originally known as *Joheather McSwain v. Anderson County Board of Education et al.* went to trial two years later in February 1952. On April 25 of the same year, the court rendered its decision in favor of the Anderson County Board of Education. Subsequently, the case was appealed to the Cincinnati Court of Appeals, where it remained until the 1954 United States Supreme Court ruling. After the Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision rendered the discriminatory racial proscriptions of the nation's public schools null and void, the United States District Court in Knoxville ruled that Anderson County high schools must desegregate by the fall of 1956.

The court's decree brought an end to Anderson County School Board's prolonged phase of litigation and resistance to school desegregation. On August 20, 1956, 12 African-American students (Jo Ann Allen, Bobby Cain, Theresa Caswell, Minnie Ann Dickey, Gail Ann Epps, Ronnie Hayden, Alva Joheather McSwain, Edward Lee Soles, Maurice Soles, Regina Turner, Alfred Williams, and Charles Williams) registered without racial confrontation for classes at Clinton High School. When classes began on August 27, most of the school's student population accepted the "Clinton 12." However, racial peace did not reign throughout the high school's desegregation process.

Out-of-state white agitators John Kasper, executive secretary of the Seaboard White Citizens Council, and Asa Carter, leader of the violent Birmingham White Citizens' Council, organized anti-black resistance in Clinton. Because of the turmoil created by their actions, Governor Frank G. Clement called out the National Guard to restore law and order and to disengage the viciously organized anti-black resistance. The "Clinton 12" withstood months of derisive ridicule and intimidation. Pioneering black students in



Clinton, Tennessee, endured the same segregationist ire during the 1956-57 school year as did the "Arkansas Nine" during the 1957-58 school year.



While the nation remembers Little Rock, Arkansas' Central High School desegregation crisis, the school desegregation crisis at Clinton High School in Tennessee has been all but forgotten. A review of the literature on the modern civil rights movement reveals a body of knowledge about the Little Rock Nine and their courageous struggle toward the desegregation of Central High School. However, although the media reported

the Anderson County school desegregation case, there is little notice or no mention by the chroniclers of the modern civil rights literature that Anderson County's Clinton High School became the first public high school in the South to graduate a student of African-American heritage. On May 17, 1957, three years to the day after the United States Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, Bobby Cain of the "Clinton 12," the only African-American senior eligible to graduate, became the first African American to be graduated from a previously segregated public high school in the South. The following year, Gail Ann Epps became the first African-American female to be graduated from a desegregated public high school in Tennessee.

In 1955, five years after filing the Clinton school desegregation case, attorneys Z. Alexander Looby and Avon N. Williams, Jr., filed suit against the Nashville Board of Education. On behalf of A. Z. Kelley, a barber whose son Robert was denied access to nearby white East High School, Looby and Williams, in consultation with the NAACP and Thurgood Marshall (Williams' cousin) sought legal remedy under the *Robert W. Kelley et al. v. Board of Education* case. The case was not heard until 1956, when William E. Miller, a federal district judge, ordered Nashville's Board of Education to prepare a plan for desegregation by January of the following year. In the fall of the following year, thirteen young African-American students of elementary school age registered at five formerly all-white schools. As the students began attending the schools, white mobs screaming racial epithets at them. Mayor Ben West ordered the city's law-keeping force to maintain the peace and to protect the rights of the first grade students, who were instrumental in bringing down separate but unequal education in Nashville. Because of the *Brown V. Board of Education* decision, other cities across Tennessee also began dismantling their segregated public school systems.

On May 17, 2004, many will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the NAACP's victory in its United States Supreme Court case of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*. The accomplishments of the NAACP's Legal Defense Fund attorneys Thurgood Marshall, Charles Houston, Constance Baker Motley and others assisted in making public education accessible and equitable to all of the nation's children.

The case of *McSwain v. Anderson County Board of Education et al.* demonstrated to other Tennessee locales that, despite agitation from outsiders or the eruption of violence, efforts to delay or stall court orders to desegregate the state's public schools would ultimately fail, and children of African descent would gain the right to be educated in racially desegregated school systems.

Linda T. Wynn, 2004

### **MATTIE E. COLEMAN (1870-1942)**

Mattie E. Coleman, physician, missionary, school administrator, activist, lecturer, feminist, and suffragist was born in Sumner County near Gallatin, Tennessee, on July 3, 1870 as Mattie Eliza Howard. The oldest of four children, at age fifteen she was graduated from high school. She continued her studies at Nashville's Central Tennessee College, which was renamed Walden University in 1900; she later entered Meharry Medical College, where she earned her medical degree. In 1902 she married the Reverend P. J. Coleman, a minister in the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, now known as the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (CME). In 1932, she became the first graduate of Meharry's dental hygiene program.

As a 1906 graduate of Meharry Medical College, Coleman was one of the first African American women in Tennessee to become a physician. Soon after graduating from Meharry, she established a medical practice in Clarksville, Tennessee, where her husband had been sent to pastor the Wesley Chapel CME church. In Clarksville, Coleman inculcated her concern for the poor into her practice. Because she combined medicine and missionary work, Dr. Coleman was elected president of the Clarksville District Missionary Society. She was an activist within the CME denomination and became an ardent supporter of women's rights. Coleman and other women fought to change denominational polity that excluded women from helping in the formulation of its national programs. This struggle extended beyond the absence of a Connectional Women's Missionary Society, as the organization became known, and into women being licensed to preach and carry on evangelistic work.

Coleman and other likeminded women in the denomination campaigned for the formation of a national women's missionary society. Twice in 1906 and 1910, they were unsuccessful in their appeals to change the minds of those attending the sessions of the General Conference. Refusing to acquiesce to defeat, they requested another hearing before the General Conference at its 1916 meeting. When Helena B. Cobb (who had been

asked to serve as spokesperson) became ill, Coleman became the leader of the women's committee for petition. Two years later, they were successful and the Women's Connectional Missionary Society of the CME church came into being.

The Women's Connectional Missionary Society, which was composed of forty-one women, held its first meeting in Nashville and elected Dr. Mattie E. Coleman as president and Helena B. Cobb as its first vice-president. In addition to the office of president and first vice-president, other offices included a second vice-president, secretary, treasurer, community director, chair of literature, chair of the art department, editor, and chaplain. On September 3, 1918, at Capers Chapel CME Church in Nashville, Coleman called the group to action in which she set forth the various ways that they aided in the advancement of the women's movement within the church. The Women's Connectional Missionary Society also drew up a constitution and by-laws for the organization's governance. Coleman held the position of president of the Women's Connectional Missionary Society from 1918 to 1939. Not only was Coleman interested in the rights of women in the church, she also was concerned about women gaining the right to vote.

In 1920, she collaborated with J. Frankie Pierce, founder of the City Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, and joined forces with white women suffragists to aid in making Tennessee the thirty-sixth state to ratify the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution that gave women the right of the franchise. Earlier in 1919, the Tennessee General Assembly passed a limited suffrage act, which Governor Albert H. Roberts signed into law on April 17, 1919. According to historian Anita Goodstein, Coleman and Pierce's efforts as organizers of black women voters bore fruit in that year's election when 2,500 black women voted for the first time in Nashville's municipal elections.

Coleman not only was a physician, missionary, activist, and suffragist, she was also a school administrator. In 1909, she became the first dean of women and medical advisor, as well as a lecturer at Lane College in Jackson, Tennessee. In April 1921, through the efforts of Coleman and Pierce, the Tennessee General Assembly enacted legislation for the creation of the Tennessee Vocational School for Colored Girls. Pierce became the school's first superintendent, serving from 1921 to 1939. Dr. Coleman followed Pierce as superintendent and served from 1939 until her death in 1942. She was also appointed medical examiner of the Court of Calanthe, an appointment she held for more than twenty years. Dr. Coleman was the first American Black women physician to serve as a state tuberculosis advisor and counselor.

A trailblazer, Dr. Mattie E. Coleman cleared the path for black women not only in the medical profession but also in the male-dominated sanctuary of the black church and society in general. She provided medical attention to children and those less fortunate. She assisted Mother Sallie Sawyer and Estelle Haskins in founding Bethlehem Center in Nashville.

A significant leader in the history of Nashville and the state of Tennessee, Coleman was honored in 1993, when the Missionary Council celebrated the 75th Anniversary of the

Women's Missionary Council of the CME denomination and placed a monument on her grave in Nashville's Greenwood Cemetery.

Linda T. Wynn, 2011

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**WALTER S. DAVIS (1905-1979)**

Walter S. Davis is said to have had a "Touch of Greatness." He spent his entire professional career at Tennessee A&I State College (now Tennessee State University), where his leadership as a coach, college professor, and later as president was known for its common touch. As a Tennessee A&I alumnus, Walter S. Davis led his alma mater as its second president for a quarter of a century. During his tenure, Davis distinguished himself as a dynamic college administrator, passionately ushering Tennessee A&I into the modern era. Under his headship, the once small black college of less than 700 students became a regionally-renowned university of 6,000 students.

Born on a plantation near Canton, Mississippi, on August 9, 1905, Davis was one of seven children born to the Reverend Walter M. and Annie Belle (Anderson) Davis. He received his early education at the Madison County School in Canton and at the Tougaloo College's Practice School before attending Cameron Street High School. Later, Davis left his hometown to attend the high school department of Alcorn A&M College in Lorman, Mississippi, from which he received his high school diploma. While Davis began his collegiate studies at Alcorn, he later transferred to Tennessee A&I in Nashville, Tennessee, where he earned a bachelor's degree in 1931. Two years later, Davis earned a master's degree from Cornell University in Ithaca, New York before earning a doctoral degree from Cornell in 1941.



Having won two General Education Board Fellowships during his graduate school tenure, Davis also began his career as a teacher and coach while at Cornell. In 1933, he began working at Tennessee A&I as an agricultural teacher and football coach. While his stint as the college's football coach lasted just three years, Davis had been teaching agriculture for a decade when William Jasper Hale, Tennessee A&I's first president, announced his retirement. Despite his limited formal education, Hale had assumed the headship of the then-fledgling Agricultural and Industrial State Normal School for Negroes in 1912 and over the next thirty-two years transformed the school into an accredited four-year teachers' college.

Following Hale's resignation, Davis assumed the presidency of Tennessee A&I on September 1, 1943. As Hale's successor, Davis knew all too well that Hale's pioneering legacy meant high expectations for him. Davis, however, was ready for the challenge. Immediately, he began working to transform the college into "a strong 'A-Class' University." His plan included a restructuring of the school's business affairs, curriculum, and administrative organization. The college was reorganized into various schools including those of agriculture and home economics, arts and sciences, education and engineering, as well as a Graduate School and divisions of business, field services and air science.

By 1947, Davis launched a multi-million dollar expansion of the college's physical plant to construct an engineering school, annexes to the library and cafeteria, and a heating system. Over the course of his tenure, he also oversaw the acquisition of 175 additional acres of land as well as the construction of eight major buildings. In all, improvements and additions to the campus during Davis' presidency totaled approximately \$17 million. The increase of student and faculty populations mirrored the growth of the physical campus. In addition to increasing the student population from several hundred to several thousand students, the number of faculty increased from a mere 32 to 250 instructors, several of whom were among the most distinguished in the nation.

Likewise, academic opportunities and campus activities were also extended during Davis' tenure. In 1948, the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools first awarded the college with accreditation. Davis' dream for the college to be elevated to university status was fulfilled in August 1951; seven years later, the university was fully accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and accorded land-grant

university status. Like Hale, the Jim Crowism of the segregated South forced Davis to lead the all-black university through the treacherous social and political realities faced by institutions promoting black self-determination. There was perhaps no greater time during which Davis' leadership and diplomacy were tested than during the nonviolent activism of the late 1950s and early 1960s. In partnership with fellow Nashville black colleges American Baptist Theological Seminary, Fisk University and Meharry Medical College, Tennessee State University students led, organized, and participated in one of the most disciplined strategic campaigns against segregation in the nation. A public position of support for civil disobedience by Davis would have triggered consequences to be faced by several of the students, most notably those that were expelled following their participation in the Freedom Rides of 1961; these repercussions were also dire and probably beyond Davis' control.

Ever "The Coach," Davis had a visionary leadership that also extended to the school's athletic program, which enjoyed unprecedented success during his presidency. The Tennessee State University basketball team won the NAIA Championship in three consecutive years (1957-59) while the football team won the Grantland Rice Bowl Classic four times. Led by John A. Merritt, hired by Davis in 1963, Tennessee A&I's football program would later go on to be named No. 1, National College Division Champion in 1973 by both the Associated Press and United Press International. Especially notable was the college's track and field program, whose sprinters won twenty-three Olympic medals. Under the tutelage of now legendary coach and National Track and Field Hall of Famer Edward S. "Ed" Temple, hired by Davis in 1953, the Tigerbelles Women's Track club produced world renowned sprinters Mae Faggs, Barbara Jones, Edith McGuire, Madeline Manning, Barbara Jones, Martha Hudson, Lucinda Williams, Chandra Cheeseborough, Wyomia Tyus, and Wilma Rudolph. During the 1960 Olympic Games in Rome, Rudolph became the first American woman to win three gold medals in one Olympiad.

Davis retired in 1968 but remained active. At the time of his retirement, Tennessee State University's physical property was valued at \$30 million. The course was set for the university's bright future in all categories of measure. Davis stayed busy through active membership in a number of civic and community organizations including the Agora Assembly, Boy Scouts of America, Chi Boule of Sigma Pi, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Incorporated, the Free and Accepted Masons, the Y.M.C.A., and the Chamber of Commerce. His professional memberships were also numerous, including the National Education, American Vocation, and Tennessee Education associations. Davis' honor society memberships included Alpha Kappa Mu, Beta Kappa Chi (Scientific), Kappa Delta Pi (Education) and Pi Omega (Business) societies. A board member of Tennessee Youth Guidance Commission, United Givers Fund, Universal Life Insurance Company and Meharry Medical College, his honors and awards include Educator of the Year, Mason of the Year and Administrator of the Year. Cited for Outstanding Contributions and Dedicated Service to Higher Education in Tennessee by the State Board of Education in 1968, Davis was also listed in *Who's Who in Colored Americans* as well as *Who's Who in America*.

Following an extended illness, President Emeritus Davis died on October 17, 1979 at the George Hubbard Hospital of Meharry Medical College. Married to his college sweetheart, the former Ivanette Hughes of French Lick, Indiana, since 1936, Davis was survived by his wife as well as a son, Nashville physician Ivan R. Davis. On October 19, 1979 a memorial service was held for Davis at Tennessee State University, the school he had so dutifully served, where his body also lied in state in the school's Administration Building Auditorium. The following day, funeral services for Davis were held at First Baptist Church, Capitol Hill. His remains are interred at Greenwood Cemetery.

*Crystal A. DeGregory, 2010*

### **MEREDITH WILLIAM DAY (1893-1981)**



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 of 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 owners of automobiles 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 city's 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. He was executive secretary many years 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 was a leading proponent of the construction of the Bordeaux YMCA.

During World War II, Day and attorney J. F. McClellan founded the *Nashville Independent* newspaper in 1942. This paper merged with the city's *Globe* in 1944, to become the *Globe-Independent*. 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 Mount Olive Baptist Church. Day was an honorary sergeant-at-arms for the Senate of the Tennessee General Assembly.

Meredith William Day died on May 22, 1981, at the Veterans Hospital in Nashville. He was funeralized at Mount 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, 1989*

### **JULIETTE ALINE DERRICOTTE (1897-1931)**

Juliette Aline Derricotte was born in Athens, Georgia, on April 1, 1897, the fifth of nine children. Her parents were Isaac and Laura Hardwick Derricotte, an interracial couple. Her African American father was a cobbler and her mother of European decent was a seamstress. Reared in the South, Derricotte soon became cognizant of the region's mores and values of racial segregation. Racial exclusivity shattered Juliette Derricotte's aspirations of attending the Lucy Cobb Institute in Athens. Although she was disappointed at limitations being placed upon her because of her race, the experience proved critical to fashioning her resolve to combat discrimination. It fashioned her perception of the world and her desire to change people's racial predispositions.

After completing her education in the public schools of Atlanta, Derricotte attended the historically black Talladega College in Alabama, where all of the teachers were white. At Talladega she became a popular student and a leader on campus. One of her professors, recognizing her potential, suggested that she try for a public speaking prize that included tuition. Although she almost convinced herself that she could not compete, with coaching she won the contest and in doing so gained needed self-confidence. Derricotte became involved with the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), joined the intercollegiate debating team, made speeches, and ultimately became president of the



YWCA. It was during her tenure at Talladega that she realized one should work for something larger than oneself.



After graduating from Talladega in 1918, Derricotte moved to New York, to work at the national headquarters of the YWCA in the student division. That fall she became secretary of the National Student Council of the YWCA, a position she held for eleven years. As secretary, she visited colleges, planned conferences, and worked with student groups, bringing ideas and building leadership. While in New York, Derricotte became friends with Lillian "Sadie" Alexander, Adele Hunt Logan, Mabel Byrd, Juanita "Jane" Saddler, Marion Cuthbert, and Lucy Diggs Slowe, African American women who supported the Harlem Renaissance. A member of Delta Sigma Theta, Inc., she was affiliated with the Alpha Beta Chapter, the sorority's first graduate chapter in New York City. She also became friends with white women working in the YWCA's student division. Although she did not constantly partake in issues of race, her presence made race an item of conversation. In 1924, Derricotte became a member of the World Student

Christian Federation (WSCF), an international ecumenical organization, and began traveling the world as a delegate representing American colleges. After traveling the world representing the WSCF, she wrote of her experiences by saying "that there is so much more to know than I am accustomed to knowing and so much more to love than I am accustomed to loving."

In 1927 she received a master's degree in religious education from Columbia University, and continued her travels for the next two years before resigning her position at the YWCA to become Dean of Women at Fisk University. Upon her arrival, Derricotte found the campus churning with the vicissitudes of change and in upheaval against obsolescent policies and rules, principally for young women. Derricotte was an adherent to the philosophy of interracialism. Interracialism connoted a particular type of struggle for racial justice—one marked by dialogue, education and patience rather than protests, boycotts, and legal changes. Her adherence was inspired by the fruitful interactions between whites and blacks she witnessed during her tenure with the YWCA.

After conversing with her friend, Lucy Diggs Slowe, then Dean of Women at Howard University, Derricotte changed the Dean of Women's paradigm at Fisk University. She wanted the position to be academic rather than one of a chaperone. She transferred her residence from the dormitory to one of the cottages on campus, giving students more freedom and more responsibility. While maintaining an open-door policy to the

university's young women, the move allowed her not to be an omnipresent overseer. Because of the student uprising of 1925 under the administration of President Fayette Avery McKenzie, Fisk went through major transformations. Dean Derricotte embraced the new autonomy given to students.

Following an illness in the summer of 1931, in November, Derricotte decided to visit her mother in Athens. She was accompanied by three Fisk students from Georgia. Outside of Dalton, Derricotte's car collided with that of a white couple. She and a student were seriously injured and given emergency treatment in the offices of several white physicians in Dalton. No one directed them to Hamilton Memorial Hospital because the local residents knew it was for whites only. Critically injured, Fisk co-ed Nina Mae Johnson and Derricotte were sent to the home of an African American woman who had beds available for the care of African American patients. They were there for five hours before the other two students managed to contact friends in Chattanooga and Nashville. Derricotte and Johnson were transferred to Walden Hospital in Chattanooga. The hospital was owned and operated by Dr. Emma Rochelle Wheeler, a 1905 alumna of Meharry Medical College. Before they arrived in Chattanooga, Johnson died in route. Derricotte died the next day, November 7.

On November 12, 1931, members of the YWCA assembled in New York City to pay tribute to Board member and former Student Secretary Juliette Derricotte. Her memorial at the YWCA was a moment of domestic racial awareness for the members of the National Board. In her work *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA, 1906-46*, Nancy M. Robertson indicates that Derricotte's death caused a change within the YWCA because her maltreatment unmasked the systemic injustice of Jim Crow. Following Derricotte's memorial service, the Headquarters Board of the National Student Council vowed to embark on "an unremitting effort for a new and different civilization where segregation shall be abolished."

Derricotte's death caused national outrage, causing individuals such as W.E.B. DuBois and organizations including the Commission on Interracial Cooperation of Atlanta at the request of Fisk University, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, to lead an investigation into her death. Memorial services were held across the country. Her alma mater, Talladega College, honors the memory of its first woman trustee through the Juliette Derricotte House, a women's dormitory on campus. Derricotte sought to preserve black colleges as a space of interracial cooperation.

*Linda T. Wynn, 2016*

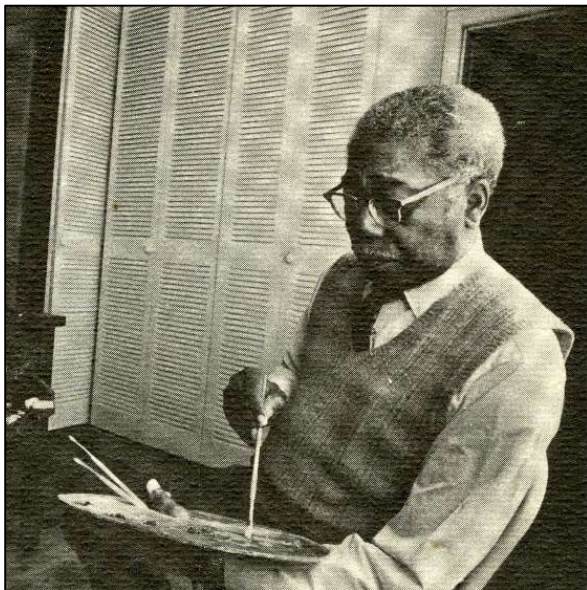
### **AARON DOUGLAS (1899-1979)**

Aaron Douglas was a "pioneering Africanist" artist who led the way in using African-oriented imagery in visual art during the Harlem Renaissance of 1919-1929. His work has

been credited as the catalyst for the art genre "incorporating themes in form and style which affirm the validity of the black consciousness and experience in America."

Douglas was born in Topeka, Kansas, on May 26, 1899, to Aaron and Elizabeth Douglas. He attended the University of Nebraska School of Fine Arts and was graduated from there in 1922. This Midwestern background seemed an unlikely indicator for this man who would rise to meet W. E. B. DuBois's 1921 Crisis challenge, calling for "the transforming hand and seeing eye of the artist, white or black," to lead the way in the search for African-American identity. After teaching art in Kansas City, Missouri, Douglas moved to New York City's Harlem neighborhood in 1924, and began studying under German artist Winold Reiss. His mentor discouraged the budding artist's penchant for traditional realist painting and encouraged him to explore African art "for design elements that would express racial commitment in his art." The young painter embraced the teachings of Reiss to develop a unique style incorporating African aesthetics and black American subject matter, and he soon captured the attention of leading black scholars and activists.

In early 1925, one of Douglas's illustrations appeared on the cover of *Opportunity* magazine, which awarded Douglas its first prize for excellence in art. A few months later,



his illustration for the NAACP *Crisis* magazine won the publication's first prize for drawing. Also in 1925, Douglas's illustrations were published in Alain Locke's survey of the Harlem Renaissance, *The New Negro*. Locke called Douglas a "pioneering Africanist," and that stamp of praise and approval for the artist influenced future historians to describe Douglas as "the father of Black American art." His fame quickly spread beyond Harlem, and he began to mount painting exhibitions in Chicago and Nashville, among numerous other cities, and to paint murals and historical narratives interpreting black history and racial pride.

During the mid-1920s, Douglas was an important illustrator for *Crisis*, *Vanity Fair*, *Opportunity*, *Theatre Arts Monthly*, *Fire!!*, and *Harlem*. At the same time, he married the love of his life, Alta Sawyer, on June 18, 1926. The following year, Douglas illustrated two important works of poetry, *Caroling Dusk* (an anthology by black poets) and James Weldon Johnson's book of poems, *God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse*. Douglas's images for the book were inspired by Negro spirituals, customs of Africans and African Americans, biblical stories, and contemporary black history. The series, soon to become among the celebrated of Douglas's work, "defined figures with the language of Synthetic Cubism and borrowed heavily from the lyrical style of Reiss and the forms of African sculpture." Through his Precisionist-style drawings for the series, Douglas "came close to inventing his own

painting style by this eclectic combination of elements in his work." At the height of his popularity, Douglas left for Europe in 1931 to spend a year studying at L'Académie scandinave in Paris. He returned to New York in 1932 and studied at Columbia University, where he later received his Master of Arts degree in 1944.

Douglas received a New Deal commission from the Public Works of Art Project in 1934 for a series of murals for the New York Public Library's 135<sup>th</sup> Street branch, now the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. These murals, titled *Aspects of Negro Life*, depict "the entire African-American experience from African heritage, the Emancipation, life in the rural South, and the contemporary urban dilemma." Three years later, after being recruited by his friend Charles S. Johnson, Douglas joined the staff of Fisk University in Nashville. Douglas and a fellow black artist, Edwin Harleston of Charleston, South Carolina, completed a series of highly significant murals depicting "the course of Negro history" for the Erastus Milo Cravath Library at Fisk University. Douglas taught painting and was chair of the art department at Fisk from 1937 until his retirement in 1966.

Prior to Douglas's death in Nashville on February 3, 1979, his work had been exhibited throughout the country and featured in companion volumes, including *Retrospective Exhibition: Paintings by Aaron Douglas* (1971) by David Driskell, Gregory Ridley, and D. L. Graham, and *Two Centuries of Black American Art* (1976) by David Driskell. In the decade following his death, the innovative art of the "pioneering Africanist" Aaron Douglas was featured in numerous exhibitions and critical publications such as *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy* (1983) by Robert Farris Thompson; *Harlem Renaissance: Art of Black America* (1987), published by The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; and *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture* (1989), co-edited by C.R. Wilson and William Ferris.

A major traveling retrospective exhibition, *Aaron Douglas: African American Modernist*, was organized by the Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas, in 2007. It presented Douglas not only as an important figure in the New Negro Arts Movement but also as a seminal figure in the development of twentieth century art. Based on archival research at Fisk University and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York City, the exhibition was shown at the Frist Center for the Visual Arts in Nashville in 2008. Exhibition curator Susan Earle edited the accompanying book, which includes essays by art historians Renee Ater, Kinshasha Holman Conwill, David C. Driskell, Susan Earle, Amy Helene Kirschke, Richard J. Powell, and Cheryl R. Ragar, with a foreword by Robert Hemenway and an illustrated narrative chronology by Stephanie Fox Knappe.

*Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr., 2013*

## ECONOMIC WITHDRAWAL DURING THE NASHVILLE SIT-INS

For most Americans, the 1950s were years of increasing personal prosperity. The booming economy brought about the growth of suburbs, as homeownership came to symbolize success and respectability in America. Even so, the culture and politics of the "Affluent Society" were shaped mostly by the world's anxiety over the Cold War. This dynamic created several of the most important factors contributing to the rise of American black protest, including the return of black soldiers from foreign service during the Second World War, the growth of an urban black middle class, the growing influence of television and other forms of popular culture, the embarrassment Americans experienced as they tried to present their nation to the world as the paragon of democracy while racial injustice persisted at home, and the political mobilization of northern blacks. These factors brought the nation's social and racial problems more sharply into focus.

After decades of struggles, an open crusade against racial intolerance and discrimination began in the 1950s. At the onset of the modern Civil Rights movement, Montgomery, Alabama, was one of the first cities where economic pressure was used to combat segregationist practices. According to Bruce J. Dierenfield's account in *The Civil Rights Movement*, bus company records indicated that 99% of the usual 30,000 black riders walked, hitchhiked, bicycled, and used car pools to make their way about the city after Rosa Parks refused to relinquish her seat on a Montgomery bus and was arrested. Black Montgomery's boycott caused the bus company, downtown businessmen, and the city to lose approximately \$1 million. The economic boycott and a favorable ruling by the United States Supreme Court in the 1956 *Browder v. Gayle* case, desegregating Montgomery's city buses, brought about a major civil rights victory. Infused with an economic component, the Montgomery boycott succeeded in establishing a new form of racial protest based on passive resistance, which soon spread throughout the South and the nation at large.

When black leaders and students in Nashville began their formal sit-in movement, they too added an economic prong that devastated downtown merchants and business owners. The Nashville sit-ins, which were the largest and best organized of the sit-ins across the South, began in November and December 1959 when black leaders and students challenged the exclusionary racial policy of downtown eateries in the major department stores. Approximately one month after students began their full-scale movement in February 1960, Fisk University professor Vivian Henderson estimated that blacks in Nashville poured approximately \$50 million a year into the coffers of white businesses. This sum was particularly significant since many white customers were moving to the suburbs, leaving downtown merchants increasingly economically dependent on Nashville's black population. The Reverend Kelly Miller Smith and Henderson organized a boycott of downtown stores just before Easter, an important shopping holiday. Empowered with their slogan, "No Fashions for Easter," the black community's "economic withdrawal" deprived storeowners of incalculable amounts of business.





By the beginning of April 1960, Nashville department stores were virtually empty as whites also stayed away. Many joined in the boycott as a show of support for the student demonstrators. A few white women mounted their own form of protest by turning in their credit cards at their favorite stores. "No Fashions for Easter" had achieved its goal. In its wake, one store merchant commented, while looking at the deserted downtown streets, "You could roll a bowling ball down Church Street and not hit anyone these days." Black women, through daily phone calls, mobilized the boycott in a display of unity with the students and sustained the "economic withdrawal" for almost seven weeks. Downtown retail merchants lost approximately 20 percent of their business. Downtown's empty streets and empty cash registers caused merchants to seriously consider

dismantling Jim Crow customs in Nashville's retail district.

As the student demonstrators continued in their efforts to dismantle the Jim Crow system, Nashville businessmen met behind closed doors to discuss their predicament. As *Time* magazine described them, most of the storeowners were "pocketbook integrationists." They were more committed to their bottom line than they were to the city's proscriptive system of racial segregation. Nashville's merchants realized the inevitability of desegregation, but they did not want to become catalysts for social change. However, the disruption of business and the boycott made it economically unsound for them to carry on without coming to some resolution. "It is inevitable," said Fred Harvey, Sr., in a telegram directing his store's treasurer, Greenfield Pitts, to desegregate. Pitts, also chair of the Chamber of Commerce's Retail Merchants Division, and Cain-Sloan President John Sloan worked diligently with storeowners to ease Jim Crow out of Nashville's downtown. Relenting under the pressure of the economic boycott, six stores (led by Cain-Sloan and Harvey's) rendered service to Nashville blacks on May 10, 1960.

By the middle of 1960, the Civil Rights movement in Nashville gained momentum as downtown store and restaurant owners surrendered to the economic demand for desegregation. They saw no advantage to losing black trade (and the profits that accompanied it) and provoking continued disruptions. Between 1961 and 1963, protests shifted to movie theatres (by May 1961 theatre owners capitulated), employment practices, downtown hotels, and every other type of public accommodation. By the spring of 1963, Nashville witnessed daily demonstrations against segregation, unfair

employment practices, and discrimination against blacks in general. In March, the Nashville Christian Leadership Conference announced a "full-scale assault" on segregation practices in Nashville. In addition to using marches, leaders and students of the Nashville movement implemented the proven weapon of an Easter economic boycott against downtown merchants and department stores to protest unfair employment practices. By 1964, segregation had all but disappeared in most of the city's public accommodations. On July 2 of the same year, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the 1964 Civil Rights Act, one of the nation's most important and most comprehensive pieces of civil rights legislation.

Department store owners had no excuse for discriminating against black Nashvillians at lunch counters or in the provision of other services, especially when they accepted their dollars for goods and not services. The decrease in dollars flowing into the cash registers of downtown merchants and businessmen helped cause the walls of racial segregation to fall. Nashville blacks effectively used the premise put forth by Reinhold Niebuhr in 1932, when they put into action economic and political pressures that "exerted coercion upon the white man's life" and, more importantly, adversely affected his businesses.

*Linda T. Wynn, 2005*

## **EDGEHILL NEIGHBORHOOD**

Generations of African Americans have lived in the part of Nashville now known as Edgehill since the first half of the nineteenth century. The neighborhood traces its beginnings to approximately 1830, when residences and farms were established on and around Meridian Hill, now the location of E.S. Rose Park, south of the city corporation line. The presence of enslaved African Americans on these estates is documented in census records and in a detailed description of the manor and grounds of Robert Brownlee Currey at the summit of the hill. Currey was a former mayor and postmaster of Nashville, for whom Meridian Hill later came to be known as "Currey's Hill."

The Union occupation and defense of Nashville during the Civil War brought dramatic changes to the area, including the physical transformation of the landscape and vastly increased numbers of African American residents. Because of their elevation and their location along the Franklin Turnpike, Meridian Hill, Kirkpatrick Hill, and St. Cloud Hill became the sites of Fort Morton (initially "Fort Confiscation"), Fort Casino, and Fort Negley respectively. A large contraband camp in the area housed thousands of conscripted African Americans, who labored in the construction of these fortifications and other war-related tasks under extreme and often fatal conditions of coercion and privation.

In spite of persisting harsh conditions, African Americans began building neighborhood institutions immediately after the war. "New Bethel" and "Rocktown" appear in postwar newspaper sources as the names of early communities. The oldest churches in the

Edgehill neighborhood date from broadly the same period, including Greater Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church (1866) and New Hope Missionary Baptist Church (1885), which is still at its original location. Edgehill's Carter-Lawrence Elementary School is a 1940 merger of two schools from the post-Civil War decades: the William Penn School, renamed in honor of Judge John Lawrence in 1889, and the Granny White School, renamed in honor of the African American educator Howard C. Carter in 1896.

During the first half of the twentieth century, Edgehill developed into an economically diverse African American neighborhood adjoining the railroad and warehouse district now known as the Gulch to the north and segregated white "streetcar suburbs" to the east, west, and south. These decades feature prominently and positively in the public memory of the neighborhood as a time characterized by the strength of community institutions, the vitality of local businesses, and the recognized professional and cultural achievements of residents.

Moses McKissack III and Calvin McKissack, founders of the country's first architectural firm owned by African Americans, both resided on Edgehill Avenue during this era. Two state historical markers in the neighborhood also honor individuals active during these years: internationally acclaimed sculptor William Edmonson and DeFord Bailey, the first African American Opry musician. The iconic polar bear sculptures that became the symbol for the Edgehill neighborhood date from the period as well. The two surviving sculptures stood for many years at the residence of Elder Zema W. Hill on Edgehill Avenue along with others at his funeral home business on South Street.



Urban renewal radically altered Edgehill from the 1950s through the early 1970s, beginning with the construction of "Edgehill Homes," at the corner of 12th and Edgehill Avenues, and eventually expanding to encompass a vast "Edgehill Project Area" of over 1,000 acres, extending from Division Street to Bradford Avenue and from Villa Place to the eastern side of Fort Negley. The promised benefits of urban renewal, where realized, came at an enormous cost to Edgehill in the demolition of homes, displacement of families, relocation or loss of businesses and churches, damage to the historical street grid of the neighborhood, and the reinforcement of segregation. The construction of I-40, I-65, and Wedgewood Avenue cut off the neighborhood to the north, east, and south, with its western border spared only by the failure of a proposed Music City Boulevard that was finally abandoned in the early 1970s.

An ironic legacy of the urban renewal period was the definitive naming of Edgehill. Since the late 1800s "Edgehill" had referred to the home of Charles A.R. Thompson on the Hillsboro Turnpike, to Edgehill Avenue, and to a small, segregated African American park



between its intersections with 11th and 12th Avenues. Both the designers of urban renewal and civil rights groups working to preserve and protect the community from the program's abuses adopted and applied the name "Edgehill" more broadly. The racially integrated Edgehill United Methodist Church was established in 1966; the Organized Neighbors of Edgehill formed the following year; and the South Street Community Center, founded on the old Lawrence School site in 1942 and moved to Edgehill Avenue in 1971, became the Edgehill Community Center in 1990. By the early twenty-first century, the name "Edgehill" had increasingly come to assert a neighborhood identity grounded in the area's African American history and a determination to continue its legacy of solidarity and resilience.

*Joel Dark, 2018*

#### Further Reading:

Bobby L. Lovett, "From Plantation to City: William Edmonson and the African-American Community," in *The Art of William Edmonson*. Nashville: Cheekwood Museum of Art; Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1999.

David C. Morton and Charles K. Wolfe, *DeFord Bailey: A Black Star in Early Country Music*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1993.

### **WILLIAM EDMONDSON (c. 1870-1951)**

Born around 1870 in the Hillsboro Road section of Nashville to "foreparents [George and Jane] who were Edmondson and Compton slaves," William Edmondson was one of six children reared by his mother after the death of their father.

After many years of working for the Nashville, Chattanooga, and St. Louis Railroad and the Women's Hospital (Baptist Hospital), Edmondson entered the art world by divine command, according to an article in the *Nashville Tennessean*: "While he lay asleep, God appeared at the head of his bed and talked to him, like a natural man, concerning the talent of cutting stone He was about to bestow. He talked so loud He woke me up. He told me He had something for me." Edmondson was instructed to make chisels and other sculpting tools.

This primitive artist, who began his career by working on tombstones, worked exclusively in limestone, usually from demolished city buildings and curbs from rebuilt streets. Wrecking companies often diverted their trucks to Edmondson's backyard to leave piles of stone at little or no cost. During fifteen years or more of sculpting, his backyard became filled with "miracles" that were not tombstones but preachers, women, doves, turtles, angels, rabbits, horses, and other "critters."



Five years after he began to sculpt in limestone, Edmondson's competence in art was acknowledged by the art world. Sidney Hirsch, Alfred and Elizabeth Starr, and Louise Dahl-Wolfe were instrumental in uncovering Edmondson's gift of sculpting stone. Dahl-Wolfe, a photographer for *Harper's Bazaar* magazine, brought Edmondson to the attention of Alfred Barr, the director of the Museum of Modern Art. Barr and some of the trustees expressed interest in a type of painting and sculpture they classified as "modern primitive" and which they applied to Edmondson's art. Thus, Edmondson became the first black American to be accorded a one-man show at the Museum of Modern Art.

Edmondson soon was widely recognized and honored for his sculpture. In 1938, his sculpture was included in "Three Centuries of Art in the United States." On February 11, 1941, he was honored with a one-man show at the Nashville Art Gallery. In 1951, Edmondson was posthumously honored by the Nashville Artist Guild. Edmondson's pieces were included in other exhibitions: Nashville's Peabody College (1951); New York's Willard Gallery; Cheekwood (Tennessee Botanical Gardens and Fine Arts Center) and Lyzon Galleries in Nashville (1964); City College of New York and the LaJolla Museum of Contemporary Art (1967); Willard Gallery and Newark Museum (1971); and a one-man show at the Montclair Art Museum in 1975. The June 1981 opening of the Tennessee State Museum featured an exhibition and illustrated catalogue of Edmondson's sculptures.

Poor health caused Edmondson to cease sculpting in the late 1940s. On February 7, 1951, he died and was buried at Mount Ararat Cemetery in Nashville. In June of 1979, a park at Seventeenth Avenue, North, and Charlotte Avenue was named in honor of Edmondson. On July 8, 1981, a marker of limestone, which came from the old Commerce Union Building, was unveiled. Sculptor Gregory Ridley carved a dove into the block, above the accompanying inscription: "This park is dedicated to the memory of the renowned Nashville sculptor, William Edmondson."

*Linda T. Wynn, 1986*

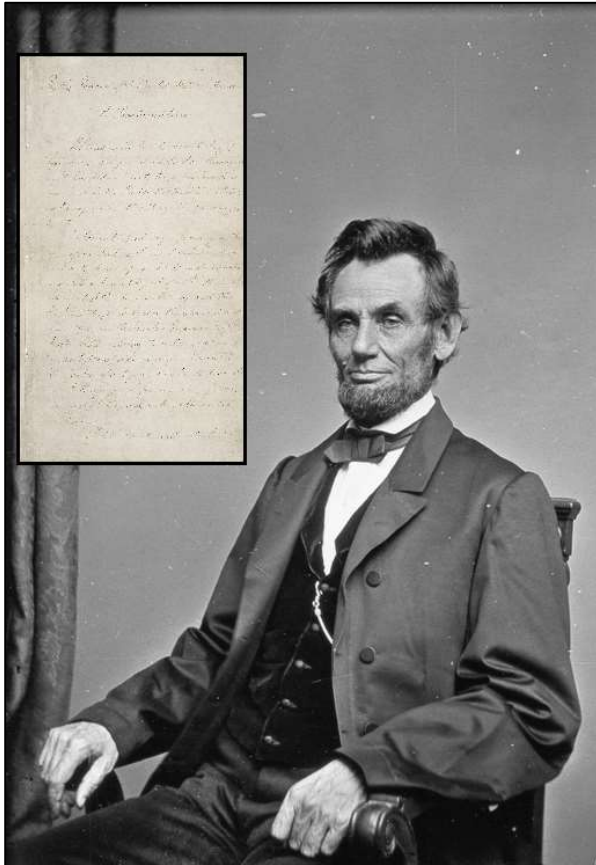
## EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION IN TENNESSEE

President Abraham Lincoln's proclamation, which took effect 150 years ago on January 1, 1863, in the middle of America's Civil War, imparted to the conflict, which until that time had been waged as a struggle to preserve the Union, a social revolutionary character. According to Allen C. Guelzo's *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation: The End of Slavery in America* (2004), the Emancipation Proclamation triggered one of the largest property transfers in history. It freed 4 million slaves valued at \$3 billion. By comparison, as a proportion of national wealth, this would represent several trillion in current United States dollars. Perceived by Guelzo as "America's last Enlightenment politician," he notes Lincoln's affection for the political activist, author, political theorist and revolutionary freethinker Thomas Paine and Scottish poet Robert Burns. He writes: "If there was any cardinal doctrine among Lincoln's beliefs, it was his confidence in the inevitability of progress .... His was a typically Enlightenment kind of optimism, coming from a man born at the end of the long Enlightenment era and steeped in the conviction that the American founding 'contemplated the progressive improvement in the condition of all men everywhere'" (p. 149).

In the 1850s, Lincoln noted that slavery was "an unqualified evil to the negro [sic], the white man, and the state." Between the election of Lincoln as the 16<sup>th</sup> President of the United States and his inauguration on March 4, 1861, seven Deep South states--South Carolina, Mississippi, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, and Texas--seceded from the Union. Virginia, Arkansas, and North Carolina seceded between April and May of 1861, with Tennessee following on June 8 of the same year. The United States, as well as several foreign nations, awaited Lincoln's position toward the new Confederacy. When he delivered his first inaugural address, President Lincoln affirmed that he had "no purpose, directly or indirectly to interfere with the institution of thralldom in the states where it exists." Four months later, on July 4, 1861, in his first address to the Congress, Lincoln reiterated his earlier affirmation. Although Tennessee was the last state to secede from the Union, it was at the heart of the war between North and South, second only to Virginia in the number of skirmishes and battles fought on its soil. Only weeks after Lincoln's inauguration, the Confederacy consummated its break with the union by firing on Fort Sumter in South Carolina, one of the last federal military outposts in the South. Lincoln responded by issuing a call for volunteers to put down the rebellion, signaling the beginning of full-scale civil war.

While the Civil War caused mayhem in Tennessee, it broke the manacles of bondage that kept some 275,000 persons enslaved. "By the spring of 1865," according to Ira Berlin's 1985 *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861-1867*, "few Tennessee blacks were still living as slaves," (p. 285). When the war started, enslaved black Tennesseans focused their attention on the intersectional hostilities, as well as how their enslavers reacted to the war. Tennessee's enslaved persons remained observant and shared what they learned with each other. Early in 1862, the Union army pushed into the state and by the end of the year, the Union army occupied areas of Middle and West

Tennessee, including the cities of Nashville and Memphis. By the end of 1863, the Union army also controlled the East Tennessee cities of Chattanooga and Knoxville. The Union army's occupation of Tennessee contributed to the demise of slavery in the state. Before the end of 1863, Lincoln took action that set in motion the end of the institution of thralldom.



On July 22, 1862, President Lincoln read his preliminary proclamation to his cabinet. However, he decided to wait for a Union military victory before bringing the document forth. Two months later, on September 22, 1862, following a victory at Antietam, the president signed the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, formally alerting the Confederate States of America of his intention to free all persons held as slaves within the rebellious states. One hundred days later, with the Confederacy still in full rebellion, President Abraham Lincoln issued the final Emancipation Proclamation to take effect on January 1, 1863.

The signals had been mounting for months. On April 16, 1862, word traveled that the District of Columbia's 3,100 slaves had been freed by Congress, and their owners compensated by the federal government. That July, Congress passed the Second Confiscation Act, which permitted the

Union Army to enlist black soldiers and forbade the capture of runaway slaves. The proclamation managed to destabilize slavery even where it technically remained legal. In Missouri and Tennessee, areas exempted from the Emancipation Proclamation, slaves deserted plantations en masse. By January 1864, one Union general declared that slavery was "virtually dead in Tennessee" (Guelzo p. 215).

President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation did not free enslaved persons in Tennessee or in any other state of the Union or the Confederate States of America. Lincoln specifically exempted Tennessee from the Emancipation Proclamation at the request of Governor Andrew Johnson and other state leaders because the state was not under Confederate control in the fall of 1862--it was under the control of the Union Army and Military Governor Johnson. However, the Proclamation was important because it unreservedly sanctioned the principal of freedom. Enslaved men, women, and children in the state of Tennessee were freed by statewide election on February 22, 1865. Because the Emancipation was a wartime measure, Congress decided that the U. S. Constitution

needed amending that would do away with slavery for the last time. The 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment, which formally abolished slavery in the United States, was passed by the 38<sup>th</sup> Congress on January 31, 1865. Tennessee ratified the amendment on April 7, 1865. Twenty-seven of the thirty-six states ratified the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment on December 6, 1865; approximately ten months after, Tennessee freed its slaves by state law. The impact of the Emancipation Proclamation was immediate and decisive. It changed the dynamic of the war by turning the federal armies into agents of liberation and by giving slaves a direct and vital interest in the defeat of the South.

On May 17, 1962, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered a manifesto reminiscent of the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation to the White House. Sent on the same day that the United States Supreme Court rendered the unanimous *Brown v. Board of Education* decision that outlawed segregated racial public education, King's proposal was constructed as both a moral appeal and a legal brief. The 64-page document called on President John F. Kennedy to issue a "second Emancipation Proclamation," an executive order outlawing segregation --just as President Abraham Lincoln had done with slavery a century earlier.

A year later, during the American Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, Lyndon B. Johnson invoked the Emancipation Proclamation holding it up as a promise yet to be fully implemented. Speaking from Gettysburg on May 30, 1963 (Memorial Day) at the centennial of the Emancipation Proclamation, Vice President Johnson connected it directly with the ongoing Civil Rights struggles of the time: "One hundred years ago, the slave was freed. One hundred years later, the Negro remains in bondage to the color of his skin...In this hour, it is not our respective races which are at stake--it is our nation. Let those who care for their country come forward, North and South, white and Negro, to lead the way through this moment of challenge and decision...Until justice is blind to color, until education is unaware of race, until opportunity is unconcerned with color of men's skins, emancipation will be a proclamation but not a fact. To the extent that the proclamation of emancipation is not fulfilled in fact, to that extent we shall have fallen short of assuring freedom to the free."

*Linda T. Wynn, 2013*

### **COYNESS L. ENNIX, SR. (1901-1984)**

Coyness Loyal Ennix, Sr., was an attorney and a political and civic leader in Nashville, Tennessee. He was born on September 21, 1901, in Hillsboro, Alabama, and was the son of Frank and Channie Ennix. He began attending the North Alabama Baptist Academy at the age of twelve. Coyness came to Nashville in 1918 and completed Roger Williams University on Whites Creek Pike. He wanted to be a pharmacist, but a few visits to local courts convinced him to study law. Ennix entered Howard University's School of Law in

1928 and completed his studies in 1931, with the second-highest scholastic rank in the class.

In 1932, Ennix gained admission to the bar. For the benefit of area blacks, he founded Nashville's Kent College of Law, where he trained local attorneys like Robert Lillard and Mose Davies. During some fifty years of practice, Ennix specialized in criminal cases. He handled about 3,000 cases before retiring to matters that came before the Probate Court during the last four years of his career. Around the courtroom, Ennix appeared well-dressed, flamboyant in style with big cigars, and well-versed in the law. At a time when black Nashvillians were turning their attention from the old elite, black Republican leaders to more middle-class and college-educated black Democratic leaders, Coyness L.

Ennix became a local civic and political leader.



Coyness L. Ennix advanced as a local political leader during the late 1940s, when he became president of The Solid Block, an organization designed to unify the black community in its opposition to political discrimination. The Solid Block held mass meetings at First Colored Baptist Church and other local black churches to petition effectively against the poll tax. The organization published *The Solid Block* newspaper to keep blacks informed and involved in the protest. After thousands of signatures and many petitions were delivered to the Tennessee General Assembly, the poll tax was ended. In 1950, two blacks won seats to the City Council for the first time since 1911. Ennix lost his bid for a seat.

Ennix continued to be a local civic and political leader. He was the first black member of the

Nashville Housing Authority. He gained appointment to the Nashville Board of Education and served through the integration uproar that forced Nashville to integrate its schools. He was a member of the city's Auditorium Commission, which directed the building of Municipal Auditorium. He also served as a member of the board of directors of the American Baptist Theological Seminary (now American Baptist College) and on the board of directors for the Eighteenth Avenue Community Center. He was a member of the Pride of Tennessee Lodge Number 1102, Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks.

In addition, Coyness Ennix was a religious leader. He served as superintendent of the Sunday school at First Colored Baptist Church (now First Baptist Capitol Hill) for more than 25 years and as a trustee and deacon of the church, as well as its unpaid legal adviser. Along with the Reverend Kelly Miller Smith and other First Colored Baptist Church leaders, Ennix helped guide the church through the black civil rights movement's

turbulent years. First Colored Baptist Church gave courageous leadership to the sit-in demonstrations and the freedom rides.

Coyness E. Ennix, Sr., died on Wednesday, April 25, 1984. He was survived by his wife, Blanche Nivens Ennix, and three sons, Frank Martin, III, Coyness Loyal, and Russell Barbour.

*Bobby L. Lovett and Lois McDougald, 1994*

### **MEREDITH G. FERGUSON (1894-1978)**



Meredith G. Ferguson was born on August 24, 1894, in Arlington, Texas. In 1912, he attended Tennessee State Agricultural and Industrial Normal School for Negroes (today's Tennessee State University) in Nashville. A reputable student, Ferguson became president of his senior class. In 1915, he graduated from the Tennessee State A & I Normal School.

Meredith continued to live in Nashville and serve his alma mater. He served as the first president of the Athletic Association, business manager and president of the Alumni Association, and instructor of accounting at Tennessee State Agricultural and Industrial College.

After America's entry into the First World War, Ferguson entered the United States Army. He became one of fifteen blacks selected from the 368th Infantry to attend division Army War

School in Washington, D. C. In 1918, Ferguson received an officer's commission in the United States Army. He was transferred to Central Officers' Training School at Camp Pike, Arkansas, where he served as an instructor for black troops. After completing his military service, Meredith G. Ferguson studied business administration at LaSalle College.

In 1924, Ferguson began his career at the Citizens Savings Bank and Trust Company in Nashville, one of the oldest continuously operated African-American financial institutions in the United States. He held many supervisory responsibilities within the bank, rising quickly through the ranks. In 1959, after the death of the bank's president (Henry A. Boyd), Ferguson became president of Citizens Bank. The bank experienced a period of growth and moved from its old quarters to the Morris Memorial Building at Fourth Avenue, North, and Charlotte Street.

Meredith G. Ferguson's bank position and leadership made him a respected leader on local and national levels. He held many offices and positions: an auditor for the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.; chairman of the fraternity's audit committee for ten years; treasurer of the AGORA Assembly; and treasurer for the Tau Lambda Chapter of the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., among other positions of responsibility and honor. Charles H. Wesley, president of Wilberforce University, said of Ferguson: "Meredith G. Ferguson was an individual whose financial recommendations and monetary proposals would have had a sobering effect on any organization."

On March 24, 1978, Meredith G. Ferguson, a notable black leader of African-American Nashville, died and was interred two days later in Nashville's Greenwood Cemetery.

*Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr., 1993*

### **FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH EAST NASHVILLE (1866- )**

First Baptist Church East Nashville was founded in 1866 by the Reverend Randall B. Vandavall (1832-98), a slave born on March 23 at Neely's Bend. He gained his freedom through self-purchase and Union Army occupation of Nashville in 1862.



Edgefield (East Nashville) slaves had a Baptist congregation as early as January of 1861, when Nashville's white First Baptist Church established a "Second Colored Baptist Mission" in Edgefield on Fatherland Street. The mission was jointly directed by a white committee and a free black preacher, George Dardis. Nelson G.

Merry, the free black pastor of First Colored Baptist Mission (now First Baptist Church, Capitol Hill) assisted "Brother" Dardis. But Nashville's white First Baptist Church abruptly discontinued the East Nashville mission in June of 1861, when Tennessee decided to enter the Civil War.

In 1862, the white Spring Street Baptist Church (1858- ) established an "African Mission" on North Cherry Street, under the leadership of George Dardis and Randall Vandavall. On January 8, this unusual congregation of all free blacks elected Vandavall, not Dardis,



as their pastor. Vandavall, Dardis, and all but a few of these free blacks held letters of dismissal from Merry's congregation (organized in 1848), whose members were mostly slaves. But the African Mission was disrupted in February of 1862, when the Union Army occupied the city.

In 1864, Spring Street (Central) Baptist Church reopened under Daniel W. Phillips, a missionary for the American Baptist Home Mission Society. Vandavall became friendly with the Reverend Phillips and helped the Yankee pastor establish a "Baptist College" (Nashville Normal and Theological Institute; later Roger Williams University) for black preachers. In 1866, Vandavall started First Baptist Church in East Nashville.

Between 1864 and 1865, the Union Army established a contraband camp for over 2,000 fugitive slaves on the site. For a long time, the church was called "Vandavall's Baptist Church." The pastor became such an influential leader that the Vandavall Public School (1880s) on Wetmore and Spring streets was named in his honor. Roger Williams University awarded him an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree in 1886. He served on the Negro Committee of the Tennessee Centennial Exposition in 1897.

First Baptist Church East Nashville was officially chartered on November 13, 1882, by Vandavall, Henry Gasoway, Austin Roberts, Granville Batts, Hezekiah Harding, and George W. Newsom. The congregation first worshipped in Vandavall's home at Berry and Second streets, then in the old Union Army barracks on Mark and Steward streets, before being forced by fire to move to McClure's Hall on the south side of Woodland, between Second and Third streets. The present church structure was built in 1928 on a more centrally located site, the corner of Main and Sixth streets. It was expanded in 1931 and continuously improved, especially from 1934 through 1941. The front entrance of the church was restructured because of the widening of Main Street during the 1960s. Built in a Classical Revival design, this beautiful church building contains an education department, a sanctuary seating 600, a magnificent pipe organ, melodic chimes, a mural by Tennessee State University professor and artist Frances Thompson, and memorial windows.

After Vandavall's death, the Reverend Sutton E. Griggs assumed the pastorage (1899-1908). A college-educated man and a native Texan, Griggs moved to Nashville to work for the National Baptist Convention. He wrote a number of novels: *Imperium in Imperio* (1899), *Overshadowed* (1901), *Unfettered* (1902), *The Hindered Hand* (1905), *The One Great Question* (1907), and *Pointing the Way* (1908).

Other learned preachers who served the church included J.D. Bushnell (1908-13), E. W. D. Hawthorne (1913-15), W. S. Ellington (1915-49), Charles L. Dinkins (1950-56), Otis Pickett (interim--1956-59), J. N. Rucker (1959-70), and James A. Campbell (1970-1994).

*Bobby L. Lovett, 1988*

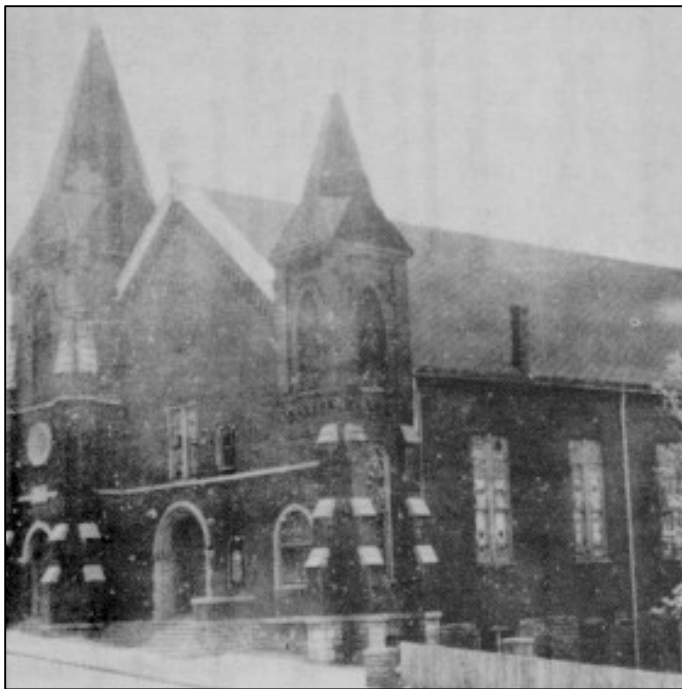
## FIRST COLORED BAPTIST CHURCH (1848-1891)

Nashville's black Baptist community originated with the city's first Baptist congregation, which, when formally organized in the 1820s, included free and enslaved blacks. Negroes and whites were called "sister" and "brother," although the stations of blacks were denoted as "servant cuff," "belonging to," or "free man of colour."

With the formation of the new Christian (Disciples of Christ) Church, most members defected from the First Baptist Church. It was not until the calling of Reverend Peter S. Gayle in 1831 that the congregation began to grow. In 1934, he was replaced by the Reverend Robert Boyte Crawford Howell.

Howell, a Virginia slave owner and staunch segregationist, convinced the congregation that mixed church services should be discontinued because blacks and whites "require different forms of religious instruction; they can never both prosper together."

In 1841, a special black meeting was given legitimacy by the attendance of the pastor, deacons, and clerk. This became an annual meeting to review the black rollback and discuss disciplinary cases. Blacks made up thirty-nine percent of the membership.



On January 10, 1846, the "Colored" members introduced the issue of building a separate church. The congregation promptly acted to fulfill the petition, intending to have it be subject to white command. Seven whites were assigned to "contract and hold in trust" a building which would either be "a branch of this church or...an independent church..." In 1847, Samuel A. Davidson, a young white minister from the east, was assigned to the Negro mission. He secured the old schoolhouse at 21 North McLemore Street (Ninth Avenue) and in January of 1848 began holding regular Sunday morning services and afternoon Sunday school

sessions. Once every three months, the Lord's Supper was carried to their church by Howell and the white deacons. Although the mission was allowed to act on all cases of discipline, discussion was deferred to the white church for approval. In 1848, First Colored Baptist Church moved to an old house on Pearl Street (Nelson Merry Street).

In 1848, Nelson Merry (a slave who became free in 1845) was allowed to preach regular sermons to the Negro mission. The whites had licensed several Negro preachers,

including James Dickinson Andrew Bents, and George Bentz. By the end of 1849, some 250 Negroes were attending the mission, though only 102 were members. On March 9, 1853, by a "unanimous vote of the church, Nelson Merry was licensed to preach the Gospel."

In November of 1853, for the first time the black members selected their own deacons: Louis Butler, Daniel Walker, Aaron Jennings, Joseph Morsels, and Anderson Pritchett. Nelson G. Merry became "moderator" of the First Colored Baptist Mission. The First Colored Baptist Mission had 500 members in 1860.

During the Civil War, the Negro church continued its services and its membership grew, doubling its size between 1863 and 1865. In March of 1865, the black members of First Baptist Church requested that they be constituted as a "separate and independent church," and the whites agreed to the ecclesiastical separation rendered necessary by the war. First Colored Baptist Church was chartered in 1866.

By 1872, the membership of First Colored Baptist Church of Nashville had experienced tremendous growth. They moved to North Spruce Street (Eighth Avenue) and erected the largest brick and stone church edifice owned by blacks.

The Reverend Nelson Merry died on July 14, 1884. The Reverend Tom R. Huffman became pastor in 1885. The first "split" of the First Colored Baptist Church occurred in 1887, under the pastorship of the Reverend Huffman. Those who followed him organized the Mount Olive Baptist Church. The remaining members continued to worship with the Reverend M. W. Gilbert, who served the congregation from 1887 to 1890. The Reverend J. E. Purdy was called in 1891; during his pastorship, another division of the church occurred and resulted in the chartering of Spruce Street Baptist Church.

Today there are three churches which are descendants of the First Colored Baptist Church of Nashville: First (Colored) Baptist Church Capitol Hill, Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church, and Spruce Street Baptist Church. Annually since 1983 the three churches jointly participated in their "Roots Celebration."

*Linda T. Wynn, 1985*

### **THE FIRST DAY OF (DESEGREGATED) SCHOOL IN NASHVILLE, SEPTEMBER 9, 1957**

Following the 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, which declared school segregation unconstitutional, some African American families in Nashville began seeking to enroll their children as students in what were then all-white schools. Families of over twenty children filed suit against the school system in September 1955 after being denied admission to the school closest to their home.

Court hearings and public meetings were held throughout 1956, and the school board worked to develop a plan acceptable to the Federal district court. This plan, which became known as the “Nashville Plan,” called for desegregating schools one year at a time, beginning with the first grade for the 1957-58 school year. Opposition grew through the summer of 1957, in anticipation of African American students enrolling at previously white schools. Infamous white supremacist John Kasper visited Nashville and inflamed segregationists throughout August, holding meetings and rallies in parks and on school grounds.

On August 25, 1957, thirteen African American parents registered their first-grade children to attend their (white) neighborhood school. Although there were protestors at the schools, there were no incidents of violence. However, many of these families received threatening letters and phone calls over the next few days, as did teachers and principals at these schools.

September 9, 1957 was the first day of desegregated school in Nashville.



**Clemons:** Four black first-grade students enrolled at Clemons School, on 12th Avenue South, on September 9. None of them had registered early, and so the organized protestors had not paid much attention to Clemons. One of the first graders was six-year-old Joy Smith, the daughter of Kelly Miller Smith; Joy stayed at Clemons through the sixth grade.

**Bailey:** Bailey School, on East Greenwood Avenue, had one African American student pre-

register to attend. A crowd of a several dozen white protestors gathered at the school, but no black families brought their children. The child who had been pre-registered was in the care of her grandparents, who, like many of the other families, had received threatening phone calls. They transferred their granddaughter, and no African American students attended Bailey in 1957-58.

**Caldwell:** Records indicated that at least thirteen African American students were in the Meridian Street neighborhood of Caldwell School, although none pre-registered. Still, over a hundred protestors gathered at Caldwell that morning, and when three families came to school on the first day, the crowd grew violent: cursing, spitting on the children, and throwing rocks. While the principal kept the families in his office, several people entered the school, searching classrooms for the black children before being detained by police. It was determined that transfer records for these three children were incomplete,

and they were not enrolled at Caldwell. No African American children attended Caldwell in 1957-58.

**Glenn:** Located on Cleveland Street in East Nashville, Glenn Elementary was the focus of the white supremacists' efforts on September 9. Approximately two dozen African American children were eligible to enter first grade at Glenn based on their address, and segregationists spent the greatest amount of time at Glenn. John Kasper made an appearance to fuel the gathering crowd's ire. Only three African American children came to school that first day, entering the building with their parents through a jeering mob with a few policemen for protection. While the two young girls who were pre-registered were shown to classrooms, several white parents began withdrawing their students. Approximately half of Glenn's enrollment of five hundred was marked absent on the first day of school, but within a week, the normal attendance pattern resumed.

**Fehr:** Fehr School in the Salemtown area had the second-largest number of potential African American students who could attend, although only four came on the first day of school. They were faced with a crowd of over two hundred protestors who cursed the children as they entered, and two white women were arrested for disorderly conduct. When school let out at noon, real trouble began. As the crowd began throwing rocks and bottles, Linda McKinley's mother pulled a nail file from her pocket in protection and was arrested. As the custodian of the school lowered the American flag, protestors assaulted him and slashed the tires of his car. Of the first African American students at Fehr, only Linda McKinley returned to Fehr for second grade.

**Buena Vista:** Three African American children had preregistered to attend first grade at Buena Vista School on 9th Avenue North. A large crowd of protestors gathered, but they remained somewhat restrained. Although they had signs and shouted slogans, there was no violence, although an ominous parade of vehicles painted with KKK signage and waving Confederate flags circled the building. Two of the three students who enrolled that first day, Erroll Groves and Ethel Mai Carr, remained at Buena Vista all year, and would attend through sixth grade.

**Jones:** North of Buena Vista, also on 9th Avenue North, four African American students entered the building through a noisy crowd of protestors, although no violence broke out. Like the other families, these families had been subjected to a barrage of threats against their home, their families, and their children. All four children who entered Jones that first day completed the first grade there, and three returned for second grade the following year.

**Hattie Cotton:** No African American children had pre-registered at Hattie Cotton, and no protestors lined the schoolyard as a lone young black girl entered the school with her mother. Word spread quickly, however, and several protestors were outside the school at dismissal. The parade of segregationists' cars circled the school throughout the morning. As the children began leaving, the principal, Margaret Cate, noticed that no one had arrived to pick up the child. Her mother, frightened by the protestors, had called a taxi for

her, which had come but not waited. Cate took the child home in her own car, and later than night received a threatening phone call.

Although no violence had erupted at Hattie Cotton during the school day, shortly after midnight, the largest act of violence would occur there, when a large case of dynamite exploded at the front of the school. This act of violence shocked most citizens of Nashville, and civic leaders, from Mayor Ben West to Police Chief Hosse and Criminal Court Judge Charles Gilbert, led the city in denouncing the violence and the protestors; John Kasper was arrested. Eleven of the sixteen children returned to their now desegregated schools on the second day, now under a heavy police presence. Within a week, enrollment figures had resumed in Nashville schools.

*Tara Mitchell Mielnik, 2017*

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### **FISK JUBILEE SINGERS (1871- )**



In 1871, hoping to raise funds for Fisk University, school treasurer and music teacher Geoff L. White borrowed money and set out with nine student singers for a tour despite the disapproval of the university.

Withstanding hardships and indignities, this nameless and almost penniless group persevered against all odds to save their school from bankruptcy and closure. The singers ranged in age from fifteen to twenty-five years and all were former slaves or children of slaves.

Financially unsuccessful at first, the group abandoned its classical, popular repertoire for powerful, moving spirituals and slave songs. The group also adopted the name of Jubilee Singers, from the biblical reference to the time of jubilee and the freeing of all slaves.

The group's manager, George White, was without musical training himself, but he was a fine singer, was dedicated to music, and had the added talent of getting the utmost from his gifted singers. Soon the power and eloquence of their music was entrancing and inspiring audiences, which always cheered for encores.

After several tours throughout the United States and Europe, the Jubilee Singers eventually raised \$150,000, securing the school's future. The funds purchased Fisk's present campus (old Union Fort Gillem) in North Nashville and built Jubilee Hall, the first permanent building in America for the education of blacks (now designated as a national historic landmark).

Begun as a free school providing primary through college education for newly freed slaves, Fisk was founded in 1866 by the Congregational Church's American Missionary Association, the Western Freedmen's Aid Commission, and former Union Army General Clinton B. Fisk of the Freedmen's Bureau. Its only buildings at first were abandoned Union Army barracks.

Each October 6, Fisk celebrates Jubilee Day, commemorating the original Jubilee Singers, who sang before kings, queens, and heads of state; who captured the hearts of all who heard their music; who introduced to the world the beauty and tradition of the Negro spiritual; and who, with steadfastness and commitment, virtually saved their university.

*Kay Beasley, 1990*

### **FISK UNIVERSITY (1866- )**



Fisk University began as Fisk Free Colored School, one of several schools founded for freedmen during the Union military occupation of Nashville. In October of 1865, the American Missionary Association, the Western Freedmen's Aid Commission, and the U. S. Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands opened the school to help fulfill the educational

needs of freed slaves. In December of 1865, General Clinton Bowen Fisk, head of the Kentucky-Tennessee Freedmen's Bureau, secured housing for the school in several old Union army hospital buildings between Church and Cedar (Charlotte) streets near Shaftesbury Avenue and the Union army's contraband camp. On January 9, 1866, the school's founders and Governor William G. Brownlow participated in a dedication ceremony for the institution. The principal founders and organizers included John Ogden and Erastus Cravath and black businessmen Nelson Walker and Richard Harris. Like Ogden, Walker was a leading member of the local Republican party.

With the reopening of the Nashville public schools in the fall of 1867, the institution was chartered as Fisk University on August 22. As a college, Fisk needed new quarters. In 1871, the surplus Union Fort Gillem was purchased. A student choir under the leadership of Professor George L. White was organized (1867) and began touring the nation in 1871 to raise building funds. The Jubilee Singers raised over \$50,000 for the construction of Jubilee Hall at Salem (Eighteenth Avenue, North) and Jefferson streets. In January of 1876, Fisk University dedicated its new campus. Under its first president, Erastus Cravath, some 130 of Fisk's students and graduates became teachers in black schools. The physical plant continued to expand and by the 1890s Fisk's curriculum had expanded to include liberal arts, theology, teacher training, and a secondary school.

At the turn of the century, with the arrival of a second generation of freed blacks, the school began to undergo changes as black expectations began to rise. Demands were made for more blacks on the faculty and in administration. In June of 1911, there was a black protest because President George Gates dismissed six of twelve black teachers for financial reasons. In 1924-25, a student strike forced President Fayette A. McKenzie to resign under a cloud of charges of racism and oppression. In 1947, Charles S. Johnson became the first black to head Fisk University.

During the 1960s, the civil rights movement radicalized the student body, causing support from white donors to diminish. Facing increasing financial burdens, Fisk unwisely dipped into its \$15 million endowment. Nineteen eighty-three found the school with a greatly diminished endowment and serious debts, but also undergirded with determination to carry on.

Presidents and Acting Presidents of Fisk have been: Erastus Milo Cravath (1875-1900), James Merrill (1901-1908), George Augustus Gates (1909-1915), Fayette Avery McKenzie (1915-1925), Thomas Elsa Jones (1926-1946), Charles Spurgeon Johnson (1947-1956), Stephen Junius Wright (1957-1966), James Raymond Lawson (1967-1975), Rutherford Hamlet Adkins (Acting, 1975-1976), George W. Gores Jr. (Acting, 1976-1977), Walter J. Leonard (1977-1984), and Henry Ponder (1984- ).

*Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr. and Haywood Farrar, 1984*



## FISK UNIVERSITY HISTORIC DISTRICT

The Fisk University Historic District was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1978, honoring the University's long history and its architectural legacy from the late nineteenth century, including such landmarks as Jubilee Hall, the Carnegie Academic Building, the Fisk Memorial Chapel, and the Van Vechten Art Gallery. At the time of its nomination, some forty buildings were listed as contributing to the historic district, many of them former Victorian-era residences that were being used by the university as offices, classrooms, or faculty residences by the second half of the twentieth century.

A recent survey of the Fisk campus reveals that fewer than half of those forty buildings are extant on the Fisk campus today. Many of the single-family residences acquired by the university in the first half of the twentieth century have been demolished for campus expansions or due to the deteriorated condition of the buildings.



At the same time, many of the buildings considered non-contributing to the historic district in the 1970s are worthy of a reassessment for their historic and architectural significance to the university and to the city. At least ten of these twentieth-century buildings should now be considered as contributing to the Fisk University Historic District and

eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. While many of these buildings do not possess the architectural distinction of the Victorian-era buildings on campus, they are representative of the architectural style of the period in which they were built, and as such, are significant in their own right, for what they represent in both American architectural history as well as the important events surrounding Fisk and the Nashville community during the 1950s and 1960s. Many of the student activists important to the Civil Rights Movement as it grew in Nashville studied and lived in these buildings, creating a community that would change the racial climate in Nashville and across the nation.

**Burrus Hall (1945):** named for the Burrus brothers, two members of the first graduating class of Fisk University. Designed by McKissack and McKissack, Burrus Hall has served as the music building, as a men's dormitory, and as faculty apartments. The

two-story brick building is L-shaped with stone framed entry doors facing both Meharry Boulevard and 16th Avenue North.

**Henderson A. Johnson Gymnasium (1950):** named for an outstanding student-athlete at Fisk who later served as a coach and physical education instructor. Henderson Johnson Gymnasium was designed by the prominent African American architectural firm McKissack and McKissack to replace the Victorian gymnasium that had been rehabilitated into the Van Vechten Art Gallery.

**Park Johnson Hall (1954):** Park Hall was constructed in 1954 and named in honor of sociologist and educator Dr. Robert E. Park. Dr. Charles S. Johnson's name was added to the building following his sudden death in 1956. This three-story contemporary academic building was designed by McKissack and McKissack and features the Fisk University seal in terrazzo in the entry hall.

**DuBois Hall (1959):** constructed as a dormitory for male students, DuBois Hall was designed by Godwin and Beckett Architects from Atlanta. It is named in honor of prominent Fisk alumnus, W.E.B. DuBois. Following a 2008 renovation, DuBois Hall now houses the departments of computer sciences, mathematics, physics, and natural sciences in addition to the University's radio station.

**Spence Hall (1959):** Godwin and Beckett Architects designed Spence Hall as a modern student union building for Fisk. This three-story rectangular brick building was named for Adam K. Spence, classical language professor, minister, and the first academic dean at Fisk.

**Crosthwaite Hall (1962):** Dedicated in October 1963 in honor of Fisk alumna, faculty member, and registrar Minnie Lou Crosthwaite, this four-story brick L-shaped contemporary building was designed by Godwin and Beckett Architects. Crosthwaite Hall serves as a residence hall for women students.

**President's House (1962):** Constructed during the tenure of Fisk President Stephen Wright, the President's House is an exceptional Nashville example of mid-century modern residential architecture.

**Creswell Residence (1964):** *Jet* magazine congratulated Fisk comptroller Isaiah Creswell and his wife, Pearl Creswell, curator at the Van Vechten Gallery, on the completion of their "ultra-modern glass and redwood residence" in 1964. This one-story residence features a pierced masonry screen wall along the façade and is a unique Nashville example of mid-century modern residential architecture. The Creswell Residence is a privately-owned residence on the Fisk campus.

**New Livingstone Hall (1966):** replaced the 1880s building named for the missionary to Africa, David Livingstone. Old Livingstone Hall was destroyed by fire in the 1960s. Godwin and Beckett Architects from Atlanta designed this four-story brick L-shaped contemporary building, which now serves a men's dormitory.

**Fisk University Library (1968-70):** The Fisk University Library is one of the most striking of Fisk's modern landmarks. Godwin and Beckett Architects designed the modern library building, which features a concrete colonnade surrounding the building. The library has been named in honor of John Hope and Aurelia Franklin.

**Shane Hall (1972):** Shane Hall was named in honor of Fisk alumna and registrar Mary D. Shane. This five-story brick and concrete residence hall is a striking example of the modern pinwheel design architecture, and was designed by Anderson, Beckwith, and Haible, Architects, a leading firm in modern campus design.

*Tara Mitchell Mielnik, 2016*

### **FISK'S STIEGLITZ COLLECTION: *RADIATOR BUILDING* IN RETROSPECT**

In 1927, when avant-garde artist Georgia O'Keeffe (1887-1986) painted New York City's American Radiator Building, the 23-story skyscraper designed by architect Raymond M. Hood was but three years old. From the beginning of the tower's construction, however, this "precursor of Art Deco" was the center of publicity and controversy. The sleek skyscraper was constructed entirely in manganese-clad black bricks, with gold highlights



added by a coating of bronze powder on the cast-stone creating the pinnacles, finials, and parapets. The dramatic effect of the black and gold was, in a word, stunning -- especially at night, when floodlights illuminated the façade.

The racial symbolism of an all-black building was obvious in 1925, according to an article in the *New York Times Magazine*. The Harlem Renaissance was "in full flower and race consciousness--and animosity--were generally running high. [ Architect] Hood has broken through the color line," wrote Orrick Johns. Four years later, in 1929, architectural illustrator Hugh Ferriss observed that the American Radiator Building "has one undeniable virtue: it has undoubtedly provoked more arguments among laymen on the subject of architectural values than any other structure in the country."

O'Keeffe's oil painting, *Radiator Building Night, New York*, revealed the artist's "personal vision of unique, peak moments of revelation" in uncluttered, American

modern abstract style and marked a “key moment” assuring her successful career. She had been a watercolorist through 1916, when she met photographer Alfred Stieglitz (1864-1946) at his 291 Gallery in New York, and her watercolors were exhibited at 291 the following year. Stieglitz became her mentor, then her husband in 1924, and encouraged her use of oil paints as she explored new modes of creative expression. As O’Keeffe began to develop her individual style, Stieglitz began making photographs of her. His obsession with O’Keeffe photographs became public knowledge in early 1921, when 45 of his photographs were exhibited at the Anderson Galleries. Many of the images were of O’Keeffe, some of which were in the nude. The O’Keeffe photographs created a public sensation which would continue to surround O’Keeffe’s life and to which the taciturn artist never responded.

From the 1920s through the 1940s, both Stieglitz’s and O’Keeffe’s artistic reputations and popularity grew. Honors and commissions accrued to the pair in rapid succession. O’Keeffe discovered the brilliant colors of New Mexico and the American Southwest in the late 1930s and abandoned the cityscapes for large-scale paintings of brilliant flowers, canyon walls, and myriad desert subjects. She was in New Mexico painting when Stieglitz suffered a cerebral thrombosis in New York; she flew to the city to be with him when he died on July 13, 1946.

O’Keeffe was executrix of her late husband’s estate, including a 1,000+ collection of his own photographs and paintings, prints, and African sculpture/tribal art. He had left to her discretion the distribution of his collection. She designated six institutions as recipients of portions of the Stieglitz collection, one being Fisk University. The latter recipient was suggested by their close friend, Carl Van Vechten (1880-1964), who shared with O’Keeffe his plan to donate a portion of his own private collection to Fisk, a small private school founded in Nashville in 1866 for the education of newly emancipated slaves.

Arrangements were made in 1948 for the establishment of the Alfred Stieglitz Collection at Fisk University. During the November 4, 1949, dedication of the Stieglitz Collection housed at Fisk, only a few explanatory words were offered by Stieglitz’s reserved widow O’Keeffe: “These paintings and sculptures are a gift from Stieglitz....I hope you will go back and look at them more than once.”

Carl Van Vechten also spoke briefly, downplaying his pivotal role as benefactor in connecting his three friends, Fisk President Charles Johnson (who joined the school’s faculty in 1928 and became the first black president in 1946), New York photographer Alfred Stieglitz, and artist Georgia O’Keeffe-for the benefit of the visual arts program at Fisk. After the ceremony, those assembled walked across campus to the Stieglitz Collection’s new home in the Carl Van Vechten Art Gallery, facilitated by interior renovation of the 1888-89 gymnasium building. This eclectic, austere setting for the 97 pieces of contemporary art provided an unadorned contrast to the university’s crown jewel across the campus: the massive Victorian Gothic structure, Jubilee Hall, which houses the floor-to-ceiling c.1880 oil portrait of the Fisk Jubilee Singers. After the Singers’

1873 performance for England's Queen Victoria, she had commissioned court painter Edward Havell to paint the singers' portrait, completed c. 1880 and later presented to the university.

The addition of selections from Alfred Stieglitz's art collection further enhanced Fisk's established reputation as a cradle of creative expression. Items donated included nineteen of Stieglitz's stunning photographs on chloride--illustrative of his technique that "defined photography as a fine art form"--and five pieces of African sculpture/tribal art (in the early 1900s, Stieglitz mounted the "first exhibition of African sculpture in the United States" at his 291 gallery in New York). Also included were paintings by Georgia O'Keeffe, John Marin (1872-1953), Marsden Hartley (1877-1943), Arthur G. Dove (1880-1948), Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), Charles Demuth (1883-1935), and Diego Rivera (1886-1957), and prints by Paul Cezanne (1839-1906) and Pierre Auguste Renoir (1841-1919).

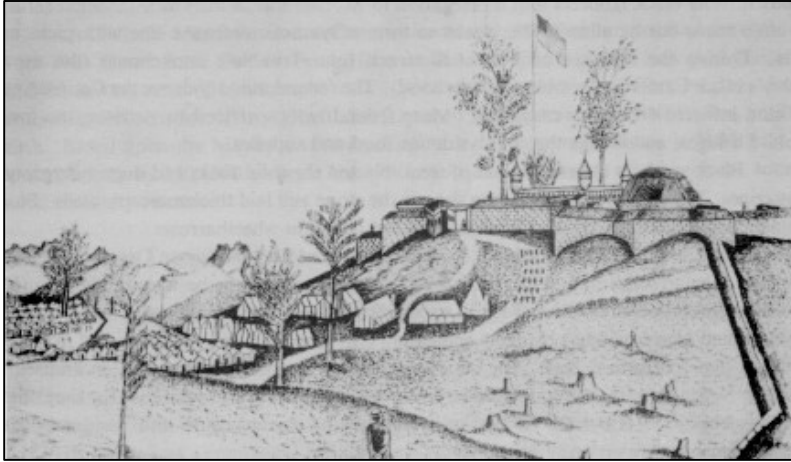
Carl Van Vechten, a prolific novelist, essayist, and photographer, was a patron of the Harlem Renaissance that began in New York City in the early 1920s and lasted until the onset of the Great Depression of the 1930s. He was fascinated by African-American culture and made photographic portraits of many of the creative black figures of the period, including writer James Weldon Johnson, poet Langston Hughes, actor Paul Robeson, singer Bessie Smith, writer Zora Neale Hurston, and writer-historian Arna Bontemps. Van Vechten created more than 15,000 photographic images and was an "avid collector of ephemera and books pertaining to black arts and letters." During his lifetime, Van Vechten donated various parts of his extensive collection to several universities, including Fisk University.

Thus, Carl Van Vechten's role as benefactor of the university continued to illustrate why Van Vechten Art Gallery was named in his honor. Georgia O'Keeffe also continued as a Fisk benefactress, initially loaning a number of paintings from her personal collection to the school in the early 1950s, then making the paintings permanent gifts. In 1954, O'Keeffe donated her *Radiator Building-Night, New York*; in 1956, O'Keeffe donated her smaller painting, *Flying Backbone*, to Fisk's growing art collection.

Although O'Keeffe died in 1986, controversy has continued to surround her paintings. In late 2005, local controversy erupted when Fisk sought court permission to sell two of its paintings, O'Keeffe's *Radiator Building-Night, New York* and Marsden Hartley's *Painting No. 3*, to raise funds for the financially challenged university. Litigation and negotiation have transpired from Tennessee to New Mexico to Arkansas, with media publicity and "advice" from every interested quarter to the present time. The completion of the *Radiator Building* in retrospect has yet to be decided.

*Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr., 2008*

## FORT NEGLEY



On February 25, 1862, following Confederate defeat at Fort Donelson, the Union Army occupied Nashville. In March 1862, President Abraham Lincoln appointed U. S. Senator Andrew Johnson of East Tennessee as military governor. Throughout the spring and summer of 1862, Confederate soldiers, irregulars, and civilians threatened to recapture the

city. Responding to Johnson's nervous pleas for protection, General Don Carlos Buell (commanding the Army of the Ohio), sent Captain James S. Morton, chief engineer, to Nashville with orders to fortify the city. By August, Morton succeeded in designing a series of fortifications, but lacked sufficient supplies and manpower. With only about 6,000 soldiers tasked with garrisoning Nashville, Morton identified another available labor source. On August 3, he wired Buell, "Only 150 Negroes so far, no tools, teams, etc. I wanted to employ 825 Negroes by the 11th."

In mid-August, nearly 2,000 free and enslaved blacks, recruited or forced into service in return for certificates of labor to be paid later, commenced construction of Fort Negley, a large fort on the crest of St. Cloud Hill. Workers cleared trees, blasted solid rock, and dug underground magazines. Expert stone masons shaped the stone and laid thick masonry walls. Women washed clothes, cooked food, and hauled debris in wheelbarrows. One observer reported, "To the credit of the colored population be it said, they worked manfully and cheerfully, with hardly an exception, and yet lay out upon the works at night under armed guard, without blankets and eating only army rations."

Morton, although not authorized to issue wages, encouraged his superiors to pay laborers \$7.00 per month to prevent desertion and to entice enlistment. Staggering rates of desertion and deaths from disease, exposure, and accidents, as well as confusion among officers over whether to pay laborers or their owners resulted in unpaid wages. Before the project ended, the army owed over \$85,958 in wages. Ultimately, only 300 laborers received pay.

On December 7, 1862, laborers completed Fort Negley, the largest inland masonry fortification built during the Civil War. From this impressive structure, located 620 feet above the Cumberland River, thousands of soldiers protected the southern approaches to the city. Based on a 17th century French design, Fort Negley consisted of three levels of

defense, covered four acres, and consumed 62,500 cubic feet of stone and 18,000 cubic yards of dirt.

The twelve-foot-high wooden stockade, the topmost structure or third level of defense, contained water cisterns, a telegraph station, observation platforms perched in two tall trees, and rifle turrets resting on each corner. The second level of defense, the inner works comprised of high cut limestone and earthen walls, contained four cannon and two powder magazines. Located below the east and west inner works, soldiers erected tents and small cabins in the ravelin ditches. Four triangular points or salients called redans constructed of earth and stone extended from each ravelin ditch. Each redan supported cannons capable of pivoting 180 degrees. Below the southern inner works, two multi-leveled bastions containing chambers and tunnels protected by tons of earth, stone, iron and wood, jutted out of the fort. Forming the first level of defense, the redans and the bastions gave the fort its distinctive star-shaped appearance. On the north side, the entrance or sally port, complete with gateway, a timber guardhouse, and a bomb shelter, overlooked the gently-sloping terrain and the city two miles beyond.

Imposing and bristling with eleven guns, Fort Negley successfully deterred direct attacks throughout the war. On November 5, 1862, a delegation of black laborers asked Morton for arms to defend against 1,000 Confederate cavalymen attempting to invade the city from the east. Refusing, he allowed the blacks to form a symbolic defensive line with picks and axes. Union forces, including guns installed at Fort Negley, drove the Confederates off, inflicting sixty-eight casualties. On December 15 and 16, 1864, Fort Negley's guns also participated in the Battle of Nashville.

From February 1862 through December 1864, thousands of troops garrisoned and improved Nashville's five major fortifications, twenty-one minor installations and more than twenty miles of earthworks. At the end of the war, troops dismantled the defenses--with the exception of Fort Negley, where a small contingent of soldiers remained until the official end of Reconstruction in Nashville in September 1867. The army removed the cannon and sold the iron and timber before abandoning the stone remains.

From 1867 until 1869, the local Ku Klux Klan held secret meetings in the fort's blockhouses. During the early 1900s, local black Republican Party leaders and others unsuccessfully petitioned the federal government to restore the fort. In spring 1935, the Works Progress Administration (WPA), a product of New Deal legislation, hired 1,150 men to restore Fort Negley. Although *The Tennessean* declared, "Restoration of Fort Negley finally complete" on December 13, 1936, the city delayed opening Fort Negley Park--featuring a new parking lot, walkways, and a small museum located in one of magazines--until the summer of 1941. While the city maintained the softball and little league diamonds also built by the WPA, the fort fell into ruins and closed in 1945. The Centennial commemoration of the Civil War (1961-1965) revived interest in the site, and the Metro Parks department and volunteers cleared vegetation and debris. In 1975, Fort Negley was listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The Metropolitan Historical Commission installed a plaque at the entrance to the site in 1980, and the Tennessee

Historical Commission placed a historical marker noting the involvement of blacks in the Civil War and in the construction of Fort Negley.

Throughout the latter part of the twentieth century, local leaders and community activists such as Joe Kelso pushed for the restoration of the fort. In 1994, the City Council approved \$500,000 to begin restoration of Fort Negley as a historical, tourist, and community resource. Between 2003 and 2007, Nashville spent more than two million dollars completing the first two phases of the 1996 Master Plan. In 2004, a stabilized Fort Negley featuring boardwalks and interpretive panels re-opened. The Fort Negley Visitors Center opened in 2007. In 2013, the Fort Negley Technical Advisory Committee oversaw the completion of a Historic Structures Report documenting the fort's complex history, current conditions, and preservation needs. Programming and interpretation at the site include antebellum Nashville, the city's importance during the Civil War, Reconstruction, the WPA era, African American heritage, and the Civil Rights Movement.

*Krista Castillo, 2014*

Revised and expanded from the 1993 Profile  
by Bobby L. Lovett

### **JOHN HOPE FRANKLIN (1915-2009)**

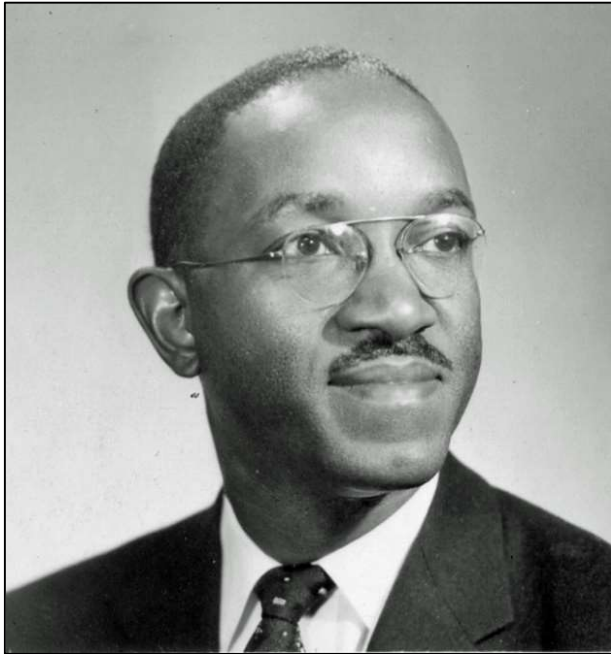
John Hope Franklin, historian, Civil Rights activist, and scholar of the African American experience in the United States, was born on January 2, 1915, in Rentiesville, Oklahoma. Coming of age in America during the era of Jim Crow, Franklin became a pioneer and the preeminent scholar in his field, holding positions at some of the most prestigious colleges in the United States. As an academic with a profound understanding of the history of race relations in America, he witnessed and participated in many of the seminal events of the twentieth century, laying the foundation for a new understanding of the history of Africans across the diaspora.

Franklin's parents, Buck and Mollie Franklin, moved to Rentiesville, Oklahoma—one of the state's many small all-black townships—shortly before his birth in 1915. Franklin's father, in search of work and better opportunity for his family, opened a law practice in Tulsa shortly after his son's birth. Franklin's mother, a teacher, took young John Hope to school with her, providing pencil and paper for her son and instructing him to remain quiet while class was in session. The visits to the classroom, his mother soon discovered, provided an early start to her son's education. These visits resulted in her son starting school already knowing how to read and write.

Franklin graduated as the valedictorian of Tulsa's Booker T. Washington High School in 1931 and headed to Fisk University. His arrival at Fisk in 1931 occurred during a period of unprecedented growth at the university. Harboring dreams of following in his father's footsteps, he pursued a degree in English and had plans of applying to law school after



graduation. Fisk, with its nationally distinguished faculty and talented student body, provided an environment where Franklin's inquisitive mind and budding intellect could flourish.



The young scholar soon found that his presence at the esteemed university did not insulate him from the dehumanizing and often violent effects of Jim Crow. Two events impacted Franklin's views regarding civic activism. First, the untimely deaths of Juliette Derricotte, Fisk's much-beloved Dean of Women, and a young co-ed while on a trip to Georgia troubled Franklin as a student. Both women died in 1931 as a result of injuries sustained during a serious car accident in Georgia. Although the women were still alive when assistance reached the site of the wreck, no local hospitals would admit them because of their race.

Another event involved the lynching of an African American teenager from Maury County, Tennessee. Falsely charged with the attempted rape of a white woman, Cordie Cheek's family sent him to Nashville to live with his uncle who owned a home near the Fisk campus. In December 1933, two white men abducted Cheek from his uncle's home and returned him to Maury County, turning the boy over to a lynch mob who subsequently murdered him and mutilated his body. These events had a profound effect on John Hope Franklin and the entire Fisk community, as the group struggled for most of the spring semester, debating how to respond to Cheek's murder. Franklin took on a leadership role in these discussions.

Surprisingly, these events, although central to Franklin's development while at Fisk, did not solidify his desire to pursue a career in law. Instead, the courses he took in history under Theodore S. Currier, and his growing relationship with him as a student, caused him to change his major from English to history. The pursuit of a Ph.D. in the discipline at Harvard University became his desired goal. When he applied to and received an invitation to join its graduate program during his senior year, he became the first student from a historically black college to be admitted unconditionally to Harvard. Currier also demonstrated his faith in his star student after he left the halls of Fisk University. When it became clear that his former student did not have the funds to attend Harvard, Currier took out a personal loan of \$500 to assist Franklin in meeting the cost of tuition at the school.

Franklin's years at Harvard were as eventful as those he spent in Nashville. He completed the requirements for his master's and Ph.D. in 1935 and 1941, respectively, taught at St.

Augustine College in North Carolina, and convinced Aurelia Whittington, a young woman he met at Fisk, to marry him in 1940. After graduation, he held positions at Fisk, Howard University, as chair of the history department at Brooklyn College, and at the University of Chicago. His service as chair at Brooklyn College was significant because it made him the first African American to hold that post at a major American university.

Franklin published his pathbreaking book, *From Slavery to Freedom*, in 1947. This book remains the seminal text in the history of African Americans. Nearly seventy years after its initial publication, the book remains in print, has been translated into several languages, and has sold over three million copies.

In 1982, Franklin became the James B. Duke Professor of History at Duke University. The first African American president of the American Historical Society, Franklin received the Spingarn Medal from the NAACP, and the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Bill Clinton in 1995, among his more than 100 honorary degrees and additional accolades.

Franklin remained a prolific writer and internationally renowned lecturer until his death in Durham, North Carolina, on March 25, 2009. Throughout his life, he provided inspiration to countless students and scholars, gave wise counsel to civil rights organizations and heads of states, and left scores of scholarly works, including his groundbreaking *From Slavery to Freedom* (1947); *The Militant South* (1956); *Reconstruction After the Civil War* (1961); *Color and Race* (1968); *A Southern Odyssey: Travelers in the Antebellum North* (1975); and *George Washington Williams: A Biography* (1985), that continue to inform and inspire generations of historians.

*Learotha Williams, 2016*

### **WILLIAM H. FRANKLIN (1853-1935)**

William H. Franklin was a writer, educator, and preacher, among other things. He was a true pioneer in most of his endeavors. He was born to free parents in Knoxville on April 14, 1852. His father was a competent brick mason, who was very much in demand. His mother was a homemaker.

He started school just one month before the Civil War began and interrupted his education. He returned to school in 1864, when General Ambrose Burnside occupied Knoxville and allowed the teaching of blacks to resume. Franklin was the acknowledged head of his class and the top student in the school.

He attended Knoxville schools until 1870 and began teaching at Hudsonville, Mississippi. After two terms, he had saved enough money to enter Maryville College in Maryville, Tennessee. There he ranked high in his schoolwork and was vice president of the Athenian Society during his first year in college. In 1880, Franklin became the first black person to be graduated from Maryville College.

His graduation oration was highly praised. He entered Lane Theological Seminary in September of 1880 and was graduated in 1883.



From Lane Seminary he went to Rogersville, Tennessee, to begin his work. He was ordained by Union Presbytery, Synod of Tennessee, in 1883 and set out to build a school. In just a few short months, he had organized what later would be known as Swift Memorial College.

Franklin had already established himself as a respected writer before finishing college. He began writing for the Knoxville *Examiner*, which was edited by William F. Yardley in 1878. He also wrote for *The Tennessee Star*, *The Herald Presbyter*, *The Critic*, and other papers. *The Afro-American Press*, a book published in 1891 about black newspapers, described Franklin as “one of the most conversant correspondents that now writes for the press. His articles are always fresh

and well-received and demand careful thought. He is logical, argumentative, and free from abrupt phrases.” He also was highly praised for his work as a special correspondent for the *New York Age* and the *Negro World*.

A number of nationally known individuals were prepared for impressive careers at Swift Memorial College under Reverend Franklin, including William A. Scott, the founder of the Scott Newspaper Syndicate. At age twenty, Scott was appointed Dean of Boys at the school by the Reverend Franklin.

The Reverend William H. Franklin died in October of 1935 at the age of 83. Services were held in the college chapel. *The Knoxville Public Guide* of October 31, 1935 stated, “During the funeral services most of the businesses and offices of the small Tennessee town were closed. It is reported that the entire city and county took on an air of mourning as the news of the educator's death went around.”

*Robert Booker, 1996*

### **FREEDMAN'S BANK OF NASHVILLE (1865-1874)**

In December of 1865, Nashville's first black bank, the Freedman's Savings and Trust Company Bank, was organized by local black leaders. It was one of thirty-three branches

which the Congress authorized in the fifteen former slave states. Black Tennesseans organized other Freedman's Bank branches: Chattanooga (1868-1874), Columbia (1870-1874) and Memphis (1865- 1874). But none of the other Tennessee branches generated more capital than the Nashville branch. The Congress designed the banks to allow a depositor to place ten cents a day in savings, receive six percent interest and accumulate \$489.31 in ten years.

The Nashville branch bank had a black cashier (manager) and nearly all black trustees. The early trustees included a white bank president and a list of Nashville's elite black leaders: chairman Nelson Walker (businessman, barber), Frank Parrish (barber), Peter Lowery (preacher, real estate dealer), Henry Harding (hotel owner), Richard Harris (preacher), William C. Napier (hack operator), Daniel Wadkins (preacher), Benjamin East (businessman) and Nelson G. Merry (preacher). Local black businessman Alfred Menefee became the first cashier of the local branch after putting up a \$5,000 bond. Menefee also acted as an agent for the National Freedmen's Relief Association and its *Freedman's Journal*, distributing copies and collecting and depositing funds in the Freedman's Bank. Later John J. Cary, a more formally educated black man and migrant from Canada, became the permanent cashier. By June of 1866, the Nashville branch had \$19,653.28 in deposits.

Between 1866 and 1874, the Nashville branch serviced 16,444 accounts and handled \$555,000 in deposits. Institutional assets rose steadily to \$6,075 (1866), \$43,974 (1869), and \$70,146 (1871). The Nashville branch had \$78,535 in deposits, compared to \$19,823 for the Columbia branch and \$56,775 for the Memphis Freedman's Bank. Cary invested nearly forty percent of the bank's funds in government securities and local real estate. In 1871, Cary and the trustees completed a three-story bank building, Liberty Hall, at 44 Cedar Street. Black cultural events and annual sessions of the State Colored Men's Conventions were held in Liberty Hall.

The national Freedman's Bank and all its branches collapsed in 1874, due to the economic depression of 1873, the accumulating effects of fraud and mismanagement of the national branch by poorly-trained white administrators and risky loan policies. Nashville's Freedman's Bank also collapsed because it had \$62,755.87 deposited in the failed national branch. Frederick Douglass received appointment as the first national black president of the troubled banking system shortly before its collapse, but he had no choice except to ask the Congress to liquidate all remaining assets. The United States Comptroller of the Currency closed all Freedman's Banks.

When rumors of the impending disaster circulated in Nashville, John Cary tried to allay the depositors' fears. He published a sound financial statement in the *Union and American* newspaper and persuaded the trustees to make positive public statements to quiet depositors' apprehensions. The Davidson County Chancery Court began bankruptcy hearings on the Nashville branch, and on December 21, 1874, the court appointed Cary as receiver for liquidation of the bank's assets. Most depositors received a small percentage of their money. Yet large investors, such as Henry Harding, lost thousands of dollars--a

fortune in that day. Part of the whites' reaction to the collapse of the black banks was expressed by the Memphis *Avalanche*, which heartlessly mocked the dejected blacks with the following headline: "WHAR'S DAT MONEY."

*Bobby L. Lovett, 1995*

### **JOHN WESLEY FRIERSON (1880-1965)**



John Wesley Frierson was born near Mount Pleasant, Tennessee, on September 25, 1880. He was educated in the Mount Pleasant schools and reared as a dedicated member of the Church of Christ. At the turn of the century, his family moved to Nashville. While in his early twenties, Frierson became interested in residential rental properties. He founded and operated the J. W. Frierson Realty Company at 431 Cedar (Charlotte) Street, which was the center of the black business district. After fifty-two years at that location, Frierson moved into his newly built J. W. Frierson Building at 1310 Jefferson Street. Eventually, he owned eighty-five parcels of property in predominantly black areas of Nashville. Frierson's motto was "Clean Deals in Dirt." At the height of his career, his personal worth was near one million dollars.

As his business prospered, Frierson increased his involvement in the Church of Christ. He considered himself a "steward" of the church.

Frierson traveled extensively wherever the church met, seeking opportunities to assist struggling congregations, motivating them to engage in projects of improvement. It is estimated that eighty-nine church buildings were erected with the help of Frierson's endowment funds.

He also was active in youth affairs, supported civil rights activities and encouraged youth with aspirations in the professions of medicine and law. In his will, Frierson stipulated that the Nashville branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was to have a permanent office in the J. W. Frierson Building at 1310 Jefferson Street. Because of his benevolence, both the local and the national headquarters of the NAACP honored Frierson with life memberships.

Frierson worshipped regularly at both the Jackson Street Church of Christ (founded in 1896) and the Jefferson Street Church of Christ (founded in 1914 and now the Schrader Lane Church of Christ). In 1963, two years before his death, Frierson established the John

Wesley Frierson Church of Christ Development Foundation, chartered to receive, hold, and manage property for religious and charitable purposes. Upon his death on February 14, 1965, his will, drawn by attorney Z. Alexander Looby, provided real estate holdings for the Foundation, and the Frierson's home at 1230 Villa Place is maintained as rental property by the Foundation. On February 17, 1965, J. W. Frierson was interred in Nashville's Greenwood Cemetery.

*Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr., 1984*

### **SUTTON E. GRIGGS (1872-1933\*)**

Born in Chatfield, Texas, on June 19, 1872, Sutton E. Griggs was an orator, a minister, a writer and a publisher. He was educated in the Dallas public schools and at Bishop College in Mars Hall, Texas. Upon completing his studies at Richmond Theological Seminary (Virginia Union University) in 1893, he was ordained and spent the next two years as pastor of the First Baptist Church at Berkeley, Virginia. During this period, he married Emma Williams, a public school teacher.

In 1899, Griggs moved to Nashville to become the corresponding secretary of the National Baptist Convention and the pastor of First Baptist Church, East Nashville. He left several years later to become pastor of Tabernacle Baptist Church of Memphis; he spent one year as the pastor of the Hopewell Baptist Church in Denison, Texas. Later, he returned to serve as Tabernacle pastor.

In Memphis, Griggs organized in 1914 the National Public Welfare League, which promoted social efficiency among Afro-Americans and interracial cooperation. He was a disciple of W. E. B. DuBois and a supporter of the Niagara Movement and the newly founded National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). In 1930, Griggs left Memphis to return to Hopewell Baptist Church in Denison. He later resigned this position to go to Houston, Texas, to establish the National Religious and Civic Institute.

Although Griggs is known and respected as a leader in the Baptist church, it is as a writer--more specifically, a novelist--that he has received the most attention. During his lifetime, Griggs wrote more than thirty-three books, five of them novels. In 1901, while in Nashville, he established and operated the Orion Publishing Company; here he published, promoted, and sold his own works to the Afro-American community. The works published by Orion were predominantly novels, which combined facts and fiction to present the plight of an oppressed people and a solution. These novels focused on the political issues, the definition or image, and the dignity and survival of black Americans. It is not for his literary style or technique that Griggs is studied, but for his response to the racial injustices of his day, for his defense and portrayal of the humanity and dignity of his people, and his suggestion of what could happen if racial persecution continued. He

has been called a "militant" by some and an "accommodationist" by others, while another portion of his audience views Griggs as vacillating between the two philosophies. Whatever label is applied to Griggs, he used ridicule, reason, sympathy, and fear in his novels to address racism in America; he, like Martin Delany in his novel, *Black*, extols the black-skinned hero.



His early novels, *Imperium in Imperior* (1899) and *The Hindered Hand; or, The Reign of the Repressionist* (1905), are responsible for most of the attention Griggs has received. *Imperium in Imperior* focuses upon the classic responses to American life by Afro Americans: assimilationism and nationalism. The issue of participation in the American democratic idea is presented through the account of a national Negro political organization, which is designed to unite all Negroes in an active body, and the actions of two main characters. One of them is a nationalist and one an assimilationist; one is black-skinned and one a mulatto. In the novel's development, Griggs reflects the tenor of the day: miscegenation, oppression, Jim Crowism, political exploitation of the black man, and the Negro's lack of protection. *The*

*Hindered Hand* depicts the cruel and tragic results of miscegenation, racial injustices, and the question of emigration to Africa. It also is an attack upon the plantation literature of Griggs's day by such white writers as Thomas Nelson Page and Thomas Dixon, Jr.; specifically, it is an attack against the propaganda in Dixon's *The Leopard's Spots: A Romance of the White Man's Burden, 1865-1900*.

\*Some sources list his death in 1930, but it is believed that Sutton Griggs died January 5, 1933.

Helen R. Houston, 1984

### **CHARLES ODOM HADLEY (1876-1948)**

Dr. Charles Odom Hadley was a prominent African American within Nashville and Tennessee medical and military history. His former home, a circa 1914 exuberant Craftsman, still stands at 1601 Phillips Street on the Fisk University campus. This architectural gem serves as a physical reminder of his legacy. In addition to his

noteworthy medical career, this Nashville physician achieved great success as a celebrated military leader and respected university instructor.

Hadley was born in Nashville on March 10, 1876 to Jennie Martin and Dr. William A. Hadley, one of the first and most highly reputed African American physicians in Nashville. Dr. W.A. Hadley also founded the Nashville branch of the Independent Order of the Immaculates (IOI, established 1871), a national African American fraternal organization based in Nashville. Once considered the strongest order in Tennessee and one of the strongest in the nation, the IOI admitted members of both sexes. W.A. Hadley's leadership and service-driven roles undoubtedly shaped the aspirations of his son.

The younger Hadley earned a Bachelor of Arts from Fisk University in 1896 and graduated from Meharry Medical College in 1899. That winter he joined the newly-formed Nashville Society of Medicine, a cadre of African American physicians and dentists headed by R.F.



Boyd. An early instance within Charles' lifelong pattern of community service, he represented the Third Ward in the 1896, 1898 and 1902 Republican primary elections.

Dr. C.O. Hadley began his Nashville medical practice in 1900, boarding and practicing at 1512 Phillips Street with his father. Upon the elder Hadley's death in 1901, Charles took over his medical practice at 1103 Cedar Avenue. He joined the Medical Alumni Endowment Association of Walden University, elected Vice President of the association in 1903. He also served as President of the Nashville Medico-Chirurgical Society, a group responsible for the formation of an all-Black state medical society of which he was elected Vice President upon its establishment in August 1903. In 1905, Charles married Fisk University graduate Mabel Grant of Nashville and they made their home at 1506 Phillips Street.

In 1906, Dr. C.O. Hadley served on the Advisory Committee of the local branch of the Negro Development and Exhibition Company, a national group which advocated for an African American museum at the Jamestown, Virginia Ter-Centennial Exposition of 1907. Largely comprised of elite African American members who wanted to earn respect from Whites and inspire less-educated Blacks, the group felt that "the Negro Building could ease a path for political and civil rights," and the museum was ultimately realized. Around this time, Dr. Hadley joined the faculty of Nashville's Wilson Infirmary (incorporated 1907), located at the intersection of South First Street and South Hill (now Hart) Street. Following in his father's footsteps and in keeping with his own custom of community



betterment, in 1908 Dr. Hadley became an advisory board member for the Colored Knights of Pythias benevolent order at Stonewall Lodge No. 103. The following year, he and several other doctors jointly opened new offices at 1211 Cedar Street near Twelfth Avenue North, the collocation of their services considered a neoteric model. Members of the state medical association elected him as their new president in June of 1909. Just prior to World War I, the dwelling at 1601 Phillips Street was constructed (c. 1913-1914) for a sum of \$2,500 and the Hadleys took up residence there by 1915.

In addition to his medical, educational and community endeavors, Charles O. Hadley served over twelve consecutive years under the Tennessee National Guard (TNG)'s all-Black Company G of Nashville, later Company K, 372d Infantry and part of the third Battalion. He enlisted in January 1905 (aged 28 years) and was commissioned First Lieutenant of Company G in 1910. Continuing his service with that company, he rose to the appointed rank of captain, revered as the first African American in the south to attain this title despite a lack of military training. Hadley served nearly three years as Captain of Infantry with the TNG, after which the Army drafted him into federal service on August 5, 1917.

As a member of the American Expeditionary Forces, he was part of the United States armed services sent to Europe during World War I. Appointed as Company G's commanding officer by Governor Thomas Clark Rye (in office from 1915-1919), Capt. Hadley joined the Medical Corps in France during the war. Throughout his years of military duty, he was primarily stationed in Nashville and Memphis, Tennessee; Camp Sevier, South Carolina; and Camps Stuart and Lee, Virginia. As Captain Hadley led this local segregated unit of 'doughboys,' some Whites had concerns about the prospect of armed African Americans in uniform. In response to those people, Capt. Hadley departed for Europe with a simple, yet dignified statement, "Nashville's Negro company will bring credit to those who have shown trust in it." While abroad, he continued his studies of medicine with European universities, but was wounded during service and honorably discharged on July 29, 1919.

Along with his successful military career, Dr. Hadley also led a lengthy and highly-regarded career as a university instructor and physician. He continued his father's medical practice for forty-eight years and spent the last thirty years of his life teaching medicine at Meharry Medical College as a demonstrator of anatomy. Dr. Hadley's medical offices were located at 1211 Cedar Street and later at 1120 Charlotte Avenue, though he also performed operations at Hubbard Hospital. He built a large medical profession as a physician and was praised in the media for his career, "There is not a man of the race who stands higher than Dr. Hadley in the profession, and he has received numerous honors at the hands of his professional brethren, having served as president of the Volunteer State Medical association, one of the highest places to which he could be elevated in the profession in Tennessee."

The Hadleys were very active in numerous other community-oriented endeavors and the couple was affiliated with Howard Congregational Church. In 1913, Dr. Hadley was

appointed to the board of directors for the Star Realty & Investment Company, an entity formed in 1912 to build and sell affordable housing. Mabel Hadley, who sang at various functions around town and traveled with the Jubilee singers, passed away in 1943. After a long hospitalization, Dr. C.O. Hadley succumbed to his illness at Veteran's Hospital on December 14, 1948. At the time of his death, Dr. Hadley had lived at 1601 Phillips Street for 33 years.

*Caroline Eller, 2021*

### **WILLIAM JASPER HALE (1874-1944)**



William Jasper Hale was born in Marion County, Tennessee, on September 26, 1874. The oldest child in a poor family of four boys and two girls, young Hale went to work at an early age. During his school days, he held several jobs in various East Tennessee towns. Hale found substantial employment in Dayton and earned enough money to enroll at biracial Maryville College. The young man had a passion for reading and mathematics. After attending Maryville College for several terms, he secured teaching positions in Coulterville and Retro. He became principal of St. Elmo Grammar School in a suburb of Chattanooga. Later, he became principal of Chattanooga's East First Street Grammar School.

Hale's opportunity for prominence came in 1909, when the General Assembly authorized a Negro state normal school. He led the effort to raise \$71,000 in pledges to get the school located in

Chattanooga. However, Nashville's black community raised nearly \$100,000 and secured the school for Davidson County. Despite the change in location, Hale became the state normal school's principal because state Superintendent of Schools R. J. Jones came from Chattanooga and knew William J. Hale.

Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State Normal School opened on June 19, 1912, with an enrollment of 247 students. Hale hand-picked the first faculty members from graduates of Atlanta, Fisk, and Howard universities. After visiting other black institutions where industrial and agricultural training took place, Hale quickly adopted a pre-collegiate curriculum for the school. He secretly created a black history course and called it Industrial Education "with emphasis on Negro problems." The State of Tennessee

received federal Morrill Land Grant Funds for State Normal and the University of Tennessee, but the white officials sent most of the money to the University of Tennessee.

Although the state officials committed fiscal discrimination against the black school, Hale managed to increase enrollments and elevate the curriculum to collegiate status by 1922. To secure more state funds, he sent state officials Christmas turkeys from the school's farm. He transported state legislators to the campus, where they were dined, served, and entertained by faculty members and students. During these visits, the students appeared in uniforms, worked on the farm, and did other manual labor, so the whites perceived that "blacks were being educated according to southern expectations." During 1927-28, three new buildings were completed, library holdings improved, faculty fellowships for advanced training established, and evening courses and extension work added. By 1935, Hale held dedication ceremonies for six more buildings and began discussion of a graduate program.

Hale married his secretary, a local girl named Hattie Hodgkins, who was a graduate of Fisk University. Their three children graduated from A & I College with distinction: William Jasper, Jr. (1931), Gwendolyn Claire (1939), and Edward Harned (1941).

In 1927, the National Association of Teachers in Colored Schools elected Hale to its presidency. He served on the board of Citizens Bank, and in 1929 he presided over the State Interracial Commission. In 1930, Hale became the first Tennessean to receive the Harmon Foundation's Gold Award for outstanding achievement in education. He chaired the Community Chest drive for blacks (1931). He also received honorary Doctor of Law degrees from Wilberforce University and Howard University (1936 and 1939, respectively). Dr. Hale became the Negro state director for U. S. Savings Stamps and Bonds during the early part of World War II and raised over forty thousand dollars.

When Tennessee A & I State College celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary, the institution was valued at \$3,000,000. Hale successfully gained accreditation for the school in 1933. His graduates earned advanced degrees from America's prestigious colleges and universities, including Columbia, Ohio State, Cornell, and Iowa State. He retired in 1943, after struggling for thirty-one years to build and expand a creditable institution of learning for African Americans.

*Billie P. Pursley, 1987*

### **ALEX HALEY (1921-1992)**

Alexander Murray Palmer Haley, the oldest of three sons (George and Julius), was born to Simon and Bertha (Palmer) Haley on August 11, 1921, in Ithaca, New York. Six weeks after his birth, Simon and Bertha returned to Henning, Tennessee, and presented Will and Cynthia Palmer with their grandson, Alex Haley. Alex and his mother remained with the Palmers, while Simon returned to Cornell University to complete his graduate studies

in agriculture. After the death of Will Palmer in 1926, Simon Haley joined his wife and family in Henning and operated the Palmer business. In 1929, Simon Haley began his teaching career, and the family moved. Two years after they relocated, Bertha Haley died in Normal, Alabama.

At the age of fifteen, Alex Haley was graduated from high school. He attended college for two years, then in 1939 he enlisted in the United States Coast Guard as a messboy. While in the Coast Guard, he began writing short stories; it would be eight years later, however, before any of his stories were published. Approximately thirteen years after entering the Coast Guard, Haley became chief journalist. After twenty years of military service, Haley retired in 1959. Upon his retirement, he embarked upon a new career as a writer. He became an assignment writer for *Reader's Digest* magazine and later was associated with *Playboy* magazine, where he inaugurated the "Playboy Interviews" feature. Soon he was recognized for his insightful and in-depth interviews. His interviews of Malcolm X led to his first book, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X: As Told to Alex Haley* (1965). Translated into eight languages, this literary work accorded Haley fame as an author.



The stories Haley heard as a youth in the 1920s and 1930s inspired him in 1964 to investigate his maternal ancestry. "Using the pronunciations of the African words repeated...by family members," Haley consulted "linguists at several universities." These linguistic specialists verified the language, as well as the village where the words originated. Haley conducted research in the Library of Congress and in Great Britain, where maritime records were available for slave ships. Traveling to the small village of Juffure, in Gambia, West Africa, he met the *griot*, who gave an oral account of seven previous generations in Mandinka tribal history, back to sixteen-year-old

Kunta Kinte, who was wrested from the forest while searching for wood to make a drum. Haley's fact-finding mission verified the oral history preserved by his maternal ancestors.

For his trip back to the United States, Haley booked passage on a cargo ship to try to obtain first-hand knowledge of what his ancestor experienced during the three-month "Middle passage" to America. For ten nights, he slept on a "rough board between bales of raw rubber in the 'hold' of the ship." He tried to conceptualize what it was like to be shackled and lie in filth and human waste, while closely packed with more than a hundred other human beings.

Twelve years later, Haley's research culminated in the 1976 publication of *Roots: Saga of An American Family*. He called his literary work "faction," meaning that it was a fusion of fact and fiction. Prior to book publication, portions of *Roots* were condensed in *Reader's Digest* in 1974. As a result of the unprecedented popularity of Haley's book, the American Broadcasting Company (ABC) produced *Roots*, a twelve-hour televised miniseries based upon Haley's novel, in 1977. The series set records for the number of viewers and the Sunday night finale achieved the highest rating for a single television production. The *Roots* miniseries' audience surpassed the Civil War drama, *Gone with the Wind*, which previously had been the most-watched television broadcast. During the course of the eight-night telecast, *Roots* was viewed by more than 130 million viewers. Two years later, in February of 1979, the ABC-Television network presented Haley's *Roots: The Second Generation*.

*Roots* in book form sold more than 1.6 million copies in the first six months after publication. The text was translated into thirty-seven languages and was serialized in the *New York Post*; the dramatic story stimulated interest in the study of Africa and in African American genealogy.

Alex Haley received the 1976 National Book Award for *Roots*. In 1977, Haley received the Pulitzer Prize, as well as the Spingarn Medal from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored. In 1989, Haley became the first person to receive an honorary degree from the Coast Guard Academy. The State of Tennessee honored Haley when it purchased and restored his boyhood home. Historically known as the Palmer House, the ten-room bungalow-style house is located in the small incorporated town of Henning, Tennessee, in Lauderdale County. The first state-owned historic site in West Tennessee and the first state-owned historic site devoted to African Americans in Tennessee, it was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on December 14, 1978. A state historical marker placed at the site tells of Haley's inspiration for *Roots*.

Alex Haley died on February 10, 1992. On February 15, after funeral services in Memphis, his body was conveyed to Henning and interred in the front grounds of the Alex Haley Boyhood Home.

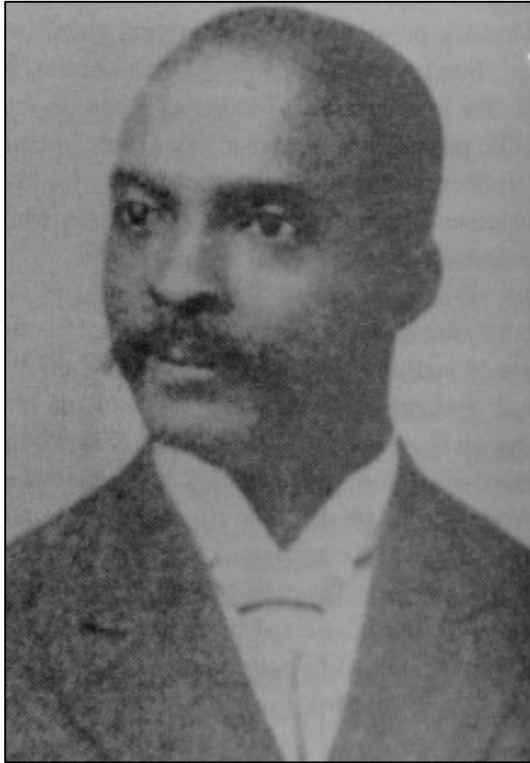
*Linda T. Wynn, 1996*

### **GREEN P. HAMILTON (1867-1932)**

Green P. Hamilton, one of the city's pioneer educators of color, was born in Memphis in 1867. His mother, Laura Hamilton, was ambitious for her son, and he grew up motivated by the importance of obtaining an education. An intelligent lapel, he was a reader and letter writer by the age of ten.

An 1882 graduate with honors from LeMoyne Normal Institute, he completed his education at Rust College, Holly Springs, Mississippi, and Columbia University in New

York City. “Professor” Hamilton, as he was called, began teaching in the Memphis city schools in 1884. He became principal of Kortrecht High School, the first Negro public high school in the city, in 1892. Green Hamilton married Alice Richmond, formerly of Arkansas, who was a teacher in the Memphis city schools. The couple did not have children.



Professor Hamilton organized the first Negro high-school band at Kortrecht around 1900. J. Edgar Hodges, a student who was the son of a prominent Memphis brick contractor, played the trombone, and his sister, Eloora, was soprano soloist. The band presented a benefit concert at Church's Park and Auditorium, in order to raise funds to purchase uniforms and instruments. A. L. Hall, M. D., owner of *The Memphis Striker*, black newspaper, raised the balance of the needed \$900. The band was a big success and toured Mississippi and Arkansas, presenting concerts in the larger cities.

Green P. Hamilton was interested in the progress of his race and was one of the first African-American writers in Memphis to present historical information on citizens of color. He was the author of two books: *The Bright Side of Memphis* (1908), which he dedicated with feeling to his mother, citing the valiant efforts she put forth to enable him to obtain an education, and *Beacon Lights of The Race* (1911). Both books are valuable additions to Memphis' history.

Hamilton Elementary School, Hamilton Junior High School, and Hamilton High School are named in honor of Green P. Hamilton.

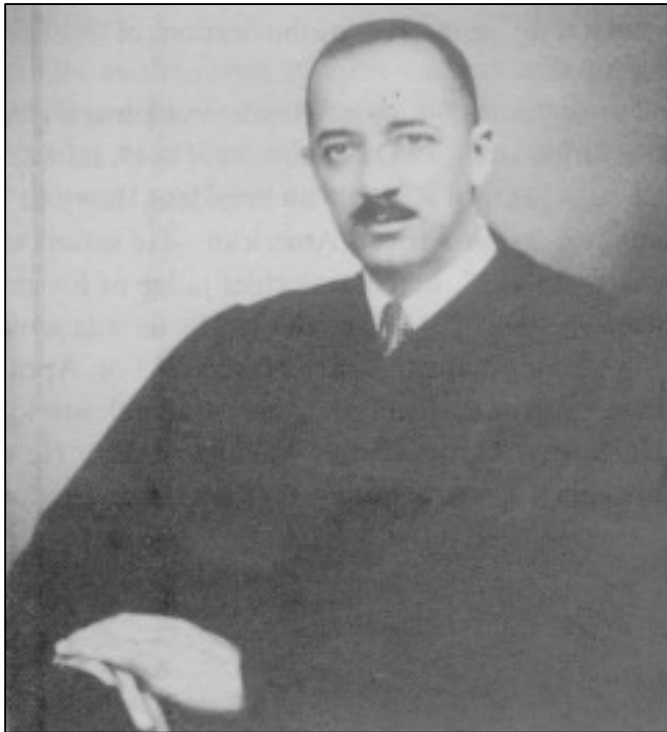
*Roberta Church and Ronald Walter, 1996*

### **WILLIAM HENRY HASTIE (1904-1976)**

William Henry Hastie was born in Knoxville, Tennessee, to William Henry and Roberta (Child) Hastie on November 17, 1904. He received his primary education in the Knoxville public schools and in the schools of Washington, D. C. After being graduated from Dunbar High School in Washington, Hastie entered Amherst College. He later was elected president of Amherst's Phi Beta Kappa chapter. First in his class, Hastie was graduated from Amherst College in 1925 with an A.B. degree. Following his graduation, he joined the staff of New Jersey's Bordentown Manual Training School, where he taught until 1927.

Three years later, he earned an LL.B. degree from Harvard University, where he served on the staff the *Harvard Law Review*. Attorney Hastie joined the faculty of Howard University Law School, and in 1931 he was admitted to the District of Columbia Bar. He entered private practice in association with the law firm of Houston and Houston. In 1932, he was graduated from Harvard University with the degree of Doctor of Juridical Science.

Following the 1932 election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt as President of the United States, Dr. William H. Hastie was one of the bright young African Americans who achieved high visibility as a race relations advisor to the Roosevelt administration. In 1933, Hastie left his private law practice to accept the position of assistant solicitor of the Department of the Interior.



Subsequent to his tenure with the Department of the Interior, in 1937 President Roosevelt appointed Dr. Hastie judge of the Federal District Court in the Virgin Islands. Confirmed on March 26, 1937, he became the nation's first African-American federal magistrate. Although the Virgin Islands were ninety percent black, no person of African descent before Hastie had been appointed to a federal judgeship. Judge Hastie served on the bench for two years before resigning his judgeship to return to Howard University's School of Law as dean and professor of law.

From 1941 to 1943, William H. Hastie served as civilian aide to Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson. On January 15, 1943, he resigned his position as

Secretary of War Stimson's civilian aide to protest the government's racial policies of segregation and discrimination in America's armed forces. In 1943, William Hastie was awarded the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's (NAACP) prestigious Spingarn Medal "for his distinguished career as jurist and as an uncompromising champion of equal justice." In 1944, Hastie supported the position of the National Committee to Abolish the Poll Tax, demanding senatorial authorization of the proposed law to enjoin the levy in elections.

On May 7, 1946, Hastie was inaugurated as the first African-American governor of the Virgin Islands. On October 15, 1949, he was nominated judge of the Third United States Circuit Court of Appeals by President Harry S. Truman. It was the highest judicial position attained by an African American. He served on the appellate court bench for twenty-one

years. In 1968, he became chief judge of his circuit and in 1971, the year of his retirement from the bench, William Henry Hastie was senior judge.

Dr. William Henry Hastie died on April 14, 1976, at Suburban General Hospital in East Norriton, Pennsylvania. Funeral services were held on April 17 at the Temple University Baptist Chapel in Philadelphia. He was survived by his wife, the former Beryl Lockhart; a son, attorney William H., Jr.; and a daughter, attorney Karen H. Williams.

*Linda T. Wynn, 1996*

### **WILLIAM DANIEL HAWKINS, SR. (1872- ?)**



William Daniel Hawkins, Sr., was born February 5, 1872, in Jasper, Tennessee. Hawkins was among that first generation of blacks born after slavery. Despite the fact 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 leader in Afro-American Nashville.

W. D. Hawkins was educated at Morristown Junior College near Knoxville. 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 the college, Hawkins served as cashier and president of 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 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 automobile accident. He was funeralized at the Seay-Hubbard Methodist Church and interred in the Mount Ararat Cemetery, located on Elm Hill Pike. Hawkins' wife, four children, and a sister--Lydia Hight--survived him. Now [1989] the only surviving member of his family is the author of this article, who resides in Washington, D. C.

*Mary Evans Hawkins Barnes, 1989*

### **GEORGE EDMUND HAYES (1880-1960)**

George Edmund Haynes was born in Pine Bluff, Arkansas in 1880. Haynes attended Fisk University where he earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in 1903 and a Master of Arts Degree in 1904. While studying at the University of Chicago during the summer of 1906-1907, his naturally questioning mind became interested in the social problems of African Americans migrating from the south to the north and how they might be supported. This interest and an attempt to find the solution led him to study at the New York School of Philanthropy, from which he graduated in 1910.

Two years later George Edmund Haynes received the Doctoral Degree in Philosophy from Columbia University. The Columbia University Press would later publish his doctoral dissertation entitled "The Negro at Work in New York City." The National Association of Social Workers in its series Social Work Pioneers identified Haynes as a Social Worker, Educator, and proudly claimed him as the Co-Founder and the first Executive Director of the National Urban League.

Haynes would come to Fisk in 1910 to establish a Social Science Department and a Training Center for Social Workers. The Dept. of Social Science co-operated with the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, in conducting a settlement house in Nashville. Fisk Senior Sociology Students were required to give four hours of field work at the settlement house each week. These Fisk students ministered to an average of 350 families. Fisk had always emphasized community service, but its fame of training social workers began with George Edmund Haynes, who became an international expert on racial affairs.

In March of 1916 a fire in East Nashville left over 2,500 people destitute. The aid for African Americans was made possible by the endeavors of Haynes and the Fisk Senior Class in cooperation with other black colleges. According to Dr. Haynes, the fire had laid the foundation in Nashville, Tennessee, for greater cooperation in meeting the problems of Public Welfare.

Soon after the fire, a conference of both races met to organize a Public Welfare League for Nashville, Tennessee. Dr. Haynes was called to Washington, D.C. to head the newly

created Division of Negro Economics in the Dept. of Labor. He was to advise the department on ways to improve working conditions for African Americans and methods for serving their entire corporation in the war production effort for World War I.



Dr. Haynes also became involved in the activities of the American Association for the Protection of Colored Women, the Committee for the Improving the Industrial Conditions of Negroes in New York, and the Committee on Urban Condition Among Negroes. He was instrumental in merging these groups into one organization named the National League on Urban Conditions Among Negroes, which is known today as the National Urban League. He served as its Executive Director from 1911-1918.

He supervised field placements of League fellows at the New York School and was Professor of Economics and Sociology at Fisk University. On leave from Fisk from 1918-1921, he served as Director of Negro Economics in the United States of Dept. of Labor. As a special assistant to the Secretary of Labor he was involved in matters of racial conflict in employment, housing, and recreation. He continued his earlier studies of exclusion of black workers from certain trade unions, interracial conditions in the workplace, and child labor. These studies resulted in numerous

scholarly works. One of the most significant was 'The Negro at Work During the World War and During Reconstruction.' The work's widespread and profound impact resulted in Haynes' appointment as a member of the President's Appointment Conference in 1921.

Earlier, while still a graduate student, he had been Secretary of the Colored Men's Department of the International Committee of the YMCA, during which time he visited black colleges and encouraged students to achieve scholastic excellence and to help black colleges set high academic standards. His work lead to the establishment of the Association of Negro Colleges and Secondary Schools, and Dr. Haynes served that organization as Secretary from 1910-1918. He also helped the New York School of Philanthropy in its collaborative planning that lead to the establishment of the first Social Work Training Center for black graduate students at Fisk, and he directed the center from 1910-1918.

In 1930 George Edmund Haynes did a survey of the work of the YMCA in South Africa, and in 1947 he conducted a similar study of the organization's activities in other African nations. These efforts resulted in his being chosen as Consultant on Africa by the World

Committee of YMCA'S. His book, *Trend of the Races- 1922*, reflected his belief in the union of all people.

For the last nine years of his life, Dr. George Edmund Haynes taught at the City College of New York and served as an officer of the American Committee on Africa. Dr. George Edmund Haynes died in New York City on January 8, 1960.

*Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr., 2018*

Source:

Joe M. Richardson, *A History of Fisk University, 1865-1946*, University of Alabama Press, 1980.

### **ROLAND HAYES (1887-1977)**

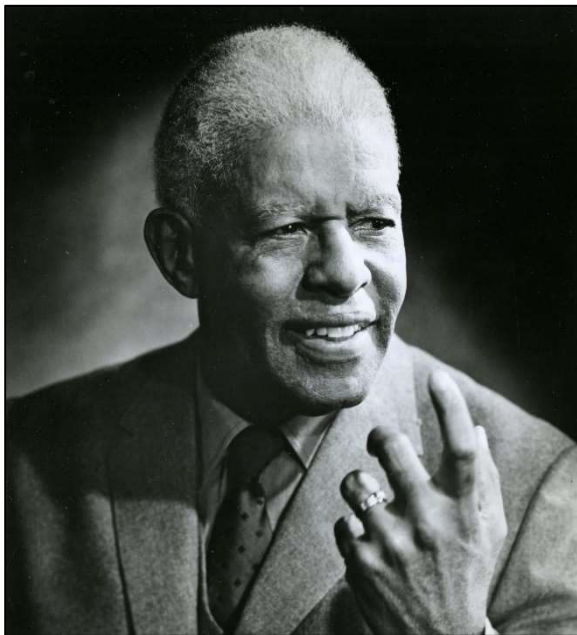
Roland Hayes was a composer, educator, world renowned lyric tenor, and considered to be the first African American man to gain international acclaim as a concert performer. Critics continue to applaud his abilities and linguistic skills with songs in French, German and Italian. He was born on June 3, 1887, in Curryville, Georgia, to Fanny and William Hayes, sharecroppers on the very plantation where his mother was once a slave. Hayes' father, said to be his first teacher in music, claimed Cherokee ancestry; his maternal grandfather had been a chieftain from Cote d'Ivoire, or present-day Ivory Coast. His mother was born a slave, yet became the co-founder of Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Curryville. It was at this church where young Roland heard his first Negro spirituals. When Hayes' father died in 1898, his mother moved her remaining family to live on a ten-acre farm in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

As a youngster in Chattanooga, Hayes worked in a foundry as a means of contributing to the family income. In his free time, he trained with organist Arthur Calhoun, and later formed a singing group, the Silver-Toned Quartet, and decided to pursue a career in music. In the summer of 1905, Hayes quit his job at the foundry. He received \$50.00 from his apprehensive mother, who still hoped he would become a minister even though he was adamant about leaving Chattanooga to fulfill his dream of being a singer. He planned to attend Oberlin College, but due to his limited finances and education, Hayes made the decision to enroll in the Fisk Preparatory School in Nashville.

After successfully completing preparatory classes at Fisk, Hayes enrolled there for college credits, paying his way via a variety of jobs, including furnace boy, waiter, butler, and soloist. In his fourth year, Hayes was ordered abruptly to turn in all his papers at the school, and was summarily expelled, perhaps for singing with an unauthorized group for money. Nevertheless, he was invited by the musical director of the Jubilee Singers at Fisk to sing at the commencement. Hayes left Nashville for Louisville after the commencement but returned as head tenor with the Jubilee Singers and toured with them under the

direction of John Wesley Work, II. It was also under the direction of Work that Hayes and two other members of the Jubilee Singers recorded nine spirituals for the Edison Phonograph Company.

Settling in Boston, Hayes studied music, worked at an insurance agency, and toured as a singer, eventually earning enough money to rent the Symphony Hall, where he performed to a sold-out hall and received critical acclaim. As his popularity grew, he was invited to perform concerts at Carnegie Hall, the Symphony Hall and other venues in America. In 1920, he performed his first European concert in London, at Wigmore Hall, to rousing applause. After his concert, he was quickly summoned by King George V, to perform at Buckingham Palace where he found the same acceptance and praise. Hayes continued to perform concerts in Europe until his return to the states in 1923.



Though he was noted as a brilliant and accomplished singer and performer, Hayes' career did not come without its racial controversies and blatant prejudices, both at home and abroad. In Germany, he was criticized simply for being a black man, and thus soiling established traditions in performance. He was unjustly booed and ridiculed in several venues in Europe, but in continuing his performance, he sometimes found himself winning over his audience. No matter the location of his concerts, he attempted to integrate the seating arrangements whenever possible. Ultimately, in 1924, he was awarded the Spingarn Medal, awarded annually by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, for

outstanding achievement by an American of African descent. Hayes married Helen Mann in 1932, and together they had one child, a daughter, Afrika. They maintained a residence in Massachusetts and purchased 600 acres in Georgia where his mother had been a slave. In 1942, Hayes' wife and daughter were removed from a shoe store for violating the whites-only policy, and Hayes was beaten and jailed. They left Georgia soon after.

Roland Hayes continued to entertain and educate until 1972, when he gave his last concert at the age of 85. He died at the age of 89 on January 1, 1977 and is buried in Mount Hope Cemetery in Boston. Among his honors include eight honorary degrees, one of which was from Fisk University; a performance center named in his honor in 1982, at the University of Tennessee, Chattanooga; part of State Route 156 in Georgia is named in his honor; a music school in Boston bears his name; and in 1991 he was posthumously inducted into the Georgia Music Hall of Fame.

*Pamela Bobo, 2016*

## **ZEMA W. HILL (1891-1970)**

Zema W. Hill was a faithful and devoted minister, a funeral home owner, and a notable leader in the Nashville African-American community. He was born in Franklin County, in the community of Asia near Winchester, Tennessee, on April 2, 1891. He became a Christian at an early age, joined the Macedonia Primitive Baptist Church during its revival services, and became an evangelist during his teenage years. In 1916, Hill moved to Nashville where he preached and evangelized in Hightower Hall. His elegance, good looks, and magnetic preaching style enlarged his South Nashville congregation until the services had to be moved under a large tent.

In 1919, a house of worship was dedicated at Overton and Division streets. Elder A. M. Bedford, the moderator of the Cumberland River Association of the Order of the Primitive Baptist Church, dedicated the building as "Hill's Tabernacle." Elder Zema Hill faithfully served the congregation for thirty years



In the year his church building was dedicated, Hill also established the Zema W. Hill Funeral Home at Fourth Avenue South and Peabody Street. During this period, no black insurance companies existed in Nashville and there were few black funeral homes. The demand for services caused the Hill funeral business to expand so rapidly that a large facility was acquired at Fourth Avenue South and Franklin Street. Hill not only arranged the funerals, but also preached and sang at the services. Although he catered to the black elite, Hill's civic-minded zeal caused him to arrange funerals for the destitute as well. These were known as his "silver services," where the plate was passed to collect money from the audiences.

The Zema W. Hill Funeral Home moved to 1306 South Street and became one of the first black businesses in the area. He purchased a fleet of Packard automobiles in the mid-1930s, and his business flourished despite the economic depression. Over the years, Hill bought many other fine automobiles, including Cadillacs, Chryslers, and Lincolns. He attracted attention to his business by printing "Zema W. Hill" in gold letters on his cars' windows. He also placed two six-and-one-half-foot concrete polar bears in front of the funeral home--two more bears were placed in front of Hill's Edgehill home.

Elder Hill left his imprint on the African-American community in Nashville through the 1930s and 40s; whites and blacks, political leaders, and famous persons attended services at Hill's Tabernacle. Even some of Nashville's underworld figures could be seen at Hill's Sunday night services. He was renowned for sermons such as "The Resurrection of the Dead" and "If a Man Should Die, Shall He Live Again." Elder Hill's ministerial work was highlighted with his selection as a moderator emeritus of the Cumberland Association of Primitive Baptists and builder of the Cumberland Tabernacle in 1944.

Zema W. Hill died on February 5, 1970, after seventeen years of illness. A year before his death, Hill's Tabernacle was rebuilt. At his funeral services on the morning of February 9 at the Cumberland Primitive Baptist Tabernacle, Elder C. R. Wooten and others lauded the late Elder Hill as "...a faithful and devoted minister, a loving father, neighbor and friend, and [who] was respected by all who he came in contact with of both races..." Hill, who was interred in Mount Ararat Cemetery in Nashville, was survived by two children, Doris Hill Griner and Clarence D. Hill.

*Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr., 2019*

#### Further Reading:

Zema Hill recorded by John Vincent, "Service at a Baptist Church in Nashville, Tenn." American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.  
<https://www.loc.gov/item/afc9999005.17367/>.

### **JOSEPHINE GROVES HOLLOWAY (1898-1988)**

A "pioneer," a "lamplighter," a "hidden heroine." Armed with determination, an old Willis Jeep, and a dream of equality for African-American girls, Josephine Groves Holloway became the founder of the first black Girl Scout troop and was the first black Girl Scout executive in Middle Tennessee. Her father referred to Josephine as "my missionary," and his early perception proved to be accurate when she set out, with missionary zeal, to make the name "Girl Scouts of America" mean what the name implies.

The seventh child and the second gal of John Wesley Groves and Emma Mae Gray, Josephine Amanda was born on March 19, 1898, in a Methodist parsonage in Cowpens, South Carolina. Although ten children were born to this union, only three boys and two girls reached adulthood.

Her father, a Methodist minister as was his father before him, valued education. John Wesley Groves moved his family to Greenwood, South Carolina, where they remained until Josephine finished Brewer Normal School in Beaufort. On the advice of a teacher, Josephine enrolled in Fisk University during the fall of 1919. She worked through college by mending tablecloths in the dining room and winding clocks in the music practice



rooms. Illness from an influenza epidemic and a shortage of funds did not keep her from receiving a degree in sociology from Fisk in June of 1923.

Josephine Groves returned to South Carolina and took a job as a recreational and community worker for the summer while sending out job applications. She said, "The job that appealed to me most was Girls' Worker at Bethlehem Center. In this I could imagine using all of my skills and, at the same time, have a hand in reforming the world."



She became Girls' Worker in September of 1923 and organized the first Girl Scout group in 1924, after completing training with Juliette Low during a special training session at the George Peabody College for Teachers. Josephine's time with the group came to an abrupt end when she married a former schoolmate and co-worker, Guernsey Holloway, the Boys' Worker at Bethlehem Center. After the June 30, 1925, wedding, Miss Mathee Nutt, center director, informed the new Mrs. Holloway that a married Girls' Worker would not have enough time for the girls. Holloway resigned in the fall of 1925. Not sharing the same enthusiasm and persistence of Mrs. Holloway, the next Girls' Worker allowed the troop to fold.

Almost twenty years passed before the black troop was reinstated in 1943 through Mrs. Holloway's efforts. Josephine Holloway returned to school and received a bachelor's degree in business from Tennessee A&I State College. She served as assistant registrar at Fisk University (1927-34), before taking a job with the state Tennessee Department of Welfare.

When resistance to her petitions to the all-white Girl Scout Council continued, she "organized an unofficial club for black girls, with gingham uniforms, but soon learned the girls longed to become 'real Girl Scouts.'" With the help of her husband, Dr. Guernsey Holloway, she began removing the obstacles. During her husband's studies at the University of Chicago, he was able to purchase the handbooks which the local Girl Scout Council would not allow her to buy. Mrs. Holloway taught the girls the Girl Scout promise, the laws, and everything needed for their investiture into Girl Scouting. Former Council president Juli Mosley said in a tribute to Mrs. Holloway: "With this trained group of girls, the Council could not deny membership. So, in 1943 troop 200 became a reality and began

Girl Scouting in Nashville for black girls." Holloway's three daughters Nareda, Josephine, and Weslia, became members of her troop.

In November of 1944, Mrs. Holloway joined the Girl Scout Council's professional staff as an organizer and field advisor. She also served as a district director and a camp director. In 1951, the Council honored her by naming its new camp for Negro girls "Camp Holloway." Other honors include the "Sojourner Truth Award" from the Nashville Chapter of the National Association of Business and Professional Women and the "Zeta of the Year Award" from Zeta Phi Beta Sorority.

Mrs. Holloway retired from her scouting career on June 15, 1963. She died on December 7, 1988.

*Harriette Allen Insignares, 1991*

### **JULIA A. B. HOOKS (1852-1942)**

Julia Hooks, one of Memphis' most prominent musicians of color and one of the city's pioneer social workers, was born in 1852 in Kentucky, where her talent in music was recognized at an early age. She was educated in Kentucky and attended Berea College, where she received further musical training.

Establishing herself in Memphis well before the turn of the century, she became active in musical groups such as Liszt Mullard Club, which performed classical music concerts in the city during the 1880s. Other members of the group included Mrs. R. R. Church, Sr., who frequently played piano duets with Mrs. Hooks, and Mrs. Josiah T. Settle, Sr., known for her beautiful soprano voice.

Mrs. Hooks also was involved with various churches because of her expertise in playing the organ and her talent for directing choirs and choral groups. In addition, she taught music, and every year her students appeared in recital at Zion Hall, Beale Street Baptist Church, and, after Church's Park and Auditorium was completed, they appeared in Roberta Church was one of Mrs. Hooks' piano pupils.

For a while, Julia Hooks served as a teacher and principal in the Memphis city schools; she later operated a private kindergarten and elementary school in her home on South Lauderdale Street. Among her pupils, in addition to her sons, Henry and Robert, were Robert Church, Jr., and his sister, Annette, Allison Vance, Nellie Bowles, Edgar Mitchum, and Fred L. Hutchins. Julia Hooks loved children and had an unusual capacity to relate to them; they returned her affection. Frequently, she would organize groups of youngsters for picnics, play activities, or musical programs, arriving at rehearsals for recitals with an ice cream cone for each child.

A dignified, compassionate woman, her sincerity and gentle manner inspired confidence and trust. These qualities served her well when she became an officer of the Juvenile



Court, and often she was able to modify the attitude of wayward youngsters and help them cope with their problems. She also was known to provide religious inspiration and spiritual comfort to adult prisoners on occasion.



Around 1907, the city opened a small Juvenile Detention Home next to her residence, which she and her husband, Charles, a truant officer, supervised. Mr. Hooks was killed by one of the wards, but Mrs. Hooks continued her efforts to help young people. At times Judge Camille Kelly, a well-known judge of the Juvenile Court, would invite Julia Hooks to sit with her when certain cases concerning Negro youths were presented.

Although her primary interest and occupation was music, throughout her lifetime Julia Hooks maintained an interest in the underprivileged of all ages. She initiated the founding of the Old Folks and Orphans Home, located on the old Hernando Road. Using her talent as an accomplished pianist, she played in concerts to help pay for the home.

Two sons, Henry and Robert, were born to Mr. and Mrs. Hooks. Both sons became expert photographers and established a studio known as Hooks Brothers Photographers. The interest in photography was passed on to the next generation, and Charles Hooks, son of Robert Hooks, and Henry Hooks, Jr., operated the family business. Henry Hooks, Sr., was a member of the Iroquois Club, a well-known social club organized by a group of young men in Memphis. Henry Hooks, Jr., and his father, Charles, were signers of a petition circulated by a group of prominent black and white Memphians endorsing Robert Church, Jr., as Surveyor of Customs for the Port of Memphis. The petition was sent to President Theodore Roosevelt in 1908.

Julia Hooks died at the age of ninety and, according to her obituary, was able to play the piano until a few weeks before she passed away. She is survived by several grandchildren, including Julia Hooks Gordon, a retired employee of the federal government; Robert, Jr. and Raymond Hooks, both employees of the U. S. Post Office; Mildred Hooks, an employee of the Shelby County Government; Benjamin Hooks, who in 1972 became the first black member of the Federal Communications Commission and served as executive secretary of the NAACP; and Bessie Hooks, an employee of the Internal Revenue Service. A great-grandson, Michael Hooks, is a member of the Memphis City Council.

*Roberta Church and Ronald Walter, 1996*

## **BETH MADISON HOWSE (1943-2012)**

Over the course of her more than four-decade-long career, legendary librarian and archivist Beth Madison Howse was the oracle of the Fisk University Special Collections and Archives. Encouraging them with the sweetness of her spirit and smile, she undergirded scores of researchers with her mastery of archival knowledge and African-American history.

Beth Irene Madison was born on September 24, 1943 to Archie and Daile Madison, Sr. Her parents doted on her and soon after welcomed a sister, Gail and brother, Archie Jr. into the family. Being a big sister was a role Beth assumed with all the loving kindness a little girl could muster, especially after the untimely death of her father when she and her siblings were young children. With the help of their Uncle Bud, her mother Daile reared Beth along with her sister and brother at 1034 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue North in the home of her maternal grandmother Mother Moore, beloved longtime dorm director at Fisk University.

Growing up in the shadow of the historic Fisk Jubilee Hall, the Madison children attended Nashville's public schools and enjoyed a wonderful childhood in the environs of the Fisk campus at the height of its golden years. The Madison family were members of Fisk Memorial Chapel, and now-famous luminaries of the Harlem Renaissance period were the parents of their childhood friends. Poet and librarian Arna Bontemps lived a few streets over, while artist Aaron Douglas lived just two doors down; the famous musicologist John W. Work, III was her family's next-door neighbor.

Beth Madison graduated from Nashville's renowned Pearl High School in 1961 and entered Fisk University that fall amidst the burgeoning modern Civil Rights Movement. Her choice to attend Fisk was unsurprising; her familial relationship to Fisk had, even by that time, stretched almost a century. Her maternal great-grandmother, Ella Sheppard Moore, entered Fisk as a student in 1868, and was one of nine singers that formed the original Fisk Jubilee Singers troupe who departed on October 6, 1871 to raise money to save the school. As pianist and assistant director for the singers, Sheppard Moore was the most recognizable and longest-serving member of the group which introduced spirituals to the world and provided funding to erect Jubilee Hall as the first permanent structure for the education of blacks in the South.

From the time she was a teenager, Beth Madison had dutifully represented her family every year at Jubilee Day, a tradition that she continued throughout her life. A fourth generation Fiskite, she excelled at Fisk, graduating with her bachelor's degree in 1965 before later attending Peabody College, from which she was awarded a master's degree. She married Wilfred B. Howse in July 1964, and together they began a family that included two sons, Bryan and Scott, and one daughter, Bethany.

In 1970, Beth Howse returned to work at her alma mater Fisk University; five years later, she began her career as a Special Collections Librarian in the John Hope and Aurelia E. Franklin Library under the tutelage of Ann Allen Shockley, whom she succeeded. Beth thrived in her role as the caretaker of priceless Fiskiana and African-American archival



materials. She took special pride in painstakingly processing a number of Fisk's more than one hundred processed collections, including the Fisk Jubilee Singers Collections. She was never too busy to help researchers--whether student, novice, or expert--reach their highest heights. In recognition of her tireless work, countless local, national and international authors have recognized the debt they owe to her as both a professional and as an enthusiast in their book's acknowledgements.

During her summers, Howse nurtured scores of children over her more than three-decade-long tenure as director of Fisk Mini College, a summer enrichment program for children aged 7 to 12. With classes offered in math, music, art, literature, African American History, speech, drama, dance as well as the history of Fisk and Nashville, hundreds of children were exposed to campus life at Fisk. The summer prior to Howse's passing, more than fifty children were the beneficiaries of her unfailing commitment

to the program. Their young voices could be heard gleefully squealing her name as they competed to be the center of her attention.

For more than thirty years, Beth also served as archivist for Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity, Incorporated (Boule). She also enjoyed helping members of the wider community including the Girl Scouts, with whom she helped to create the curricula for a Jubilee Singers patch. For several decades, she was also a faithful member of the Howard Congregational Church where her great-grandfather, the Reverend George W. Moore, had once been a minister.

Above all, Beth was a loving family person and a faithful friend. She was an avid reader, loved turtles, enjoyed cooking and was devoted to her sister Gail. Beth died of leukemia on September 26, 2012, after an almost two-year battle with myelodysplastic syndrome.

*Crystal deGregory, 2014*

## **ALBERTA HUNTER (1895-1984)**

A celebrated blues singer, songwriter, international cabaret entertainer, and nurse, Alberta Hunter was born in Memphis, Tennessee, on April 1, 1895, to Laura Peterson Hunter. Her father, Charles Hunter, a Pullman porter, died of pneumonia in late February 1895, less than two months before her birth. The youngest of three children, her older brother John died shortly after being born and her older sister, La Tosca Hunter, was born two years before Alberta.

Following Charles Hunter's death, the Hunter family lived with Laura's parents, Henry and Nancy Peterson. Four years after Hunter's birth, her grandfather Henry Peterson died. His death left his wife and daughter as the family's primary wage earners. Nancy Peterson took in laundry and cared for her granddaughters, while their mother worked outside the home. Hunter was close to both her mother and grandmother. Nancy Peterson, a member of Collins Chapel Colored Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church, carried both of her granddaughters to church with her. Collins Chapel, like most African American churches during racial segregation, served as an educational, political, and social center for the African American community. At Collins Chapel, Hunter received an education in social norms and was heavily influenced by her church attendance there.

Laura Hunter stayed with her mother until 1903, when she moved her family into a room in a house across from the Beale Street Baptist Church. Later she moved into a house on Lane Street. She surrounded herself with a community of women who in one way or another assisted her in the rearing of her daughters. Hunter and her sister attended Grant School, an elementary school for African American children located on Auction Street. It was at school that her love of music and singing developed. Despite the archetypes of middle-class propriety and Christian values her mother and grandmother attempted to inculcate within her, Hunter's interest in music also attracted her to what some considered the less desirable parts of Memphis. Later, the milieu of Beale Street, the blues center of the city, would impact Hunter's musical career.

At the age of 13, Hunter was sexually abused by a boyfriend of "Aunt Nellie," the white landlady at the boardinghouse where she resided with her mother and sister. Fearing retribution from her white male abuser and the possibility that divulging the incident could cost her family their home, she never reported the abuse to her mother. She also endured other acts of sexual abuse from a local school principal, as well as physical abuse from her stepfather, Theodore Beatty. At age 15, to supplement the family's income, she began working as a laundress. Looking for asylum from sexual and physical maltreatment and penury, Hunter turned to the pulsating musical environs of Beale Street.

By age 16 Hunter grew weary of her life in Memphis and moved to Chicago. Once in the "Windy City" she lived with Ellen Winston, a friend of the family. She found employment as a domestic, the same type of work she had in Memphis. Finally, she began her singing career at Dago Frank's, a small bar patronized by pimps and prostitutes. From 1914 to 1921 Hunter was at the top of the African American music scene. Hunter brought the

sounds of Beale Street to the North and was one of the first singers to perform W. C. Handy's *St. Louis Blues* and *Beale Street Blues* in Chicago. In 1919, Hunter married Willard Saxby Townsend, a former soldier who later became a labor leader for baggage handlers via the International Brotherhood of Red Caps. The marriage was short-lived, as they separated within months. The couple officially divorced in 1923.

Purportedly, Hunter was a lesbian, although she kept her sexuality relatively private. In August 1927, she sailed for France, accompanied by Lottie Tyler, the niece of comedian Bert Williams. It is reported that their relationship lasted until Tyler's death. Although portrayed by academic researchers and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered (LGBT) activists, Hunter never overtly embraced any association with "same-gender-loving communities."



A contemporary of blues artist Bessie Smith, a fellow Tennessean, Hunter made her first recording on the Black Swan label with her own song, *Down Hearted Blues*. She replaced Smith in the leading role of the musical, *How Come?* Her 1927 European tour included a leading role in the London production of *Showboat* with Paul Roberson. Hunter had a successful European career, including a role in England's first color film, *Radio Parade of 1935*. It was in Europe that she developed a sophisticated cabaret act. Hunter returned to the states at the beginning of the Second World War and offered to headline a 1945 United Service Organizations (USO) tour to Europe, Japan, and Korea. Her first retirement from the field of entertainment took place in 1954. A year later, she embarked upon a

new career in health care. At the age of 60 Hunter volunteered at the Joint Diseases Hospital in Harlem, then began her second career as a practical nurse at Goldwater Hospital on Roosevelt Island in New York City, where she labored for the next twenty years.

After retiring from the nursing profession, Hunter began a second musical career. In October 1977, she began performing at the Cookery in Greenwich Village at the insistence of Barney Josephson. A year later, on October 6, 1978, Tennessee Governor Ray Blanton declared an "Alberta Hunter Day" and Memphis mayor Wyeth Chandler presented her with a key to the city on Beale Street. In December 1978, she was invited to the White House to perform for President Jimmy Carter. In 1978, she was also signed by Columbia

Records and went on to record four more albums before her death. In February 1979, she performed for the closing of the governors' conference in Washington, D.C.

Hunter's musical revival lasted six years; she toured in Europe and South America, made television appearances, and enjoyed her renewed recording career as well as the fact that record catalogs contained her old recordings, going back to her 1921 debut on the Black Star label.

Alberta Hunter, an internationally renowned "singer of songs" and cabaret star in the 1920s and 1930s who, after two decades of retirement, began a second successful singing career in her 80s, died October 17, 1984, at her home on Roosevelt Island in New York. She was survived by her nephew, Samuel Sharpe Jr., of Denver, Colorado. Hunter's remains were interred in Ferncliff Cemetery and Mausoleum located in Hartsdale, Westchester County, New York. Her life was documented in *Alberta Hunter: My Castle's Rockin'* (1988 TV movie), a documentary written by Chris Albertson and narrated by pianist Billy Taylor, and in *Cookin' at the Cookery*, a biographical musical by Marion J. Caffey that toured the United States. Hunter's comeback album, *Amtrak Blues*, was honored by the Blues Hall of Fame in 2009. Two years later, Hunter was inducted into the Blues Hall of Fame. In 2015, her native city inducted her into the Memphis Music Hall of Fame for her lifetime achievement in music.

*Linda T. Wynn, 2017*

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## **INTERSTATE 40 AND THE DECIMATION OF JEFFERSON STREET**

Once a bustling thoroughfare in North Nashville's African-American community, the construction of Interstate 40 decimated Jefferson Street. The destruction of this African-American community had its genesis with the passage of the 1956 Interstate Highway Act, also known as the National Interstate and Defense Highways Act. Passed during the administration of President Dwight D. Eisenhower and enacted on June 29, 1956, the Act provided for approximately 41,000 miles of an interstate highway. Highway planning for

the purpose of clearing deteriorated or poverty-stricken areas began in 1938, when the United States government first deliberated giving assistance to states for interstate highways. Henry Wallace, Secretary of Agriculture under President Franklin Roosevelt, proposed that highways routed through cities could accomplish “the elimination of unsightly and unsanitary districts.” In the early 1940s, the American Concrete Institute urged the building of expressways through urban areas for “the elimination of slums and blighted areas.” According to Richard Rothstein’s *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, over the next twenty years, the connection between highway construction and removal of African Americans was a common leitmotif of those who stood to profit from a federal road-building program. The American Road Builders Association informed President Harry S. Truman, near the end of the 1940s that if interstates were properly channeled through municipal areas, they could “contribute in a substantial manner to the elimination of slum and deteriorated areas.”

In planning for the interstate system in the Tennessee, one of the consultations that the city of Nashville planners received recommended a route that went “eastward from Memphis along Route 70 S, then hugged the Louisville & Nashville Railroad tracks for several miles before continuing directly downtown between Broadway and Charlotte Avenues.” However, this path came near Belle Meade, Vanderbilt University, Baptist Hospital, and Centennial Park. Ignoring the consultants’ recommendations, the State offered Nashville an alternative proposal. The substitute plan called for the expressway to parallel Charlotte, bend to the north to cross 28th Avenue North, and curve again toward Jefferson Street. While functionaries discussed the various plans, they never informed those who would be impacted how the area would be disrupted. This design effectively eviscerated North Nashville. Interstate 40 demolished a hundred square blocks, including sixteen blocks of stores along Jefferson Street. In addition to the hundreds of homes and business adversely impacted by Interstate 40, its route swerved between the nearly contiguous campuses of Tennessee A&I State University and the area around Fisk University and Meharry Medical College.

Jefferson Street’s business and recreational corridor took on even more importance for African-American commerce after the Capitol Hill urban renewal program annihilated much of its African-American commercial district. Planners Clarke and Rapuano knew that the construction of the interstate expressway would form a “Chinese Wall” dividing and destroying the neighborhood. For much of the planning process, people in the African American community were uninformed. While officials filed the plan with Tennessee’s Department of Highways and Public Works on September 15, 1958, the department “consistently refused” to admit that a path had been selected. Some nine years later—after reports revealed that 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue North was going to be widened to accommodate interstate traffic—the African American community finally became aware of its imminent threat. In response to the threat posed by the construction of the interstate, professors from Fisk and Tennessee A&I State Universities formed the Interstate 40 Steering Committee. As noted by Ben Houston in *The Nashville Way: Racial Etiquette and the Struggle for Social Justice in a Southern City*, after a search of the archives, it was revealed that that the original interstate route had been “somewhere near Vanderbilt.”

This caused an eruption of anger and adding insult to injury, they discovered that a public hearing had taken place as required by law on May 15, 1957. However, notice of the hearing was not distributed to the press; rather, notices were displayed in post offices in all white neighborhoods, and each notice had the wrong date for the public hearing.

Members of the I-40 Steering Committee included Flournoy A. Coles, Iman Otey, Curlie McGruder, Dr. Edwin Mitchell, and Attorney Avon Williams, Jr. In October of 1967, Dr.



Mitchell appeared before the Chamber of Commerce where he gave a scathing rebuke to the city's white elite. He indicted the City as being a place where "superhighways form concrete moats between Negro and white communities" and "huge jungles of compact housing" marked the homes of African Americans, whom he called "consumers of the slum rather than producers

thereof." In describing recent public policies that helped shape the realities facing African Americans in the way of Interstate 40, Mitchell stated, "Gentlemen, you of the chamber, the city, and state administrations endorsed this program, You Did Not Speak for US!" Dr. Mitchell ended his razor-sharp discourse by stating: "What brave and unthinking men you are!" Nashville's role in the Civil Rights Movement possibly played a part in the racial tone of highway plans and opposition there; racial violence followed the death of Martin Luther King, Jr., in Nashville, which was already a hot-bed for demonstrations and civil rights organizing. Scholars assert that in Nashville, "many public policies had racial implications and racial intentions," and the steering committee argued that the proposed highway route through the latter city was no exception.

Ultimately, the I-40 Steering Committee filed a legal suit to stop the construction of the interstate through the North Nashville community. Attorney Avon Williams, Sr. filed the suit in the U. S. District Court in Middle Tennessee claiming that the interstate planning discriminated against Nashvillians who lived in the path of the Interstate. On November 2, 1967, Judge Frank Gray determined that the public hearing was inadequate and filled with "irregularities, agreeing with the plaintiffs that I-40 would adversely impact North Nashville. However, after agreeing with the I-40 Steering Committee, Judge Gray ruled in favor of the defendants stating, "most of the evidence presented by the plaintiffs goes to the wisdom and not the legality of the highway department's decision." The Sixth



Circuit Court of Appeals upheld Judge Gray's decision and the U.S. Supreme Court denied a review, effectively ending the Steering Committee's legal battle. This was one of the first legal battles to stall the construction of an interstate on the grounds of racial discrimination. However, one result was a new federal directive "that no highway or other public works shall be implemented on the basis of hearings more than five years old."

The outcomes of the Nashville stretch of Interstate 40 are difficult to challenge. Within a year of the I-40's completion, most businesses in the neighborhoods surrounding the expressway experienced financial difficulty and some ceased operations. Additionally, property rates declined by nearly a third. More than 620 black homes, twenty-seven apartment houses, and six black churches were demolished and fifty local streets were dead-ended. As the Reverend Dr. Kelly Miller Smith noted, the interstate was "a bitter thing which tore the community apart." Once a thriving residential, business, entertainment and recreational center within the African-American community, I-40 dissected and decimated Jefferson Street.

Linda T. Wynn, 2019

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## JEFFERSON STREET

From the Hadley plantation on the west to the Cumberland River on the east, there developed a wide footpath that evolved into a wagon road. This was the antecedent of North Nashville's Jefferson Street. During the Civil War, the Union army occupied Nashville (1862-1865) and several large contraband camps were established in the city. The newly freed African Americans were emancipated as the federal army swept southward and were considered contraband or prizes of war. The women and children were sent to camps, while newly-freed black males were sent to serve as support or soldiers in the federal army. A large contraband camp was opened in the area around the site of federal Fort Gillam, north of downtown Nashville. Bisecting Fort Gillam was the wagon road later designated as Jefferson Street.

With the end of the Civil War, many groups began organizing efforts to provide educational opportunities for African Americans. On January 9, 1866, a school opened in Nashville, named in honor of Union General Clinton B. Fisk, who was in charge of federal occupation. Fisk Free Colored School opened in former federal barracks next to the present site of the railroad's Union Station. These facilities deteriorated rapidly, forcing the school to search for new facilities. The efforts of the now-famous Fisk Jubilee Singers during 1871-1872 resulted in the school's purchase of the former site of Fort Gillam and the construction of the school's Jubilee Hall. The impressive structure stands on the high point between thoroughfares later named 17th and 18th avenues North, with the old footpath/wagon road behind it. The emerging school, rechartered as Fisk University in 1872, possessed a robust population using the old artery and demanding expansion of the bustling thoroughfare. Just to the west, the congregation of the Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church (organized in 1868) constructed a magnificent edifice in the 1870s on Jefferson Street at what is today 11th Avenue North.

By the turn of the century, according to the *Nashville Globe*, the Abraham Lincoln Land Company and the Realty Saving Bank and Trust Company offered lots for sale in the Fisk University Place subdivision, where Negro buyers paid five dollars down and five dollars a month to purchase a lot. The development was located "within four blocks of the Jefferson streetcar line." Through an act of the state legislature, Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial (A & I) State Normal School was chartered and opened in 1912 along the western edge of Jefferson Street. Several residential counties sprang up around the A & I campus, establishing another populace for the street's commerce. With the return of African-American World War I veterans, the student populations of both Fisk and A & I expanded. These veterans made greater demands for services to the African-American community, and the response was manifested in increased commercial development of Jefferson Street.

The Great Depression affected various sectors of Nashville's black economy. Cedar Street's downtown black business district suffered decline due to the devastating consequences of the economic collapse on working-class blacks. Yet another business

district was already forming along Jefferson Street in what was then suburban North Nashville, and was supported by the more affluent, middle-class blacks; this commercial district weathered the economic depression better than downtown Cedar Street, according to research by historian Bobby L. Lovett. Funeral parlors, personal service providers, and retail outlets became the foundation for Jefferson Street businesses. K. Gardner's Funeral Home, Isom's Beauty Shop, William Hawkins' North Side Ice Cream Company, William Hemphill's Press, Terrance Restaurant, Jefferson Street Pharmacy, Menefee and Bauer Tire & Battery Service, I. E. Green Grocery Company, Terry's Pharmacy, and Frank White's Cleaners were prominent businesses located along Jefferson Street. To obtain the tonsorial services of a professional barber, the North Nashville residents continued to patronize establishments on downtown Cedar Street; it was not until the late 1930s that Crowder's, the first barbershop for blacks, opened on Jefferson Street. The many beauty shops owned by Negro women continued operations, mostly in the front rooms of the operators' homes.

In the mid-1930s, Meharry Medical College moved from South Nashville to a new campus across from Fisk University. Jefferson Street became the northern boundary of the medical college with its teaching hospital. To serve the needs of the educational and medical complex developing within the radius of the Jefferson Street thoroughfare, a number of new retail businesses began to flourish. The 23-block area from 5th Avenue North to 28th Avenue North also contained some of the oldest church congregations within black Nashville. Engine Company No. 11, a fire hall located at 12th Avenue North and Jefferson Street, also functioned as a gathering spot and informal community center (see photo).

The 1930s also witnessed the birth of a formal entertainment industry as a component of the Jefferson Street montage. Eventually, everything from small, intimate, hole-in-the-wall Chicago-style "speak-easys" to grand nightclubs, supper clubs, dance halls, beer joints, and pool rooms flourished along what became popularly nicknamed "Jeff Street." There were small eateries and elegant cafes, as well as ice cream parlors, interspersed between the local landmarks designated as Good Jelly's Club and A & I's barn.

In the age of Jim Crow, black Nashvillians filled the Ritz Theater to enjoy first-release movies, where they were free to enter through the front door and sit in the main audience. For the merchants and residents along Jefferson Street, there was an ease of contact without regard to race. There were four department stores and three were operated by Jewish merchants. Although the African-American Otey family operated a major retail grocery outlet, several white owned and operated groceries, some with integrated staff and some with white staff, were prominent along the thoroughfare. The life-affirming bustle along Jefferson Street flowed through bakeries, hardware stores, service and gasoline stations, dry-cleaning establishments (some of which offered made-to-order men's apparel), insurance agencies, and shoe shops...all in proximity to the afterlife enterprises of mortuaries, funeral homes, and churches.

Many long-time Nashvillians consider the 1935-65 period as the Golden Age of Jefferson Street. The historic street always reflected the spirit of the season: holidays were always festive, and the smells of seasonal fare greeted the visitor. Thanksgiving morning marked the traditional celebration of A & I's homecoming, with a parade down Jefferson Street.



The 1950s and 1960s erupted along Jefferson Street in the marches of the Civil Rights era and the destructive violence of social protest.

These manifestations, in concert with the construction of Interstate 40 in the mid-1960s, led to the shattering demise of the transportation artery's vigor, as well as the burial of the myriad culture that symbolized Jefferson Street.

With the beginning of the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup>

century, positive efforts are underway regarding the future of Jefferson Street. These efforts are through public and private partners, business industry and government. The business activities along historic Jefferson Street are now aided through the efforts of the Jefferson Street United Merchants Partnership (JUMP) -- a very positive concept. Plans have been announced for a new museum to be placed in the eastern area of the street, and for a new connector in the western part of the street that will connect Jefferson Street to the western areas of Nashville, facilitating transportation, business and leisure activities. Hopefully, Jefferson Street will again serve as one of the centers for life in Nashville, Tennessee.

*Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr., 2011*

### **CHARLES S. JOHNSON (1893-1956)**

Charles S. Johnson was born in Bristol, Virginia, on July 24, 1893. He attended Wayland Academy and received his undergraduate degree from Virginia Union University. Johnson completed the doctoral degree in 1917 at the University of Chicago. While a student in Chicago, Johnson assumed responsibility as director of research and investigation for the Chicago Urban League. During World War I, he enlisted in the army and served in France.

Johnson returned to Chicago after the war, one week before the race riot of 1919. He completed a study and analysis of the race riot and presented a plan to study its causes. The governor accepted his plan and appointed Johnson as associate executive secretary of Chicago's Commission on Race Relations. The commission published a report entitled, *The Negro in Chicago*. In 1921, Johnson became the director of research for the National Urban League in New York, where he founded and edited *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life*, a periodical designed to stimulate pride in past racial achievements and to show there was hope for the black future.

Charles S. Johnson came to Fisk University in 1927 to head the department of social research, which was established by a gift from the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial.



As head, Johnson created a first-class department and received large grants from foundations. He devoted his life, research, writing, and teaching to explaining blacks to whites, whites to blacks, southerners to northerners, and urban and rural dwellers to one another. His scholarly ability was recognized by awards and appointments, including the 1930 William E. Harmon Gold Medal for distinguished achievement among blacks in the field of science and service on the National Housing Commission under President Herbert Hoover and on the U. S. Committee on Farm Tenancy under President Franklin D. Roosevelt. In 1934, he was elected the first black trustee of the Julius Rosenwald Fund and in 1937 became the first black accorded the honor of being elected vice president of the American Sociological Society.

Johnson helped Fisk become a center for research in race relations. When the university created the Institute of Race Relations in 1944, Johnson was chosen to head the unit. He gathered distinguished scholars at Fisk, including E. Franklin Frazier, Horace Mann Bond, Bertram Doyle, Paul K. Edwards, and Robert E. Park.

In October 1946, the board of trustees chose Charles S. Johnson as the university's first black president. Their selection was inspired by Johnson's capabilities, not his race. Johnson was an internationally recognized scholar with seventeen books, chapters in fourteen others, seventy-two articles, and many book reviews. He served as editor of three magazines. Under his presidency, the university enlarged its student body and the endowment. Charles S. Johnson died in 1956 and was interred in Nashville's Greenwood Cemetery.

*Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr., 1988*

## **JAMES WELDON JOHNSON (1871-1938)**

Songwriter, poet, novelist, journalist, critic, autobiographer, lawyer, diplomat, and civil rights activist, James William Johnson, much like his contemporary W. E. B. Du Bois, was an individual whose life spanned several historical and literary periods. Born during the era of Reconstruction on June 17, 1871, in Jacksonville, Florida, Johnson was imbued with a diverse set of talents. The second child and first son of the three children born to James and Helen Louise Dillet Johnson, his given middle name was William, which he changed to Weldon in 1913.

Johnson inherited his ancestors' amalgamation of productive energy and service to community, as exhibited by his maternal grandfather's longevity in Bahamian public service, where he was a member of the House of Assembly for thirty years. His father, James, Sr., worked as the headwaiter of the St. James Hotel in Jacksonville, and his mother taught in the Jacksonville public schools for many years. After completing the eighth grade at Jacksonville's Stanton Grammar School, James W. Johnson entered the preparatory school and later the college division of Atlanta University, from where he was graduated in 1894. In 1895, the same year that Booker T. Washington delivered his Atlanta Compromise speech, Johnson founded the *Daily American* in Jacksonville, a weekly newspaper committed to reporting on matters relevant to African Americans. Although the paper was extant for only a year, the *Daily American* addressed racial injustice and stressed a self-help philosophy that echoed Booker T. Washington's ethos. Johnson then became principal of Stanton School, and at the same time studied law; in 1898 he became the first African American to pass the bar exam in Florida. While at Stanton, he and his brother, musician and composer J. Rosamond Johnson, wrote the words and music to "Lift Every Voice and Sing," commemorating the birthdate of Abraham Lincoln, which was first performed by Stanton schoolchildren in 1900. This song was adopted by the National Association of Colored People (NAACP), and would later be known as the "Negro National Anthem."

"Lift Every Voice and Sing" was not the only song on which the Johnson brothers collaborated. In 1899, they spent the summer in New York City; there they sold their first popular song, "Louisiana Lize," and began writing and composing in earnest. In 1902, James Weldon Johnson resigned his position as principal of Stanton School and the brothers left their hometown to join Bob Cole, a young songwriter they met while in New York. The trio became the successful Broadway songwriting team of Cole and the Johnson Brothers. Over the next few years, Johnson was largely responsible for the lyrics of such hit songs as "Nobody's Lookin' but de Owl and de Moon" (1901), "Under the Bamboo Tree" (1902), and "Congo Love Song" (1903).

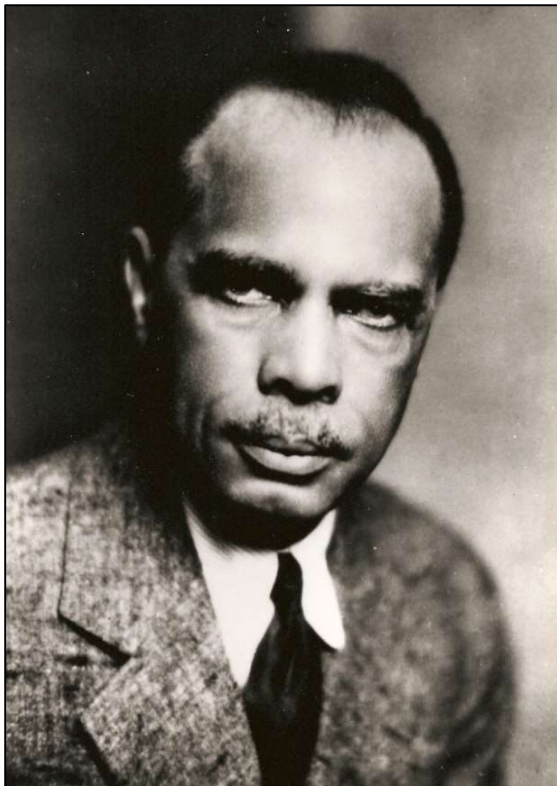
While in New York, Johnson became involved in politics and sought to further his education. In 1904, he served as treasurer for the Colored Republican Club. Around the same time, he began to study literature at Columbia University, under professor, critic, and novelist Brander Matthews, and he ended his role in the Cole/Johnson musical partnership to pursue a life as a writer. Actively involved in the Harlem Renaissance as



an author and as a supporter of young talent, Johnson emboldened writers and other artists to look at and draw upon the life experiences in American Black communities for their artistic ingenuity. Two years later, Theodore Roosevelt appointed him as the United States consul in Puerto Cabello, Venezuela through the influence of Booker T. Washington. Fluent in Spanish and French, Johnson was the first American Black to serve as the United States consul to Venezuela and Nicaragua. Johnson married his wife, Grace Nail, in New York City in 1910, and she joined her husband at his post in Nicaragua. In 1912, revolution broke out in that country and Johnson's role in aiding U.S. Marines in defeating the rebels drew high praise from Washington.

It was during his tenure in the consul corps that Johnson wrote *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, published anonymously in 1912. Johnson's novel grabbed renewed attention when he revealed in 1927 that the book was a work of fiction. Because the reading public associated the novel's hero with Johnson, he deemed it necessary to pen his autobiography *Along this Way*, in 1933. Johnson's political life fused with his creative curiosities and personified his life as an artist and activist.

Because he felt there would be little opportunity for an American Black in the newly elected Democratic administration of Woodrow Wilson, Johnson left the Consular Service in 1913. He joined the staff of the NAACP in 1915, and just one year later became the first African American to serve as field secretary and later as executive secretary of the NAACP. He advanced his own ideas on reducing the maltreatment of minorities in America. As executive secretary of the NAACP, Johnson organized the Manhattan Silent March of 1917



to protest lynching. During his tenure with the NAACP, Johnson led a national campaign against lynching that garnered significant congressional support in the form of the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill of 1921, a bill that would have made lynching a national crime. However, because of the lack of support in the U.S. Senate, the Anti-Lynching Bill failed.

Johnson continued writing throughout the 1920s, editing the first anthology of African American poetry, *The Book of American Negro Poetry*, in 1922, followed by *The Book of Negro Spirituals* in 1925, a two-volume collection of sacred songs he co-edited with his brother J. Rosamond. *The Book of Negro Spirituals* also contained an introductory essay in which the Johnsons traced the origins and importance of this earliest of African American art forms. Johnson also adapted Black preaching in verse form, publishing *God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse* in 1927. Stepping away

from poetry and song, Johnson chronicled the history of African American life in New York City in his 1930 book *Black Manhattan*.

After retiring from the NAACP in 1930, Johnson joined the faculty of Fisk University as the Adam K. Spence Professor of Creative Writing. Commenting on his decision to go to Fisk, Johnson said, "I feel that on this favorable ground I shall be able to help effectively in developing additional racial strength and fitness in shaping fresh forces against bigotry and racial wrong." Students often met in the Johnson home for spirited discussions of literature and Blacks role in America.

James Weldon Johnson's life ended on June 28, 1938, at the age of sixty-seven, when he was killed in an automobile accident in Wiscasset, Maine. Fifty years after his death, on February 2, 1988, the U.S. Postal Service released a commemorative stamp honoring the songwriter, poet, novelist, journalist, critic, autobiographer, lawyer, diplomat, civil rights activist, and educator. The first day of issue ceremonies were held at Fisk University, where Johnson had taught creative literature. In 1991, the Tennessee Historical Commission approved the placement of the James Weldon Johnson Home historical marker on the campus of Fisk University.

*Linda T. Wynn, 2014*

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### **HISTORIC JUBILEE HALL OF FISK UNIVERSITY**

Fisk School opened its doors in January 1866 in Nashville, near what is today the site of the Union Station railroad depot. The only campus buildings at the time consisted of small wooden hospital barracks originally built to serve ill Union soldiers. The Union Army occupied Nashville in February 1892 and held the city throughout the Civil War.

By the early 1870s, the wooden barracks were insufficient to serve the population of African Americans who wished to be educated at Fisk School. Through the efforts of Fisk's Jubilee Singers- who introduced Negro spirituals to the world beyond the South- funds were raised to relocate the school on more than forty acres of land in North Nashville.



Funds raised by the Jubilee Singers during an 1871-74 international concert tour were used to construct the school's first permanent building, Jubilee Hall. This imposing six-story building named in honor of the Jubilee Singers, was designed by the architect Steven D. Hatch of New York. Construction began in 1873 and was completed in 1876. The massive Victorian Gothic structure, which first housed the entire college, features a towering steeple. Complementary elements near the entrance include magnificent doors and a beautifully carved staircase created from wood sent from Sierra Leone, West Africa, by a former student.



In Jubilee Hall's first floor Appleton Room hangs a floor-to-ceiling portrait of the original Jubilee Singers. The portrait was created by artist Edward Havell, portrait painter for the court of Queen Victoria, who commissioned this portrait in the 1880s and later presented it to Fisk University. The Appleton Room was totally refurbished in 1992 as a gift to the university from the William Randolph Hearst

Foundation. Jubilee Hall, dedicated in January 1876, is one of the oldest structures continuously in use for educational purposes by the African-American community. The building today serves as a residence for first-year female students. Over the years, as many as three generations of women in the same family- grandmother, mother, and daughter- have at different times occupied the same dormitory suite. Jubilee Hall is truly one of the most cherished buildings on the campus. Fisk University's campus has the notable distinction of being listed as a historical district in the National Register of Historic Places, maintained by the U. S. Department of the Interior in Washington D. C. Jubilee Hall has received recognition from the State of Tennessee in the form of a historical marker denoting the structure's significance. In 1976, due to its national-level significance, Jubilee Hall was designated a National Historic Landmark by the U. S. Department of the Interior, the highest distinction in the National Register of Historic Places program.

*Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr., 1996*

## MARSHALL KEEBLE (1878-1968)

Marshall Keeble, one of the few African Americans to participate in the "Restoration Movement" of New Testament Christianity on a national basis, was a worldwide evangelist. He preached to racially-diverse audiences, baptized thousands of persons, established hundreds of congregations, worked with numerous schools, and served as president of the Nashville Christian Institute. A well-known and effective traveling proselytizer, Keeble rose above the twentieth-century's dilemma of "the color line," and brought white believers into the Church of Christ.

Keeble was one of four children born to ex-slave parents Robert and Mittie Keeble on December 7, 1878, in Rutherford County, Tennessee. According to two of his biographers, Keeble's father was the slave of John Bell Keeble, who served as dean of Vanderbilt University Law School. During the Civil War, Keeble's grandfather (also named Marshall), the slave of Confederate Major Horace Pinkney Keeble, traveled with and served as the major's personal valet.

At the age of four, Keeble moved to Nashville with his parents. The family resided on High Street (now 6th Avenue, North). Keeble attended Belleview and Knowles Schools, but his formal education did not extend past the seventh grade. Ten years after he moved to Nashville, Keeble was baptized by the Reverend Preston Taylor in the Gay Street Christian Church.

In 1896, Keeble married Minnie Womack, a graduate of Fisk University. To this union five children were born, two of whom died in infancy. A third child died suddenly at age ten when he touched an exposed high voltage wire on a utility pole in front of the Keebles' home. After thirty-six years of marriage to Keeble, Minnie Womack Keeble died on December 11, 1932. In November 1935, approximately three years after the death of his wife, Keeble's daughter, Beatrice Elnora died. Robert Keeble, his only surviving child died in 1964.

To support his family, Keeble worked in a soap factory owned by the Cassety Coal Company. Later, he went into business for himself and opened a small grocery store on Hamilton Street. Keeble also operated a produce wagon and later opened a second store on Jefferson Street managed by his wife. Philistia Womack, his sister-in-law, managed the Hamilton Street Store.

One year after marrying Minnie Womack, Keeble entered the ministry in 1897. He preached his first sermon at the Jackson Street Church of Christ where he remained a member until his death. In 1914, Keeble decided to "preach the gospel" on a full-time basis. Considering data submitted by Keeble to the *Gospel Advocate*, between 1915 and 1918 he traveled more than 23,000 miles, preached 1,161 sermons, and baptized 457 persons. Because of Keeble's success he came to the attention of affluent and influential whites such as Nashville millionaire A.M. Burton, founder of the Life and Casualty

Insurance Company. After 1920 he traveled extensively at Burton's expense and was supported by the Nashville Company.

According to Don Haynes, less than a year before his death, Keeble stated that Booker T. Washington's style of instructions helped him. "I got a lot out of how he made his points" said Keeble "any man who can make things simple is a great teacher." Keeble, like his mentor, made things clear. Similar to Washington, Keeble also influenced others. Early in his career, Ira North (Madison Church of Christ) traveled the evangelistic circuit with Keeble and later credited Keeble with influencing his style of preaching. An astute observer of Washington's fundraising activities, Keeble later utilized Washington's paradigm to raise money from whites for the Nashville Christian Institute.

In 1934, after a formal courtship, Keeble married his second wife, Laura Catherine Johnson (1898-) of Corinth, Mississippi. Eight years after Keeble's marriage to Laura Johnson, he became the first president of the Nashville Christian Institute (NCI) in 1942. Opening in 1940, NCI served as a night school for adults. The same year that Keeble became president, NCI opened as a fully accredited elementary and high school. He served the school as president until 1958 when he became President Emeritus. Nashville Christian Institute closed on June 2, 1967.



Marshall Keeble spoke annually in the Tennessee State Prison for approximately 30 years. From the 1930s to the 1950s, the decades of Keeble's greatest fame and accomplishments, his unique gifts influenced race relations in the Churches of Christ. It has been said that Keeble was the first person in the Churches of Christ who transcended the twentieth century's color line. Notwithstanding, according to historian Bobby L. Lovett's *The African-American History of Nashville, Tennessee, 1780-1930*, Keeble infuriated many African Americans by "reserving racially segregated seating for white visitors."

During his long career, Marshall Keeble received many honors. He was the first African American to become the subject of academic studies among leading preachers of the Churches of Christ. In 1954, Keeble was honored as the "Man of the Hour," on WLAC sponsored by the Business and Professional Women's Club. Two years later, he was presented a citation by President Hugh H. Tiner of George Pepperdine College. In 1960, he was made an honorary chief of the Nigerian tribe. In 1964, he was featured in the "Magazine Section" of the *Nashville Tennessean*. A year later, Harding University in Arkansas awarded him an honorary Doctor of Law degree. Governor Frank G. Clement

appointed him the first African-American "Colonel Aide-De-Camp," an honorary colonel on the Governor's staff, and Mayor Beverly Briley presented Keeble (on his birthday) with a bronze plaque.

Marshall Keeble preached his last sermon on April 17, 1968. He died on April 20, 1968. Five days later, Keeble's funeral service was held at the Madison Church of Christ, where his eulogy was delivered by Benton Cordell Goodpasture, editor of the *Gospel Advocate*. Keeble's body was buried in Greenwood Cemetery. In 1984, the African Christian Schools foundation established the Marshall Keeble Scholarship Fund.

Some thirty years after Keeble's death, his life's work continues to be recognized and honored. In 1996, Tracy Blair completed a master's thesis, "For a Better Tomorrow: Marshall Keeble and George Philip Bowser, African-American Ministers," at Middle Tennessee State University. On October 15, 1999, The Tennessee Historical Commission approved the placement of a historical marker commemorating the life of Marshall Keeble, one of the most notable and most conquering itinerant ministers of the Churches of Christ.

*Linda T. Wynn, 2000*

### **SAMPSON W. KEEBLE (1832 - mid-1880s)**

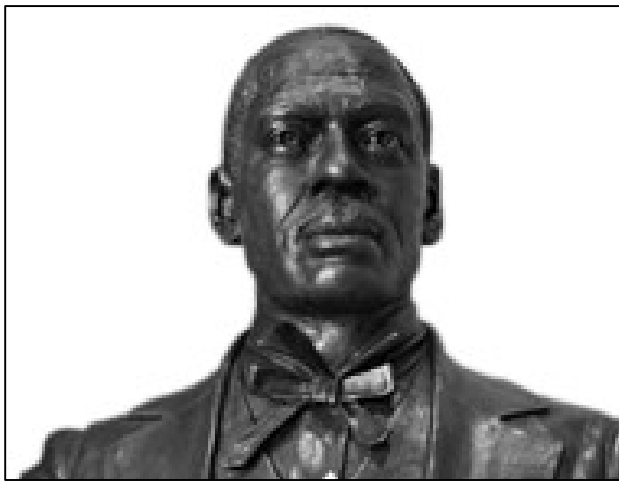
Sampson W. Keeble- barber, businessman, and politician- became the first black Tennessean elected to the Tennessee General Assembly. Keeble was born circa 1832 in Rutherford County, Tennessee, to slave parents, Sampson W. and Nancy Keeble. From the age of nineteen until 1863, he served as pressman for two weekly newspapers in Murfreesboro. Near the end of the Civil War, Keeble moved to the bustling city of Nashville, where black population had tripled during the Union army's occupation. By 1866, Keeble had established the Rock City Barber Shop. He became an active leader as a member of the advisory board of the Freedman's Savings and Trust Company Bank and treasurer of the board of directors of the Colored Agricultural and Mechanical Association.

During the Reconstruction era, when all local blacks were Republicans and the Davidson County Republican party was dominated by Negroes, Keeble became involved in politics. In 1872, he won the Republican nomination for a seat in the Tennessee House of Representatives. Helped by a heavy black vote for presidential candidate General U. S. Grant and some local white voters who viewed Keeble as a moderate black man, Keeble was barely elected to the Thirty-eighth General Assembly in November of 1872. He carried the important, heavily black fourth ward by eighty-five fewer votes than cast for Republic President Grant's reelection. Keeble's term began on January 6, 1873.

House Speaker W. S. McGaughey swore Keeble into the legislature and appointed him to the House Military Affairs Committee and the Immigration Committee. Before his term

ended in 1875, Keeble introduced three unsuccessful bills: to amend Nashville's charter to allow blacks to operate businesses in the downtown area; to protect Negro laborers and their wages; and to gain state funds for Tennessee Manual Labor University.

Keeble's third bill was a significant gesture in his political career. Located on Murfreesboro Road, Tennessee Manual Labor University was organized in December of 1866 by the leaders of the Colored Agricultural and Mechanical Association. These leaders were artisans, craftsmen, and small businessmen, as well as Keeble's associates. indeed, the Colored Agricultural and Mechanical Association was a political base for Keeble and others because the Association held an annual fair every fall and attracted a faithful constituent among the freedmen. It brought national black Republican leaders to Nashville, including John Mercer Langston (1872) and Frederick Douglass (1873).



After service in the Tennessee General Assembly, Keeble was elected a magistrate in Davidson County and served from 1877 until 1882. His first election as magistrate was contested when Keeble's opponent, James W. Ready, lost by only nineteen votes. The county court ruled in Keeble's favor. Two other blacks also were elected county magistrates with Keeble. By the late 1870s, however, the state poll tax and white racial violence had significantly reduced black voting strength, and white Conservatives (Democrats) had effectively

recaptured political power in Nashville and Davidson County. When Keeble sought to return to the General Assembly in 1878, he was defeated by a Greenback party candidate. Yet another black, Republican Thomas A. Sykes, won election from Davidson County to the Tennessee General Assembly during the presidential election of 1880, which was won by Republican James A. Garfield.

Keeble's date and place of death are undetermined, but it is likely that he passed during the mid-1880s, like so many others of his generation.

*Linda T. Wynn, 1990*

### ***KELLEY V. BOARD OF EDUCATION***

Fifty-one years ago most of the Southern region was in an uproar over school desegregation, which was mandated by the unanimous decision of the United States Supreme Court's 1954 ruling in the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* case that overturned the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision. Yet, despite the court's ruling, American black elementary and high school students endured angry crowds protesting

school desegregation. Across the region, despite their youth, these students and their parents met the challenge that offered them access to "equal" educational opportunities and persevered.

In Nashville, like Arkansas's "Little Rock nine" and Clinton, Tennessee's "Clinton Twelve" which caused their respective cities to adhere to the Supreme Court's school desegregation ruling, sixteen black six-year-olds and their parents ended the "Jim Crow" era of education in the "Athens of the South" on September 9, 1957. They too, walked past protesting whites into seven of the city's previously all-white elementary schools. Black and white children had never before shared classrooms in the city's educational history. Even during Reconstruction, when the divided nation attempted to reunify itself, blacks and whites did not have equal access to public education.

Nashville's school desegregation was in response not only to the *Brown* decision but also to the *Kelley v. Board of Education* case, which Nashville black families filed in 1955. Nashville attorneys Z. Alexander Looby and Avon N. Williams, Jr., joined by Thurgood Marshall, legal director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's (NAACP) Legal and Educational Fund, filed suit against Nashville public schools in federal district court to bring the city into compliance with the *Brown* decision. The lead plaintiff in the Nashville case was Alfred Z. Kelley, a Nashville barber, whose son, Robert commuted to Pearl High School although East High School was within walking distance of his home. Two years later, Judge William E. Miller decided in favor of the plaintiff and ordered the Nashville School Board to desegregate its public schools and to submit to the court a desegregation plan by January 1957. In the spring of the same year, the court accepted the school board's plan to desegregate the first grade in the fall and one grade a year thereafter. However, in deciding with the plaintiff, the court placed emphasis on the 1955 Supreme Court's decision in *Brown II* to desegregate "with all deliberate speed" and stressed the adjective "deliberate" rather than the noun "speed." Given the zeitgeist of the era, white resisters, led by the Klan, the White Citizens Council, and the Tennessee Federation for Constitutional Government (TFCG), fought school desegregation in Nashville. Vanderbilt University's English Professor, Donald G. Davidson, one of the noted Fugitives, who defended racial segregation, led the TFCF. Despite their protestations, the school desegregation process in Nashville had been set in motion.

On September 9, 1957, nineteen African American children, all six years old and formally registered to attend the first grade, were slated to desegregate all-white Buena Vista, Jones, Fehr, Bailey, Glenn, Emma Clemons, and Hattie Cotton schools. However, because of improper transfer papers, three students were unable to attend opening day. Still, sixteen six-year-olds braved the crowd of white resisters and desegregated the Nashville Public School System. Fourteen students successfully entered Buena Vista (Erroll Groves, Ethel Mai Carr, and Patricia Guthrie); Jones (Barbara Jean Watson, Marvin Moore, Richard Rucker, Charles E. Battles and Cecil Ray, Jr.); Fehr (Charles E. Ridley, Willis E. Lewis, Bobby Cabknor, Linda McKinley, and Rita Buchanan); Glenn (Lajuanda Street, Jacqueline Griffith, and Sinclair Lee, Jr.); Emma Clemons (Joy Smith) and Hattie Cotton

(Patricia Watson), received one student each. For all practical purposes, the first day of school desegregation in the "Athens of the South" appeared to have been a relatively peaceful success.



Resistant forces were determined to shatter the city's process. In the wee hours of the following morning, Hattie Cotton School was dynamited. An outside agitator from the North named Frederick John Kasper incited the cowardly deed. Despite Kasper's agitation and intended intimidation and terrorizing of the young trailblazers and their families, the pusillanimous act of violence only served to reinforce their resolve to peacefully end

racial segregation in the public schools of Nashville. Although Hattie Cotton was unable to open, the other schools, with the assistance of law enforcement authorities, opened without incident and eleven of the sixteen first-graders attended class. In spite of the reprehensible bombing of Hattie Cotton, supporters of Nashville school desegregation attained their desired goal. While the actual number of African-American first graders who desegregated the public schools was negligible on September 9, 1957, figuratively, they were incalculable.

In the forthcoming years, there would be many battles facing school desegregation in Nashville. Because of many controversies and disputes, the *Kelley v. Board of Education* case became Tennessee's longest-running school desegregation case, finally settled in 1998. A debt of gratitude is owed to the sixteen first-graders placed in harm's way so that all may access the educational opportunities of the city's public school system.

*Linda T. Wynn, 2008*

### **DR. MATTHEW W. KENNEDY (1921-2014)**

The gifted and talented Dr. Matthew W. Kennedy was born in Americus, Georgia on March 10, 1921, the grandchild of slaves in the segregated South. Nevertheless, his phenomenal musical talent enabled him to excel and overcome these hardships. During his life Kennedy would perform at Carnegie Hall and around the world, directing the Fisk

Jubilee Singers for decades. Royal Clement Kennedy, Matthew's father, marveled at his son's natural musical ability and realized that "there is something special in that baby" and encouraged the child's mother to develop his talent. Matthew's mother, Mary Dowdell Kennedy, a teacher and a soprano in the church choir, would inspire her son by singing spirituals and hymns.

At the age of four, Kennedy followed the sound of music and played his first piano composition, "It's Me, o Lord, Standin' in the Need of Prayer," by ear. It did not take long for others to realize his talent as a child prodigy. He took piano lessons once a week from a white teacher, Kate Land, paying for his lessons by cleaning her studio. Land arranged for the young boy to be featured in a fifteen-minute WENC radio show playing classical compositions on the piano. By 1932, the young Matthew had been greatly inspired after hearing Sergei Rachmaninoff perform in Macon, Georgia. Matthew and his parents had to sit in the segregated balcony of the concert hall. Soon he began to imitate the Russian pianist's playing style. Another white music teacher, Mrs. Irene Drake, heard Matthew play and arranged for him to live in her home while he attended Ballard Normal, a private Christian school. The Drakes used their influence to help Matthew get another radio show, "Music with Matthew Kennedy Show," sponsored by Banker's Life Insurance.

In 1934, after moving to New York with his mother, Matthew enrolled in DeWitt Clinton High School. Another music teacher, Lois Adler, helped him enter the prestigious Julliard Institute of Music. It was during this period that he was able to meet the great Duke Ellington. Matthew had an audition with "The Duke" in his New York apartment. Ellington was impressed with the promising protégée but advised Kennedy's mother not to expose the sixteen-year-old to the nightclub circuit of smoking and alcohol, and that he should continue his studies at Julliard. Matthew Kennedy earned his diploma in piano in 1940.

Kennedy went on to attend Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. He became the piano accompanist to the historic Fisk Jubilee Singers, under the direction of Jane A. Myers, and toured Europe, North Africa, and Israel. Drafted into the army in 1943, he served his country during World War II in France and North Africa. He formed a small military band to entertain the troops. After the military, he returned to Fisk and graduated cum laude with a B.A. degree from Fisk in 1947, and then went on to earn his M.A. degree from Julliard in 1950 and a Ph.D. from George Peabody College in Nashville. He became a faculty member of his alma mater, Fisk University, where he taught and directed the Fisk Jubilee Singers. He married another Julliard pianist on the Fisk faculty, Anne Gamble, in 1956, and they had one child, a daughter, Nina. In 1958, Kennedy made his New York solo piano debut at Carnegie Recital Hall. He also played at the Apollo Theatre and performed extensively in duo appearances with his wife Anne Gamble. In 1973, he was a member of the piano faculty at the Interlochen Arts Academy in Interlochen, Michigan. After 24 years directing the Jubilee Singers, and 33 years on the Fisk faculty, Kennedy retired in 1986.

During his lengthy career in music, Dr. Kennedy served on resource panels for the Tennessee Arts Commission and the boards of the Nashville Symphony Association and



the John W. Work III Memorial Foundation. He received several distinguished service awards throughout his career and is listed in “Who's Who Among Black Musicians,” “Who's Who in America,” “American Keyboard Artists,”



“Who's Who in Entertainment,” and “Who's Who of World Musicians.” He received the Achievement Award from the National Black Music Caucus of the Music Educators National Conference. Active in the local community, Dr. Kennedy was past President of the Fine Arts Club and played piano at First Baptist Church Capitol Hill well into his 90s. Fisk University conferred him the honorary degree, Doctor of Humane Letters. He was inducted into the Georgia Music Hall of Fame and is the subject of the 2007 award winning documentary, “Matthew Kennedy: One Man's Journey,” a film produced and directed by his daughter Nina. The Anne Gamble and Matthew W. Kennedy, Scholarship Endowment was established in support of Fisk music students' education. To honor the legacy of Dr. Kennedy, Nina Kennedy established the Kennedy Music Fund to spark global participation and awareness of his beloved

cause. Dr. Matthew W. Kennedy died June 5, 2014.

*Gloria Haugabook McKissack, 2016*

### **REMEMBERING THE REVEREND DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. (January 15, 1929-April 4, 1968)**

On April 4, 2018, the nation will pause to remember the life and legacy of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., one of the most charismatic leaders of the modern Civil Rights Movement. A staunch advocate for the rights of African Americans, he used nonviolence and civil disobedience to bring the rights to fruition. Although he and his followers practiced nonviolence, it was violence that silenced his voice. King may be America's most honored political figure, commemorated in statues, celebrations, and street names throughout the globe. On the fiftieth anniversary of his assassination, the man who believed that “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere” is as acknowledged through public awareness as ever.

Born on January 15, 1929, in Atlanta, Georgia, to Reverend Martin Luther King, Sr. (1899–1984) and Alberta Williams King (1904–1974, the younger King was introduced to the African-American social gospel tradition by his father and grandfather, both of whom pastored at Atlanta's Ebenezer Baptist Church and were affiliated with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). King's father also led

campaigns against racial discrimination that would later become a model for his son's political engagement. Despite his family's history of political and social activism, and King's apparent grooming for a similar life, as a teenager he was hesitant to pick up that mantle. That changed when he entered Atlanta's Morehouse College in 1944. King found new spiritual advisors in Morehouse president Benjamin E. Hays and religion professor George Kelsey, who encouraged him to view Christianity as a force for positive social change. King described his decision to enter the ministry as a response to an "inner urge" calling him to "serve humanity."

King's ordination took place during his last semester at Morehouse, and during his senior year, he was already traversing the path of political activism. After receiving a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology from Morehouse College in 1948 and a Bachelor of Divinity degree in 1951 from Crozer Theological Seminary, King entered Boston University's School of Theology. Two years later, he married Coretta Scott, who was studying music at the New England Conservatory of Music. In 1954, he accepted the pastorate of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Ala., one year before receiving his Ph.D. in Systematic Theology.

In December 1955, African American leaders formed the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) to protest the arrest of NAACP secretary Rosa Parks for refusing to render her bus seat to a white man. The MIA selected Dr. King to head the new group. As principal spokesperson of the year-long Montgomery Bus Boycott, King devised a protest strategy that included the recruitment and mobilization of African American churches. After the Supreme Court overturned Alabama's bus segregation laws in *Browder v. Gayle* (1956), King, C. K. Steele, Fred Shuttlesworth, and T.J. Jemison established the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). As president, King coordinated the struggle for civil rights throughout the South. His 1958 publication of *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story* aided in catapulting him to the position of a national civil rights leader. Although he was busy writing, speaking, and gaining insights into the philosophy of nonviolence for the betterment of the movement's goals and objectives, during the late 1950s, the SCLC's lack of success made the movement appear relatively dormant. A 1959 trip to India also led King to become a staunch advocate of Mohandas Gandhi's nonviolence ethos, which he combined with the concepts of a Christian social gospel.

The southern civil rights movement gained new energy from the student-led lunch counter sit-in movement that caught the nation's attention on February 1, 1960, when the "Greensboro Four" from North Carolina A & T State University sat-in at the racially segregated Woolworth's lunch counter. Their action ignited the sit-in movement that spread throughout the South during 1960. The sit-ins brought into existence a new protest group, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). King's interaction with students, especially Nashville's James Bevel, Diane J. Nash, and John Lewis—to whom Rev. James Lawson taught the philosophy and tactics of direct nonviolent protest tactics—often pushed King toward a greater assertiveness and militancy. In May of 1961, students under the leadership of Nash, Lewis, and others continued the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) Freedom Rides in Mississippi. Between 1961 and 1962, King's strategic

differences with SNCC activists became apparent during the protest movement in Albany, Georgia. Arrested twice during the Albany protests, when King left jail and subsequently left Albany without attaining a successful victory, some activists questioned his leadership within the southern protest movement.

By 1963, King had reaffirmed his prominence within the movement through his leadership of the Birmingham campaign, where the most massive protests to date were taking place. The brutality of Birmingham officials and Alabama's governor George C. Wallace's refusal to allow the admission of black students at the University of Alabama motivated President Kennedy to introduce major civil rights legislation. In August, King's address at the *March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom* was the culmination of a wave of civil rights protest activity that extended to northern cities. In his *I Have a Dream* speech, King told America that its African American citizens came to Washington to "cash a check...that will give us on demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice." Less than a month later, shock waves moved through the movement and the nation as dynamite blasted Birmingham's Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, killing Addie Mae Collins, Cynthia Wesley, Carole Robertson and Carol Denise McNair. The Reverend Dr. King preached at three of the girls' funerals. King was named *Time* magazine's 1963 "Man of the Year" in its January 1964 issue, becoming the first African American recipient of this honor.

On March 7, 1965, state police under orders from Governor George Wallace confronted protesters with tear gas and clubs, stopping a march from Selma to Montgomery and forcing them back across the Edmund Pettus Bridge. Following the marches on March 7 and 9, King postponed the Selma to Montgomery march until he received court approval. After receiving such, thousands of black and white civil rights sympathizers from across the country joined the voting rights march. On March 25, King addressed the protesters from the steps of the capitol in Montgomery, and on August 6, the 89th U.S. Congress passed the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

In December 1967, King announced the Poor People's Campaign, a crusade designed to improve government antipoverty efforts. This effort was in its early stages when James Lawson asked King to come to Memphis, Tenn. on behalf of sanitation workers striking against unfair treatment and wages. On March 28, 1968, King led thousands of sanitation workers and sympathizers on a march through downtown Memphis. He returned to Memphis for the last time in early April 1968. Addressing an audience at Bishop Charles J. Mason Temple on April 3rd, King seemed hopeful in the face of the "difficult days" that lay ahead. He asserted "But it really doesn't matter with me now, because I've been to the mountaintop [and] I've seen the Promised Land." Continuing in the cadence of a Baptist preacher, he declared, "I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land." The following evening while standing on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel, James Earl Ray forever silenced the voice of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., with a single bullet. Four days later, an estimated 42,000 people led by Coretta Scott King, SCLC, and union leaders silently marched through Memphis in honor of King and demanded that Mayor Henry Loeb III give in to

the union's requests. The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) pledged support for the workers until "we have justice."



Dr. King remained unwavering in his resolve to revolutionize the American social order through nonviolent activism until his death. He was one of the most identifiable leaders of the modern Civil Rights Movement, yet fifty years after his assassination, many do not recognize that King's radicalism underscored his revolutionary vision, his unapologetic opposition to the Vietnam War, and his crusade against global imperialism. In his 1969 posthumously published essay,

"A Testament of Hope," King averred that "White America must recognize that justice for black people cannot be achieved without radical changes in the structure of our society." The "black revolution" was more than a civil rights movement, he insisted. "It is forcing America to face all its interrelated flaws--racism, poverty, militarism and materialism."

Linda T. Wynn, 2018

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*Hate is too great a burden to bear. It injures the hater more than it injures the hated.*  
~Coretta Scott King

### KNOXVILLE COLLEGE (1875- )

Knoxville College was founded in 1875 by the Board of Freedmen's Mission of the United Presbyterian Church. The church started educational missions among the freedmen in 1864 and they were located in Mississippi, Louisiana and Tennessee.

In 1872, Southern states passed legislation to provide some form of education for black children. Since so few black teachers were available, the church that year passed a resolution to discontinue its missions and to concentrate all its educational efforts in a good normal school to train teachers.



After a trip through the Carolinas, Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee, the site selection committee was convinced that Knoxville offered the best opportunity for such a school. It had a healthful climate, good transportation facilities, a large black population and was lacking schools.

Dr. John S. McCulloch became the first president of the Knoxville College in 1877. In order to have a supply of college students, the school organized an elementary department and a high school department to feed into the college department. The school graduated its first two college students in 1883.

In 1895, Knoxville College organized a medical department to train physicians. Unfortunately, it never was properly staffed or financed to carry on the work of an accredited medical school. It graduated only two students in 1900 and closed later that year.

Knoxville College had more success with its hospital, which opened in 1907. It was the only hospital within 200 miles of Nashville or Atlanta where Black doctors and nurses could practice their professions. Knoxville General Hospital did not accept black physicians or nurses on its staff. When the Knoxville College Hospital opened, there were only seven black physicians in the city; by the time it closed in 1926, there were twenty. It

offered a modern setting for black patients, who were treated in a basement ward at General Hospital.

The college discontinued its elementary department in 1927 and the high school department in 1931 to fully concentrate on college work. College work, of course, included operating a large farm and maintaining a dairy herd. The most popular department was perhaps the music department with its various quartets and octets, which traveled extensively to boost the recognition of the college.

The effects of the Great Depression and the effects of World War II forced Knoxville College to sell most of its farmland and other properties across the country during the 1930s and 1940s. The college was able to bounce back with a great deal of vigor in the 1950s and 1960s with great building projects.

Although it continues to struggle with financial woes, Knoxville College still plays a vital role in educating those students most at risk and is a valuable asset to the city of Knoxville.

*Robert J. Booker, 1996*

### **JAMES RAYMOND LAWSON (1915-1996)**

James Raymond Lawson's accomplishments as both a pioneering physicist and alumnus university president are legendary. Long before he became the first alumnus president of his alma mater, Fisk University in 1967, a leading historically black university in Nashville, Tennessee, Lawson's research as the student of Elmer S. Imes and as mentor to a host of students had made him a pioneer in the study of infrared spectroscopy. Even so, his leadership of Fisk during the turbulent mid-1960s through mid-1970s, when student dissent grew stronger and white financial support grew faint, was an equally if not more impressive feat.

Physicist, professor, and university president James Richmond Lawson was born on January 15, 1915, in Louisville, Kentucky, to Daniel LaMont and Daisy Harris Lawson. A dean of Louisville's Simmons College, the elder Lawson had attended Fisk University where he was a member of the world-renowned Fisk Jubilee Singers. The younger Lawson followed his father's example, enrolling at Fisk in 1931. As a mathematics and physics major, Lawson sought the mentorship of Elmer S. Imes. A distinguished physicist, Imes had become the second African American to earn a doctorate in physics when he graduated from the University of Michigan in 1918. While at Michigan, Imes also became the first African American to write a scholarly research article before he returned to teach at Fisk, his alma mater, in 1930. At Fisk, Imes continued to pioneer in infrared spectroscopy, offering Lawson enviable opportunities as his student. Lawson did not disappoint his mentor, graduating Phi Beta Kappa in 1935 with a degree in physics, the first Fisk student to do so.

Lawson's successes were not however, limited to the classroom. An avid sportsman, he held both football and basketball letters and was also known to swing a mean racquet. However, it was his leadership experience and intellectual promise that made Lawson an ideal candidate for graduate study. The close ties that Imes maintained with the University of Michigan made the college a natural choice for Lawson. As a Julius Rosenwald fellow, he began graduate work at Michigan in 1937, and earned his Ph.D. in physics in 1939.

Having begun his teaching career at St. Augustine College while he was still a student, Lawson served as an assistant professor at Southern University in Louisiana from 1939 to 1940, then as associate professor of physics at Langston University in Oklahoma from 1940 to 1942. Lawson's mentor, Imes died unexpectedly that same year, prompting his return to Fisk as associate professor of physics and chairman of the department. Continuing the research begun by Imes, Lawson immediately began efforts to establish and develop a research program in infrared spectroscopy. Using his ties with his University of Michigan colleagues, he acquired an infrared spectrophotometer for Fisk, similar to a model that was being constructed for Michigan's departmental research.

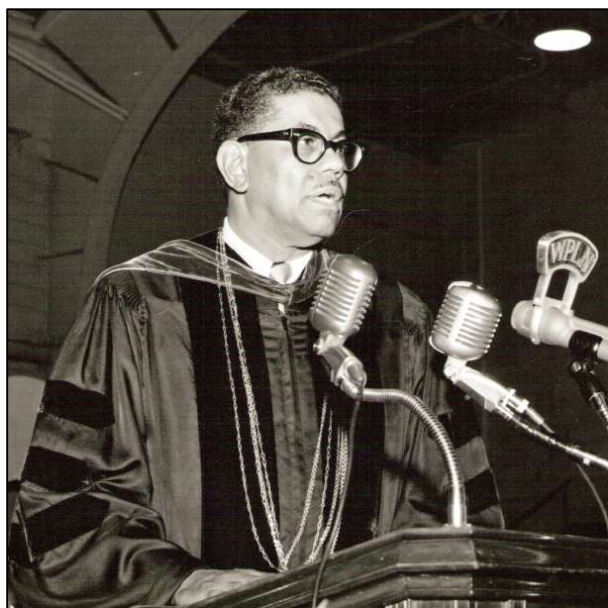
By the time the cutting-edge equipment arrived on campus in 1948, Lawson had successfully recruited five Fisk seniors to pursue their Master of Science degrees at the university. As the physics majors conducted their theses research on the new equipment the infrared laboratory flourished. They were soon presenting their research at major scientific conferences including the American Physical and American Chemical societies, both of which they effectively integrated. Enabled by grants secured in 1948, 1949 and 1950, both student and faculty research flourished. In 1950, co-directors, Lawson and Nelson Fuson established the Fisk Infrared Spectroscopy Institute.

After serving as chairman of the Physics Department at Tennessee A & I State University (another Nashville historically black university, later known as Tennessee State University) from 1955 to 1957, Lawson returned to Fisk as a full professor and department chair in 1957. In 1966, he became vice president of the university until 1967 when was selected as the university's eighth president, following his eighteen-month service as acting president subsequent to the resignation Stephen J. Wright, Jr.

As the university's first alumnus president, Lawson assumed the leadership of his historically black alma mater amid the social turmoil of the late 1960s. The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s nonviolent ethos was steadily eclipsed by the emergent Black Power Movement's popularization of the right to armed self-defense as well as its demands for stronger black cultural identity. Fisk students were no exception to the spirit of the age. Just as its students had been at the forefront of the nonviolent struggle with their sit-in and boycott campaigns in the spring of 1960, many Fisk students embraced the protest spirit of the "age of dissent."



Despite having transformed its Natural Science programs as a professor and administratively leading the institution to secure its largest-ever enrollment of 1,500 students, Lawson continued to face student protests throughout his seven-year



presidency. The student's open dissent only further alienated the university's traditionally white philanthropist financial base; whose support had continued to wane since the beginning of Fisk's nonviolent student activism of the early 1960s. Internal student dissent, coupled with the external pressures of financial supporters to conform student ideology that insisted on being "nonconformist" and "black" in identity, soon proved too much. With a dwindling endowment, Fisk experienced salary cuts of twenty percent and operational budget cuts of twenty-five percent that caused severe decreases in faculty, staff, and student enrollment. Lawson resigned as president of the university in 1975. Over the course of the

decade that followed, he resided in Washington, D.C., where he worked for the Energy Research and Development Administration (a forerunner to the Department of Energy) as special assistant to the director of the office of university programs. Later, he served as head of NASA's University Affairs Office and Associate Director of the Institute for the Study of Educational Study at Howard University before a series of illnesses forced him into full retirement. Lawson returned to Nashville, where he later died on December 21, 1996.

A member of numerous professional organizations throughout his life, Lawson was a member of the American Physical Society, American Association of Physics Teachers, American Institute of Physics, Sigma Xi and a board member of the Oak Ridge Associated Universities as well as a member of the Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. Married to the former Lillian Arcaeneaux of Opelousas, Louisiana, Lawson had four children - Ronald Raymond and James Edward Lawson, both Fiskites, as well as daughters Daryl and Elizabeth Lawson.

*Crystal A. deGregory, 2008*

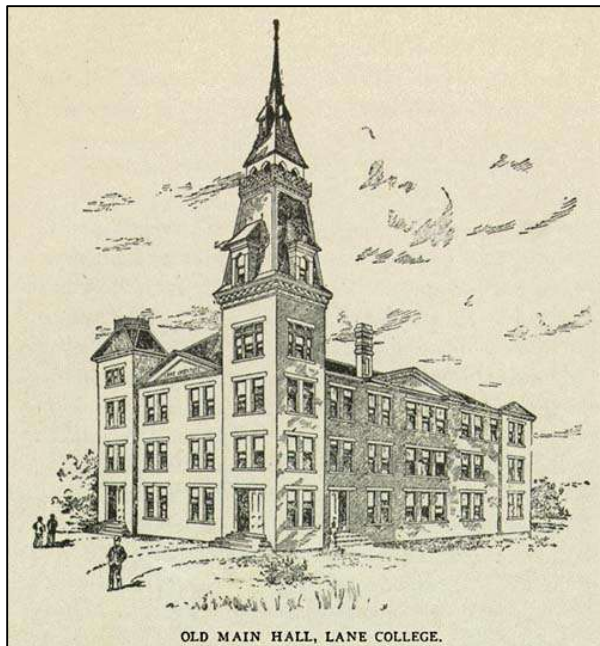
### **LANE COLLEGE (1882 - )**

In 1882, Lane College, then the "C. M. E. High School," was founded by the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America. Looking to the establishment of this enterprise as early as November of 1878, Bishop William H. Miles, the first bishop of the C. M. E.



Church, presided over the Tennessee Annual Conference, at which time the Reverend J. K. Daniels presented a resolution to establish a school. The resolution was adopted amid much applause. The Conference at once appointed a committee to solicit means with which to purchase grounds and to inaugurate plans to carry forward the proposed work. The Reverends C. H. Lee, J. H. Ridley, Sandy Rivers, and J. K. Daniels constituted this committee.

Owing to the great yellow fever epidemic of 1878, the committee was handicapped and did not accomplish very much. Meanwhile, Bishop Isaac Lane came to take charge of the Tennessee Conference as presiding bishop. He met with the committee, gave advice, and helped formulate plans for the founding of the school. On January 1, 1880 four acres were purchased for \$240. Thus began a work that has been a powerful factor in the uplift of people throughout the South, the nation, and the world.



OLD MAIN HALL, LANE COLLEGE.

The school began its first session in November of 1882 as the "C. M. E. High School," with Miss Jennie E. Lane, daughter of the founder, as the first teacher. In January of 1883, Professor J. H. Harper of Jackson, Tennessee, took over the work and carried out the unexpired term of Miss Lane. In September of 1883, he was succeeded by the Reverend Charles Henry Phillips, later to be elected as a bishop in the C. M. E. Church.

It was during the administration of the Reverend Phillips that the school was chartered Under the laws of the State of Tennessee and its name changed to Lane Institute. The Reverend Phillips recommended this action to the board of trustees during the fall of 1883, and the

board took action on the recommendation in 1884. Its action was one of the first significant changes in the development of the school.

The first class to be graduated from Lane Institute was under the leadership of Professor T. J. Austin, who served from 1886 until 1887. In 1887, the Reverend T. F. Saunders, a member of the Memphis, Tennessee, Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, was appointed the first president of Lane Institute and made numerous contributions. It was during this period that the need for a college department was discerned. The college department was organized in 1896, and at that time the board of trustees voted to change the name from Lane Institute to Lane College. The college department was organized into the classical, the natural and physical sciences, and mathematics divisions, thus broadening the curriculum.

In 1903, the Reverend James Albert Bray, later to be elected a bishop in the C. M. E. Church, was elected president. He held that position until 1907. During his reign, the present Administration Building was erected. President Bray was succeeded by Dr. James Franklin Lane, the son of the founder. Dr. Lane served with distinction for thirty-seven years. During his administration, the college improved its educational facilities and its physical plant. In addition, the college attracted the attention of several philanthropic agencies, such as the General Education Board of the Rosenwald Foundation and the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. These boards gave liberal contributions to the educational program of the college.

In 1936, Lane College was approved by the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools and given a “B” rating. Lane College was given an “A” rating by the Association in 1949. In December of 1961, Lane College was admitted into full membership in the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools.

With the passing of President J. F. Lane on December 11, 1944, the Reverend Peter Randolph Shy, who later was to be elected a bishop of the C. M. E. Church, was elected as the acting president, to serve until Dr. D. S. Yarbrough was elected president in 1945. Dr. Yarbrough served until 1948. He was succeeded by Professor James H. White. Professor Richard H. Sewell, dean of instruction, was elected the acting president in 1950 and served until the Reverend Chester Arthur Kirkendoll was elected president in July of the same year. Dr. Kirkendoll served with distinction for twenty years, until his election as a bishop of the C. M. E. Church in May of 1970. During his tenure, the college became fully accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and six modern buildings were added to the campus.

Dr. Herman Stone, Jr., who served as the dean of the college for ten years, was elected president in July of 1970. He assumed office on September 1, 1970. During his presidency, Lane College’s accreditation was reaffirmed twice by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. In addition, the J. F. Lane Health and Physical Education Building was added to the master plan of the college. After serving for sixteen years as president, Dr. Stone retired in May of 1986. He was succeeded by Dr. Alex A. Chambers, who took office on June 1, 1986.

On March 18, 1992, after a short illness, Dr. Alex Chambers passed away. The board of trustees named Dr. Arthur L. David, dean of the college, to serve as the interim president. In August, Dr. Wesley Cornelious McClure was elected the ninth president of Lane College and took office on September 1, 1992.

Lane College, from its beginning, has served as a source of inspiration for the youth of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church. Today it stands as a symbol of Christian education for youth of all faiths, creeds, colors, and nationalities.

*Lane College, 1996*

## LEMOYNE-OWEN COLLEGE (1871- )

LeMoyne-Owen College is a four-year, historically black college located at 807 Walker Avenue in Memphis. Conceived in 1870, when philanthropist Francis Julius LeMoyne (1798-1879) gave \$20,000 to the American Missionary Association (AMA), LeMoyne Normal and Commercial School opened during the fall of 1871 in a new building at 284 Orleans Street. LeMoyne directed that the school, which succeeded the AMA's Lincoln Chapel freedmen's school, would admit "all pupils whose conduct is orderly and whose character is creditable." A notable anti-slavery man, LeMoyne traveled from his Washington, Pennsylvania home to visit the new school. He donated a Hutchress striking clock worth \$800 for the school's tower.



Early classes enrolled 185 students, including seventy-five persons in the Sabbath I School. J. H. Barnum, the first principal (1871-1873), reported nearly 300 students and three active departments: normal, commercial, and music. LeMoyne Normal produced many teachers and graduated 200 students by 1908.

The LeMoyne School moved to its present site in 1914. The school became a junior college in 1924 and a baccalaureate institution in 1934, when the name was changed to LeMoyne College. By this time, LeMoyne had strong debating and

football teams that gained name recognition for the school. Hollis F. Price became the institution's first black president in 1943.

Owen Junior College (1954-1968) merged with LeMoyne College in 1968. Owen was founded in late 1953 by the Tennessee Baptist Missionary and Educational Convention, Inc., and located near the corner of Vance and Orleans streets in the former St. Agnes Academy - Sienna College buildings. Some twenty-two students began their Christian education there on January 18, 1954. The junior college was named for the Reverend Samuel Augustus Owen, pastor of Metropolitan Baptist Church, LeMoyne College's next-door neighbor.

LeMoyne-Owen College continues to educate African Americans and other students for meaningful positions in the world community.

*Perre M. Magness, 1996*

## **JOHN ROBERT LEWIS (1940-2020)**

Born near Troy, Alabama on February 21, 1940, the venerable John Robert Lewis came into this world as the son of sharecroppers Willie Mae and Eddie Lewis. Nicknamed "Preacher" as a child, he was the third born of their ten children and attended segregated public schools in Pike County, Alabama. The teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. had a profound influence on the young Lewis, and he came to Nashville at the age of seventeen to attend American Baptist Theological Seminary. There he met other like-minded civil rights activists including fellow American Baptist student Bernard Lafayette and Fisk University student Diane Nash. During his freshman year at the seminary, Lewis tried to establish a campus chapter of the NAACP but the college blocked his efforts. Throughout the fall semester of 1959, he attended student-oriented civil disobedience workshops led by Reverend James M. Lawson, Jr. at Clark Memorial United Methodist Church. In October 1959, Lewis and students from several local colleges formed the Nashville Student Movement responsible for initiating the downtown lunch counter sit-ins.

Pre-1960 lunch counter sit-ins did not garner much press, though they occurred in many cities including Nashville. In November and December 1959, Lewis and other students conducted two "test sit-ins" at the segregated lunch counters of Harvey's and Cain-Sloan Department Stores in downtown Nashville. Lewis led the December sit-in at Cain-Sloan, where they endured significantly more hostility than at Harvey's the month prior. On February 13, 1960, emerging leaders Lewis and Nash joined by other students including James Bevel, Bernard Lafayette, Marion Berry and The Reverends Kelly Miller Smith and James Lawson staged the first full-fledged Nashville sit-ins at three more downtown establishments- Kress, Woolworth, and McClellan's. In total, 124 students participated in that day's protests which concluded without incident. During a subsequent sit-in on February 27, 1960 involving 400 students, a violent event which Lawson termed "Big Saturday," Lewis was incarcerated- the first of his fifty arrests during the Civil Rights Movement. He and more than 2,500 other demonstrators conducted a silent march through Nashville on April 19 after the bombing of attorney and civil rights activist Z. Alexander Looby's home. Local sit-ins lasted three months and ultimately made Nashville the first Southern city to begin desegregating public facilities. The tireless work of Lewis and other unflappable civil rights activists made this hard-won success possible.

The year 1961 was pivotal for John Lewis. That spring, he was part of the original group of Freedom Riders, a group of Black and White pro-desegregation activists who boarded a Greyhound bus in Washington, D.C. headed for New Orleans. This group included several students and leaders from Nashville, including Rev. C.T. Vivian, James Bevel, and James Lawson. Led by Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) national director James Farmer, the ride encountered peril in Anniston, Alabama where Klansmen ambushed and firebombed the bus. Lewis and the other Freedom Riders thankfully managed to escape the dire situation.



Upon his graduation from American Baptist, Lewis enrolled at Fisk University in 1961 with a focus on religion and philosophy. However, he paused his studies in order to lead the student movement as a co-founder and National Chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), serving in that position from 1963 to 1965. During that time, a young Lewis represented SNCC in the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom where he spoke to a crowd of hundreds of thousands of people about the need to disrupt an unjust political and judicial system that included the Kennedy administration. His powerful speech necessarily highlighted how radical the civil rights movement needed to be in order to effect meaningful change. In 1965, he went on to actively participate in the Selma voting rights campaign which SNCC initiated two years prior. On

March 7 that year, he led a protest across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama on what became known as "Bloody Sunday." Lewis and others were viciously attacked by state troopers but their nationally publicized efforts directly led to passage of the Voting Rights Act that August.

John Lewis returned to Fisk and earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1967. For the next eleven years, he continued to fight for social justice and equality by working for the Field Foundation of New York City, the Southern Regional Council's Community Organization Project in Atlanta, and the Voter Education Project. He served a two-and-one-half year term under the Carter administration as an associate director of ACTION, self-dubbed "the federal domestic volunteer agency." From 1981 to 1986, he served on the Atlanta City Council and in January 1987, he began a 33-year term representing Georgia's 5th Congressional District, a post he held until his death in July 2020. Lewis' life ended the same day as his friend and fellow civil rights activist the Rev. C. T. Vivian.

An inspiration to us all, Rep. John Lewis fought for what was right and just. He boldly faced tumultuous and dangerous encounters time and time again to stand up for what he and millions of Americans wanted to see change for the future of America. Lewis' work was perhaps best summarized by his own 2012 quote during a visit to Nashville when he stated, "I was inspired to get in the way. For more than 50 years, I've been getting in the way. I've been getting in trouble – good trouble, necessary, trouble."

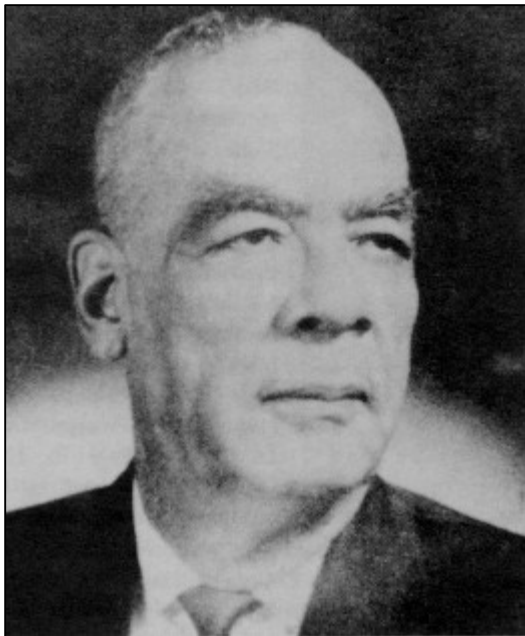
*Caroline Eller, 2021*

## **ROBERT EMMITT LILLARD (1907-1991)**

Robert Emmitt Lillard was born March 23, 1907, in Nashville, Tennessee, to John W. and Virginia (Allen) Lillard. He received his education at Immaculate Mother's Academy and in local public schools, then attended Beggins Commercial College, although his ambition was to become a lawyer. In 1928, R. E. Lillard began work as a city garage attendant and married Hallie C. Moore (d. 1970). Robert and Hallie Lillard had three children: Gladys, Sandra, and Robert Walter.

Lillard entered law school in 1932, after Z. Alexander Looby and other local black leaders organized Nashville's Kent College of Law. He continued his city job and attended law classes five nights a week, and in 1935 he was graduated from the Kent College of Law.

In 1936, Lillard passed the bar examinations, but he continued to work at the city garage to support his family. During the next year, however, Lillard received an appointment to Nashville's Fire Engine Company No. 11 at 12th Avenue, North, and Jefferson Street. He drove a fire truck until receiving a disability pension in 1950.



Robert E. Lillard then entered the practice of law on a full-time basis and participated in local black politics. In 1932, he organized the 15th Ward Colored Voters and Civic Club. He persuaded local politicians to pay the \$2 poll tax for over one hundred black men and women in the fifteenth ward. He prepared for the councilmanic election for a South Nashville district. In 1951, Lillard entered the predominantly black third district, second ward councilmanic race against the white incumbent, Charles Castleman. Because Castleman received support from Democratic party Mayor Thomas Cummings' administration, white politicians reportedly offered money and jobs to persuade Lillard to withdraw from the election. Lillard responded, "I won't be bought out. I won't be frightened out. You have to beat me out." Another Negro, Daniel West, entered the

race (perhaps persuaded by white politicians), split the black vote and force a run-off election between Lillard and Castleman. On May 24, 1951, Lillard won the run-off election and joined Z. Alexander Looby as the first blacks elected to Nashville's city council since 1911.

Lillard served the city council for twenty years, never missing a regular meeting. He served as chairman of several council committees: Public Safety Committee; Special Water Sewer Rate Committee; Special Beer, Wine, and Whiskey Committee; and Public Election Committee. He helped persuade the city to transform Cameron Junior High

School into the second high school for local blacks and successfully gained an ordinance to desegregate the Parthenon in Centennial Park. During 1960s, because Lillard believed that a metropolitan form of government would dilute the black voting strength, he opposed the plan to consolidate the city and county governments. Before retiring from the Metro City Council in 1971, Lillard became the first black to serve as Vice Mayor Pro Tem (1967). He made unsuccessful campaigns for vice mayor and councilman-at-large.

Meanwhile, Lillard's political activism and law practice continued to thrive. He gained admission to the federal district court (1955), the U. S. Court of Appeals, the Sixth Circuit Court (1957), and the U. S. Supreme Court (1962). Lillard founded the Tennessee Federation of Democratic Leagues and campaigned for the election of President John F. Kennedy in 1960. He refused the offer to become Nashville's Assistant U. S. Attorney; however, in 1964 and 1967, Lillard was appointed to the state of Tennessee Board of Pardons and Paroles by two Democratic governors. In March of 1978, the governor appointed Lillard as judge of the First Circuit Court, Tenth Judicial District. On August 31, 1978, Lillard retired from the bench.

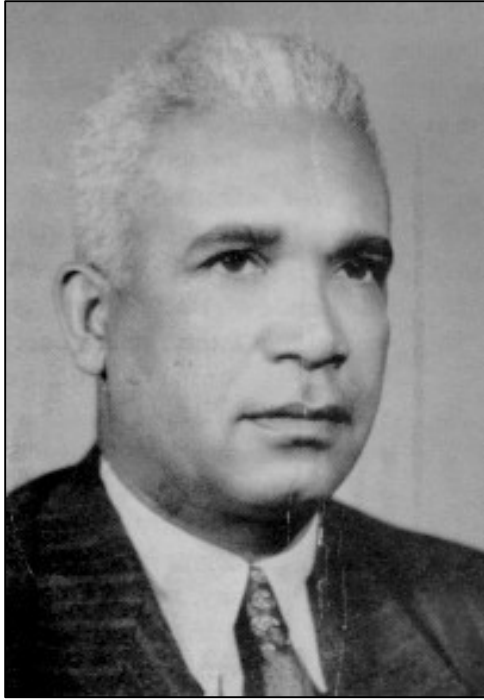
Robert E. Lillard died on November 6, 1991. He was funeralized on November 11 at the Seay-Hubbard United Methodist Church and interred in Nashville's Greenwood Cemetery.

*Linda T. Wynn, 1993*

### **CRAWFORD B. LINDSAY, SR. (1905-1988)**

Crawford B. Lindsay was a notable college professor and a leading educator. He was born in Birmingham, Alabama, on October 19, 1905, to Charles Bernard and Hettie (Hill) Lindsay. Among four of their children, only Crawford and a younger brother, Henry Lewis, survived. Hettie died when Crawford was five years old and Henry at one year of age. After being reared by Aunt and Uncle Henry E. and Carrie Hill, young Crawford completed Talladega College in 1927 and assumed a teaching position in English at Dillard High School. He also coached basketball and met his wife, Rachael Darden, at Dillard High School. Rachael and Crawford had three children: Henry H., Crawford, Jr., and Hettie Jane. After receiving a master's degree from the University of Michigan in 1930, Crawford Lindsay held a professorship at Morehouse College in Atlanta from 1931 until 1941. Then Lindsay accepted a position at Tennessee A&I State College in Nashville, Tennessee.

Recruited by Walter S. Davis, Lindsay was among a class of highly qualified faculty members who arrived during the 1940s to convert the institution into a university. Lindsay later completed his doctorate in English at Cornell University at Ithaca, New York, and obtained a law degree from the Nashville School of Law, which held evening classes in the YMCA.



Although he was typical of Nashville's rising black middle class after World War II, Lindsay contributed greatly to the foundation upon which local blacks would stand during the 1960s and '70s. His three children completed colleges and universities, including Tennessee State University and Meharry Medical College, and entered professions in teaching and medicine. Lindsay, like the dedicated black professors of his time, also helped to produce many black graduates who successfully entered America's professional life. By the time of his death in Nashville on May 13, 1988, Crawford B. Lindsay, college professor, had served as a model example of Nashville's black intelligentsia.

*Bobby L. Lovett and Rachel O. Lindsay, 1996*

### **Z. ALEXANDER LOOBY (1899-1972)**

Zephaniah Alexander Looby, the son of John Alexander and Grace Elizabeth (Joseph) Looby, was born in Antigua, British West Indies, on April 8, 1899. After the death of his father, young Looby departed for the United States, arriving by 1914.

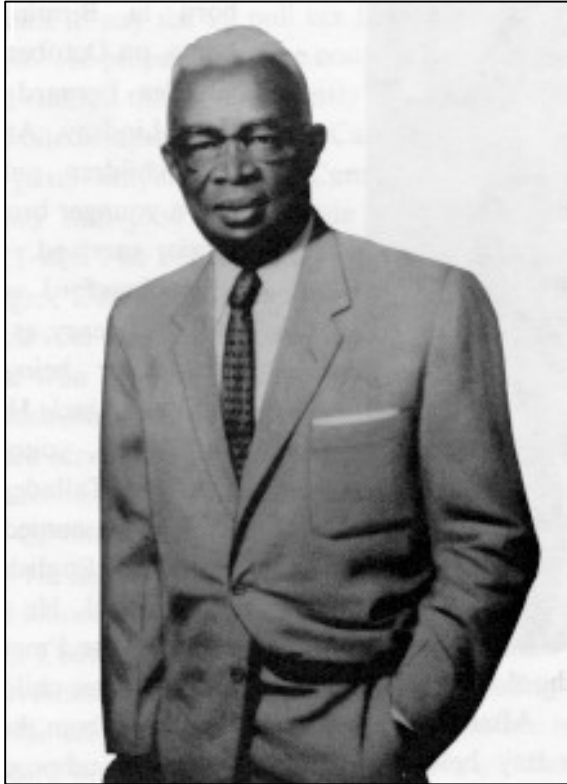
Looby received a bachelor's degree from Howard University, a Bachelor of Law degree from Columbia University, and a Doctor of Juristic Science from New York University. In 1926, the year that he received the doctorate, he came to Fisk University as assistant professor of economics and remained until 1928. Later he served brief periods as a lecturer at Fisk University and Meharry College. In 1929, Looby was admitted to the Tennessee bar. He practiced law in Memphis for the next three years and met a schoolteacher named Grafta Mosby, whom he married in 1934.

Unwilling to "pay the moral price" demanded of Memphis' attorneys and "Boss" Edward H. Crump, Looby returned to Nashville. He helped to found the Kent College of Law, Nashville's first law school for blacks since the old Central Tennessee College's department of law (1877-1911).

When the Negro civil rights movements of World War II began, Looby became the local leader. From 1943 to 1945, he presided over the James C. Napier Bar Association. He ran for the city council in 1940, although a white opponent beat him in a runoff election. In 1946, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) hired Looby, Maurice Weaver, and Thurgood Marshall to represent the blacks of Columbia,



Tennessee, who were charged with murder following recent race riots in that town. Looby's legal defense helped acquit twenty-three of the defendants. He crisscrossed the state in the company of other black lawyers, arguing against Jim Crowism and discrimination. Looby is credited with desegregating the Nashville Airport's dining room and the city's non-private golf courses.



Soon after the momentous U. S. Supreme Court decision of *Brown versus Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954), Looby filed a suit against the local public schools on behalf of A. Z. Kelley, a barber, whose son Robert was denied access to a nearby white school. During the sit-in demonstrations and civil rights marches of the 1960s, Looby and other black attorneys provided money and legal services for local college students who were arrested and jailed. On April 19, 1960, his Meharry Boulevard home was destroyed by dynamite.

Looby viewed politics as a way to change an oppressive system. In 1951, he and fellow attorney Robert E. Lillard became the first blacks to be elected to the city council since 1911. In 1962, he ran for a seat on the Tennessee Supreme Court but lost. In 1963, Looby became a member of the Metropolitan Charter Commission. In 1971, he retired after

serving on the old city council and the new Metropolitan Council for a combined total of twenty years.

Z. Alexander Looby died on March 24, 1972. On October 8, 1982, the Nashville Bar Association, whose white members had denied Alexander Looby's membership application in the 1950s, posthumously granted a certificate of membership in his name. His contributions to Afro-American Nashville are recognized in the Z. Alexander Looby Library and Community Center erected by the city on Metro Center Boulevard.

*Linda T. Wynn, 1984*

### **HAROLD M. LOVE, SR. (1919-1996)**

Harold M. Love was born September 8, 1919, to Samuel DeGreer Love, Jr., and Lillian Sinclair Adams Love in Nashville, Tennessee. The first of five children, including a twin brother, Arnold, Love was reared in a three-room house at 1421 Jackson Street near the

current site of the Andrew Jackson Housing Project. This house, probably like many others in this community, had no indoor plumbing or electricity, indicating a sign of poverty. Despite the financial status of Samuel and Lillian Love, they stressed the importance of education to their children.

Love was educated in Nashville public schools, graduating first in Pearl High School's class of 1935. He later attended Tennessee A&I college, majoring in social studies and earning a B.A. degree in 1939. He earned a M.A. in Sociology at Fisk University in 1941. Upon obtaining his graduate degree, Love accepted short-lived employment as an instructor at Fisk when he was drafted into the United States Army on January 31, 1942.

During his military service, Love served in the European Theater in France, Belgium, Holland, and Luxembourg, Germany. He also excelled in the military, earning the rank of Master Sergeant and becoming a recipient of the Distinguished Service Award and two battle stars. After almost four years in the United States Army, Love was honorably discharged in 1945. When he returned to Nashville, he successfully obtained employment as an insurance agent for the Atlanta Life Insurance Company and resumed his teaching career at Fisk.

Between 1959 and 1965, Harold Love's life began to change when he married, sought a political career, and became active in the Nashville Civil Rights Movement. On June 28, 1959, in Fayette County, Tennessee, Love married Mary Alice Yancy and subsequently



became the father of six children: Chrystal, Caralyn, Harold, Jr., Candyce, Anita, and Cheryl. Two years later, he was elected to the Nashville City Council, representing North Nashville (the area extending north of the Bordeaux Bridge) from 1961-1970. Of equal importance was Love's participation in the Civil Rights Movement. He solicited funds from Nashvillians to post bail for Tennessee State University students incarcerated during the Sit-In Movement and for other related expenses, and he marched with and supported those students throughout the Nashville Civil Rights Movement.

After a successful decade as a councilman, Love sought a higher level of Government - the Tennessee State General Assembly. Using the campaign slogan "Keep Love in the House," he was successfully elected to represent the 54th Legislative District in 1970, a seat he

would hold for 25 years. A staunch politician, Love's political affiliations were many. He was chairman of the State and Local Committee and Davidson County Legislative Delegation, and a member of the Tennessee Black Caucus of Legislators, the Ways and Means Committee, the Fiscal Review Committee, and the Calendar and Rules Committee. He also made several significant accomplishments during his tenure as a State Representative, including a \$100 million appropriation for Tennessee State University for renovations and a \$200,000 deposit of state funds in Nashville's African American Bank, Citizens Bank and Trust Company. In addition, he obtained funds for the replacement of the Bordeaux Bridge, later renamed in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and successfully established the Memorial Home Program to rehabilitate old homes. Finally, State Representative Love was instrumental in the judicial appointment of Attorney A.A. Birch, Davidson County's first African American judge, and in opening employment opportunities for African Americans within Tennessee state departments.

Often described by his peers and members of the community as a compassionate and community-oriented man, Love was affiliated with numerous civic organizations. They included the Nashville Urban League, Metropolitan Business Association, Northwest YMCA, and North End Citizenship Association. He served on the Board of Directors of the Nashville Opportunities Industrialization Center and Citizens Bank and Trust Company, and on the Trustee Board of Lee Chapel A.M.E. Church. He worked as a volunteer for Big Brothers and Sisters, Boy Scouts of America, and the United Givers Fund. In addition, Love was a member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., the Free and Accepted Masons, Tennessee State University National Alumni Association, and the Nashville Fisk Club.

Harold M. Love, a family man, died March 14, 1996. Focusing on safer neighborhoods, improving education, concern for senior citizens, and economic and community development, he left a legacy of community service, civil rights activism, and a successful political career spanning 35 years in Nashville, Tennessee.

*Pamela Smoot, 1998*

### **SAMUEL R. LOWERY (1832- c. 1900)**

Samuel R. Lowery was born to Peter and Ruth Lowery in December 1832. Ruth Lowery died in 1840, leaving Samuel to be reared by his father. Samuel's father, Peter, was born a slave but purchased his freedom. He operated a hack business at 96 N. Cherry (Fourth Avenue, North) Street and worked as a farmer, a livery stable operator, and a janitor at Franklin College. The Reverend Talbot Fanning, white proprietor of the Franklin College, tutored Peter and Samuel. Peter became the pastor of the Colored Christian Church (today's Gay Lea Christian Church), which had been organized in 1855 by the white Vine Street Christian Church. Peter also was a founder of the Colored Agricultural and Mechanical Association, a member of the board of trustees for Nashville's Freedman's

Savings and Trust Company Bank, and organizer of Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) congregations at Bristol, Caperville, Knoxville, and Trenton. He also became a real-estate dealer in Civil War Nashville.

In 1848, Samuel became a Christian Church minister. Later, in December of 1856, his life and the lives of local free blacks were drastically changed because the debate over slavery during the 1856 presidential campaign caused a local race riot in which immigrants and poor whites vented their latent resentment of wealthy free blacks by attacking them and their businesses. The free blacks' school, which had been operating since 1839, was ordered closed for good by the city and white vigilantes. Two dozen blacks were jailed but later released. Fearing for their safety, several free black families, the Lowerys among them, went to the North. In 1857, Samuel became the pastor of the Harrison Street Christian Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. By 1859, Samuel was organizing Christian Churches in Canada.



Union occupation of Nashville (1862-66) allowed black Nashville to flower again, and Samuel Lowery was one of the exiled free blacks who returned to the city. He became a Christian Church missionary, chaplain for the 9th U. S. Colored Artillery Battalion, and teacher for the 2nd U. S. Colored Light Artillery, Battery A troops. Between 1865 and 1875, Lowery was involved with the State Colored Men's Conventions, the National Emigration Society, and the Tennessee State Equal Rights League. He studied law under a white attorney in Rutherford County and began a law practice.

On December 10, 1867, Samuel Lowery and his father, Peter, founded Tennessee Manual Labor University, with Peter Lowery as president. Like the former white Franklin College, the school was designed to teach agriculture, mechanical arts, and Christian ethics to freedmen. It was located in frame buildings in a black settlement called Ebenezer, on Murfreesboro Road near Smyrna. Samuel Lowery and Daniel Wadkins traveled north to raise funds for the school. However, questions arose concerning financial impropriety on the part of the Reverend Wadkins, who had collected \$1,632 and took all but \$200 of it in expenses. Apparently Samuel Lowery, not Wadkins, bore the brunt of the blame. The white Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) refused to support the school and excommunicated Samuel Lowery. Around 1872, the Tennessee Manual Labor University ceased to function.

In 1875, Samuel Lowery moved to Huntsville, Alabama, where he established Lowery's Industrial Academy, which won first prize for its silk at the 1884 World's Fair. A group of businessmen financed his Birmingham Silk Culture Company. Later, he founded the S. R.

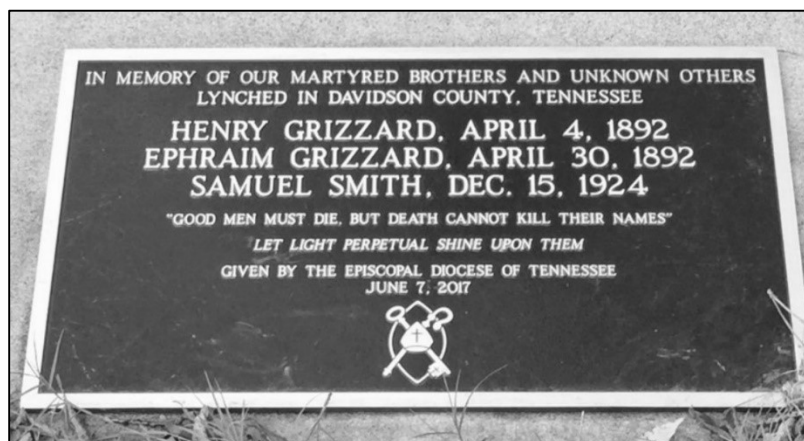
and R. M. Lowery Industrial Silk Culture and Manufacturing Company. On February 2, 1880, Lowery was admitted to the bar of the U. S. Supreme Court. In the 1880s, he established a cooperative community, Loweryvale, in Jefferson County, Alabama, where he died around 1900.

*David Mills and Bobby Lovett, 1984*

### **LYNCHING IN DAVIDSON COUNTY, TENNESSEE: 1892-1924**

Between 1889 and 1968, more than 3,437 lynchings of Blacks were documented in the United States. Public lynching was designed to inflict terror on people for generations. The first hanging of an African American in Nashville was in 1841 when an enslaved man was hanged for murdering his master. After the Supreme Court decision *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which established a “Jim Crow” system of separate but equal treatment in the country, racism increased. During the 1890s, lynchings increased and reached their peak period. This decade became the period in which whites sought desperately and definitely to “put the Negro in his place.” In Tennessee, between 1882 and 1951, forty-seven whites and 204 blacks were lynched, both men and women. Lynching claimed 235 mostly black lives during the year 1892 alone. Never was a white lynched by a black Tennessean.

Four known lynchings took place in Davidson County between 1892 and 1924. At least three more took place before 1892. David Jones was taken from the county jail on First Avenue on March 25, 1872, hung from a lamp post in public square and shot. Joe Reed was also taken from the county jail, on April 30, 1875, suspended from the Woodland Street Bridge and shot. An unknown man, caught in an act of burglary on Fifth Avenue in Germantown on June 9, 1877, was taken from police custody by a mob to the overlook by the Cumberland River, where he was allegedly shot and thrown into the river. Those involved claim it was a hoax and that no one was killed. We have no way of knowing if there were other lynchings that were not reported in newspapers at the time.



The most well-known lynching in Nashville actually started in Goodlettsville, near the Sumner County line. Brothers Henry and Ephraim Grizzard, along with several others, were accused of robbing a home at gunpoint and later returning to rape two white girls in their mother’s home. Although the girls failed to identify him,

Henry allegedly confessed to the local sheriff. A mob soon formed, and Henry Grizzard

was taken across Mansker's Creek into Sumner County where he was hung from a tree with a sign attached to his chest that read: "Death to anyone who cuts this body down before twelve o'clock tonight." The other accused men were taken to the Nashville jail. All were eventually cleared of charges, except for Ephraim. A huge mob of "well-to-do, respectable citizens" stormed the jail with a sledgehammer, unlocked the cell and took Eph outside. With no clear description of the accused, several inmates were attacked in the search for him. Eph had been dressed in a woman's disguise because the authorities had planned to sneak him out of town. Nevertheless, Eph was dragged to the Woodland Street Bridge where he was hanged and shot hundreds of times. Like his brother, a sign was placed on his chest, not to remove it from his body. Whites would pass by and jingle the rope in order to make the black man's body dance like a "lumber jack." The entire incident took less than half an hour, but made headlines in the *Banner* newspaper for days, justifying the lynching. Frederick Douglass joined Black Nashville leaders expressing shock and disgust of the events. Douglass spoke at Spruce Street Baptist Church denouncing the breakdown of "law in order" in Nashville. Yet no one was arrested, and no anti-lynching laws were passed by the United States Congress, despite the efforts of activists like Ide B. Wells and black Congressman George Henry White, who introduced a bill to make lynching a federal crime.

Another lynching in 1892 received far less national attention, though it was still reported in Nashville and was an example of whites taking the law into their own hands in an effort to keep African Americans in line. On December 14, 1892, Emma O'Bryan was allegedly attacked by an unknown man while he was working for her father at the house in Bellevue. After the attack, the man fled and Mrs. O'Bryan informed the girl's father, who gathered a mob of men who began searching for the man. They searched throughout the night and, according to a December 16 newspaper article, the unknown man was caught and hung, and his body cremated.

The final lynching in this time period was that of fifteen-year-old Samuel Smith on December 14, 1924. Lengthy details of the events leading up to the arrest and hanging of Sam were reported in the *Nashville Banner*. Sam's brother, Eugene Smith, had been injured in an altercation with a white rural merchant named Ike Eastwood, who was also wounded. Sheriff Bob Briley decided not to pursue the incident when Eastwood's injuries proved not to be serious while Eugene's would probably be fatal. Nevertheless, the young Samuel was arrested and charged with assault with a pistol with intent to commit murder, after seeking "help" from Eastwood's neighbor. A wounded Sam was taken to Nashville General Hospital where he was abducted by a masked mob of whites. Nurse Amy Weagle tried to hide the young man when the mob was searching for him. He was driven to a tree near the Davidson/Williamson County line—on Old Burkitt Road—where he was stripped, hung from a tree, and shot repeatedly. About thirty parked vehicles were reported at the scene of the crime. Prominent local citizens condemned the lynching and requested Governor Austin Peay and Sheriff Briley to identify and punish the perpetrators. The news articles reported "State Moves against Mob: criminal judge charges grand jury to investigate conspiracy." On December 15, 7,000 protestors gathered and collected \$5,000 toward legal expenses and cash rewards to informants. The

Chamber of Commerce retained the firm of Thomas & Cummings to prosecute. Yet, racism and maintaining the status quo prevailed, and not a single conviction was ever obtained in the lynching of young Samuel Smith.

In 2017, the Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee, in collaboration with Lipscomb University's Christian Scholars' Conference, formed the "Beloved Community: Commission on Racial Reconciliation." Their research on lynching resulted in 2019 pilgrimages to The National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama, which is dedicated to the legacy of lynching in the United States, as well as the placement of a marker for Nashville lynching victims on the grounds of St. Anslem Episcopal Church in North Nashville. On June 19, 2019, a historical marker commemorating the Grizzard brothers' lynchings was placed near the Woodland Street Bridge. That same day, a marker was also dedicated further down First Avenue, near the site of the old jail, to commemorate the lynchings of David Jones and Joe Reed.

*Gloria McKissack, 2020*

### **HULDA MARGARET LYTTLE-FRAZIER (1889-1983)**

Hulda Margaret Lyttle-Frazier, a native Nashvillian, was born in 1889 to David and Rebecca Lyttle. After receiving her primary education, in September of 1910 Hulda entered the first class of George W. Hubbard Hospital's Training School for Nurses. She gained recognition as an astute scholar and as one willing to render care when needed. Lyttle became proficient in operating room techniques, and attending physicians rewarded her diligence and efficaciousness by requesting Lyttle's help in the operating room. Three years after entering the Training School for Nurses, Lyttle, Lula Woolfolk, and Rhonda A. Pugh became the school's first graduates.

Lyttle then entered Lincoln Hospital's School of Nursing in New York. Upon completion of her studies at Lincoln Hospital's School of Nursing, Lyttle was asked by her former teacher, Charmian C. Hunt, to stand in for her as an instructor at Southern University's School of Nursing, until her contract with George W. Hubbard Hospital's Training School for Nurses terminated. Lyttle returned to Nashville after her three-month tenure at Southern University's School of Nursing ended. She was recommended for head nurse at Hubbard Hospital by Dr. George W. Hubbard, president of Meharry Medical College, and Dr. Josie Wells, superintendent of George W. Hubbard Hospital, and director and dean of Meharry Medical College's School of Nursing. Lyttle was directly responsible for enhancing the nursing education program and indirectly responsible for improvements made in the general administration of the hospital.

After leaving Meharry Medical College, Hulda M. Lyttle worked in various health care positions around the country. For almost a year, she gave services and expertise to the newly formed (1941) United Service Organizations (USO) in North Carolina. She later moved to Houston, Texas, where she was to manage a recently inaugurated school of

nursing. However, because the school's organizational and operational standards were inadequate to meet the academic needs of prospective student nurses, Lyttle closed the school with help from the state board. She moved to California and for a while worked as a private-duty nurse. In 1948, Lyttle accepted a position with the University of California as administrator of School Health Programs. She later accepted the position of superintendent of the National Baptist Bath House Hospital in Hot Springs, Arkansas. There she met Dr. S. M. Frazier, to whom she was married in May of 1954. They later moved to Miami, Florida.



A proponent of continuing education, Lyttle had completed summer extension courses at the University of Colorado and Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University. In 1938, she received a B. S. degree from Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State College and two years later took advanced courses at the University of Toronto's School of Nursing. Additionally, she held teaching certificates in Florida and Tennessee. Lyttle served as first vice president, then president of the National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses. She was a member of the Miami Chapter of Links, Inc., and the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

On June 23, 1946, Meharry Medical College's officials named the student nurses' residence hall in honor of Hulda M. Lyttle-Frazier. She became the first female Meharrian so honored by the school and the hospital.

At the age of 94, on Sunday, August 7, 1983, at Cedars of Lebanon Medical Center in Miami, Florida, Hulda Margaret Lyttle-Frazier died. She was funeralized on August 10 at the Church of the Open Door and was interred in Lincoln Memorial Park.

*Linda T. Wynn, 1994*

### **PATTI JULIA MALONE (1859-1897)**

Patti Julia Malone was born a slave to Mahalia Malone at The Cedars Plantation in Athens, Limestone County, Alabama, in 1859. After the Civil War, Mahalia bargained with her former master, Dr. Thomas Smith Malone, for her work and that of her daughter Patti. They made arrangements for Patti to attend Trinity School, a school for African Americans operated by the American Missionary Association. It was here that Patti Malone first came to know Mary Frances Wells, the principal from Michigan and a graduate of Mt. Holyoke Seminary for Women. Miss Wells befriended Patti, employed her, and sent her to Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee.



Patti first entered high school at Fisk in 1873-74 as a boarding student. In 1877, Dr. George White asked Patti to join the Jubilee Singers, already an internationally acclaimed chorale group. Ella Sheppard, one of the nine original Jubilee Singers, kept a daily diary of her travels. At Christmas in 1877, she wrote about Dr. White's announcement that Georgia Gordon and Patti Malone would soon join the group. Patti made her debut with the group in Hamburg, Germany, on January 14, 1878.

After Dr. White disbanded the Jubilee Singers in 1882, former member Frederic Loudin organized the Loudin Jubilee Singers. The group performed in Europe and Australia. In Paris, Patti purchased opera glasses which today are housed in the Houston Library in Athens, Alabama. The Jubilee Singers spent thirteen months on tour in Australia and were very well received there. When Patti left the tour for a two-month rest at home in



Athens, the group's patrons presented her with a purse of sixty-three sovereigns. It was even rumored that she was to wed a wealthy white Australian.

On January 26, 1884, Patti Malone purchased from her mentor and benefactor, Mary Frances Wells, a lot that was seven-eighths of an acre for \$300 on Brown's Ferry Road on Coleman Hill in the Village View section of Athens. For \$1400 she erected a spacious two-story residence which she named "The Oaks." The home later became the Oaks Funeral Home but is no longer standing.

In 1897, while the Jubilee Singers were touring the United States, Patti became ill. The local physician in Omaha, Nebraska, advised surgery and Patti prayed over her condition all evening. Shortly after the group left for their next engagement, Patti entered the hospital. She died on January 20, 1897, the first Jubilee Singer to die while in active service. Her

companions returned with her body to Athens, Alabama, where she was buried in the black cemetery in a lot with an iron fence around it. Her fellow Jubilee Singers sang at the funeral. The local press gave considerable notice to the occasion and praised her for "her genuine worth and true womanliness."

Almost a century passed before someone rediscovered Patti's grave and the local historical society raised money for a grave marker. The occasion was truly celebratory with services at her graveside. Following the dedication, the public was invited to see local actors and singers portray various historical scenes from Patti Malone's life.

Patti Malone spent almost twenty years of her young life as a Jubilee Singer. Her legacy is one of good deeds, an unsurpassed soprano voice, and a touring agenda that included visits to seventeen countries and appearances before six crown heads of Europe. Two different photographs of her with the Jubilee Singers remain, though she is not in the 1873 mural at Fisk University's Jubilee Hall. Her legend continues to live and flourish in her church and her community.

*Mary Glenn Hearne, 2000*

## **MARTIN HOTEL HISTORICAL SITE**

The Martin Hotel boasted fifty “steam-heated” rooms and a restaurant that served guests and off-the-street customers three full-course meals a day. Many famous African-Americans stayed at the hotel: Willie Mays, Satchel Paige, the Original Harlem Globetrotters, Lena Horne, Cab Calloway, J. Ernest Wilkins (U. S. Assistant Secretary of Labor), and many more. The hotel had its greatest success during World War II, when African American soldiers passed through Chattanooga on their way to Europe.



In 1862, Clark O'Bannard purchased the property from James Fryson, who was the trustee for the estate of Jeremiah Fryson. The property remained in the O'Bannard family until sometime around 1900, when Christian Horman acquired it. He bequeathed it to his widow Amelia Horman, daughter Lenora A. Grayson, and son Samuel H.

Grayson. D. P. Montague purchased the property from W. S. Allen, trustee for Amelia Horman, on August 15, 1906. The property then passed to Genevieve Allen Montague, who gave power of attorney to Richard H. Kimball. Robert R. Martin established the Martin Hotel in 1924; he was a former porter for the railroad. His niece, Ms. Mayme Martin, a former schoolteacher from South Carolina, came to help with the hotel in 1930. In 1933, after prohibition ended, the Martin Hotel was the first African-American business to receive a legal beer license in Chattanooga, charging fifteen cents for a bottle of beer. Kimball later sold the property to Richard Huskey and his wife, Deane Huskey, on September 3, 1934. In 1936, Ms. Martin assumed the management of the hotel after her uncle's death and ran it until 1985. Later, this property was sold to the Wilcox family; they in turn sold it to the *Times* Printing and *Chattanooga News-Free Press*. On July 19, 1977, the *Chattanooga Times* became the sole owner of the property, which it later transferred to the city of Chattanooga, and then the City of Chattanooga gave the property to the Martin Luther King Community Development Corporation.

On July 1, 1984, the final business permit was issued to the Martin Hotel. On June 30, 1985, the Martin Hotel's business license expired. In November of that same year, it closed its doors after sixty-one years in operation. After several unsuccessful attempts by the Chattanooga *Times* to save the building and preserve it, demolition of the hotel began in June of 1986; the final chapter in the life of the hotel was completed.

On February 19, 1993, the Tennessee Historical Commission designated the former hotel site as a State of Tennessee historical site. The state historical marker was erected in May of 1993, and the site was dedicated on May 27, 1993. The committee handling the dedication ceremony consisted of Leamon Pierce (councilman for Chattanooga City Council District 8), Gary D. Kelley, (chief executive officer of the Martin Luther King Community Development Corporation), Ella B. Bryant (vice chair, Chattanooga Board of Education), Dollie Hamilton (co-owner, Post Mark Business Services Center), Elizabeth Green (retired from South Central Bell Telephone Company and former board member of the Martin Luther King Community Development Corporation), and Ronald E. Brewer (regional manager, Community Diversity Development of Tennessee Valley Authority).

*Ronald E Brewer, 1996*

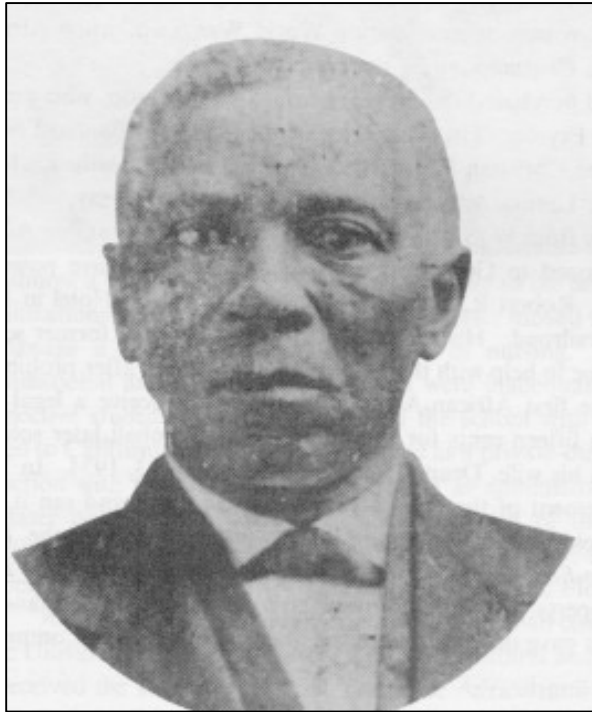
### **JAMES MASON (1840- ?)**

Knoxville's first black taxpayer was an industrious individual who was active in various civic and charitable causes. He was an ex-slave, city policeman, educator, and a founder of one of the city's oldest black churches.

James Mason was born in Knoxville about 1840 and was owned by Major James Swan. As a young man, he was the Major's favorite servant and valet. His duties were to look after the master and his horses. Mason was fortunate that a young member of the Swan household taught him to read. Although teaching slaves was forbidden in many areas, that was not the case in Knoxville, where free blacks soon outnumbered slaves. Mason also was given the opportunity to earn money on other jobs when not needed by the Swans.

Mason eventually was given his freedom. He continued to work and save his money, in hopes of buying his wife's freedom. He had married Betty Fountain, a young slave woman. With the coming of Emancipation, however, purchasing the freedom of his wife was not necessary. He used his savings to buy a house and lot on West Cumberland Avenue in 1866, thus becoming the city's first black property owner and taxpayer. In 1865, he had become a charter member of Shiloh Presbyterian Church.

One of Mason's chief concerns was the plight of deaf black children in Tennessee. As early as 1852, the board of trustees for the Tennessee School for the Deaf had been petitioned to admit a black pupil. The request fell on unhearing ears. In 1879, Mason established a school for deaf children in his home. On April 4, 1881, the state legislature passed a bill



establishing a school for black deaf children, with an appropriation of \$2,500 for two years. The first session of the school opened with ten pupils, who were initially placed in Mason's home. They ate their meals in a log cabin, slept in another building, and went to yet another part of the city for schoolwork. This arrangement went on until the summer of 1883, when the students were moved to a site on Dandridge Avenue. In 1885, the Tennessee General Assembly appropriated money to purchase the property and repair the buildings. By 1945, the school grounds had increased to almost 100 acres and was serving twenty students.

Mason did not live to see the fruits of his labor manifested in the success of the school for the state's black deaf children, but he had dared to dream and take the initial steps for what was

to come. While deeply involved in working for deaf children and his church, Mason made his living as a city policeman. He became Knoxville's second black policeman in 1884 and served honorably until his retirement in 1902.

*Robert J. Booker, 1996*

### **JOHN McCCLINE (1852-1948) AND CLOVER BOTTOM FARM**

John McCline was born on James Hoggatt's Clover Bottom farm in August of 1852, one of sixty enslaved African-Americans who labored on this 1,500 acre farm eight miles east of downtown Nashville. The antebellum history of the Clover Bottom farm is very wanting due to the lack of surviving account books, farm journals, and personal correspondence from the Hoggatt family. Few documents related to the operation of the Clover Bottom's antebellum past exist, and what little is known comes from the words of John McCline who described his life at Clover Bottom and the ensuing years during the Civil War in a vividly detailed book, *Slavery in the Clover Bottoms*. McCline wrote his narrative about 60 years after the events occurred, documenting unrecorded chapters in the farm's history and shedding new insights into interaction between roles of owner and slave. The story of McCline's journey from slavery to freedom, his witness to key events during the Civil War, his transition to freedman, and his nearly 50-year employment with Herbert Hagerman, the Territorial Governor of New Mexico, is a remarkable story.

McCline's mother, whose name is unknown, died shortly after he was born and he was

raised by his maternal grandmother, Hannah. McCline was the youngest of four boys. His father, Jack McCline, did not live at Clover Bottom, but was owned by a man named James Smith who lived at Silver Springs in neighboring Wilson County. McCline wrote at length about the work and jobs he and others performed at Clover Bottom, and how the management of the household was sternly overseen by Mrs. Hoggatt. Perhaps the most important information McCline mentioned in his narrative are the names, kinship relations, and occupations of over half of the 60 slaves living on the farm. Without written farm journals, McCline's information is the only documentation that gives specific identity to this enslaved community.

The onset of the Civil War changed life for everyone at Clover Bottom. Troops from both the Union and Confederate forces encamped on the farm for brief periods of time. Nathan Bedford Forrest and his cavalry of 1,000 men were fed and camped one night at Clover Bottom on July 21, 1862. Union foraging patrols confiscated supplies, food, animals, and wood. On December 18, 1862, troops from the 13<sup>th</sup> Michigan Infantry returning from a foraging trip marched down Stewart's Ferry towards Lebanon Road. John McCline was sitting on his mule named Nell when a soldier on the supply wagon shouted, "Come on Johnny, go with us up North, and we will set you free."



McCline, a ten-year-old boy, jumped off his mule, climbed into the back of a large covered ambulance, claiming his freedom yet leaving behind his family and the only life he ever knew. Within two weeks of leaving Clover Bottom, McCline witnessed the aftermath of a great battle of the Civil War, Stones River outside of Murfreesboro. He moved with the Michigan troops throughout Middle Tennessee and northern Alabama over the next three years. He became part of Sherman's March to the Sea, and finally mustered out in Cincinnati in 1865.

McCline was taught to read and write and after the war spent nine years living in Michigan with the families of these soldiers. In 1874, McCline moved to Chicago and worked as a porter at the Sherman and Palmer House hotels. McCline returned briefly to Nashville to

attend Roger Williams University in 1877, eventually teaching school in Trousdale County. Concerned over the low pay and poor working conditions, McCline left Tennessee. He moved to St. Louis and worked at the Lindell Hotel for twelve years, first as a waiter, then as the hat check man. In 1890, McCline contracted malaria and because of his health, doctors advised him to seek a drier climate. He moved to Colorado Springs, Colorado, and established a stable. After two years running an economically unsuccessful business, McCline began working for a wealthy industrialist named James Hagerman in 1892. McCline oversaw Hagerman's horses and stable.

McCline continued in the employment of the Hagerman family, and in 1906 he moved to Santa Fe, New Mexico, with Herbert Hagerman who had been appointed Territorial Governor of New Mexico for President Teddy Roosevelt. McCline lived in Santa Fe the remainder of his life and worked for the Hagerman family for nearly fifty years. McCline, a respected leader of the small African American community in Santa Fe, died in 1948 at age 96. He is buried in Santa Fe's Fairview Cemetery.

*Steven Rogers, 2015*

### **SAMUEL A. McELWEE (1857-1914)**

Former slave Samuel A. McElwee became a lawyer and the most powerful Republican party leader in Haywood County during Reconstruction. He served in the Tennessee General Assembly for three terms: 1882-1888.

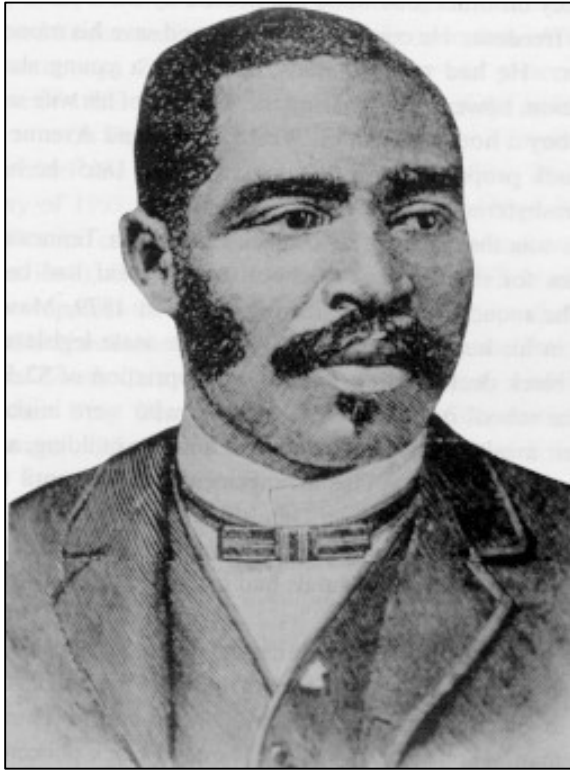
McElwee was born in Madison County, Tennessee, to Robert and Georgianna McElwee. During the general movement of former slaves, the McElwee family relocated to Haywood County in 1866. Samuel attended local freedmen's schools and Oberlin College in Ohio before starting a teaching career in Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee. He entered Fisk University in 1878 and was graduated in 1883 at age twenty-six. McElwee represented Haywood County at the 1884 Annual State Colored Men's Convention in Nashville. While serving in the legislature, McElwee attended Nashville's Central Tennessee College's law school and obtained his law degree in 1886. In Haywood County, his political base, McElwee practiced law, operated a grocery store, and dabbled in real-estate transactions.

McElwee's political career began in 1882, when he won election to the Tennessee General Assembly. Three other black men, all fellow Republicans, won election to the legislature. Young McElwee had the benefit of the experiences of other black men who previously had served in the General Assembly: Davidson County's Sampson W. Keeble had won election in 1872; Thomas A. Sykes also had won a seat from Davidson County in 1880. Moreover, during the period 1880-1883, predominantly black Haywood County had other blacks who held public offices: Green Estes, county trustee, and William Winfield, registrar. McElwee became a notable orator in the General Assembly, where he fought constantly for equal educational opportunities for the freedmen. He also worked with his fellow black legislators to defeat bills involving Jim Crowism and contract labor.

McElwee's political career came to an abrupt end in 1888. The white Democrats and Conservatives used fraud, intimidation, and terrorism to take the elections in the heavily black areas of Haywood and neighboring Fayette counties. McElwee received less than 600 votes and was forced to flee, as a group of brave black men guarded his exit.

Determined that they would not be ruled by "Negroes and Republicans," the conservatives, the radical whites, and the neo-Confederates began to "redeem" Tennessee government in 1879 through poll taxes, terrorism, and intimidation of blacks at the polls.

The Tennessee General Assembly passed the South's first Jim Crow law in 1881. By 1888, although Haywood County blacks outnumbered the whites, the blacks stayed away from the polls rather than pay the poll tax and risk losing their sharecrop jobs. From that point through the 1960s, the whites continued to use economic reprisals, domination of land ownership, illegal manipulation of court records (deeds), lynchings, and outright terrorism to keep the Racks in Haywood and Fayette counties under control and away from the polls.



In his book, *Lifting the Veil: A Political History of Struggles for Emancipation* (1993), former Tennessee State University Professor Richard A. Couto focused on Haywood County and discussed the career of McElwee. Couto noted that McElwee was the last African American to win a county-wide election in Haywood County.

McElwee settled in Nashville. On June 6, 1888, he married his second wife, mulatto Georgia M. Shelton. To keep the vicious whites from taking the McElwee family lands in Haywood County (as they effectively did to many black families), McElwee hid the land titles under the name *Georgianna Shelton* (his nearly white mother-in-law). He sold some of the lands, but as late as 1900 the McElwees still owned some 95 acres of land in Haywood County. After briefly establishing a newspaper and a law practice in Nashville and

losing four of his six new children in infancy, the McElwees moved to Chicago in July of 1901. At that time of Black Northern Migration, many blacks were heading to industrial cities to escape white terrorism and oppression in the South. McElwee established a lucrative law practice in Chicago, where he died on October 21, 1914. He was eulogized by at least three newspapers in Illinois and Tennessee.

*Linda T. Wynn, 1996*

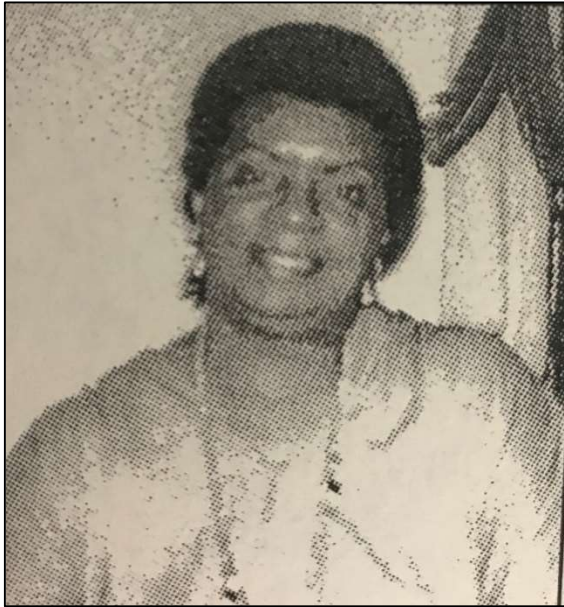
### **MRS. CURLIE McGRUDER (1927-1993)**

Mrs. Curlie E. McGruder served in a variety of capacities during her adulthood. She was an educator, pianist, coach, and a mother. However, Nashvillians will best remember her for her endeavors and resilience as a civil and social activist.



Curlie E. Haslip was born to Troy E. and Bessie Haslip on November 11, 1927, in Fairfield, Alabama. She received her elementary education from the Jefferson County School System and completed her secondary education at Selma University Prep High School. After completion of her formative education, Haslip moved to Knoxville, Tennessee, where she received her undergraduate degree from Knoxville College. While there, she was Miss Knoxville College and pledged the Pi Zeta Chapter of Zeta Phi Beta sorority. After completing her undergraduate studies, Haslip returned to Alabama, where she taught and coached the girls' basketball team at Clay County Training School.

In 1952, Curlie Haslip married Charles E. McGruder, thereby retaining her initials, which later became her trademark. In 1954, the McGruders moved from Toledo, Ohio, to Nashville, Tennessee, so he could complete his residency at Meharry Medical College. In a short period, Curlie McGruder gave birth to two sons. Later, she attended Fisk University for graduate studies in sociology. She was more committed to her family and her involvement in community organizations, however, and she did not complete her master's degree.



Much of Mrs. C.E. McGruder's community service involved activities with the Nashville chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). From the 1960s, McGruder held many different positions in the local chapter, including President (1964-65), Youth Director, Public Relations, and Lifetime Board Member. In 1964, she was instrumental in organizing a march for freedom around Nashville. During the march, white police were instructed to pick up all organizers. Some march organizers, including McGruder, hid in a car near Fisk University's campus and continued to instruct and encourage students with techniques to carry out a successful march. This was only one

of many marches that McGruder organized throughout the 1960s. Others included a silent march to protest the bombing of Birmingham's Sixteenth Avenue Baptist Church, where four little girls died. As a result, the Nashville chapter of the NAACP drafted a letter to President Kennedy requesting more federal troops be dispatched to Birmingham to protect citizens of color. Another important march involved a demand for a public accommodations ordinance. That effort included civil rights activist John Lewis, national chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Mrs. McGruder organized this march in her capacity as President of the local chapter of the NAACP along with SNCC and local churches and ministers. Activities such as these brought McGruder an abundance of criticism and rejection among both blacks and whites, but she forged ahead in her quest to secure equal rights for people of color. Because of her efforts in the 1960s as Local and State Youth Director and Second Vice President for the State of



Tennessee, the National Youth Council and College Division of the NAACP gave McGruder an award of appreciation.

After the turbulent 1960s, McGruder continued her efforts to bring about better communities and racial, social and economic equality. During the 1970s, she joined the ranks of the Davidson County Independent Council (DCIPC) and retained her position(s) with the local chapter of the Young Adult Chapter of the NAACP. McGruder focused much of her attention on enfranchising more people of color in Nashville. With the help of local ministers such as the Revs. Dogan Williams and Amos Jones and college students from the local black colleges and universities, hundreds of black Nashvillians, who otherwise would not have registered to vote, were given that opportunity. She focused on voting issues in Nashville and other urban and rural areas.

To assist in bringing down the walls of racial injustice beyond Nashville, college students under McGruder's direction organized numerous fundraisers to facilitate their travels to Clarksville, Murfreesboro, Louisiana, and Mississippi. She also joined forces with comrade Joe Kelso to seek federal and local funds for the restoration of the Fort Negley project. McGruder continued to receive accolades in the 1970s, including Dedication and Outstanding Leadership (WVOL radio); Outstanding Service Award, Youth Adviser of the National Youth Work Committee NAACP (61st National Convention); Certificate of Appreciation for community and public service (Governor Ray Blanton); and Invaluable Contribution to the Civil Rights Struggle (NAACP Youth Council).

In her later years, McGruder continued to work feverishly for any cause that benefited the black community, even if that included shaking up Metropolitan and state government. The omnipresent crusader continued to march in response to issues that affected Nashville. She marched against issues such as apartheid, lack of employment for blacks, and the lack of minorities in political positions, and pushed for a national holiday to honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Although McGruder ran unsuccessfully for city council, she continued to endorse and support others. Among her greatest achievements in the 1980s was the establishment of an annual citywide march and breakfast held every January in honor of Dr. King. During the 1980s and 1990s, Mrs. C.E. McGruder received numerous awards and accolades for her dedication to the Nashville community. They included: Social Action Award (Eta Beta Sigma Chapter of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity Inc.); Honorary Registrars-at-Large in recognition of Outstanding Service to the Nashville Committee (Davidson County Election Commission); Appreciation of Devoted Service and Invaluable Service to the David B. Todd, Jr. Foundation; an Appreciation Award for Dedicated Service, Davidson County Independent Council; and the Freedom Fighters Plaque for Community Service (NAACP).

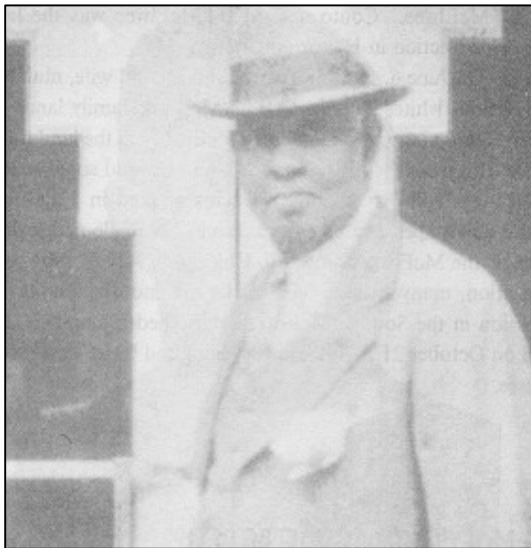
In the early 1990s, as the struggle continued for racial and social equality, McGruder's health began to wane. Despite poor health she remained dedicated to community service, and it was the masses and college students that were most receptive of her actions. According to Dr. Charles E. McGruder, "If someone called at 2:00am from East Nashville and needed assistance, and Curlie was in North Nashville, she would tell them to send a

car and she would be there for the cause." She was outspoken and often a thorn in the side of her opposition.

On the evening of December 17, 1993, McGruder attended her last board meeting of the NAACP. In a matter of hours after the meeting was adjourned, Mrs. C.E. McGruder was forever silenced. In death, as in life, she continued to receive recognition of outstanding proportions. The annual Martin Luther King Birthday Breakfast, which was created to bring community leaders together at Jefferson Street Missionary Baptist Church, was renamed the C.E. McGruder Celebration Breakfast. But her greatest honor came in 2003, when the Metropolitan School Board, with the encouragement of school board member Edward Kendall, renamed the abandoned John Early Elementary school the C.E. McGruder Family Resource Center.

*Pamela Lane-Bobo, 2004*

### **McKISSACK AND McKISSACK ARCHITECTS (1905- )**



Nashville's McKissack and McKissack architectural firm has designed thousands of facilities since the early twentieth century. The first Moses McKissack, of the Ashanti tribe of West Africa, was sold into bondage to William McKissack. As a slave, he learned to be a master builder. In 1822, he married a Cherokee Indian woman named Mirian. Gabriel Moses, one of fourteen children, was born on November 8, 1840, and continued in the trade learned from his father, who died in 1865. Moses McKissack III was born on May 8, 1879 to Gabriel and Dolly Ann McKissack in Pulaski, Tennessee.

When Gabriel began his business in Pulaski, builders were often responsible for designing their structures. Moses III learned these skills from his father and received his formal education at the Pulaski Colored High School. In 1890, Moses worked for an architect in Pulaski, drawing, designing, and assisting with building construction. From 1895 to 1902, he worked as a construction superintendent and built houses in Pulaski, Mt. Pleasant, and Columbia, Tennessee.

In 1905, Moses came to Nashville to construct a residence for the dean of architecture and engineering at Vanderbilt University. He was hired to design and build other residences in the West End area. That year, he opened his first office in the Napier Court Building. McKissack's first major commission in Nashville was the Carnegie Library on the Fisk University campus, a massive two-story stone building with an interior light well. In 1908,

Secretary of War William Howard Taft laid the cornerstone of this building, one of the first major structures in America designed by an Afro-American architect.

McKissack began to officially advertise as an architect in 1909; the city directory listed him as a "colored architect," along with eighteen other architects in the city. By 1920, McKissack was designing buildings for clients in all sections of the city, and his reputation spread throughout the state. One of his more significant residences was the Hubbard House at 1109 First Avenue, South (listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1973). Moses was assisted in most of his pursuits by his younger brother, Calvin Lunsford McKissack, who was born on February 23, 1890, in Pulaski. He spent three years at Barrows School in Springfield, Massachusetts and attended Fisk University from 1905 to 1909. Like his brother, Calvin received his architectural degree through an international correspondence course.

In 1912, Calvin McKissack opened an independent practice in Dallas, Texas, and constructed dormitories and churches throughout the region. From 1915 to 1918, he was superintendent of industries and teacher of architectural drawing at the Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State Normal School. After 1918, he was the director of the industrial arts department of Pearl High School. He was the first executive secretary of the Tennessee State Association of Teachers in Colored Schools, resigning in 1922 to join his brother as partner in the firm of McKissack and McKissack. They were among the first registered architects in the state when the registration law was put into effect in 1921.

In 1924, the firm received a contract from the National Baptist Convention, U. S. A., Inc., to design the Morris Memorial Building on Charlotte Avenue. McKissack and McKissack moved into space on the first and second floors, where the firm still maintains its offices.

The firm received contracts to design several school buildings for Nashville: Washington Junior High, 1927; Pearl High, 1936; and Ford Green Elementary, 1937. They also designed the Tennessee State University Memorial Library (1927) and other buildings on that campus. The firm was chosen in 1929 to build the new company headquarters for the state's only black insurance company, Universal Life of Memphis. Other McKissack buildings included the C. M. E. Publishing House in Jackson and the A. M. E. Publishing House in Nashville. These buildings, demolished in the late 1970s, represented the firm's expertise in the Art Deco style.

The McKissacks received several federal Works Progress Administration contracts to design public educational facilities in the late 1930s. In 1941, Alabama granted the firm a business license, and in 1943 licenses were granted in Georgia, South Carolina, Florida, and Mississippi. The McKissacks received national recognition in 1942, when they secured a contract for the 99th Pursuit Squadron Air Base in Tuskegee, Alabama--the largest contract ever granted by the federal government to an Afro-American company. Moses and Calvin McKissack received the Spaulding Medal, given to the outstanding Negro business firm in the country. During Franklin Roosevelt's administration, Moses was appointed to the White House Conference on Housing Problems. The firm was

involved in the design of several housing projects, one of which was the College Hill development in northwest Nashville.

Moses McKissack III died on December 12, 1952. Calvin became the president and general manager of the firm, remaining until his death in 1968. The reins of the company then fell to Moses III's son, William DeBerry McKissack, who continued the family tradition until illness forced him to retire. McKissack and McKissack Architects, Inc., with offices in Nashville, Memphis, and Tuskegee, currently is directed by Leatrice McKissack, the wife of William McKissack.

In recognition of Moses McKissack III's contributions, the city has named an elementary school and a small park in his honor.

*Linda T. Wynn, 1985*

### **MEHARRY MEDICAL COLLEGE (1876- )**

Meharry Medical College originated in 1876 as the medical division of Central Tennessee College, an institution established by the Freedmen's Aid Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The founder and first president of Meharry Medical College was New Hampshire native George Whipple Hubbard (1841-1921), a former Union soldier who received his medical degree from the University of Nashville. While still in school, Hubbard began the work of building Meharry, with himself as sole instructor, religious advisor, and superintendent.

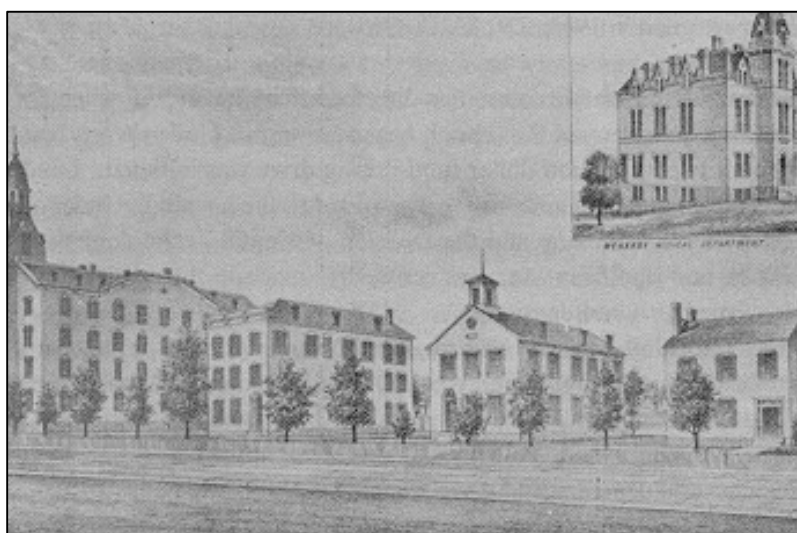
Meharry's dental and pharmaceutical departments were organized in 1886 and 1889, respectively. There was only one member in the first graduating class in 1890; he held the degree of Master of Arts. In 1910, the School of Nursing of Mercy Hospital was transferred to Meharry. The Hubbard Hospital was built in 1917. On October 13, 1915, Meharry Medical College was granted a charter separate from Central Tennessee College, which had changed its name to Walden University in 1900.

On February 1, 1921, John J. Mullaney, a 1908 graduate of the University of Pennsylvania and a former faculty member of Gerard College in Philadelphia, became the second president of Meharry. Under his leadership, admission requirements were rigorously administered; the number of faculty members increased; research and hospital facilities were expanded, increasing the bed capacity to 100; outpatient clinics were reorganized according to specialty; and a hospital superintendent was employed. In 1923, Meharry was given an "A" rating. With contributions from the General Education Board and the Rockefeller, Rosenwald, Eastman, and Carnegie foundations, together with assistance from the City of Nashville and Meharry alumnae, the college moved from South Nashville to its present location in North Nashville, adjacent to Fisk University.

In 1938, the distinguished scholar Edward L. Turner assumed the post of press. Turner modified the curriculum of the medical school, insisting on a more scientific approach

and stressing the importance of proper clinical procedures. During this time, Meharry began to experience financial difficulties, which plagued the institution throughout the 1940s. President Turner resigned in 1944. Dr. M. D. Clawson served as president of Meharry from 1945 to 1950.

An interim administrative committee directed affairs until 1952, when Dr. Harold D. West, the first black president of the school, began his term. Under West, fiscal expansion was planned and a twenty million dollar fundraising drive was initiated. Land adjacent to the campus was purchased, and a new wing was added to the hospital. Under a re-definition of purpose, the School of Nursing and the Division of Dental Technology were terminated in the early 1960s, and significant improvements were made to the curriculum and facilities in the schools of medicine and dentistry.



From 1966 to 1968, Meharry was managed by an interim committee until the dean of the medical school, Lloyd Elam, was appointed president. Meharry then established a graduate school offering the Ph.D. degree in the basic sciences and a School of Allied Health Professions in conjunction with T. S. U. and Fisk University. New buildings for the schools of medicine and

dentistry and a new hospital building were constructed in the 1970s. Elam provided Meharry with thirteen years of progressive leadership. He continued his service to the school as a distinguished member of the teaching faculty.

In March of 1981, Richard Lester, chairman of the Department of Radiology of the University of Texas Science Center and a member of Meharry's board of trustees, assumed the duties of interim president for one year. In July of 1982, David Satcher became the third black man to hold the position of president. He served until 1993 and was followed by President John Maupin.

Meharry Medical College includes the School of Medicine, the School of Dentistry, the School of Graduate Studies and Research, the School of Allied Health Professions, the George Russell Towers of Hubbard Hospital, two health centers, and the Harold D. West Basic Sciences Center.

*Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr., 1985*

## **METRO CONSOLIDATION AND NASHVILLE'S AFRO-AMERICAN COMMUNITY**

The 1951 local elections in Nashville, Tennessee signaled a turning point in race relations in a city that prided itself on being a progressive southern city. A new generation of leadership had emerged within the African-American community of the city during World War II and now that generation was about to step forward. The election of Z. Alexander Looby and Robert Lillard as the first African Americans elected to the city council in more than forty years was the first step of this new group into the political arena. Dr. Looby and Mr. Lillard came from different backgrounds and represented different constituencies within the black community, but both were committed to seeing African-American influence in local government expand. In this same election, Ben West narrowly defeated the incumbent mayor of Nashville, Thomas L. Cummings, Sr., and his election marked a changing of the guard for Nashville's white political establishment as well. With the support of Nashville's NAACP chapter, Councilman Looby immediately began to introduce bills to desegregate public facilities.

Throughout out the early 1950s, white Nashvillians began moving out of the city into Davidson County's newly-built suburbs that began to surround the city. While Davidson County, headed by County Judge Beverly Briley, struggled to provide essential services to these residents, Mayor West and the city council began to see their tax revenues shrinking. In this environment, the city council and the county court created a joint commission of fifteen citizens to study the needs for local government and make proposals, including a consolidated system. This group became known as the Community Services Commission and in 1952 published *A Future for Nashville*, a comprehensive study of the challenges of growth and possible solutions to the problems of providing adequate government services to all residents in an efficient manner. A major theme was that the city and the county were economically interdependent and the county residents needed city services. The report planted the seeds for an extended discussion about changes in the current system that led to the creation of a city-county commission to write a charter for a unified system in which the city of Nashville and Davidson County would be consolidated into one governmental unit. This idea became known simply as "Metro".

Z. Alexander Looby was one of Mayor West's five appointees to the 1957 charter commission and Mayor Briley appointed Dr. George S. Meadors, a well-known black community leader and businessman. These appointments gave African Americans 20% of the representation on the 10-member commission that wrote the first charter for metropolitan government. This charter was endorsed by both Mayor West and County Judge Briley, as well as both of Nashville's daily newspapers. At the time of the writing of this charter and the referendum on it that followed, there were less than 10,000 registered black voters in Davidson County out of 70,000 who were actually eligible to vote. African Americans who now made up one-third of the population of the city were divided over the benefits of consolidation. They had steadily gained strength in city government and Councilman Bob Lillard feared that African Americans could lose their hard-won political

gains if the city and county governments were merged. Z. Alexander Looby, however, believed that consolidation would bring economic growth that would benefit all Nashvillians, including African Americans. When a referendum on the charter was held in June 1958, it passed in the city but failed in the county, where residents were fearful of increased taxes.

With the failure of the first charter, Mayor West and his city council began taking controversial steps to solve the city's financial problems by annexing two significant areas of the county that included over forty-two square miles and 82,000 residents. These annexations, along with a wheel tax on county residents who drove their cars into the city, created an outcry among county residents who by 1962 were calling for another charter. When a second charter commission convened, however, the racial atmosphere in Nashville, a city that regarded itself as a moderate southern city, had dramatically changed. The Nashville sit-ins had ushered in a wave of protests and boycotts that continued for several years because many white Nashvillians remained opposed to integration. After the sit-ins, many African Americans became disenchanted with Mayor West and his political allies at the *Nashville Banner* because of West's reluctance to endorse complete integration of all public facilities and the *Banner's* outright opposition to ending segregation. It was in this highly-charged environment that a second charter, now opposed by Mayor West and the *Banner*, was written and presented to the voters for approval.



Z. Alexander Looby and Fisk University economics professor Vivian Henderson were the most vocal spokesmen in support of consolidation within the black community. They argued that the annexations would ultimately dilute the black vote by increasing the numbers of white voters in the city. Only through consolidation would African Americans be able to maintain political power through the deliberate drawing

of district lines for the thirty-five member metropolitan council now included in the new charter. Because of Dr. Looby's persistent defense of majority black districts during the commission meetings, six of the thirty-five councilmanic districts were drawn to preserve black majorities in them. Dr. Henderson and Dr. Looby also argued that economic gains promised by consolidation would create additional job opportunities for both blacks and whites. In the June 28, 1962 referendum, the charter passed in both the city and the county, in spite of the fact that fifty-five percent of black voters rejected it.

On April 1, 1963 Beverly Briley was sworn in as the first mayor of Metropolitan Nashville. Mansfield Douglas, John Driver, Robert Lillard, and Harold Love, Sr. joined Z. Alexander Looby as African Americans among the forty members of the first Metropolitan Council. Nashville's struggles with ending segregation, however, were not over with the implementation of consolidated government.

Shortly after Metropolitan government went into effect in 1963, violence erupted at several Nashville restaurants when demonstrators attempted to picket segregated establishments. African-American leaders pressured Mayor Briley to take action. Six weeks after Briley's inauguration, he created the Metropolitan Human Relations Committee to work to bring both the demonstrators and the business community together. That same month, President John F. Kennedy came to Nashville and gave an eloquent speech about race relations before 30,000 spectators at Vanderbilt Stadium. In this speech, the President challenged Nashvillians and Southerners to accept their full responsibilities of citizenship and voluntarily desegregate. In spite of all of the gains that African Americans made politically, desegregation of public places was not fully achieved for many years to come.

*Carole Bucy, 2013*

### **REAVIS L. MITCHELL, JR. (1947-2020)**

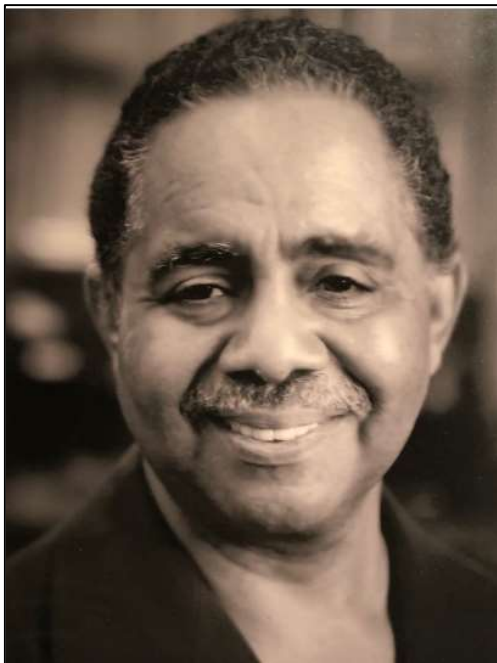
Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr. began his life's journey in Nashville, Tennessee, on July 12, 1947. The oldest of four children born to Reavis L. and Thelma Wilkes Mitchell, Sr., he attended St. Vincent DePaul Catholic School, Wharton Jr. High School, and was graduated from Pearl Senior High School in 1965. He continued his post-secondary education at Fisk University, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in history; Tennessee State University where he received the Master of Science degree; and a Doctor of Arts from Middle Tennessee State University. He also completed postdoctoral studies at Harvard University.

From 1980 to June 2020, Professor Mitchell served on the Fisk University faculty in the Department of History and Political Science. During his tenure, he held several administrative positions, including Director of Institutional Advancement, Executive Assistant to President Henry Ponder, Dean of Academic Affairs, Dean of the School of Humanities and Behavioral Sciences, Professor Emeritus, and University Historian Emeritus. He held adjunct professorships at the College of St. Francis and Vanderbilt University. He treasured the pursuit of knowledge and the opportunities it afforded to teach about the history, contributions, and impact of African Americans on American history.

As an academician, he and his colleagues in the Department of History produced over 50 students who went on to earn their Doctor of Philosophy degrees in history. Dr. Mitchell was often sought out as a consultant on various projects relating to African American



heritage, which he viewed as useable teaching moments that could be beneficial in advancing conversations about race and inclusivity in American society and beyond. As an administrator, colleague, collaborator, faculty member, scholar, and public servant, Dr. Mitchell was valued for his ability to build consensus across the spectrum. As an administrator and faculty member, he inspired his students, colleagues, and fellow administrators to engage in activities that were relevant beyond academia, by encouraging them to participate in activities that would transform the world in which they and their children lived. As a scholar and public intellectual, Dr. Mitchell promoted a deeper understanding of and appreciation for African American history in Nashville, the United States, and in all areas of the African Diaspora. A consummate public servant, Dr. Mitchell was a lifelong member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated, where he served two terms as the organization's national historian, and a member of Sigma Pi Phi's Chi Boulé. He served as vice-chair of Citizens Bank Board of Directors, the country's oldest continuous operating African American bank. A life-long parishioner of St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church, he was also a member of the Knights of St. Peter Claver.



Professor Mitchell served as a consultant for the PBS film titled *The American Experience* that highlighted the Fisk Jubilee Singers. He also served as a consultant to Spark Media in Washington, D. C. for the documentary film, *Partners of the Heart*, which chronicles the life of Vivian T. Thomas, a pioneering surgical technician. He also served as on-air consultant to WTVF Channel Five in Nashville. It was not unusual to find his comments in such publications as *Time*, *Ebony*, *Black Enterprise*, *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* and *The Journal of Ethnic Studies*. A contributor to the *Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, his *Thy Loyal Children Make Their Way: Fisk University Since 1866* was published in 1995, as well as hundreds of historical monographs in journals, magazines, and newspapers. In 2003 he wrote an illustrative chapter, "Alexandria, Tennessee in the

Shadow of Progress" that appeared in *Critical Essays on W. E. B. DuBois' Souls of Black Folk*, *An Anthology* from the University of Missouri Press.

He gave generously of his time and talent to serve the State of Tennessee and Metropolitan Nashville as the Chairman of the Tennessee Historical Commission (THC), Chairman of the Tennessee State Review Board and the Metropolitan Historical Commission (MHC), and board member and Secretary of the Tennessee Historical Society challenging them to become more diverse in their identification, analysis, interpretation, and celebration of Tennessee History and its public spaces. A member of the THC for twenty-one years, Dr. Mitchell was the second longest serving current member. Elected as chair of the commission in 2015, at the time of his demise, he was

serving his third consecutive term as chair. As chair of the THC, he also served as a member of the Tennessee Capitol Commission. Since 1993, he was also a member of the Tennessee State Review Board of which he also served as chair. A member and former chair of the MHC, he was also Executive Vice President of the Tennessee Historical Society. Members of the THC remember Chair Mitchell's balanced leadership of the commission as "a gentleman and scholar." The vineyard he most enjoyed was that of the academy and his interactions with faculty and students, many of whom he considered not only as colleagues but friends, a term he did not use loosely. One of those whom he considered as a friend was Dr. William D. Piersen.

Mitchell relished honoring the late Dr. William D. Piersen, who hired Dr. Mitchell into Fisk's History Department in 1980. The two colleagues-turned-friends respected each other's accomplishments and contributions to the discipline and Pierson felt Mitchell added a new dimension and visibility to the department. Dr. Mitchell and his colleagues instituted the Pierson Lecture Series (focused on primary research about Fisk) and personally funded a scholarship for Fisk's Currier Scholars program to help recipients purchase books. Soon after his death, colleagues and friends in the Department of History and Political Science renamed the Piersen Lecture Series to the Piersen/Mitchell Lecture Series. The School of Humanities and Behavioral Sciences, of which he served as dean, established the Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr. Scholars Award for Excellence in Teaching in his memory. Through the benevolence of the Peyton Manning Foundation, Fisk established an endowed scholarship in his name.

Dr. Mitchell broadened his brand into the public history arena as a Planning Committee member and co-chair of the Nashville Conference on African American History and Culture (NCAAHC). During his tenure, Dr. Mitchell provided leadership, energy, passion, humor, instruction, and a spirit of discernment regarding the conference's direction and activities. He also contributed approximately twenty profiles to the conference's series *Leaders of African American Nashville*. In June 2020 the NCAAHC adopted a resolution recognizing Dr. Mitchell's achievements and contributions to the study of history and education in Tennessee.

Dr. Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr.'s life journey ended on June 16, 2020. After the funeral service at Fisk University, his body was interred in the historic Greenwood Cemetery.

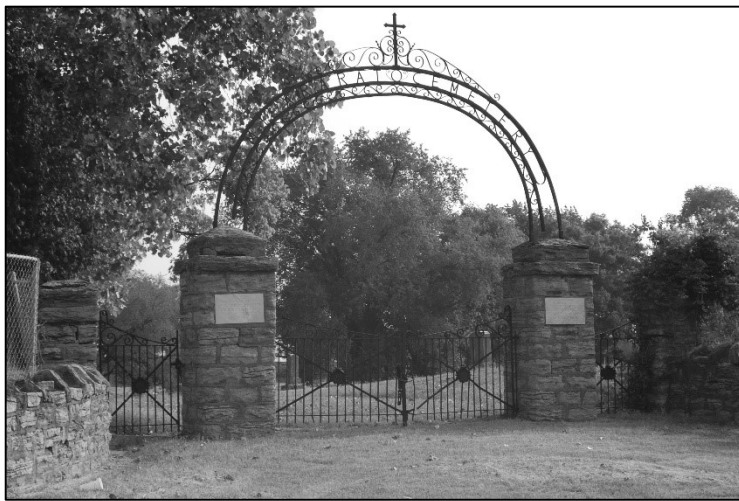
*Linda T. Wynn, 2021*

## **MOUNT ARARAT AND GREENWOOD CEMETERIES**

Mount Ararat Cemetery (1869- ) and Greenwood Cemetery (1888- ) are the oldest organized burial sites in Black Nashville.

Since 1822 about 4,000 blacks (slaves and free persons) were buried in the Nashville City Cemetery on Fourth Avenue, South. Other slaves were interred in white family and church

cemeteries. After the federal government established the National Cemetery in Nashville in 1866, some 1,909 former black soldiers from Union army regiments were buried there, with tombstones imprinted with "USCT" (United States Colored Troops). After the Emancipation of 1865, local whites no longer wanted black bodies in private white cemeteries. Additionally, because they continued to have a high mortality rate caused by cholera, pneumonia, intestinal diseases, poverty, poor housing, malnutrition, alcohol consumption and other ailments, the freed blacks needed their own undertakers and cemeteries. In 1884, the death rate was 16.7 for local whites and 26.9 per 1,000 persons for black Nashvillians. Infant deaths comprised 46.5 percent of the total black deaths for 1887 and 40 percent for 1910 -- rates that mirrored Nashville's black infant mortality rates for the 1850s.



In April of 1869, Mount Ararat Cemetery was founded by local black leaders. They employed black businessman and Republican Nelson Walker, who began buying lands from white Republican leader John Trimble and other whites in the area presently known as the Cameron-Trimble Bottom locale. In 1869, Walker purchased property from James M. Murrell for the trustees of the Nashville Order of the Sons

of Relief No. 1 and the Nashville Colored Benevolent Society. The land belonged to the H. B. Lewis estate, lying 1,000 feet north of Murfreesboro Pike, where it junctions with Elm Hill (Stones River) Pike. On May 2, 1869, the Mount Ararat Cemetery lots went on sale. To involve the churches and preachers, a mass meeting was held on Sunday and a black leader said, "We must have education, valuable property, and plenty of money; and, we should labor to secure colored teachers in the colored schools of the city." Thomas Griswold, businessman and black city councilman, became secretary of Mount Ararat Cemetery. Because of periodic epidemics, some 1,400 burials per year frequently took place at Mount Ararat. The freedmen needed undertakers as badly as they needed cemeteries. Between 1865 and 1888, one major black undertaker, Thomas Winston, operated in Nashville. His crude shops were moved frequently from No. 5 and No. 3 Front, 47 Cedar Street, McLemore and Velvet, 119 McLemore, and then to 161 Cedar Street. In 1886, Preston Taylor arrived as pastor of the Gay Street Colored Christian (Disciples of Christ) Church. He boarded at 119 McLemore and later at 249 Gay Street. When Winston died in 1888, Taylor filled the void by opening Taylor and Company Undertakers at 316 1/2 North Cherry Street. He purchased thirty-seven acres of land one mile east of Mount Ararat on Elm Hill Pike and opened Greenwood Cemetery by 1888. Two years later, Taylor was in competition with Woodard and Company Undertakers and then the W. Goff Colored Undertakers in 1891. By 1892, however, Taylor was black Nashville's major

undertaker. After Taylor's death and will probate in 1931, the United Christian Missionary Society of the National Christian (Disciples of Christ) Missionary Convention acquired Greenwood Cemetery.

After 1910, the Mount Ararat Cemetery deteriorated until it was revived in the 1920s. By the 1970s, however, much of Mount Ararat again was overgrown with trees and brush and insensitive white businessmen had begun to encroach on the site. In 1982, Greenwood Cemetery's board of directors was asked to take Mount Ararat under its management. The board accepted the property from the Mount Ararat Association and Mount Ararat Cemetery, Inc., and the new management (under Robert Mosley, Jr.) cleared brush and trees and restored the neglected sections of Mount Ararat. In 1983, the Garden of Saint James was developed. A landscaping project provided more burial space and a 112-crypt mausoleum was built on the Mount Ararat property. On June 21, 1986, Greenwood Cemetery's board of directors voted to change the name from Mount Ararat to Greenwood Cemetery West. In 1988, Greenwood Cemetery was honored by mayoral proclamations recognizing its 100th anniversary and commending its contributions to Nashville's history and culture. By 1992, the management had professional color brochures, a new administration building and various services for Greenwood Cemetery's customers.

*Bobby L. Lovett, 1995*

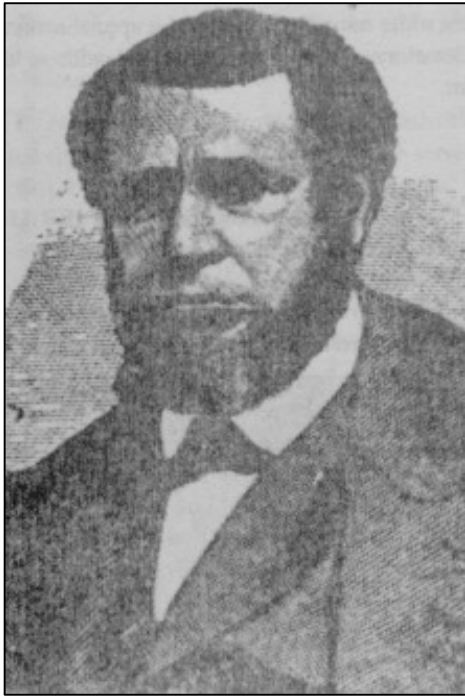
### **NELSON G. MERRY (1824-1884)**

Nelson G. Merry, born a Kentucky slave in 1824, came to Nashville with his master. In 1840, his widowed mistress willed the sixteen-year-old slave to the First Baptist Church. He was employed by the church, baptized, and finally freed on November 1, 1845.

Merry began preaching to the First Colored Baptist Church congregation, which had been organized by whites in 1843. Merry was carefully tutored by the Reverend Samuel A. Davidson, a white man who served as the black congregation's pastor from 1848 to 1853. After being examined by local Baptist ministers, Merry became in 1853 the first ordained Negro minister in Nashville. Immediately he took charge of the 100 members of the First Colored Baptist church. In 1849, after the Reverend Davidson became pastor, the black congregation moved into the old schoolhouse at 21 North McLemore Street (now Ninth Avenue). After moving to a house on Pearl Street, the church finally found a permanent location on the west side of Spruce Street (now Eighth Avenue), today's site of the Federal Reserve Bank. Under Merry, the First Colored Baptist Church became the state's largest church, with over 2,000 members. It became independent of the white First Baptist Church in 1866.

During the 1880s and the 1890s, the church experienced trouble and several congregational splits. In 1887, an ideological split caused the Reverend Tom Huffman, Nelson Merry's successor, to lead a group of members to organize Mount Olive Baptist

Church at 908-910 Cedar Street (now Charlotte Avenue). In 1895, due to a destructive fire and bickering over the insurance proceeds, the First Colored Baptist Church split again. One faction went to court and received the name First Colored Baptist Church (now First Baptist Church Capitol Hill on Merry Street) and moved to the northwest corner of Spruce Street. The other faction was granted the old church site at 311-313 Spruce Street, along with several thousand dollars in insurance proceeds. They organized Spruce Street Baptist Church at 810 Cedar Street and are now located on Twentieth Avenue North.



Merry organized at least fourteen Negro Baptist churches, including the Vandavall Baptist Church on Stewart Street in Edgefield, begun in 1866. Its pastor, Randall B. Vandavall, a self-purchased free black who was born a slave near Nashville in 1834, officiated at Nelson G. Merry's funeral on July 15, 1884.

Merry is recognized as a founder of the Tennessee Colored Baptist Association (1866). He served as editor of *The Colored Sunday School Standard* (1874-1875). He also was well known in regional and national Baptist church conferences, due to his frequent attendance at such meetings before and after the Civil War.

His survivors were his wife Mary and their children: Adella, Elizabeth, Emma, Jimmy, John, and Nammie. His death drew notices in both of the city's major newspapers, and Nashville's white ministers

conducted a special service for Merry. He was buried in Mount Ararat Cemetery. The tomb is marked with a lifelike relief and a forty-foot granite monument.

*Linda T. Wynn, 1983*

### **JAMES C. NAPIER (1845-1940)**

James C. Napier was born of free parents on June 9, 1845, in Nashville, Tennessee. His father, William Carroll, was a free hack driver and a sometime overseer. James attended the free blacks' school on Line and High Streets (now Sixth Avenue) with some sixty other black children until white vigilantes forced the classes to close in 1856. Although the teacher, Daniel Wadkins, a free black, reopened the school, the December of 1856 race riot caused a temporary end to black education in Nashville until the Union occupation in February of 1862. After the riot, the Napier family and several other moderately wealthy free black families either moved or sent their children to Ohio to continue their children's education under free black teacher Rufus Conrad.

Upon returning to the Union-held city of Nashville, James Napier became involved in Republican party politics, John Mercer Langston, an Ohio free black who became a powerful Republican politician and congressman, was a friend of Napier's father. Langston visited Nashville on December 30, 1864, to speak to 10,000 black Union troops, who had taken part in the recent and victorious Battle of Nashville, and to address the second Emancipation Day Celebration. He later invited James to attend the newly opened law school at Howard University in Washington, D. C., where he was founding dean. After receiving his law degree in 1872, James returned to practice in Nashville. In 1873, he married Dean Langston's daughter, Nettie. This wedding was the biggest social event in nineteenth-century black Washington.



Between 1872 and 1913, James C. Napier became Afro-American Nashville's most powerful politician and its most influential citizen. Between 1878 and 1886, he served on the Nashville City Council and was the first black to preside over the council. He was instrumental in the hiring of black teachers for the colored public schools during the 1870s, the hiring of black "detectives," and the organization of the black fire-engine company during the 1880s. His greatest political accomplishment was his service as President William H. Taft's Register of the United States Treasury from 1911 to 1913.

Napier also was a successful businessman and a personal friend of Booker T. Washington. Margaret Washington was a personal friend of

Nettie Langston Napier and often spent two or more weeks each summer at the Napier's Nolensville Road summer home. Washington visited the city several times a year until his death in 1915. Napier was elected president of the National Negro Business League, which Washington had founded. The League held several of its annual meetings in Nashville, and Napier organized a local chapter of the League in 1905. He was a founder and cashier (manager) of the One Cent (now Citizens) Savings Bank organized in 1904, and he gave the new bank temporary quarters rent-free in his Napier Court office building at 411 North Cherry Street (now Fourth Avenue). He helped organize the 1905 Negro streetcar strike and the black Union Transportation Company's streetcar lines. He presided over the powerful Nashville Negro Board of Trade and was on the boards of Fisk and Howard universities. Upon his death on April 21, 1940, James Carroll Napier was interred in Greenwood Cemetery near members of his family and members of the Langston family.

*Herbert Clark, 1983*

## NETTIE LANGSTON NAPIER (1861-1938)

Nettie Langston Napier, former chair of the National Association of Colored Women, historic preservationist, president of Nashville's Day Home Club, and noted civic and social activist, was born in Oberlin, Ohio, on June 17, 1861. Born the daughter of John Mercer and Carrie Wall Langston, Nettie grew up in one of the most prestigious African American families in the United States, an upbringing that exposed her to the central tenets of civic engagement and the struggle for black equality in the North. Growing up in the Langston household had a tremendous effect on her activism during the decades of late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

At the age of 18, while enrolled at Oberlin College, she met, was wooed by, and consented to marry the up and coming Nashville businessman and politician, James Carroll Napier. In what can be described as the African American "Wedding of the Century" during the period immediately following Reconstruction, their nuptials received acclaim from blacks and whites throughout the United States. Her wedding dresses—one a dress created by the famed African American White House modiste, Madame Elizabeth Keckley, and the other a gown that was reported by observers to reflect "various hues of the rainbow" under certain lighting—made the wedding an event that showcased the wealth and potential of African Americans as freed persons.

It was Napier's residency in Nashville, however, that initiated the activism that would define her life and provide her both national and international acclaim. Shortly after her arrival in the city, she became involved in Nashville's Women's Club movement. Arguably, her crowning achievement was the success of the city's Day Home Club, an institution that she had first imagined while enrolled at Oberlin. The Day Home Club, first located at 618 4th Avenue South, was created to provide a place for working mothers who had jobs that required them to leave home early or return late to drop off their children while they worked. While at the Day Home Club, the staff provided childcare, meals, education, healthcare, and shelter at no cost to the women or their families.



The Day Home Club's operation depended largely on private donations and volunteers from the Nashville community, and its overall success came as a result of Napier's skills as an organizer and fundraiser. As

leader of the Day Home Club, she appointed vice presidents for each of Nashville's city wards, making them responsible for raising money and soliciting donations for the home and its children. Donations came into the house from all segments of the city's African

American population, with private donations ranging from fifty cents to \$5. At her request, Preston Taylor, prominent Nashville African American undertaker and founder of the popular Greenwood Park and Cemetery, completely furnished one of the rooms, while Castner Knotts' Dry Goods had quilts, sheets, and other goods delivered to the location.

While her exemplary work with the Day Home Club gave rise to her growing acclaim in Nashville's social circles as someone with a deep and abiding interest in the well-being of the city's underclass, it was her work as a member of the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) that brought her national fame. Organized in Washington, DC, in 1895, the NACW became the first national black organization in the United States. Operating under the slogan, "Lifting as We Climb," this group, spearheaded by middle to upper-middle class African American women like herself, sought to provide much-needed social services to the African American community. The NACW's vital tasks included providing childcare, medical care, job training, and education for black women and their children.

It was while serving as the custodian of funds for the Douglass Memorial Historical Association that Nettie Langston Napier was involved in perhaps her greatest accomplishment, the saving of the Frederick Douglass Home in Anacostia, Washington, DC. Between July 1916 and July 1922, the NACW collected more than \$18,000 in donations on behalf of the site, a figure sufficient to pay off the home's remaining mortgage, begin renovations, and beautify the grounds. Under her watch, Frederick Douglass's Cedar Hill home became a "museum for generations unborn," and it stands today as a monument to Napier's activism.

Although her work with the NACW and Douglass Home kept her on the road for much of her career, Napier remained very active in the Nashville community. An accomplished pianist, she could often be found playing and raising her contralto voice at public and private musical programs throughout the city. She was also a source of relief for many needy young adults who came to the city seeking an education, and often offered assistance to them at the local black colleges. During World War I, she was selected by the Red Cross to assist in its campaign to send comfort items such as hand-knitted socks, sweaters, razors, and surgical dressings to Allied troops and civilians in Europe.

As America entered into the throes of the Great Depression, Napier's health began to decline, causing her to remain under a physician's care for the last years of her life. In August 1938, her condition took a turn for the worse, and her physicians moved her from her home at 120 15th Avenue North to Hubbard Hospital where she succumbed to congestive heart failure on September 27, 1938. Upon her death, Nashville lost one of its most outstanding citizens. During her lifetime, Nettie Langston Napier's grace and empathy for the plight of the marginalized and forgotten in American society made her one of the most extraordinary African Americans in Nashville's past.

*Learotha Williams, Jr., 2018*



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## **50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF FREEDOM RIDERS OF 1961**

On May 17, 2011, the Freedom Riders from Nashville and those cognizant of the modern Civil Rights movement timeline will pause to remember and commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Nashville student activists' entrance into the Freedom Rides of 1961. Because of their heroic actions and refusal to relent to the demands of government officials, the Kennedy administration ultimately directed the Interstate Commerce Commission to issue regulations prohibiting racial segregation in all transportation facilities. The Freedom Rides were not a new tactic of the 1960s Civil Rights struggle. Fourteen years earlier, in 1947 the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) organized and implemented the interracial Journey of Reconciliation throughout the Upper South to test the United States Supreme Court's decision in the *Morgan v. Virginia* (38 U.S. 373 [1946]) case, which mandated interstate bus desegregation.

As was done in 1947, the May 1961 Freedom Rides tested another Supreme Court decision, *Boynton v. Virginia* (364 U.S. 454 [1960]), which extended the Court's 1946 directive to all interstate transportation facilities, including terminals, waiting rooms, restaurants, and other amenities. The Court's decision made it unconstitutional to racially segregate waiting rooms, restrooms, and lunch counters. The South, known for its racial rigidity, often dismissed Supreme Court decisions as they related to racial desegregation. James Farmer and CORE were determined to make sure that both the South and the new Kennedy administration recognized that the Court's decision in *Boynton v. Virginia* could not be disregarded. While the 1947 and the 1961 rides were comparable in that they both tested decisions handed down by the nation's highest court, John Lewis asserts that the 1961 rides had been designed to be more cogent, bolder, and to move further into the deep South. In his *Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement*, Lewis states, "It would be a bolder title as well -- nothing so tame and accommodating as 'reconciliation,' which is how Farmer came up with the phrase 'Freedom Ride.' There was a tone of demand in that phrase, a sense of proclamation, of no more waiting."

On May 4, 1961 CORE sent two buses and an assembly of thirteen Freedom Riders (seven black men, three white men, and three white women) on what was intended to be a two-week trip, traveling through the deep South from Washington, D.C. to New Orleans, to

test their right to intermingle blacks and whites in the region's bus stations. CORE officials notified the United States Justice Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) of their schedule, which was also transmitted to local police forces, and in Alabama, through them to the Ku Klux Klan. The interracial group encountered only a few problems during their first week of travel. However, when they reached Anniston, Alabama, on that fateful May 14, the Freedom Riders met a vicious horde of more than 100 angry whites, who brutally beat them and firebombed the bus. In Birmingham, a mob toting iron pipes and other weapons greeted the riders where they were battered, knocked unconscious, and hospitalized. While the violence garnered national and international attention, it also caused Farmer to terminate the ride.

Although not the progenitors of the Freedom Rides of the 1960s, Nashville's student activists, under the leadership of Diane Judith Nash, became their driving force. Despite the Kennedy administration's prodding of CORE to abort their plans to ride to New Orleans, Nash and the Nashville student contingent moved into action upon hearing the news about the assault on the Freedom Riders. They felt the ride must continue. In their opinion, the movement's future was at stake. If the rides were terminated, as Diane Nash said, "it would prove that violence could overcome nonviolence." The students comprehended the importance of continuing the Freedom Rides after the Alabama attacks, and strengthened their resolve that the Klan could not be left triumphant to claim control of the streets. On May 17, 1961, recruits left Nashville for Birmingham, on the seventh anniversary of the Supreme Court's unanimous *Brown v. Board of Education* decision.

When the Nashville student contingent arrived in Birmingham, Theophilus Eugene "Bull" Connor, the city's racially intolerant chief of police, ordered the new Freedom Riders taken to the Birmingham jail. The following night, he released them at the Tennessee-Alabama state line. Within days, they regrouped and rejoined the route at Montgomery, undeterred by the mob violence in Birmingham or the threat of it that mounted as they approached Montgomery. However, the law enforcement presence that had accompanied their trip suddenly fell away at the city line. It was in Montgomery, the "Cradle of the Confederacy," that the Freedom Riders rode into the national and international consciousness as the media broadcast the mayhem perpetrated upon them by a mob of Klan members and other angry whites. These merciless attacks on those riding for freedom and justice forced the national government to act.

As stated in Mary L. Dudziak's *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*, "President Kennedy was angered by the Freedom Riders' persistence." In *President Kennedy: Profile of Power*, Richard Reeves asserts that the President was disconcerted in some measure because the viciousness against the Freedom Riders was "exactly the kind of thing the Communists used to make the United States look bad around the world." Embarrassed by the fiasco of the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba, Kennedy was preparing to meet Nikita Khrushchev, the leader of the Soviet Union, for the first time at a summit conference in Vienna. It was Kennedy's hope to draw attention away from the Bay of Pigs and establish himself as a global leader. The Freedom Rides

obstructed these aims. According to Harris Wofford's *Of Kennedy and Kings: Making Sense of the Sixties*, Kennedy "supported every American's right to stand up or sit down for his rights but not to ride for them in the spring of 1961."

The students' single-mindedness to carry on the Freedom Rides had major consequences for the southern Civil Rights movement. The Freedom Rides continued for the next four months with student activists in the forefront. While segregationists' vindictive show of aggression only served to make the tightly-knit group of trained student activists more resolute to bring down the nation's bastions of racial segregation, it also forced the federal government into action. On September 22, 1961, in response to the Freedom Rides and under pressure from the Kennedy administration, the Interstate Commerce Commission promulgated regulations eliminating racial segregation in train and bus terminals. These regulations went into effect on November 1, 1961.

Linda T. Wynn, 2011

## **NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS NAMED FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS**

Many students, both former and present, graduated from or go to public schools in Nashville and Davidson County that are named for African Americans. However, many of these students may not have known or know for whom these schools are named. According to Debbie Oeser Cox, two years after the Civil War ended, "The City Council called upon the Board of Education to select locations and provide suitable buildings for the accommodation of the colored scholastic population of Nashville and to bring the colored children of the city under the provisions of the existing city laws that related to the Public schools". Cox compiled a listing of some 50 traditional African American schools that included such schools as Ashcraft, Belle View School, Carter School, Hadley School, Merry School, Mt. Pisgah School, Peebles School, and Trimble Bottom to name a few. Yet, the quest to educate and be educated among African Americans began in antebellum Nashville before the formalization of public education.

Some African Americans in Nashville began receiving underground schooling in 1833 when Alphonso M. Sumner, an African-American barber, opened a school for free African American students. The school experienced rapid growth and within three years served approximately 200 students. Sumner hired Daniel Wadkins as a teacher for the growing number of students. Later, as noted in Wadkins' *Origin and Progress Before Emancipation*, officials accused Sumner of writing and sending letters that aided the efforts of those trying to escape the institution of enslavement, compelling him to flee Tennessee. His forced departure from the city caused his school to remain closed until 1838, when John Yandle, a white man from Wilson County, taught at the school. Wadkins, as well as Sarah Porter Player, also a free black, assisted Yandle. In 1841, Player continued instruction by opening a school in her home and hiring Wadkins as her assistant. The

following year she moved the school to the home of a supporter. In 1842 Daniel Wadkins opened his own school on Water Street and for the next fourteen years it operated at various locations to avoid public scrutiny. Fearing insurrections among African Americans in 1856, although as historian Bobby L. Lovett states “no real evidence existed of insurrectionary plots despite rumors and reactions,” Nashville's governing body established unyielding constraints on its African-American population and closed the instructional facilities established by both Player and Wadkins.

Antebellum schools in Nashville for African Americans ceased operation until federal troops took control of the city in 1862. It was then that Wadkins, assisted by J.M. Shelton and his wife, resurrected his school in the First Colored Baptist Church. Eighteen months later Wadkins moved his school to High Street. The following year, white United Presbyterian Church of North America minister Joseph G. McKee with missionary funding opened Nashville's first free colored school. Following McKee's free school for African Americans, in December of 1865 the American Missionary Association opened the Fisk Free Colored School (dedicated on January 9, 1866), the progenitor of Fisk University. The Tennessee General Assembly established a system of public education in 1867 for both white and African American children. In 1871, a compilation of the school board's Annual Report listed the two schools for African Americans. Bellevue School, located at 305 North Summer Street, was a two-story brick structure that housed grades one through six with six teachers. Mr. G. W. Hubbard served as the Principal. Trimble School, a two-story brick building given to the city by John Trimble, Esq., was located at 524 South Market Street.

In 1976 the Metropolitan Nashville-Davidson County Public Schools under the auspices of the Bicentennial Committee, the Department of Public Information and Publications and the Department of Audiovisual Services published A Bicentennial Chronicle of those schools existing during the 1975-1976 academic year. Many in Nashville are familiar with the following schools but may not know for whom these schools received their appellations.

**Cameron** bears the name of Lt. Henry A. Cameron, a former school instructor of science at Pearl High School, who lost his life in the Battle of Argonne Forest, France on October 30th, 1918, two weeks before World War I ended. **Carter-Lawrence Elementary School** is the combination of two schools. Carter School was an early African-American educational institution named for Howard C. Carter, an early African-American educator, who died in 1895. Lawrence School carried the name of Judge John Lawrence, a member of the Board of Education of the Nashville City Schools. **Carter-Lawrence** opened in 1940 and today is known as **Carter-Lawrence Math and Science Magnet Elementary School**. Built in 1940 **Ford Greene** was named for Ashcroft School principal Ford N. Greene. Opened from 1906 to 1932 for many years Ashcroft was the only elementary school for African Americans in Northwest Nashville. **Haynes School**, which began as an elementary school in 1931, was named for William Haynes, a local African American who made the land available on which the school was built. Prior to the 1962 merger of city and county governments, the only high school for African Americans



in Davidson County began at Haynes in 1935 when the ninth grade was added. The last senior class graduated in 1967 and the junior high school program closed in 1970. Established in 1997,

**Hull-Jackson Montessori School** was named for John C. Hull, a renowned Nashville educator and former principal of Cameron and Pearl High Schools and Oscar R. Jackson, who followed Hull as principal of Cameron. Opened in Fall 2006, **Creswell Middle**

**School of the Arts** is named for Isiah T. Creswell, a Nashville businessman and Fisk University comptroller, who served on the Metro Board of Education. **Johnson Elementary School** (known now as Johnson Alternative Learning Center and MNPS Middle School) opened in September 1955 and was named for Hugh J. Johnson, who taught at Pearl High School then became principal at Cameron in 1929. Johnson was one of Cameron's longest serving principals, remaining in the position until his death in August 1949. Named on November 30, 2004, **Robert E. Lillard Elementary Design Center School** was given that appellation for Attorney and Circuit Court Judge Robert E. Lillard, who in 1950, was one of two African Americans elected to serve on the Nashville City Council since 1911. A former fireman with engine Company No. 11 on 12th Avenue North and Jefferson Street, in 1967 he became the first African-American to serve as vice mayor *pro tem*. **Moses McKissack Elementary School** was named for architect Moses McKissack and opened in August 1954. Built to replace the old Clifton Elementary School on 40th Avenue North, Moses and his brother and architect Calvin McKissack owned the land on which McKissack School was built. Originally planning to use the land for residential development, they sold the property to the Nashville Board of Education. Opened on March 10, 1958 **Murrell Elementary School** was named in honor of Professor Braxton R. Murrell, formerly the chair of the Math Department at Pearl Senior High School where he also served as director of the school's orchestra. A former student and the 1909 class valedictorian, Murrell also composed the Pearl's *Alma Mater*. **Napier Elementary School** opened in 1898 and was named for Henry Alonzo Napier, brother of John Carroll Napier. Alonzo Napier was the second African-American man to be admitted into West Point. He became a schoolteacher after leaving West Point in 1872. **Robert Churchwell Museum Magnet Elementary School** opened in 2010 at the former site of Wharton School (named for Confederate naval hero and educator Arthur Dickson Wharton). Nashville's first museum magnet school, it was named for Robert

Churchwell, Sr., a graduate of Pearl High School and Fisk University. He became the first African-American journalist employed at a white-owned metropolitan newspaper in the South. Joining the Nashville Banner in 1950, Churchwell was forced to work from home when Banner executives prohibited him from meetings and barred him from the newsroom until 1955. **Rose Park Math/Science Middle Magnet School**, formerly known as Rose Park Junior High School, opened in the fall of 1963 with Richard Harris, a former physics teacher and assistant principal at Pearl High School as principal. Rose Park was named in honor of the Reverend E. S. Rose (now deceased) pastor of Bethel A. M. E. Church and an active and effective leader in the community. Opening in September of 1928 for students in grades seven through nine, **Washington Junior High School** was named for George E. Washington, a prominent African American educator and former principal of Pearl High School. J.A. Galloway served as the Washington's first principal. Additions to the school were made throughout the 1940s and 1960s. Other principals of the school were Braxton R. Murrell, Isaiah Suggs, and Clarence Austin. Washington Junior High School as well as Ford Greene was demolished in the mid-1980s to make room for the newly consolidated Pearl-Cohn Entertainment Magnet School built in 1986.

These schools named for African Americans are a testament to those who mostly labored in Nashville's vineyard of education. They understood the power of education and saw it as "the universal passport to human development." Insisting that their students perform to the best of their intellect, these African-American educators provided their students a visual representation of achievement that they too could replicate.

Linda T. Wynn, 2018

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### **NASHVILLE SIT-INS (1959-1963)**

Contrary to popular belief, the 1960s were not the first time that American Blacks sat-in to protest unequal treatment at lunch counters and other public accommodations, not even in the South. In 1866 blacks in Tennessee staged their first "freedom rides," by boarding streetcars operated by a private Nashville streetcar company, paying the fare, and refusing to sit in the "colored section." Later, when the United States Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1875 that guaranteed equal access to public accommodations, black Nashvillians tested the act with sit-in demonstrations in March, the same month that the act was passed.

Believed to be a new tactic to combat racial segregation, earlier protest actions of this type by American blacks have been forgotten. Established in 1942 in Chicago, Illinois, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), which was an interracial group, used Gandhian tactics of direct nonviolent action in the struggle for racial equality. During the 1940s, CORE organized sit-ins and pickets to protest racial segregation in public accommodations and successfully desegregated some public facilities in the North.

Mary Church Terrell, who was well into her eighties, led a successful crusade to desegregate eateries in the District of Columbia. In February 1950, she and three other colleagues (one white and two blacks) entered the Thompson Restaurant and were refused service. When Church and her associates were denied service, they filed a lawsuit. While awaiting the court's decision in the *District of Columbia v. John R. Thompson Co.* case, Terrell targeted other restaurants, this time using tactics such as boycotts, picketing, and sit-ins. Her direct-action campaign proved successful. On June 8, 1953, the United States Supreme Court rendered its decision and affirmed that segregated eating establishments in the nation's capital were unconstitutional.

Although the four male students at the North Carolina A&T in Greensboro, North Carolina, are given credit for beginning the sit-in movement on February 1, 1960, according to Aldon Morris' *Origins of Civil Rights Movements: Black Communities Organizing for Change*, civil rights activists conducted sit-ins between 1957 and 1960 in at least fifteen cities, demonstrating that the civil rights movement was not just a

southern occurrence, but also a national one. These cities included: St. Louis, Missouri; Wichita and Kansas City, Kansas; Oklahoma City, Enid, Tulsa, and Stillwater, Oklahoma; Lexington and Louisville, Kentucky; Miami, Florida; Charleston, West Virginia; Sumter, South Carolina; East St. Louis, Illinois; Nashville, Tennessee; and Durham, North Carolina. Notwithstanding, the Greensboro sit-ins are important because they denote a link in a chain of previous sit-ins, and Nashville, Tennessee was one of the links in that chain.

While a few blacks served on the Board of Education, the city council, and the police force, blacks and whites in Nashville were racially segregated. The pattern of racial exclusivity prevailed in the city's schools and public facilities, including restrooms, waiting areas, lunch counters, transportation terminals, libraries, theaters, hotels, restaurants, and neighborhoods. Jim Crow pervaded all aspects of life in Nashville and throughout the South.

In 1958, following the formation of the Nashville Christian Leadership Conference (NCLC), Reverend Kelly Miller Smith, Sr. and others including Nashville's black leaders and students launched an attack on Jim Crow segregation. In March of that year, NCLC members held a workshop on nonviolent tactics against segregation. Early in 1959, the NCLC began a movement to desegregate downtown Nashville. It utilized the concept of Christian nonviolence to stage the Nashville sit-in movement to combat de jure and de facto racial segregation. The Reverend James Lawson, a devoted adherent of the Gandhian philosophy of direct nonviolent protest, trained local residents and students in the techniques of nonviolence. In November and December of 1959, NCLC leaders and college students staged unsuccessful "test sit-ins" in an attempt to desegregate the lunch counters at Harvey's and Cain-Sloan's department stores. The Reverends Smith and Lawson, students John Lewis, Diane Nash, James Bevel, Marion Barry, and others bought goods and then attempted to desegregate the lunch counters. Before the end of 1959, other college students were trained to participate in the protests. The students were from Nashville's black colleges and universities, including American Baptist Theological



College, Fisk University, Meharry Medical College, and Tennessee A&I State University. The Greensboro, North Carolina sit-in received the first publicity on February 1, 1960.

Twelve days after the Greensboro sit-in, Nashville students launched their first full-scale sit-ins on February 13, 1960. Throughout the spring, they conducted numerous sit-ins and held steadfastly to the concept of Christian nonviolence. In addition to the Kress,



Woolworth, McClellan, Harvey and Cain-Sloan department stores, W. T. Grant's, Walgreen's, and the Greyhound and Trailways bus terminals were targeted. The students' principles of direct nonviolent protest and written rules of conduct became models for later protests in the South. When the students were met with white violence and arrests on February 27, the black community rallied to their support with attorneys and bail money. Approximately eight-one students who were found guilty of disorderly conduct on February 29 refused to pay the fines and chose to serve time in jail. Vanderbilt University's administrators expelled the Reverend James Lawson, a divinity student, for participating in the sit-ins.

Shortly before Easter, black Nashvillians withdrew their economic support and boycotted downtown stores, creating an estimated twenty percent loss in business revenues. "To destroy radical evil, you have to be radically good," said Dr. Vivian Henderson, an economics professor at Fisk University. "It is a radical evil that rules this town and it will take radical good to break it." As tension escalated, segregationists lashed out at civil rights activists. The April 19 bombing of the home of Z. Alexander Looby, who was an attorney for the students, city councilman, and leading figure in desegregation movements throughout Tennessee, caused thousands of blacks and some whites to silently march to City Hall, where Mayor Ben West conceded to Diane Nash of Fisk University that lunch counters should be desegregated. Nashville became the first major city to begin desegregating its public facilities on May 10, 1960. Merchants and representatives of the sit-ins gathered to evaluate the desegregation of the lunch counters on June 15, 1960. During the meeting, merchants admitted they were wrong in predicting dire consequences to desegregation. While food service decreased slightly, and a few employees resigned rather than work in a desegregated lunchroom, the merchants reported no effect on retail stores. Sit-ins resumed in November, as racially exclusive practices continued in most eating establishments and institutionalized racism remained intact.

One of the best organized and most disciplined movements in the South, the Nashville sit-in movement served as a model for future demonstrations against other violations of black American civil rights. Many of the Nashville student participants became leaders in the struggle for civil rights throughout the South.

The deliberate nonviolent actions of college students across the nation caused the walls of racial segregation to crumble and made America live up to its professed principles of equality and justice for all.

*Linda T. Wynn, 2010*

### **NASHVILLE'S STREETCAR BOYCOTT (1905-1907)**

With the enunciation of the 1896 *Plessy versus Ferguson* United States Supreme Court decision, white Southerners declared segregation laws permissible as long as they

provided equal accommodations for the races. The court ruling legalized the concept of racial separation and served as the constitutional underpinning for the South's Jim Crow system. Four years later, between 1900 and 1906, African Americans in Nashville and numerous other cities battled against unequal accommodations in public transit.

Beginning in 1899, the Tennessee General Assembly attempted to expand the existing scope of segregation in public transit by proposing legislation to "make the separate coach law apply to street cars." Although this proposal died the same year in the House Judiciary Committee, it was revived in 1901 and was defeated by a 48 to 30 vote in the House of Representatives. Again, in the biennial session of 1903, proponents of the "separate coach" legislation continued to push for the law's enactment. Successful lobbying by the transit companies and strong newspaper objection in Nashville and Chattanooga aided in limiting the proposed law to "counties having 150,000 inhabitants." On June 7, 1903, the Tennessee Supreme Court ruled that the streetcar law was unconstitutional. However, white citizens of Tennessee mirrored the notion of ethics superiority, as revealed in the range of laws established to separate the Negro race from white society in other southern states.

When the General Assembly convened in January of 1905, Jim Crow was awakened from hibernation. On January 10, Davidson County's Representative Charles P. Fahey introduced Bill Number 87 "to separate white and colored passengers on streetcars." After two or three inconsequential amendments had been adopted, the bill, as amended, passed the lower house of the legislature by a vote of 81 to 4. It was then transmitted to the upper chamber, where it passed by a 28 to 1 vote. The law passed on March 30 was to become effective on July 5 and required operators of streetcars to designate by means of conspicuous signs which part of the car was for white or colored passengers. Those passengers refusing to occupy the designated seating area were liable for a fine not to exceed twenty-five dollars.



As early as March 5, 1904, the Reverend J. A. Jones declared that "the day the separate street car law goes into effect. . .that day the company will lose nine-tenths of its negro [sic] patronage. . .the self-respecting, intelligent colored citizens of Nashville will not stand for Jim Crowism on the streetcar lines in this city." The *Nashville Clarion*, a Negro weekly newspaper edited by the Reverend Edward W. D. Isaac, urged its readers "to buy buggies, or if they could not, trim their corns, darn their socks, wear solid shoes and walk." On July 5,

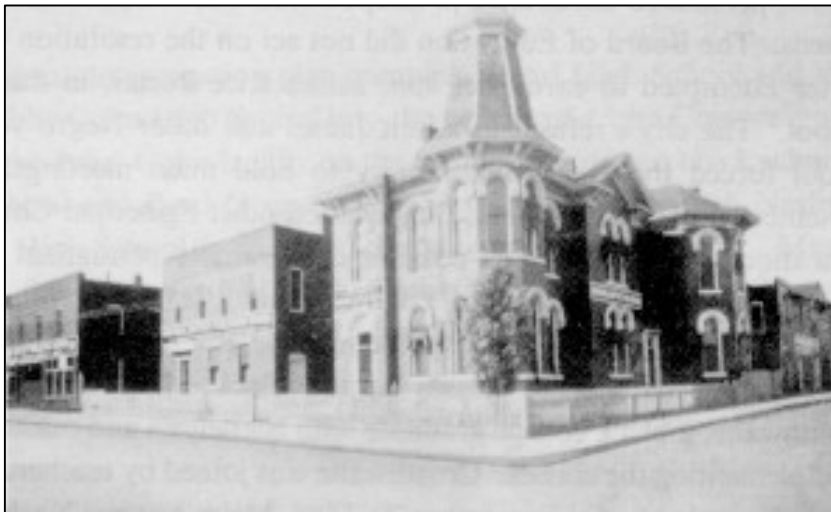
black Nashvillians transformed disapproving discourse into protest action and boycotted the Nashville Transit Company. Whites accused Negro leaders of being "agitators...who for purposes of their own are willing to play upon the fears and excite the prejudices of their more ignorant people." A well - known black cleric responded to the charge by insisting that the real troublemakers were the members of the Tennessee General Assembly, who "substitute race prejudice for brain." R. H. Boyd said, "These discriminations are only blessings in disguise. They stimulate and encourage, rather than cower and humiliate the true, ambitious, self-determined Negro."

Of all the boycotts that took place in the state, Nashville had the best-organized boycott and the most ambitious of transportation companies, which Negroes initiated in several southern municipalities. The Union Transportation Company was chartered August 29, 1905 and became operational on October 3. As the company began experiencing difficulty with its steam-driven cars, electric-powered buses, and more and more blacks tired of walking, the boycott came to an end. The black streetcars were sold and the Union Transportation Company closed in 1907.

*Linda T. Wynn, 1995*

### **NATIONAL BAPTIST PUBLISHING BOARD (1896- )**

During November and December of 1896, the National Baptist Publishing Board was established in Nashville by the Reverend Richard Henry Boyd (1843- 1922). Before becoming secretary of the Home Mission Board of the National Baptist Convention in September of 1896, Boyd pursued the idea of providing literature for the Convention's



member churches. Upon his arrival in Nashville in November of 1896, he received help and advice from the Reverend Charles H. Clark of Mount Olive Baptist Church, officers of the African Methodist Episcopal Sunday School Union, and the white Southern Baptist Convention's publishers. The latter establishment lent Boyd its printing plates

to print the first publications of the National Baptist Publishing Board. The Board began on January 1, 1897 and was first located in the Brown Building on Cedar (Charlotte) Street before moving into three buildings on Second Avenue, North, and Locust Street. To equip the facility, Boyd sought the services of a white man to visit auctions and bid for

machinery, since the rules of segregation would not allow blacks to engage in such activity.

The main purpose of the National Baptist Publishing Board was to publish literature for denominational use. The Board also published books which gave accounts of the denomination's history and books on a variety of secular subjects, including Richard H. Boyd's *The Separate or "Jim Crow" Car Laws* (1909). With a plant valued at \$350,000 by 1913, the National Baptist Publishing Board became one of the largest business enterprises owned and operated by blacks in the United States.

The Reverend Boyd presided over the publishing board until his death in 1922, then his son, Henry Allen Boyd, assumed leadership of the company. Henry A. Boyd implemented new business practices and operational procedures, which promoted the growth of the business. He directed the company for thirty-seven years. When Henry Allen Boyd died in 1959, Theophilus Bartholomew Boyd, Jr., was elected secretary-treasurer and chief administrator of the National Baptist Publishing Board. As a young man, he had worked in every department of the publishing plant and was fully acquainted with all aspects of the business. It was during T. B. Boyd, Jr.'s administration that the National Baptist Publishing Board experienced its most prosperous period. For the sum of \$60,000, the Board purchased four and one-half acres of land on Centennial Boulevard and erected a one million dollar building for operations and administrative offices. After serving the National Baptist Publishing Board for twenty years, Dr. T. B. Boyd, Jr., died on April 1, 1979, and was interred in the Woodlawn Mausoleum.

The fourth generation of leadership was provided by Dr. T. B. Boyd, III. He too continued the Boyd tradition of progressive leadership. Under his leadership, the National Baptist Publishing Board continued to modernize its operations and expand the circulation of periodicals. By 1944, the National Baptist Publishing Board included millions in sales, worldwide distribution of publications, and operation of its Annual Sunday School Congress (1905- ), which attracted over 30,000 "messengers" to convention cities all over America.

*Linda T. Wynn, 1986*

## **NEGRO BRANCH OF THE CARNEGIE LIBRARY**

In April of 1912, the Nashville City Council approved the acceptance of a \$50,000 gift by Andrew Carnegie for branch libraries. Eleven years earlier, he had given the city \$100,000 for a library building on the condition that "a site be provided and provisions made for maintenance and books ... annually." In 1912, the same year that the council accepted Carnegie's gift, the Nashville Negro Board of Trade (NNBT) was organized. The NNBT replaced the inoperative Negro Business League as the accepted voice of the city's "business, professional, and industrial colored men."

Andrew Carnegie, who made his fortune in steel, believed that the wealthy had a duty to act for the public benefit. His sense of noblesse oblige was demonstrated by his benefaction of some 3,000 public libraries. Carnegie's 1912 beneficence stipulated that "\$25,000 shall be used as a branch library for the white citizens... and \$25,000 for a branch library for the colored citizens..." and that the mayor and City Council "shall appropriate \$2,500 annually" for each branch. The African-American public library branch was not the first time that Carnegie bestowed his munificence upon Nashville's African-American community. In 1905, at the behest of Margaret Murray Washington, wife of Booker T. Washington, Carnegie donated \$20,000 for the first library building on the Fisk University campus which is known today as the Carnegie Academic Building.

In 1913, the NNBT raised \$1,000 in the African American community for the city's first public library for African Americans. The funds were applied toward the purchase price of the Nenon property on Hynes and Twelfth Avenue North, the library's proposed site.

On February 10, 1916, the Negro Branch of the Carnegie Library opened its doors on Hynes and Twelfth Avenue North. The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of the NNBT and the Carnegie Library Board of Nashville with Dr. G.H. Bradley, president of the NNBT, presiding. Addresses were made by G.H. Baskette, president of the library board, A.N. Johnson of the NNBT, Marian Hadley, librarian of the Negro Branch and Margaret Kercheval, head librarian. Music was provided by singers from Fisk and Roger Williams universities and Pearl High School. A two-story Classical Revival structure, the building was designed and equipped according to approved library specifications of the period. It contained two large reading rooms (one for adults and one for children), a large auditorium and smaller meeting rooms. Books, salaries and maintenance of the building were financed by the City of Nashville. Marian M. Hadley and Hattie Watkins served as librarian and assistant librarian, respectively. Both women were trained in library methods by librarian Margaret Kercheval in the city's main library.



Patrons of the Negro Branch of the Carnegie Library included persons from every walk of life. During its years of operation, the Negro Branch served thousands of people and its facilities were available for meetings and other activities, including literacy programs. Between 1930 and 1933, this public athenaeum circulated some 57,410 books and in 1934 had registered 5,248 patrons. In 1935, only 83 of 565 public libraries in thirteen southern states reported rendering library service to African Americans.

The original registration book of the Carnegie Library's Negro Branch contains the names and addresses of 54,381 Nashvillians of African descent. Some of the most well-known names include: Emma, Lee, Nannie, and Sallie Stone; Millie (Mrs. John H.) Hale; Minnie Crosthwaite; Dr. Josie Wells; the Reverend Preston Taylor; J. Frankie Pierce; Josephine Holloway; Ford Greene; Hulda M. Lytle; Z. Alexander Looby; Dr. Matthew Walker; and members of the Boyd, Hadley, Hemphill, Keeble, McKissack and Work families.

The Negro Branch of the Carnegie Library closed in 1949 and was succeeded by the Hadley Park Public Library branch in 1952. The only extant pieces of Nashville's first African-American public library are the door lintel and cornerstone which are in the courtyard of Nashville's downtown Ben West Library.

*Linda T. Wynn, 1997*

### **PEARL HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL**

In March 2006, when the Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association (TSSAA) prepared for the boys' state basketball championship tournament, recognition was given to the Pearl High School team of 1966. That team made history when it broke the color barrier and became Tennessee's first black high school team to win the TSSAA's boys' state basketball tournament. The first year that black high schools were permitted to vie for a TSSAA basketball title, the school's legendary coach Cornelius Ridley suited a team of well-disciplined student athletes. After a 21-0 regular season record, the Pearl High School Tigers entered post-season play with a great deal of momentum, winning the 17th District championship and the Region 5 tournament. The Tigers fulfilled their date with destiny when they won the 1966 State Boys' Basketball Championship, closing an undefeated season.



Pearl High School was no stranger to basketball championships. Although the team was not allowed to participate in games with white schools from across the state, its athletic prowess had earned the school national attention, as it dominated many of the state's black championships between 1939 and 1964. Pearl participated in the National High School Athletic Association (NHSAA)

tournament games, established in 1929 by Charles H. Williams, and sponsored by the

historically black Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute (now Hampton University) in Virginia. Replaced by the National Interscholastic Athletic Association (NIAA) in 1934, the championship games moved to other locations before World War II intervened. In 1945, Tennessee A&I College (now Tennessee State University) athletic director Henry Arthur Kean, and the college president, revived the tournaments, bringing them to Nashville, where they remained until 1964. Because A&I's campus facilities were not large enough to host the tournaments, Davis and Kean sought the use of Pearl High School's gymnasium, which was the best athletic facility for blacks in Nashville. After consulting with Principal J.A. Galloway, Coaches William J. Gupton and Sadie Galloway, and with the approval of Nashville's superintendent of schools, W.A. Bass, the first games were held on March 29, 1945. Tournament games alternated between Pearl and A&I until 1953, when the university opened a new 4000-seat gymnasium in Kean Hall, where all the games could be played at one site. That same year, Pearl won the consolation game against Knoxville's Austin High School and broke the NHSAA's scoring record.

Pearl High's boys' basketball teams were not the school's only teams to excel at the sport. Under Sadie Galloway Johnson, who became the girls' basketball coach in 1939, the girls' teams dominated the basketball court in Middle Tennessee. Winning eight district titles and three state titles, Johnson amassed a record of 160 wins, six losses, and two ties, and seven undefeated seasons, before retiring in 1953.

In 1958, coached by William J. Gupton and led by forward Ronnie "Scat" Lawson, Pearl captured the first of three consecutive national NIAA championships. That year, the Pearl team posted a perfect season. Pearl's winning streak ended in 1961, when Clarksville's Burt High School won. Booker T. Washington High School of Memphis won in 1962. In 1963, Pearl recaptured the championship, and Henry Watkins became the first black basketball player from a racially segregated school to be awarded All-American honors. Tennessee's national championship dominance ended in 1964, when Birmingham's Park High School won the last NIAA tournament held in Nashville. Pearl's participation in the NHSAA ended in 1964, and the tournament moved to Alabama State College in Montgomery, where it was played until 1967. Led by Pearl, Tennessee teams placed third among the states winning NIAA championships, a record exceeded only by Oklahoma (8) and Indiana (7). The Pearl High Tigers continued to dominate the basketball court in the THSAA, winning the final two state championships in 1963 and 1964.

On June 14, 1964, during the height of the battle for integration, TSSAA Board of Control members voted to accept black segregated schools belonging to the THSAA and the Middle Tennessee Athletic Association as affiliate members, allowing them to schedule athletic matches in any sport with TSSAA member schools. With this decision, Tennessee became the first and only southern state to desegregate its high school athletic organizations without court intervention. At Pearl, coaches, staff, and players carried on business as usual, continuing to add games and championships in the win column, winning the TSSAA Affiliate Championship in 1965, under coach Cornelius Ridley.



In 1966, the varsity basketball team excelled in competition. Coaches Ridley, Melvin Black, and James Armstrong and the Tigers posted a perfect record (21-0) in the regular season. The ten-man squad was a group of well-disciplined athletes. Through the district, regional, and state competitions, the Pearl squad warmed up to the song "Sweet Georgia Brown" and demonstrated their main weapon, the demoralizing slam-dunk, which awed both spectators and their competitors.

Pearl was not the only African-American high school to play in the 1966 state tournament. Two other African-American schools, both in West Tennessee, Jackson's Merry High and Weakley County Training School of Martin, were also in the competition. Additionally, four other Tennessee teams had African American players on their squads, including Oak Ridge (3), Alcoa (2), Bradley Central of Cleveland (2), and McMinnville City (2). On March 19, 1966, the Pearl Tigers conquered the TSSAA competition and made Tennessee history by defeating Memphis Treadwell for the Boys' State Championship, becoming the first African-American team in the state to win the title. The team's contributions to sports history in Tennessee are also intertwined with civil rights achievements of black Americans.

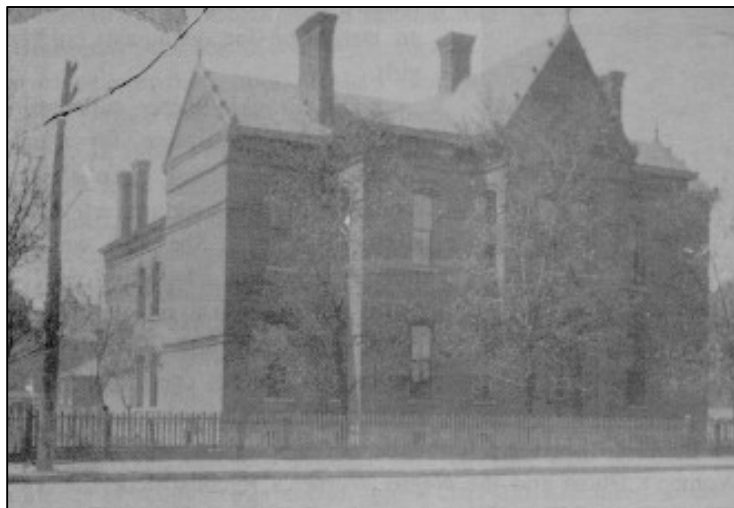
While the Pearl teams were known for their athleticism, the players were also academically inclined. Pearl had a nationally recognized reputation as an excellent secondary educational institution. Just as team members Ronald R. Lawson, Walter "Vic" Rouse, and Leslie Hunter played on winning teams during the era of segregation, and were heavily recruited by the nation's colleges and universities, including UCLA and Loyola University, so were the members of Pearl's 1966 championship team. Perry Wallace, team center and class valedictorian, was recruited by some eighty colleges, and became the first African-American to play basketball in the Southeastern Conference, at Vanderbilt University. Other team members went on to play collegiately at Memphis State, Fisk, and TSU. Ted "Hound" McClain played in both the American Basketball Association and the National Basketball Association.

Several coaches and players associated with Pearl High basketball teams have been inducted into numerous Hall of Fames. The Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame honors Coach William J. Gupton (inducted in 1979), Coach Sadie Galloway Johnson (1981), Theodore McClain (1997), and Perry Wallace (2003). The TSSAA Hall of Fame includes Coaches Cornelius Ridley (1991) and William J. Gupton (2006), and player Ronald R. "Scat" Lawson (2004). The Metro Nashville Public Schools Hall of Fame has inducted players Perry Wallace (2003) and Theodore McClain (2005). In 2005, the National Negro High School Hall of Fame inducted Coach William J. Gupton and player Ronald R. "Scat" Lawson.

*Linda T. Wynn, 2007*



## PEARL SCHOOL (1883-1983)



Pearl High School opened its doors in the fall of 1883 on South Summer Street (Fifth Avenue, South). The newly constructed public school for Negroes was named for Joshua F. Pearl, the city's first superintendent of public schools. T. W. Haley, a white principal, and white teachers directed Pearl (grades one through eight) until 1887, when black teachers were employed.

On September 25, 1884, Nashville's last Negro city councilman of the era, James C. Napier, persuaded the council to adopt a resolution to provide high-school classes for Negro citizens. The Board of Education did not act on the resolution until 1886, when Mrs. Sandy Porter attempted to enroll her son, James Rice Porter, in the all-white public Fogg High School. The city's refusal to admit James and other Negro youths to the city's only high school forced the Negro community to hold mass meetings. A mass meeting held on September 14, 1886, at Clark Chapel Methodist Episcopal Church petitioned the Board of Education "to as speedily as possible consummate permanent high school facilities for the rapidly growing [population of] colored youth..."

The Board convened a special meeting and authorized the superintendent to establish ninth- and tenth-grade classes at the black Meigs Public School. Principal D. N. Crosthwaite, a black college graduate with bachelor's and master's degrees, received the task of implementing the classes. Crosthwaite was joined by teachers J. Ira Watson, J. M. Turpin, and L. T. Jackson. On September 20, 1886, Meigs became Nashville's first black high school. Eleventh-grade instruction was added to the school's curricula the following year.

Beginning during the 1897-98 academic year, the high-school department at Meigs was transferred to Pearl. On June 2, 1898, Pearl's first high-school class was graduated. Because of overcrowded conditions, the mayor and the city authorized the building of a new facility for Pearl High School. In 1917, Pearl moved to a new three-story structure at Sixteenth Avenue, North, and Grant Street. The Board hired additional teachers, expanded the course of study, and included a twelfth grade. The old Pearl building was renamed Cameron Junior High School, in honor of former teacher H. H. Cameron, who died during World War I.

By 1936, because of crowded conditions, it was necessary to begin construction of a new building. Located on Seventeenth Avenue, North, and Jo Johnston, the new structure was

designed by the black architectural firm of McKissack and McKissack. In the fall of 1937, students moved into what "eminent authorities considered one of the most modern, best constructed, and well-equipped buildings for Negroes in the South." The city later added other facilities: vocational wing (1945), stadium (1948), gymnasium, cafeteria, and four classrooms (1964). Pearl students won many awards and athletic championships, including the 1966 TSSAA State Basketball Championship.

In 1983, the city's federal desegregation plan combined Pearl High School and West Nashville's predominantly white Cohn High School into the new Pearl-Cohn Comprehensive High School. The city built the Pearl-Cohn facility on the former sites of two black schools-- Washington Junior High School and Ford Greene Elementary School in North Nashville--and converted the old Pearl High School facility into the Martin Luther King, Jr., Magnet School. In October of 1992, the Tennessee Historical Commission approved the placement of an historical marker at the site of the former Pearl High School.

*Linda T. Wynn, 1993*

## **PEOPLE'S SAVINGS BANK AND TRUST COMPANY**

African Americans in Memphis and Nashville, Tennessee established four financial institutions within the first decade of the twentieth century. They were the One-Cent Savings Bank and Trust Company (1904) and the People's Savings Bank and Trust Company (1909) in Nashville; the Solvent Savings Bank and Trust Company (1906) and the Fraternal Savings Bank and Trust Company (1910) in Memphis.

On July 31, 1909, the People's Savings Bank and Trust Company opened at 410 Cedar Street and became the third financial establishment in Nashville's African-American community. Black Nashville's first banking institution, the Freedmen's Savings Bank and Trust Company opened in 1865, during the Reconstruction era, and was one of the four branches (Memphis [1865-74], Chattanooga [1868-74], and Columbia [1870-74]) located in Tennessee. The Freedmen's Bank and Trust Company and all of its 33 branches failed in 1874. In part, the national bank's failure was due to fraud and mismanagement by poorly trained white officers, unsound lending practices and the 1873 depression. Because regulations required the branches to keep the majority of their assets on deposit in the national branch, the Nashville bank failed in spite of its sound economic base.

In 1890, notwithstanding the 1874 bankruptcy of the Freedmen's Savings Bank and Trust Company, African Americans in Chattanooga opened the Penny Savings Bank. This banking enterprise attracted investors from Atlanta and Nashville, including James C. Napier, who served on the bank's board of directors. However, three years later the bank collapsed, due in part to the 1893 financial panic.

After the 1874 collapse of the Freedmen's Savings Bank and Trust Company, 30 years passed before leaders in Nashville's African-American community inaugurated the One-Cent Savings Bank and Trust Company. The bank opened on January 16, 1904 in the James C. Napier Court Building at 411 North Cherry Street (4th Avenue North). The oldest continuously operated African-American financial institution in America, the One-Cent Savings Bank changed its operating name to Citizens Savings Bank and Trust Company in 1920.

In 1909, four and one-half years after the founding of the One-Cent Savings Bank, African Americans established the People's Savings Bank and Trust Company, Nashville's second post-Reconstruction financial institution. Among others, the founders included Dr. Robert Fulton Boyd, Andrew N. Johnson, Dr. J. B. Singleton, Dr. Arthur M. Townsend, attorney Solomon P. Harris (later elected to the Nashville City Council in 1911), and businessman Dock A. Hart. Several of the bank's directors had been affiliated with the One-Cent Savings Bank and Trust Company. Desiring to promote more economic growth among African Americans, the organizers of the People's Bank adhered to the fundamental principle that African-American business ventures should be more responsive to the needs of the common people. The bank's founders stated that their objective was to embolden the city's African American populace "in purchasing homes and embarking in business." They proposed a capitalization of \$50,000.

From all indications, the founders of the One-Cent Savings Bank gladly received the competition from the city's second African American bank to open during the twentieth century's first decade. As reported in the *Nashville Globe*, Richard H. Boyd commented, "This is the way it should be." Founded in 1906 by Boyd, who also served as president of the One-Cent Savings Bank, the *Globe* reported on the bank's opening day activities and called the founding of a financial institution by "younger Negroes a healthy sign."

The founders of the People's Savings Bank and Trust Company stressed to depositors and stockholders the importance of gaining the trust and bettering the living conditions among members of the African-American community. Also, for the benefit of their prospective customers, they painstakingly expounded upon the bank's goals and objectives.



The newly established financial institution met with slow growth of paid-in capital and deposits. Two years after its establishment, the bank had only \$21,200 in assets. However, by 1917 its coffers had increased by almost \$50,000. As new job opportunities and war-time wages elevated the economic well-being of the African-American community, the bank's deposits and savings accounts more than doubled between 1917 and 1918. After World War I, the bank's directors issued new capital stock.

People's Bank endeavored to carry out the covenant of its name and made numerous small, short-term loans, leaving itself open to risk and possible failure. As early as 1924, loan defaults caused concern, but bank officials barely modified their policies. In 1928, the bank made a series of loans to the Sunday School Publishing Board that was later judged insolvent at the time of the loans. Because the bank's functionaries pursued liberal loan policies, bought numerous bonds and second mortgages from fraternal and religious institutions, and made multitudinous loans to working-class people, it became vulnerable to the grim devastation of the Great Depression. The People's Savings Bank and Trust Company ceased operations on November 21, 1930. Ultimately, most of the approximately 4,000 active account holders received a 35% dividend.

Of all the African-American financial institutions capitalized in Tennessee during the first decade of the twentieth century, only the Citizens Savings Bank and Trust Company was able to surmount the impediments of marginal patronage, circumscribed liquid assets, skepticism among members of its community, and Eurocentric racism--all perils associated with sustaining commercial ventures in the African American community.

*Linda T. Wynn, 1999*

### **J. FRANKIE PIERCE AND THE TENNESSEE VOCATIONAL SCHOOL FOR COLORED GIRLS (1923-1979)**

Frankie Pierce was born during or shortly after the Civil War to Nellie Seay, the house slave of a Smith County legislator. Frankie received her education in John G. McKee Freedmen's School in Nashville. She married and left Nashville, returning at the death of her husband with a mission of her own in mind: to found an institution for delinquent colored girls.

J. Frankie Pierce supposedly received the inspiration for establishing such a school by observing this nature in other southern states. She also was influenced by her friendship with a probation officer, who reluctantly took delinquent black girls to jail because the law would not permit them to enter white institutions.

Mrs. Pierce soon set about the task of laying a foundation of support, organizing the City Federation of Colored Women's Clubs and the Negro Women's Reconstruction Service League. She was a leading member of First Colored Baptist Church (Capitol Hill). After extensive lobbying, the Tennessee Vocational School for Colored Girls bill was passed by the General Assembly on April 7, 1921, and the school opened its doors on October 9, 1923. Frankie Pierce became its first superintendent, a position she held until 1939.

Located at 2700 Heiman Street, the school had a sixty-six-acre campus and employed an average of sixty-nine workers. Girls twelve to fifteen years old were received from across the state and were released through the Division of Juvenile Probation. The school was approved through the ninth grade and included academic and vocational training.



Frankie Pierce was a woman with vision, and through her perseverance, determination, and courage, she provided the leadership to make that vision a community reality. She was "an untiring worker, a great politician" for her people. Those who knew this woman took pride in how she led her club members in a march on city hall in protest of the racial segregation of public facilities at a time prior to the civil rights movement. J. Frankie Pierce died in 1954.

Mattie Coleman served as the vocational school's second superintendent until her death in 1943. She promoted the school's choir, which performed at religious services and area concerts. During Coleman's tenure, the girls attended Haynes High School; one of them became the valedictorian and one the salutatorian of their graduating classes. During this time, Laura Deaderick became the principal of the academic program at the vocational school.

In 1943, Mattie Flowers became the school's superintendent. Under her leadership, the girls received all of their education on the campus. The elementary grades were certified; a psychologist joined the staff, in conjunction with the Tullahoma School for White Girls; and a chaplain and a full-time religious curriculum were added. The State Board of Licensing for Cosmetology was located on the campus and hundreds of young women often gathered to be licensed.

In 1953, Dorothy Read became the head of the school. The Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance of Nashville became interested, and many local ministers became involved with the school. Read's administration added Read Hall and sought to attract highly trained employees and volunteers.

In 1960, Virginia Edmondson became superintendent. During her tenure, a program of behavioral modification was started; spiritual, educational, and physical programs were expanded; and affiliations with local and national professional organizations were explored. The focus was on preparing students to return to the community as homemakers. Meharry Medical College supplied professional help for the staff and students, and the Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State College supported the recreational program. In 1966, the school was integrated, and Pierce Hall was built. Edmondson retired in 1967 to become a psychiatric nurse.

Marlene Howlett served as superintendent from 1967 to 1971. The high school was accredited and teachers' salaries were equated with those of public-school teachers. A director of religion was added, and a chaplain was hired in conjunction with the Joelton

School for Boys. The first white student was sent to the all-black Pearl High School; she commuted daily with the superintendent's husband, who taught there. Students enjoyed the additions of an annual field day, a Sweethearts' Ball, dramatic performances, and a Girl Scout troop. Sammie Mitchell became superintendent in 1971.

The Tennessee Vocational School for Girls was renamed the Tennessee Reception and Guidance Center for Juveniles before it closed in 1979.

*Virginia Edmondson, 1985*

### **JAMES HENRY PRESNELL (1885-1950)**

Knoxville's "Bronze Mayor" was widely known throughout the city and was undoubtedly the most popular person in the black community during the 1930s and 1940s. Noted for his ever-present cigar and friendly manner, he was very involved in civic, church, and social activities.

James H. Presnell was born in Knoxville, Tennessee, on November 13, 1885. He was graduated from the Normal Department of Knoxville College in 1908 and from the College in 1910. After being graduated from Meharry Medical College in 1913, he set up his medical practice in Knoxville. In 1923, he married Cloteal Hardy, a popular teacher at Knoxville Colored High School. They had three children: James, Jr., Madison, and Margaret Louise.



Through the years, Presnell's lucrative practice allowed him to accumulate a considerable amount of property. He continued his studies at Northwestern University and engaged in post-graduate work in some of the leading hospitals in the country. His patients ranked him high in his knowledge and practice of medicine.

In 1937, the *Flashlight Herald*, a weekly newspaper for the black community, sponsored the Bronze Mayor Contest, in an effort to give black citizens an "official" voice. Four of the city's most prominent black men were in the contest. Presnell won by more than 2,800 votes over his nearest rival. One of the daily newspapers described the event as "just like Harlem."

When the results were announced, the newspaper reported that "the city stood abreast Harlem and Beale Street and other Negro sections which already had 'mayors.'"

Presnell, in his usual genial manner, was quoted as saying, "I feel greatly honored. I went over and bought the boys of the *Flashlight Herald* cigars after they notified me of my election."

But that election was no lighthearted or trivial matter. He had been “elected” spokesman for the black community. His job, as he explained it, was to head committees of Negro citizens in conferring with city officials and others. One of his chief concerns was to prevent the Knoxville Housing Authority from destroying beautiful homes and prosperous businesses during its “slum clearance” projects. He advanced efforts to remedy overcrowded schools and to divert Knoxville’s notorious First Creek, which flooded and ravaged a good part of the black community during the rainy season.

Through his generosity, the auditorium in the Knoxville College Administration Building was refurbished; the renovated auditorium was named in his honor. He is credited with leading the successful drive to establish the unit for blacks at the local tubercular hospital in 1928. His medical building, which was constructed in 1922, was a centerpiece for black achievement.

*Robert J. Booker, 1996*

### **THEODORE “TED” RHODES (1913-1969)**

Theodore “Ted” Rhodes was born to Frank and Della (Anderson) Rhodes on November 9, 1913. A native Nashvillian, he attended the city's public schools. At the age of twelve, Rhodes dreamed of pursuing the game of golf. In as much as the sport did not welcome persons of color from its beginning, this was an ambitious goal for an African-American child during the 1920s.

Soon after the First World War, African Americans were banned from municipal golf courses and legalized segregation locked them out of the few country clubs where they had been permitted to play. If one game manifested the ingrained ethnological bigotry, it was the sport of golf.

During his late teenage years, the aspiring young golfer learned the game and honed his skills by working as a caddie at the Belle Meade and Richland golf courses. When it came to the exclusivity of African Americans on the manicured verdant links, Nashville was no different from the rest of the country. No course in the city allowed them to play. Any time the opportunity presented itself, Rhodes surreptitiously played on the clubs’ courses. He practiced the game with other caddies and developed his swing by hitting shag balls at Sunset Park in Nolensville, as well as practicing in East Nashville’s Douglas Park and North Nashville’s Watkins Park. He became an adroit master of the links, mastering the use of the one iron to the sand wedge, the driver through the four wood, and the putter. According to Rhodes’s friend Zenoch Adams, “He had all the shots. He would tell you what he was going to do on the golf course.”

Ted Rhodes joined the United States Navy during the Second World War. After his tour of duty, Rhodes was discharged in Chicago, Illinois. There he met and became friends with entertainer Billy Eckstine and heavyweight boxing champion Joe Louis. Rhodes



taught both to play the game of golf. Later, the “Brown Bomber” sponsored Rhodes on the golf circuit. By the late 1940s, Rhodes became unbeatable on the tour sponsored by the United Golfers’ Association (UGA), an association founded circa 1926 by a group of African American physicians in response to the United States Golf Association’s (USGA) racially exclusive policies.

In 1948, Rhodes participated in the United States Open at the Riviera Country Club in Los Angeles, California, and became recognized as the first African American professional golfer. The same year that he participated in the U.S. Open, he and another black golfer brought suit against the Professional Golfers’ Association (PGA). They sought adjudication in the courts because of the association’s “Caucasian clause,” a provision that allowed membership to only “professional golfers of the Caucasian race.” Although they won an out-of-court judgment, the golfing association changed its tournaments to “invitationals” with more racially prejudiced regulations. In 1961, the PGA deleted its “Caucasian clause” from its body of laws, making golf the last major sport to desegregate its ranks.



Ted Rhodes, who “dressed in silks and plus fours” when he competed, finished in the top ten in the few white tournaments he was allowed to participate. He played without practice against white golfers like Sam Snead and Ben Hogan. A year after he participated in the U.S. Open, Rhodes played in the Tam O’Shanter All American in Chicago and later in the Canadian Open. Because his race barred him from many PGA-sanctioned tournaments, Rhodes played in tournaments sponsored by the UGA. The first person of African descent to play in a U.S. Open, Rhodes won approximately 150 UGA tournaments. He became the first American Black employed

as a member of the advisory staff of Burke Golf in Newark, New Jersey.

In 1950, African Americans in Nashville requested a facility where they could play golf. City councilman and attorney Robert Lillard sponsored legislation that provided for the land and financial resources for the course’s development. Built near the Cumberland River in North Nashville, the nine-hole Cumberland Golf Course opened on July 10, 1954. Joe Hampton, an African American, served as the course’s first golf pro. Although Cumberland was a “separate but equal” course, it became a desegregated golfing facility soon after its opening.

After touring the country for most of his adult life, Rhodes returned to his native city in the 1960s. Considered the quintessential instructor among black golfers, the famed golfer



contributed both “locally and nationally to the game of golf.” Perhaps one of the greatest African-American golfers of the immediate post-World War II era, he took the time to mentor such persons as Lee Elder, the first African-American golfer to play the Masters, Charlie Sifford, and others. Jim Dent, a well-known black professional golfer, said, “...younger guys like me would come by just so they could sit beside him and listen to him talk about golf. He understood the game.”

Given the sobriquet “Rags” because of his exquisite and flashy dress style on the golf course, the life of Theodore “Ted” Rhodes suddenly came to an end at the age of 53 on July 4, 1969. The day after his demise, Lee Elder said, “Ted Rhodes was like a father to me ... He took me under his wing when I was 16 years old and completely rebuilt my golf game and my life.” A few days later, Rhodes's remains were interred in National Cemetery on Gallatin Road.

At the request of Councilman Lillard, on August 13, 1969, the Metropolitan Board of Parks and Recreation renamed the Cumberland Golf Course in honor of Theodore “Ted” Rhodes. The Joe Hampton Clubhouse at the eighteen-hole Rhodes Golf Course honors the memory of the trailblazer with a painting, photographs, and memorabilia. In 1970, to commemorate Rhodes as the first African-American golfer to be recognized by the PGA, the Ted Rhodes National Memorial Foundation was formed “to promote the game of golf for one and all, regardless of race, gender, creed or color.”

When Tiger Woods won the 1997 Masters Golf Tournament, he invoked the memory of Ted Rhodes and other African-American pioneers in the world of golf. A legend in the African American community, Rhodes’ accomplishments in golf escaped the attention of the white masses, most notably in his native state. For his achievements in the golfing community, the “black Jack Nicklaus” was better known outside his home state. However, in November of 1997, officials of the Tennessee Golf Foundation rectified his anonymity in the sports history of the state when they announced his forthcoming 1998 induction into the Tennessee Golf Hall of Fame located in Franklin, Tennessee. An homage long overdue!

*Linda T. Wynn, 1998*

### **GREGORY D. RIDLEY, JR. (1825-2004)**

"From the Hands of a Master" was the title of Greg Ridley's survey exhibition (1951-2003) mounted in the summer of 2003 to honor the master artist in the Nashville Public Library Art Gallery. Five years earlier, Ridley had been commissioned to create public art for the library's Grand Reading Room. The commission resulted in "A Story of Nashville," eighty hammered copper panels in bas relief or repousse, installed to form a continuous, room-sized horizontal frieze above the book stacks. When the library opened in 2001, Ridley's series of signature panels interpreting the history of Nashville was the focal point of public acclaim. Thus, when the exhibition of selected creations during Ridley's long career was

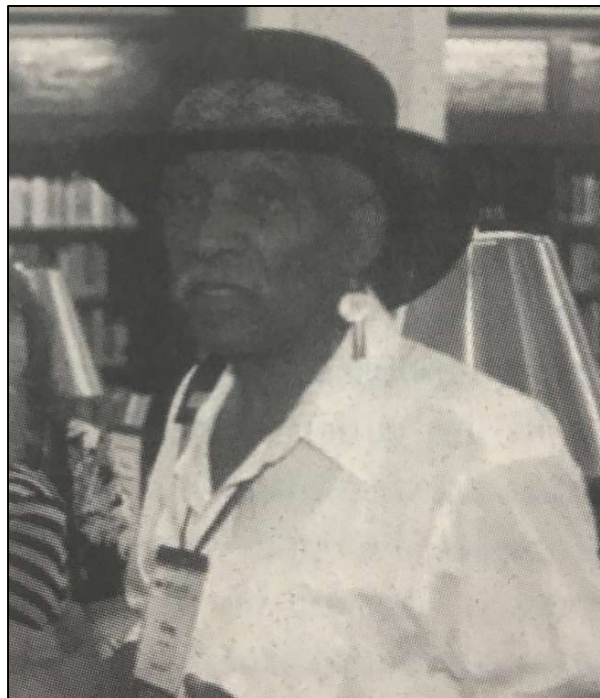
displayed at the library gallery in 2003, the master artist had come full circle from his student-mentor days begun in 1945 at Fisk University under the tutelage of painter and muralist Aaron Douglas (1899-1979) to fulfill and surpass the creative promise seen by his mentor and friend over thirty-four years.

The journey had been a long and laborious one for Gregory David Leon Ridley, Jr. Born July 18, 1925, in Smyrna, Rutherford County, Tennessee, he was the son of minister Gregory D. L. Ridley, Sr. and Lucile Elder Ridley, a domestic worker and crafts artist. His mother was his first influence in visual art, as young Greg Ridley accompanied her to club exhibits--where she displayed her crafts, quilts, and appliques--and to various showings of Appalachian art and crafts. In 1936, the Ridley family moved to Nashville, Davidson County, and Greg was educated in local public schools, being graduated in 1944 from Pearl High School. He served a year as Apprentice Seaman in the U. S. Navy during World War II and, after being honorably discharged, entered Fisk University in Nashville in 1945; he was graduated in 1949. The four years spent studying with Fisk's professor of art Aaron Douglas, one of the most prominent artists of the Harlem Renaissance (1916-1940), set Ridley's feet on the artistic path he would pursue and refine over the following fifty-four years.

In 1951, Ridley earned an undergraduate degree in art education from Tennessee State University, Nashville, and in 1955, after studying with Ulfert Wilke, Justus Bier, Walter Creese, and Creighton Gilbert, earned a master's degree in fine arts from the University of Louisville--the first person to receive this degree from that university. His first academic position (from 1951 to 1958) was as instructor of art at Alabama State University. Subsequent tenures included concurrent appointments as assistant professor of art at Grambling State University and Elizabeth City State College (from 1958 to 1962), followed by professor of art at Tennessee State University and visiting lecturer and sculptor at Fisk University (from 1966 to 1971). During the period 1971-1975, he served as studio artist, lecturer, professor of art, and museum coordinator at the City University of New York, then returned to Tennessee State University as associate professor and art gallery curator (1975-1981). The next decade saw his return to Fisk University, where he served as associate professor of art (1981-1985); art consultant to President Henry Ponder (1989-1991); and acting curator at Van Vechten Gallery (1991-1995). After a year as artist-in-residence at Morehouse College, Atlanta (1995-1996), Ridley retired and returned to Nashville to serve as adjunct associate professor of art at Tennessee State University and professor of art at Fisk University.

Throughout his academic career, Ridley was first and foremost a working artist. Over the years his work, utilizing myriad techniques in painting and sculpture, has appeared in major exhibitions across the nation and is included in numerous collections held by museums, corporations, art galleries, and private citizens.

Among his major commissions was one for Fisk University to memorialize the history of the Carl Van Vechten Gallery of Fine Arts, resulting in Ridley's pair of copper repousse sculpted panels adorning the entrance doors to the gallery. His "Ngere Mask Series" in oil paintings are displayed in Fisk's library, where six completed copper panels of his



"History of Fisk University" also hang. Among his local exhibitions were "Visions of My People: African-American Artists in Tennessee" at the Tennessee State Museum, and one-man shows mounted at Cheekwood Fine Arts Center and the Nashville Artists' Guild Gallery, among numerous other venues. At Tennessee State University, his work is part of the permanent collection in the Brown-Daniel Library and the Hiram Van Gordon Art Gallery. Examples of Ridley's work have been included in fourteen visual-art publications, including *American Negro Art*, *Prizewinning Art in America*, and David Driskell's *Two Centuries of Black American Art*.

At the height of his creativity and acclaim, Gregory Ridley died at his home on January 10, 2004. He is survived by one of his two

sons, Cecil Kelley Greenidge; daughters, Jeanene Ridley, Clarette Ridley, Ronica Ridley-Martin, Gloria L. Ridley II, and Crystal Brooks Ridley; five grandchildren and four great-grandchildren; numerous kith and kin; and his wife of forty-one years, Gloria Louise Brooks Ridley. To his supportive wife he had dedicated the exhibition, "From the Hands of a Master," mounted June 13 through September 13, 2003 at the Nashville Public Library: "This exhibition is dedicated to my beautiful wife Gloria Louise Brooks Ridley, who has been an inspiration to me and to many other artists, a knowing collector of our art, and a strong nurturer of the creative spirit."

*Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr., 2006*

### **WALTER CALDWELL ROBINSON (1893-1968)**

Walter Caldwell Robinson was born the son of sharecroppers in Larkinsville, Alabama, on July 17, 1893. His family, which lived in Alabama, worked the farm of a white man until Walter was nine years old. Walter's parents, Joseph and Elizabeth Robinson decided to move to Chattanooga, Tennessee, when he was nine, seeking better employment and educational opportunities for their children. In Chattanooga their economic status improved, but, due to segregation and discrimination, their "plight" remained bleak. In

spite of these despairing circumstances, the children--Floyd, Monroe, Jessie, Rosa, Fannie, Amanda, and Walter C. Robinson--were able to lift themselves to a high level of participation in a tightly segregated society.

Walter Robinson showed signs of becoming a businessman and leader at an early age. At age eleven, he secured employment in a foundry and by age sixteen was operating a laundry business of his own. He married one of his neighbors and classmates, Cora Adair. To this marriage were born seven children: Evelyn, Marian, Walter, Jr., Jesell, Camille, Lucille, and Alma Lee.



Walter, Cora, and their children were very active members of the Second Missionary Baptist Church. Robinson became president of the Baptist Young People's Union soon after joining the church. At age twenty-one, he became a trustee of his church. Robinson was an asset to the church because he was able to influence outstanding ministers to accept the pastorship of the church. After becoming a politician, Robinson was able to raise large sums of money for religious undertakings by asking wealthy whites for donations. He began attending the meetings of the city's fourth ward. Because of the interest he exhibited in ward, local, and national politics, as well as his leadership ability, he was elected chairman of the fourth ward by defeating Hiram Tyree, who had been ward leader for many years.

Walter Robinson was quite successful in creating interest and participation among black citizens. In a short while his influence spread throughout Chattanooga and Hamilton County. He organized the chairmen of all the black wards and established the Colored Voters League of Greater Chattanooga to gain recognition for blacks through a united political group. In 1926, the National Republican Executive Committee selected Robinson to conduct a campaign tour of northern and northwestern states. In his address, Robinson encouraged blacks to support the Republican national candidates for President, Vice President, and the Congress, because he felt that this was the best avenue for ending segregation and discrimination. As a result of his political involvements, he was chosen as alternate delegate to the Republican National Convention in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1928. Thereafter, he was an alternate delegate at each National Republican Convention until his health failed in 1963.

H. D. Huffacker was supported by Walter Robinson and the Colored Voters League of Greater Chattanooga for the position of Commissioner of Education in 1997. Huffacker

was elected and, once in office, gave Robinson a job as a truant officer for the Chattanooga Public School System. He was responsible for seeing that black boys and girls attended school. Also, because of his leadership ability and influence, Robinson was given the responsibility for suggesting the blacks to be hired as teachers, janitors, and other positions in city departments. Robinson worked in this capacity until a candidate whom he opposed was elected Commissioner of Education in 1935.

Then Robinson began full-time work for the success of the newspaper business, which he started in 1933. This newspaper (*The Chattanooga Observer*) was initiated for the purposes of expressing his views to benefit the Republican party and to defeat candidates in local elections when Robinson felt they were not the best candidates for the good of the black citizens.

Robinson was continually elected chairmen of the fourth ward until urban renewal programs split the ward in 1959. He also was continually elected chairman of the Colored Voters League of greater Chattanooga until his death in 1968.

*Malcolm J. Walker, 1996*

### **ROGER WILLIAMS UNIVERSITY (1866-1929)**

Roger Williams University, one of four colleges founded in Nashville for freed slaves, began in 1864 as Bible classes in the home of Daniel W. Phillips, a white Baptist minister from Massachusetts. The Reverend Phillips (1809-1890) was assisted by fellow ministers Henry L. Wayland, J. R. Graves, and Thomas Skinner. The pastor of the First Colored Baptist Church allowed the school to move to the basement of the church at Pearl and Walnut Streets. A mission of the white First Baptist Church, the black congregation was pastored by Nelson G. Merry.

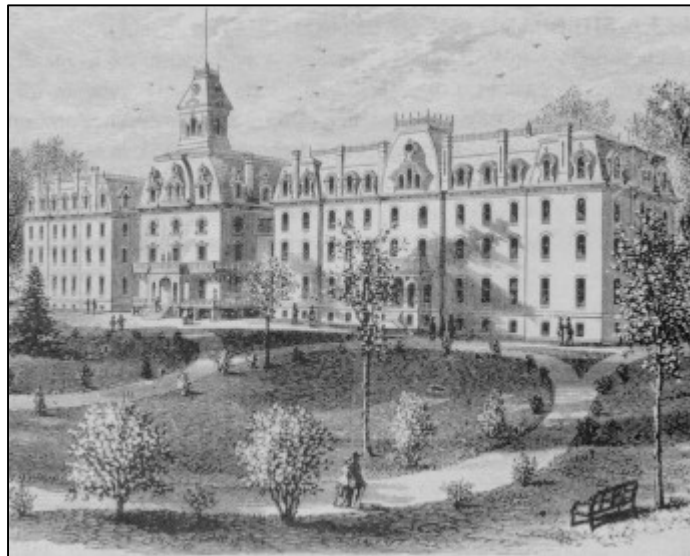
In 1866 the so-called "Baptist College" was named the Nashville Normal and Theological Institute and relocated in Union Army barracks on Cedar (Charlotte) between Spruce (Eighth Avenue, North) and McLemore (Ninth Avenue, North) streets. The American Baptist Home Mission Society (ABHMS) of New York, local blacks and other contributors funded the freedmen's school.

In 1867 the school moved into a two-story frame building at Park and Polk streets. Merry traveled to Memphis and held church benefits to raise money for the school. In 1869 a group headed by Phillips attempted to purchase surplus Union Army Fort Gillem adjacent to them at Salem (18th Avenue, North) and Jefferson Streets but Fisk University bought the property. When Fisk's Jubilee Hall rose next door, Phillips raised \$30,000 and purchased thirty acres of the William H. Gordon farm on Hillsboro Road by 1874.

On February 13, 1883, the school was incorporated as Roger Williams University. Several blacks, including Merry and Randall B. Vandavall (1832 -1898), served on the board of trustees. The school added a master's degree in 1886 and continued to expand until the

1890s, when student rebellion and white suburbanization of West Nashville caused its decline.

After Vanderbilt University established itself in the vicinity and the Belmont area was under development by realtors, a realtor offered the American Baptist Home Mission



Society \$150,000 for the Roger Williams campus. The discussion of whether to sell the campus was influenced by the student rebellion of 1888-89, in which the blacks had charged the president with racism and caused him to resign. But the ABHMS refused to sell the school.

On the night of January 24, 1905, at ten o'clock, a mysterious fire destroyed Centennial Hall. The school reopened, but on May 22, 1905, another fire of unknown origin leveled Mansion House. The American Baptist Home Mission

Society closed Roger Williams University and subsequently sold part of the land to realtors and the rest to George Peabody College for Teachers by 1911. Realtors subdivided the land for resale, with covenants on the deeds that restricted sale to any "person of African descent."

Local black leaders were upset that the white Baptists had closed "their school" built by Merry, Vandavall, and Phillips. As a result, the Negro Baptist Association of Tennessee formed the Tennessee Missionary and Education Association to raise \$10,000 and purchase a new campus on Whites Creek Pike. In the fall of 1909, Roger Williams University was reopened in North Nashville, with its first black president. By 1922, however, there were only 159 students and twelve faculty members. On July 12, 1927, the decision was made to merge the school with Howe Institute in Memphis (LeMoyne-Owen College). The students and teachers left for Memphis on December 29, 1929.

*Bobby Lovett, 1984*

### **CARL T. ROWAN (1925-2000)**

Acclaimed journalist, author, and diplomat, Carl T. Rowan was born in White County, Tennessee in 1925. His parents, Tom and Johnnie Rowan, moved from the tiny hamlet of Ravenscroft to McMinnville before Carl's first birthday, in search of greater economic and educational opportunities for their family. Such opportunities were in short supply, however, and Rowan's father earned twenty-five cents an hour as a day laborer stacking

lumber during the Depression-era years. Carl Rowan's early years were spent in abject poverty, with "no electricity, no running water, no toothbrushes...no telephone, no radio, no clocks or watches, and no regular inflow of money."

Rowan left McMinnville to live with his grandparents at age eleven, attending seventh and eighth grade at the school run by the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, where he worshipped with his grandparents, but as the church did not have a high school, he chose to return to McMinnville's Bernard High School rather than attend Pearl High in Nashville. Rowan credited his Bernard High English and history teacher, Bessie Taylor Gwynn (a graduate of Fisk University's teacher education program in 1911), with educating him not just academically, but in dignity and respect. Rowan excelled at football and his studies and graduated as valedictorian of Bernard High's Class of 1942. Two months later, he hitched a ride to Nashville to attempt to enter Fisk University on a football scholarship, where he was told "you'd never make it here." Disappointed, he returned to his grandparents' home in Nashville. His grandfather, employed at the State Tuberculosis Hospital in Madison, arranged for Rowan to work there as well, where he mopped floors and delivered patients' meals while saving money for his first semester at college.

Instead of Fisk, Rowan entered Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial Normal School (now Tennessee State University), where he excelled in his classes, and later recalled two TSU teachers who made lasting impacts on his life, art instructor Frances Thompson and history professor Merle Eppse. Because of Eppse's recommendation to Dean George W. Gore, Rowan was selected as one of a handful of Tennessee A&I students to test for Officer Candidate School for the Navy. Rowan passed the examination, the interview process and the physical, was entered into the Naval Reserve in 1943, and ordered to report to Washburn University in Topeka, Kansas, where he was the only African-American in an officer class of 335. After the academic year at Washburn, Rowan was transferred to Oberlin College, and in 1944 became one of the first fifteen African-Americans as commissioned officers in the United States Navy. Rowan served on the USS *Mattole* and the USS *Chemung* in a deputy command as communications officer.

Following the war, Rowan returned to McMinnville and then Nashville. Finding no real opportunities for an educated African-American naval officer, he quickly decided to return to integrated Oberlin College to pursue a degree in mathematics, in part because his naval training had provided him with several hours of mathematics and science courses that would allow him to obtain a quick bachelor's degree. Following his graduation from Oberlin in 1947, he attended the University of Minnesota, where he studied journalism and obtained his master's degree in 1948. After graduation, Rowan took a job at the *Minneapolis Tribune*, first as copy editor then as a reporter. While working in Minneapolis he met Vivien Murphy, a nursing student who became his wife in 1950.

It was during Rowan's time as reporter for the *Tribune* that he conceived his first groundbreaking journalistic endeavor, a series of articles about "what it means to be a Negro in

the postwar South.” Traveling for six weeks, first through Tennessee then in Oklahoma, Texas, Alabama, Florida, and Georgia, Rowan wrote a series of eighteen articles for the *Tribune* entitled “How Far From Slavery?,” which explored issues of segregation and racism and for which he received several awards. In 1952, he published a book-length account of his experience, titled *South of Freedom*. Rowan followed up these articles with another series, “Jim Crow’s Last Stand,” where he visited the five cities who joined together in *Brown v. Board of Education* and studied what school desegregation would mean to these cities and to the country. As a result of these two series, Rowan received the Sigma Delta Chi award for best general reporting and was named as the United States Junior Chamber of Commerce’s “Ten Outstanding Young Men of 1953.” Rowan also received a grant from the U.S. State Department to travel to India and Pakistan for three months to lecture, during which time he wrote a series of articles for the *Tribune* on this experience, and for which he received another Sigma Delta Chi award. Following his India adventures, he traveled across Southeast Asia lecturing and writing, resulting in his third-won consecutive Sigma Delta Chi award. His experiences in Southeast Asia led to the creation of his second book, *The Pitiful and the Proud*.

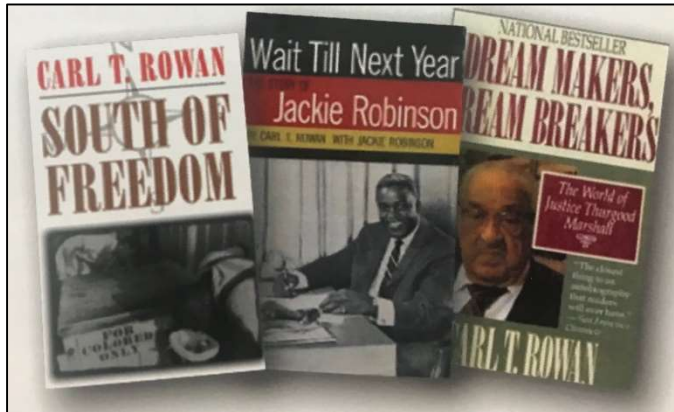
After Rowan returned to the United States, he again traveled across the South, this time with fellow journalist Richard Kleeman (who was white), to document the efforts of Massive Resistance to court-ordered desegregation in the months and years following *Brown v. Board of Education*, starting in Montgomery, Alabama during the days of the bus boycott. These articles led to Rowan’s third book in four years, *Go South to Sorrow*. While finalizing this book, Rowan’s editor sent him to the United Nations to cover the growing unrest in Eastern Europe in 1956. Throughout the rest of the decade, Rowan continued covering the American Civil Rights Movement for diverse publications such as the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Redbook*, *Reader’s Digest* and *Ebony*, while at the same time continuing his work with the *Minneapolis Tribune*. In 1960, Rowan co-wrote *Wait ‘Til Next Year*, the autobiography of one of America’s greatest sports heroes, Jackie Robinson.

Because of Rowan’s international experiences, and in part because John F. Kennedy believed him to be a fair and balanced reporter, he was tapped for a State Department job as a deputy director and immediately made front-page news. In Rowan’s words, “No Negro had ever held so high a job in the State Department.” In 1961, Rowan accompanied vice-president Lyndon Johnson on a world tour including stops in Iran, Turkey, Thailand, India, Pakistan, and Vietnam. In 1963, Kennedy named Rowan ambassador to Finland, and in January 1964 President Johnson named Rowan director of the United States Information Agency (USIA), a position he held until July 1965 when he resigned following differences with Johnson.

Following his work in the State Department and with USIA, Rowan returned to journalism as a syndicated columnist and as a television commentator, and his work through the 1970s and 1980s became more politicized. As a national columnist and commentator, Rowan developed a reputation for being independent and often controversial. He publicly made statements, such as urging Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to soften his anti-war stance because he felt King’s anti-war position was hurting the focus



of the Civil Rights Movement, and he called for the resignation of FBI director J. Edgar Hoover. Rowan was critical of President Ronald Reagan throughout and after his presidency, and vilified Reagan's cuts to social and economic programs during his administration. Rowan was highly critical of Washington Mayor Marion Barry for his corrupt administration, deeming Barry "a disgrace, a betrayer of black children." Rowan also produced television documentaries, including those on Thurgood Marshall, on the racial unrest in Rhodesia, and on drug abuse in America, for which he won an Emmy Award.



Although much of Rowan's writings and commentaries focused on Civil Rights, Rowan was often critical of African-Americans (such as Marion Barry) who he viewed as obstacles to the cause and admonished those he felt were not doing enough to improve their own circumstances. In 1988, Rowan shot and wounded a young man trespassing on his property and found himself in a maelstrom of publicity

surrounding this incident. The Barry administration sought to make a case out of the Rowan shooting, and he was tried for unlawful possession of an unregistered firearm. Although the charges were later dropped, the damage done in the press was considerable to Rowan's national reputation at the time. Rowan continued his writing, commentary, and fundraising for his Project Excellence, founded in 1987 to provide scholarships to African-American students from the Washington, D.C. area. In 1990, Rowan published his memoir, *Breaking Barriers*, followed by his biography of Thurgood Marshall, *Dream Makers, Dream Breakers: The World of Justice Thurgood Marshall* (1993). His last book, *The Coming Race War in America* was published in 1996.

Plagued by diabetes and other health concerns, Rowan retired from his writing in 1999, in part due to his faltering health, and he died on September 24, 2000. He was hailed by journalists and newspapers across the country as a "crusading journalist, best-selling author, defender of affirmative action, proud to call himself a liberal" (*New York Times*, 24 September 2000). Madeline Albright, director of the State Department, posthumously honored Rowan by rededicating the State Department briefing room as the Carl T. Rowan Briefing Room in 2001.

*Tara Mitchell Mielnik, 2010*

(All quotations taken from Carl T. Rowan, *Breaking Barriers: A Memoir*, New York: Harper Collins, 1991, unless otherwise credited.)

## WILMA RUDOLPH (1940-1994) AND THE TSU TIGERBELLES

The Tigerbelles Women's Track Club at Tennessee State University became the state's most internationally accomplished athletic team. The sprinters won some 23 Olympic medals, more than any other sports team in Tennessee history. Mae Faggs and Barbara Jones became the first Olympic medal winning Tigerbelles in 1952. The Tigerbelles won another medal in 1956. Eventually, the Gold Medal winners included Edith McGuire, Madeline Manning, Barbara Jones, Martha Hudson, Lucinda Williams, Chandra Cheeseborough (2), Wilma Rudolph (3), and Wyomia Tyus (3). Tyus became the first athlete to win Gold Medals in the sprints in two consecutive Olympiads (1964 and 1968), but the first star of the Tigerbelles was Wilma Goldean Rudolph.

Wilma G. Rudolph was born June 23, 1940, in Clarksville. She was the 20th of 22 children. Her father, E. D. Rudolph, already had fourteen children when he married Wilma's mother, Blanche. Wilma Rudolph suffered chicken pox, measles, scarlet fever, whooping cough, and polio. She wore leg braces from age six until ten years old.

In early 1955, when serving as a referee for a basketball game in Clarksville, the coach of the Tennessee A & I State College women's track team, Edward S. Temple, invited the long, skinny-legged teenage basketball player, 14-year-old Wilma, to attend his summer camp.



In 1956 Rudolph and five other Tigerbelles qualified for the 1956 Olympics, returning to Nashville with many medals and plaques. In 1959 Rudolph accompanied the team to the Pan American Games where they also won several medals. At the 1960 Olympic Games in Rome, Italy, Rudolph won three gold medals. Coach Temple said: " ... at the 1960 Olympics ... I was so happy [for Wilma] I was bursting all the buttons off my shirt."

Wilma G. Rudolph won the James E. Sullivan Award in 1960, the year her father

died. She was received by President John F. Kennedy. In 1962 Rudolph retired from track and field and completed goodwill tours abroad before returning to Clarksville. There she married Robert Eldridge, and they had two sons and two daughters: Yolanda, Djuana, Robert and Xurry. After teaching second grade in a Clarksville elementary school Rudolph left to take several jobs, later settling in Indianapolis for ten years. Although a star and America's first female athlete to be so honored, Wilma Rudolph's life was "no crystal stair." In her book, *Wilma: The Story of Wilma Rudolph* (1977), Rudolph said: "I was besieged with money problems; people were always expecting me to be a star, but I wasn't making the money to live like one. I felt exploited both as a woman and as a black person."

On December 2, 1980, Tennessee State University named its indoor track for Wilma Rudolph.

In 1992 Wilma Rudolph's life journey pulled her back to Tennessee, where she became a vice-president for Nashville's Baptist Hospital. In July of 1994, shortly after her mother's death, Wilma Rudolph was diagnosed with brain and throat cancer. She did not want people to see her, but Rudolph would come out to Tennessee State University and walk arm-in-arm around the Tigerbelles' track with retired Coach Temple. On November 12, 1994, Wilma G. Rudolph quietly passed away. Thousands of persons filled TSU'S Kean Hall on November 17 when Rudolph's body was received for memorial services. The funeral followed at Clarksville's First Baptist Church and the State of Tennessee flew flags at half-mast.

Wilma G. Rudolph's life was short, painful but triumphant. She was more than an athlete-Wilma Rudolph was the epitome of the triumphant human being. She was a leader, a humanitarian, and an extraordinary person in the history of Tennessee. She won the National Woman's Hall of Fame award (1994) and was awarded two honorary degrees. A section of Highway 79 in Clarksville was renamed Wilma Rudolph Boulevard (1994). On July 21, 1995, Clarksville groups held a Wilma Rudolph Breakfast. On August 11, 1995, TSU dedicated its new six-story dormitory the Wilma G. Rudolph Residence Center. On November 21, 1995, the Wilma Rudolph Memorial Commission placed a black marble marker at her grave in Clarksville's Foster Memorial Garden Cemetery. On October 13, 1995, TSU's annual Edward S. Temple Seminars in Society and Sports named its annual luncheon the Wilma Rudolph Memorial Luncheon. Lastly, in April of 1996, a life-sized bronze statue of Rudolph was completed for mounting in Clarksville, Tennessee.

*Bobby L. Lovett, 1997*

### **JACKIE SHANE (1940-2019)**

Jackie Shane, pioneering Black transgender musician, was born in Nashville in 1940 to Jack Crawford and Jessie Shane. As a child growing up in North Nashville, Jackie knew that she was a female trapped in a male's body. Her grandmother exposed her to music at an early age, singing beautiful melodies around the house. By four years old, Jackie relished wearing makeup and women's clothing and took posture cues from iconic actress Mae West.

Barely a teenager, Jackie joined a musical trio by happenstance after hearing young pianist Louis Lavelle playing blues in the back room of a neighborhood store. She tapped beats on chairs as Lavelle played, and he noticed her innate rhythm. They swiftly formed a band with guitarist Les Monday and got regular bookings with radio station WVOL and the Nashville Fairgrounds. At age fifteen, Jackie met Little Richard and influenced the drum stylings of Charles "Chuck" Connors from Richard's band The Upsetters. For the 1957 Excello Records hit "I Miss You So," penned by Reverend Morgan Babbs, Jackie

created a simple, yet infectious beat; the song reached #8 on the R&B charts and #66 on the Pop charts.

After a summer in L.A., Jackie returned to Nashville and became a regular member of the Excello/Nashboro studio band with guitarist Johnny Jones. The New Era, Nashville's preeminent Black nightclub on Charlotte Avenue, brought Jackie on as their house band drummer. She formed a new ensemble with Lavelle and Monday, adding guitarist Bobby Hebb and bassist DeFord Bailey, Jr., whose legendary father often sat in on sessions. Between 1957 and 1960, Jackie often recorded at Excello and the New Era, once cutting a complete album with gospel singer Edna Gallmon Cooke and backing up three live performances all in one day. As Jackie's predilection for music and performance deepened, Nashville's thriving African American music scene sought after and fostered her distinctive talent.

While playing Club Cherry in Lexington, Kentucky in 1958, Jackie assembled a superior ensemble who were quickly signed by a New York agent. During a show in Florida, Jackie upstaged Jackie Wilson and was asked to leave the tour. A prime example of Jackie Shane's on-stage intensity, it signaled that she was destined to be the star of the show. After being propositioned by one of her band mates, Jackie left the group and returned to Nashville, where musicians Joe Tex and Little Willie John advised her to leave the Jim Crow South in order to succeed. As an openly gay Black performer during this era, Jackie acquiesced to this inequitable truth. After witnessing racial violence in downtown Nashville in late 1958, she decided to pursue a new direction.

A brief tenure with carnival troupe Jerry Jackson's Hep Cats further shaped Jackie's on-stage persona. In mid-1959, she relocated to Ontario, Canada with Johnny Jones and fellow band members. They played a weeklong carnival at Cornwall, hired immediately thereafter by a Montreal club. Only nineteen, Jackie had near-death encounters with the local mob and a gang who kidnapped her band mates, forcing them to return to the States without their frontman. In spite of these traumas, Jackie opted to stick with her craft. She soon joined Frank "Duel Trumpet" Motley and his Motley Crew, playing Ray Charles and Bobby "Blue" Bland covers. That fall, the group and "Little Jackie Shane" played sold-out shows in Boston's Roxbury district alongside The Temptations, Marvin Gaye, The Drifters and Etta James.

Upon moving to Toronto in 1959-1960, Jackie was already performing in androgynous attire that became more effeminate as she rose to stardom. She spent the early 1960s gigging a regular circuit through Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Boston, Montreal and Toronto with the Motley Crew, cutting at least five tracks, including her two Little Richard-esque originals "Chickadee" and "Slave for You." Her chart-topping cover, "Any Other Way" (1962), received critical acclaim from *Billboard* and the *Chicago Defender*. The hit reached #2 on Toronto's CHUM Chart and sold over 10,000 copies locally, eclipsing Stax recording artist William Bell's original. Her follow-up 45, "In My Tenement" (Sue Records, 1963), received praise from *Billboard* and *Cashbox*, spurring

appearance requests from Dick Clark's *American Bandstand* and *The Ed Sullivan Show*. Jackie declined both shows, citing discriminatory practices.

Jackie left Sue Records in spring 1963 and turned down subsequent offers from Motown and Atlantic Records. After a few years in L.A., Jackie came back to Nashville in 1965 for



her only known American television performance on WLAC's R&B music program *Night Train*, where she sang a riveting version of "Walking the Dog." That summer, she toured California with Etta James and the O'Jays. Her life quieted down until August 1966, when she cut the single "Stand Up Straight and Tall"/"You Are My Sunshine" under L.A. label Modern Records. The single flopped, but a 1967 release of "Money" (1960) generated new buzz, ushering in her triumphant re-entry to Toronto's music scene. By this time, her audiences were more mainstream with roughly equal Black and White patronage, some of whom regularly traveled from as far away as Detroit and Buffalo.

"The Fabulous Jackie Shane" morphed into a bona fide star with an image of controlled flamboyance that attracted diverse audiences, including a legion of late-1960s cross-dressing fans. Using sharp wit and mid-

set monologues, she chronicled her challenges within the music industry during shows. After the release of *Jackie Shane Live* (1967), she took over Frank Motley's group The Hitchhikers and cut a final, original single "New Way of Lovin' (1969)." Jackie continued touring in Toronto and L.A., but went into seclusion in December 1971, disillusioned by the industry and fed up with transgender discrimination. Ultimately, she left the music industry and returned to Nashville to care for her beloved mother Jessie, who passed away in 1997. Jackie's masterful performances, underscored by gender-bending charisma, laid the groundwork for ensuing Glam Rock trends adopted by musicians like Lou Reed, David Bowie and Michael Jackson. Jackie departed in February 2019, mere weeks after being nominated for a Best Historic Album Grammy. Celebrated for her reserved mystique and unapologetic presence, Jackie broke myriad barriers for gay and transgendered people in the music industry, and far beyond.

*\*This profile uses the terms "she/her" to refer to Jackie, as was done for the 2017 "Any Other Way" liner notes, a publication to which she directly contributed.*

*Caroline Eller, 2021*

## **ELLA SHEPPARD MOORE (1851-1914)**

Ella Sheppard was born on February 4, 1851, in Nashville, Tennessee. Her father Simon Sheppard hired his time from his master and worked hard to accumulate \$1,800 to buy his freedom. Ella's mother, Sarah Hannah Sheppard, was not as fortunate. Her mistress promised Simon that he could buy Sarah, but the slaveowner refused to honor the agreement. Determined that Ella would not remain a slave, Sarah made a threat to "take Ella and jump into the river than see her a slave." Fearing the loss of mother and child, the slave mistress sold Ella to Simon Sheppard for \$350.

Ella remained in Nashville with her father when the mother was taken to Mississippi. Simon married another slave woman and gave \$1,300 for her freedom. A race riot hit Nashville in 1856, causing whites to tighten the controls on local free Negroes. When his business debts piled up and could not be paid, Simon fled to Cincinnati, Ohio, to prevent his family from being seized as assets and sold as slaves. Ella Sheppard attended a colored school and studied music in Cincinnati. Ella demonstrated such exceptional musical talent that her father bought a piano and paid for private music lessons.

Simon Sheppard died in 1866. His bills were paid, leaving Ella and her stepmother penniless. To help support the family, young Ella played the piano at local functions. A prominent local piano teacher agreed to help Ella continue her musical education. She became this man's only black pupil, and Ella had to keep the lessons a secret by entering the school through the back door between nine and ten o'clock at night.

Ella Sheppard returned to Tennessee. In 1868, she accepted a teaching position at Gallatin, north of Nashville. The poor Negro students paid tuition so seldom that she saved only six dollars after five months of work. Ella took this six dollars from her "pie box" (trunk) and entered Fisk University, where her six dollars lasted three weeks. By teaching music in Nashville, she earned enough money to continue in school for two years. Ella became the music teacher at Fisk University--the only black staff member at the school before 1875.

Again, good fortune smiled on Ella Sheppard. To relieve the school's serious financial deficiency, Fisk's treasurer, George L. White, organized a group of students to sing for money. The first excursions became so promising that Erastus M. Cravath reluctantly gave White permission to form a group and go on national tour. Cravath was field secretary for the American Missionary Association, Fisk's founding and funding agency, and he was White's brother-in-law. Ella Sheppard became one of nine singers selected by White to form the group of singers. She served as pianist and assistant trainer. Principal Spence became so upset about losing his only music teacher that he asked Cravath to hire another black teacher to serve during Ella's absence "lest the students rebel."



On October 6, 1871, the group went on tour. The first tour netted \$20,000 to pay for the site of a new campus at Salem (Eighteenth Avenue, North) and Jefferson Street. As majestic Jubilee Hall slowly rose on the site and the school needed more funds, the Jubilee Fund often became the only source of money for the school. So the singers had to extend their concert tours. In seven years, the Jubilee Singers raised \$150,000 in America and Europe. Ella Sheppard served as the backbone and trainer for the group.

In 1882, Ella Sheppard married George W. Moore. She spent many years helping George in his work with the American Missionary

Association, lecturing throughout the South, and organizing Jubilee choirs. Eventually, she located her mother and a sister in Mississippi and brought them to Nashville.

Ella Sheppard died on June 9, 1914. She was interred in Nashville's Old City Cemetery.

*Beth Howse, 1987*

### **BENJAMIN "PAP" SINGLETON (1809- ? )**

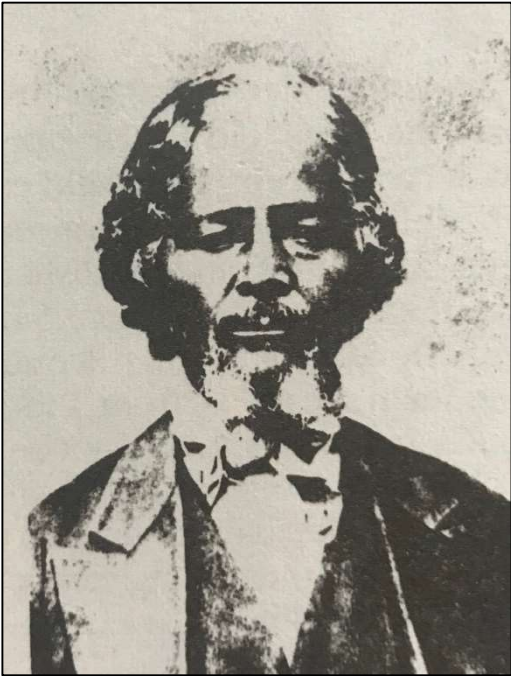
Benjamin "Pap" Singleton called himself the "father of the Black Exodus," a movement that began during the late 1860s and continued into the 1880s, when thousands of freedmen resettled in Kansas, Oklahoma, Nebraska, Indiana, and other areas. Singleton led nearly 8,000 blacks to Kansas via steamboat, train, and wagon.

Singleton was a former Davidson County slave, born around 1809, and raised and trained as a cabinet maker. After being sold and sent to New Orleans, he escaped back to Nashville and then to Detroit and Canada. During the Civil War years, Singleton left Detroit and returned to Nashville, which was under Union army occupation. He made a living building cabinets and coffins, while he lived in a large Union camp for fugitive slaves along the riverbank in Edgefield (East Nashville, near the Jefferson Street bridge). When peddling his wares, "Pap" Singleton, as his fellow freedmen called him, preached to idle, destitute former slaves about going west to farm and own federal homestead lands.

In September of 1869, black Nashvillians held a large meeting about migrating from the South. Elias Polk, Robert Knowles, Randall Brown, Henry Carter, and Daniel Wadkins argued the pros and cons of leaving the South. Many of Nashville's freedmen were frustrated because of crowded and impoverished conditions, recent outbreaks of racial violence by whites, and the 1869 electoral defeat of their city Republican ticket by white



Conservatives (Democrats). When the mass meeting failed to gain a vote for the exodus, Singleton and a Summer County black preacher, Columbus M. Johnson, organized a homestead association. Johnson was concerned about addressing the large federal contraband camps, which housed impoverished freedmen in Gallatin and Hendersonville. In 1872, the association sent a committee to investigate Kansas for settlement. A year later, Johnson, Singleton, and 300 persons boarded steamboats on the Cumberland River to settle in Cherokee County, Wyandotte, and Topeka, Kansas. For years, the north end of Topeka was called "Tennessee Town."



In April of 1875, Singleton, William A. Sizemore, and Benjamin Petway called for a state convention to discuss black migration to the West. The convention met in Liberty Hall (44 Cedar Street, now Charlotte), which was built in 1872 by and for Nashville's first black bank, the Freedman's Savings and Trust Company. The convention formed the Tennessee Emigration Society, sent delegates to Kansas, and resolved: "To the white people of Tennessee, and them alone, are due the ills borne by the colored people of this State." The *Memphis Bulletin* newspaper reported that the "chiefest ground of discontent is inadequate labor prices and delays in paying the same. A repair of this evil would tend greatly towards checking the flow of [black] immigration out of the State, already begun." Then the Nashville Colored People's Cooperative

Emigration Club was formed "to improve the moral, intellectual, social, and material interests of the colored people." The leaders hoped to relieve crowding in Tennessee's urban black neighborhoods, resettle the black poor, and build a politically powerful society in the Far West.

Singleton, Sizemore, and their followers formed the Edgefield Real Estate Association, located at No. 5 Front Street. They held rallies in Brentwood and other black communities, raised funds by charging five cents for parties, and published newspapers to publicize the colored migration. Singleton criticized Frederick Douglass and other Republicans for opposing the freedmen's exodus from the South, saying, "Such men as this should not be leaders of our race any longer." But Douglass simply argued that the Negroes should remain in the South and fight the racist attempts to re-enslave them. In Nashville, Singleton plastered lettered posters announcing: "Leave for Kansas on April 15, 1878." He established a colony at Dunlap, Morris County, Kansas, in June of 1879. At least 2,407 local blacks joined the exodus.

The Nashville *Union and American* called the Black Exodus "a foolish project," and white employers supported a campaign to attract Chinese laborers to replace the black workers.

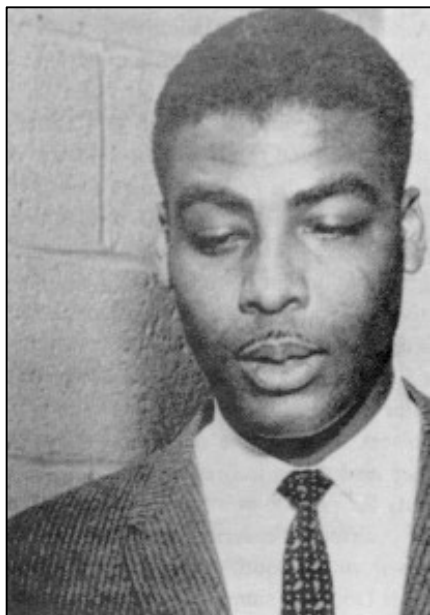


By 1882, the Black Exodus had stopped. The waters of the Cumberland River washed out all traces of the black emigrants who boarded so many steamboats near Edgefield. Benjamin "Pap" Singleton died out West during the late 1880s and was buried in an unidentified grave.

*Bobby L. Lovett, 1990*

### **KELLY MILLER SMITH, SR. (1920-1984)**

Kelly Miller Smith was born on October 28, 1920, in the all-black town of Mount Bayou, Mississippi, to Terry Monroe and Priscilla Anderson Smith. He received his early education in Mound Bayou and graduated in 1938 from the Magnolia Avenue High School in Vicksburg, Mississippi. Later in 1938, Smith entered Tennessee A & I State College; however, after being called to the ministry, he transferred to Morehouse College and completed the bachelor's degree in religion by 1942. Smith furthered his education at Howard University where he earned the Master of Divinity degree and later received an honorary doctorate (1976).



The Reverend Smith served as pastor for the Mount Heroden Baptist Church congregation in Vicksburg, Mississippi, from 1946 to 1951. In May 1951, he became pastor of Nashville's First Colored Baptist Church (First Baptist Church, Capitol Hill) on Eighth Avenue North. Here, Smith spent the remainder of his life, completing a magnificent new church edifice in 1972, inaugurating new programs, and completing the Kelly Miller Smith Towers, a highrise apartment complex for the elderly, in 1980.

When the U.S. Supreme Court handed down its *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) decision against school segregation, Smith was president of the Nashville chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). He joined twelve other black parents in a federal suit to achieve desegregation in

Nashville public schools.

In 1958, the Reverend Smith founded the Nashville Christian Leadership Council and served as president until 1963. This organization sponsored the non-violent workshops and demonstrations that played an integral role in desegregating Nashville's lunch counters, hotels, and theaters. Smith, a strong advocate of non-violence, believed that Americans would be more sympathetic to black rights if Negroes obtained their rights through peaceful demonstration than in a court. Also, in his efforts to promote

educational and economic parity for black Americans, Smith founded a local chapter of the Opportunities Industrial Center, Incorporated, in 1969.

In the same year, he was appointed as assistant dean of Vanderbilt University's Divinity School. Additionally, Dr. Smith served on the faculties of Natchez College, Alcorn College, and American Baptist Theological Seminary. Other honors he received were as follows: one of *Ebony* magazine's "Ten Most Outstanding Preachers in America"; one of *Nashville* magazine's "Ten Most Influential Citizens" in 1977; president of the National Conference of Black Christians; member of the board of directors for Morehouse College's School of Religion; member of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches; a founder of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. In 1983, Dr. Smith delivered the prestigious Lyman Beecher Lectures at Yale University. These lectures served as the basis for his final publication, *Social Crisis Preaching* (1984).

Linda T. Wynn, 1986

### **WILLIAM OSCAR SMITH (1917-1991)**

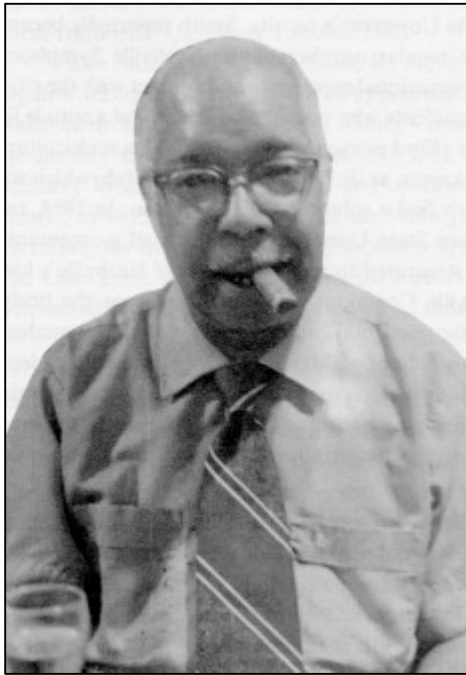
William Oscar Smith was born in Bartow, Georgia, to William O. and Ida B. Smith on May 2, 1917. Due to threats his father received from local white supremacists, six months after Smith's birth the family moved to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Reared in Philadelphia, W. O. received his education in the city schools and was graduated from Benjamin Franklin High School. After graduating from high school, he entered the Mastbaum Vocational School of Music. Subsequent to attending Mastbaum, Smith matriculated at Lincoln University and in 1937 entered New York University (NYU), New York City. While a student at NYU, Smith, a bassist, gained practical music experience playing with noted persons such as Bessie Smith, Fats Waller, Dizzy Gillespie, and Coleman Hawkins.

Two years after he enrolled in NYU, Smith "thumped" his way into jazz history by playing for the now-classic Coleman Hawkins recording of *Body and Soul*. In June of 1942, he was graduated from NYU with a Bachelor of Arts degree. Smith continued his academic training, earning a graduate degree from the University of Texas at Austin and the Doctor of Philosophy degree from the University of Iowa at Iowa City.

During World War II, Smith was stationed at Fort Huachuca, Arizona, as band director in the Thirty-seventh Special Services Company, U. S. Army. While in the service, he met a young woman named Julia (maiden name undetermined), whom he married; in 1944 they became parents of W. O. Smith, III. After his tour of military service ended, he returned to New York and taught at the Seward Park High School.

In 1945, Smith participated in a recording session with Max Roach and Dizzy Gillespie. Later in the same year, he moved to Baltimore, and at Morgan State College he met Catherine Leeds, to whom he was married in 1948. They became the parents of three children: Jacqueline, Jay, and Joel. As he wrote in his autobiography, *Sideman. The Long*

*Gig of W. O. Smith* (1991), when he moved to Baltimore, he “effectively left behind [his] chance to become a big name in jazz.” Smith displayed his musical capability at noted spots of entertainment such as the Cotton Club and the Savoy Ballroom. In 1952, W. O. Smith and his family moved to Nashville, where he began his thirty-year tenure on the faculty of Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State University. Dr. Smith’s educational, musical, and cultural endeavors in his adopted city made him a force with which to be reckoned.



Subsequent to joining Tennessee State University’s faculty, Smith reportedly became the second African American to become a regular member of the Nashville Symphony, playing in the viola and bass sections. His instructional experience and contact with the city’s school system made him painfully aware of students who possessed a desire and aptitude for music but lacked the financial wherewithal to afford private lessons. Through a multicultural gathering of interested community members known as the Wednesday Night Club, which was founded by Smith, he articulated his desire to find a solution to the problem. In 1984, two years after Smith’s retirement from Tennessee State University, his vision of a community music school came to fruition. Specifically structured to meet the needs of Nashville’s low income students, the W. O. Smith/Nashville Community Music School was the

bridge between the city’s public schools, where the students’ multitude prevented personalized training on a one-to-one ratio, and the Ellair School of Music, a private musical academy where the \$300 cost for fifteen weekly half-hour periods (payable in advance) was preclusive for under-privileged persons. The community music academy was established in the inner city at 1416 Edgehill, where it provided seven teaching studios, a waiting room, and office space.

Dr. William Oscar Smith died on May 31, 1991. His remains were interred in Woodlawn Cemetery, Nashville.

*Linda T. Wynn, 1996*

## **SOUTHEASTERN CONFERENCE**

As this year is the 40th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Public Law 88-352), it is only fitting that some attention be given to the sports arena, specifically the desegregation of the Southeastern Conference (SEC) and the role that Nashville played in

bringing down the conference's "Jim Crow" walls and racially diversifying its teams. In May 1966, Perry E. Wallace, Jr., who played center on Pearl Senior High School's championship varsity basketball team, signed with Vanderbilt University and became the first African-American "Commodore" to participate in the school's varsity sports and in SEC basketball. Just as young college students at the beginning of the sixth decade of the 20th century led Nashville in becoming the first major city in the South to desegregate its lunch counters during the sit-in movement, an academically talented, physically agile, and well-disciplined student athlete from North Nashville continued the civil rights struggle in the sports arena and led the desegregation of the SEC.

Known for his slam dunks and referred to as "king of the boards," Wallace was graduated from Pearl on June 7 as class valedictorian. During his high school basketball career, he averaged 19 rebounds and 12 points per game. A high school All-American, Wallace was recruited by more than 80 colleges and universities across the country. His graduation from high school occurred in the midst of the modern Civil Rights Movement and racial cordons across the spectrum were down or coming down every day. Yet, the SEC continued to conduct business as usual and remained racially segregated.

Wallace and his Pearl High teammates broke the Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association's (TSSAA) color barrier when they became the first African-American high school team to win the TSSAA's Boys' State Basketball Tournament (1966). Pearl High School's legendary Coach Cornelius Ridley suited a team of well disciplined, cerebral, and poised athletic student warriors.

A self-confident and disciplined Perry Wallace assumed a leadership role both on and off the basketball court. In the spring of 1966, both the Nashville *Tennessean* and *Nashville Banner* covered the flurry of recruiting surrounding Wallace and watched with great anticipation to see with which institution of higher education he would cast his lot. According to Roy Neel, who covered his signing as a sports reporter for the *Banner*, the high school All-American was "the best player in the region." Said Neel, "It was a daily drama." The excitement reached its apex when Wallace signed with Vanderbilt University, an SEC member school. He entered Vanderbilt University that fall as an engineering major and joined Vanderbilt's freshman basketball team. The same year, Roy Skinner, the Commodores basketball coach, also signed Godfrey Dillard from Detroit, Michigan, another African-American freshman basketball player.

During their first year, the African-American players encountered segregation's "flood of hatred" during games at Mississippi State, the University of Tennessee, and Auburn University. In spite of vitriolic racism, the players successfully completed their first year. However, Dillard left the team because of numerous injuries, leaving Wallace as the only African-American player on the Commodores squad. On December 2, 1967, he became the first African-American varsity student athlete to compete in the SEC.

According to Brad Golder's article "Breaking Barriers: The Story of Perry Wallace, the SEC's First Black Athlete," in the *Vanderbilt Hustler* (February 26, 2002), Wallace was handicapped before his first season on the varsity team began. The National Collegiate

Athletic Association (NCAA), with "strong support from Kentucky Head Coach Adolph Rupp and Oklahoma Head Coach Henry Iba, outlawed the slam dunk in college basketball." The "dunk shot" was Wallace's high school trademark. Like Kareem Abdul-Jabbar (Lewis Alcindor) of UCLA and other black collegiate basketball players, he executed it with precision. In 1966, Rupp's Kentucky Wildcats were upset in the National Championship by five black starters at Texas Western. "The NCAA crapped on Perry," Skinner said. "They took away his game." Notwithstanding, Wallace persevered and developed into one of the SEC's best post players.

Desegregating the SEC was not an easy task for the first African American who competed in its conference. He experienced intense ire from segregationists. Their blatant display of racism was at its worst in Alabama, Mississippi, and his home state of Tennessee. Cheerleaders led a volley of invective racist cheers against him. Although members of opposing teams made him the target of physical abuse on the court, referees refused to acknowledge their actions as intentional fouls. Fans threatened to beat, castrate, and lynch the trailblazing student athlete. When the Commodores played at Oxford, Mississippi, the catcalls, threats, and racially disparaging expletives were so vociferous, they were discernible over the radio airwaves. At Tennessee's Stokely Athletic Center, a group of opposing fans near the baseline threatened lynching, shouting "We gonna string you up, boy!" Wallace was harangued, taunted, and threatened throughout his SEC career.

Struggling to stay inbounds between whites who wanted him to fail and African Americans who expected him to be a "superstar," Wallace became the quintessential organization man." He never retaliated against players who maliciously fouled him. He realized that any perceived misconduct on his part would impede the progress of SEC desegregation. Wallace remained silently focused and let his performance on the basketball court speak for him. He met the test with dignity, decorum, and determination. The academically astute and well-disciplined student athlete set new criteria for SEC athletics. The first African-American "Commodore" and the first to complete four years in the SEC, Wallace ended his tenure as captain of the Vanderbilt varsity team. As a testament to his athletic prowess, notable bravery, and despite the racial bigotry he encountered, Wallace continued to reign as "king of the boards." According to Golder, Wallace still ranks "second on Vanderbilt's all-time rebounding list with 894 career rebounds." He stated, this is "a number that is even more amazing considering that he only played three varsity seasons."

A pioneer in the desegregation of SEC sports, Perry E. Wallace, Jr. earned a bachelor's degree in engineering in 1970. After his graduation, the universities of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and Kentucky opened the 1970 SEC season with desegregated varsity teams. With the assistance of Vanderbilt University, its coach, basketball team, and a well-disciplined student athlete from Pearl Senior High School, who became the first African American to compete in the Southeastern Conference, Nashville led the way in bringing down the conference's walls of racial segregation. Because of Vanderbilt's actions, the universities that belonged to the SEC diversified the players who suited up for their courts

or playing fields. After 1970, the SEC no longer conducted business as usual or adhered to a restrictive color barrier. In December 2003, after 71 years of existence, the SEC secured its first African-American head football coach when Mississippi State University hired Sylvester Croon, thus bringing down another conference color barricade. Forty years after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, its member teams are desegregated as well as its coaching staffs.

*Linda T. Wynn, 2004*

## **SPRUCE STREET BAPTIST CHURCH**

Known as the 'Mother Church' of African-American Baptist churches in Nashville, Spruce Street Baptist Church originally began in 1841 when the congregation of First Baptist Church at Seventh and Broad permitted its "Colored members to hold a separate meeting under the superintendence of a Standing Committee on Negro Problems." Beginning in



1848, the First Baptist Colored Mission moved to Pearl Street (now Nelson Merry Street), and Nelson Merry was allowed to preach regular sermons to the Negro mission. After being examined by local Baptist ministers on November 29, 1853, Merry became the first ordained Negro minister in Nashville. In March of 1865, the Negro members of First Baptist Church requested that they be constituted as a "separate and independent church." A year later, the congregation was incorporated as the First Colored Baptist Church. Eighteen

years after its incorporation, in 1884, the Reverend Nelson Merry died on July 14th. Three years after Merry's death, an ideological spilt caused the Reverend Tom R. Huffinan to lead a group of members to form the Mt. Olive Baptist Church. The remaining members continued to worship with the Reverend M. W. Gilbert. In 1895, under the Reverend James E. Purdy, the First Colored Baptist Church again divided.

A little more than 100 years ago, the church known as Spruce Street Baptist Church came into existence under the pastorate of the Reverend James E. Purdy. Originally a part of First Colored Baptist Church, Spruce Street became the second branch of the city's first African American Baptist church to organize a separate congregation. On September 19, 1895, one day after Booker T. Washington delivered his Atlanta Compromise speech, those members who followed the Reverend Purdy were incorporated as the Spruce Street Baptist Church. Purdy served the congregation for two years and in 1897 was succeeded by Pastor E. F. Dennis, under whose leadership the members began the process of

rebuilding the congregation and the church building. At the turn of the century, pastoral leadership was given to the Reverend E. J. Fisher. It was during Fisher's tenure that the church's building program was completed. In 1905, the Reverend E. W. D. Isaac was called to lead the congregation. It was during this same year that African Americans in Nashville protested against the state's newly enacted "Jim Crow" streetcar law. Isaac, who was the editor of *The Nashville Clarion*, a Negro weekly newspaper, urged the black community to cease doing business with the Nashville Transit Company. On July 5, Blacks readily transformed disapproving discourse into protest action and withheld patronage from the local bus company.

Through the years, members of Spruce Street have been served by some of the nation's and the National Baptist denomination's greatest sermonists, religious scholars, and financiers, including but not limited to the Reverends T. E. Huntley, J. J. McNeil, and J. F. Grimmett. In 1947, under the pastorate of the Reverend C. A. W. Clark, Spruce Street opened the Willa A. Townsend Reading Room and the Nelson G. Merry Playground with a paid attendant. Two years later, the Callie P. Brown Nursery opened. The Reverend Dr. Arthur Melvin Townsend, who pastored Spruce Street Baptist Church at various periods between 1917 and 1956, led the congregation in two major building programs. In 1934, he was instrumental in having the church remodeled, when it was located on Capitol Hill, and in rebuilding the church on its present site, when the members were forced to acquiesce to the city's mid-1950s Capitol Hill Urban Renewal Program. In 1954, Spruce Street sold its Eighth Avenue, North, property to the federal government. Today the Nashville Branch of the Federal Reserve Bank stands on the site. Under the leadership of Dr. Townsend and other appropriate church leaders the congregation purchased property at 504 20th Avenue, North, and contracted with the African-American architectural firm of McKissack and McKissack to design the new church facility. Groundbreaking ceremonies were held on May 23, 1954.

In the summer of 1954, the last worship service of Spruce Street Baptist Church was held at 311 8th Avenue, North. While the site was under construction, the church's membership worshipped in the Head Elementary School auditorium. In 1955, Spruce Street's new church edifice was completed. The stained glass windows from the 311 8th Avenue, North, church building were preserved and restored for use in the new building as were the Communion table, pulpit chairs and podium, deacons' chairs, and congregational pews. In the fall of 1955, church members proudly marched from Head Elementary School into the new church building. In February 1958, the Reverend Lewis H. Woolfolk was called to lead the membership of the church. Under Woolfolk's leadership the church continued to move forward. Approximately four years after the completion of the church edifice, on April 20, 1959, the Reverend Dr. Arthur Melvin Townsend, member, former pastor, and secretary of the Sunday School Publishing Board of the National Baptist Convention U. S. A., Inc., died.

During the 1950s and 1960s, Spruce Street was an active participant in the African-American struggle for civil rights in Nashville. Not only did it financially support the student sit-in movement, but many of its members were active participants in the non-

violent direct-action protests of the era. In 1963, through a bond program under the leadership of Miss Bessie Walton, the mortgage on the church structure was retired and the documents were burned. Pastor Woolfolk served the congregation for sixteen years until ill health forced him to retire from his ministerial duties in the fall of 1974. In recognition of the Reverend Woolfolk's service, the congregation named him Pastor Emeritus. The Reverend Woolfolk was followed by the Reverend Drs. Harmon Stockdale (1974-1980), Cupid Poe (Interim: December 1980-April 1981), Charles R Hudson (1981-1985), and Robert Blackshear (1986-1987). All of these men made invaluable contributions to the growth of the church. Beginning in 1987, the congregation's horizon beyond denomination and race was broadened when they and the members of Hillsboro Presbyterian Church inaugurated the alternate exchange of pulpits and congregations twice a year, a practice that continues today. On December 17, 1989, the Reverend Raymond Bowman was installed as pastor of Spruce Street Baptist Church.

Spruce Street Baptist Church is active in denominational associations and conventions including the Stones River District Association, the Tennessee Baptist Missionary and Educational Convention, and the National Baptist Convention, U. S. A., Inc. Four of its last five pastors have served as moderators of the Stones River District Association, including Pastor Bowman. The church is an ardent supporter of the American Baptist College of American Baptist Theological Seminary. Scholarship programs have been established to assist students interested in furthering their academic endeavors. Realizing that it has a Christian responsibility to the community, Spruce Street participates through its outreach programs in the Greater Charlotte Feeding Cooperative, supports social agencies in their efforts to assist the less fortunate and provides tutorial services to the community's children.

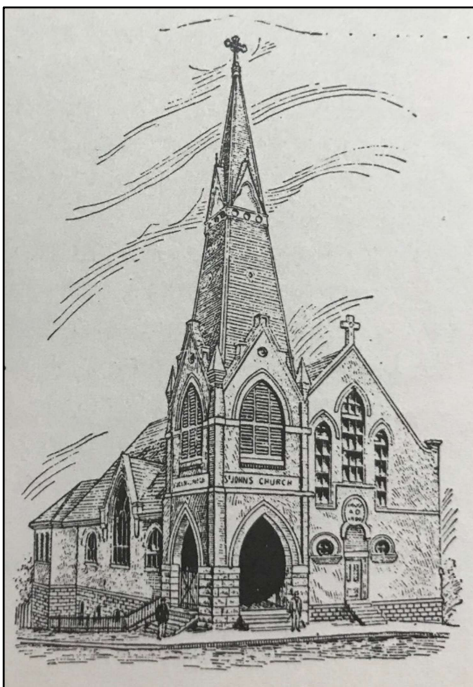
Throughout its 100 years of incorporation, Spruce Street Baptist Church has been a steadfast supporter of its denominational affiliations, a tireless proponent of the civic, political, and social rights of the African-American community, and a builder of bridges between the African-American community and the Nashville community at large.

*Linda T. Wynn, 1996*

## **ST. JOHN AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

St. John African Methodist Episcopal Church had its genesis on December 5, 1863—eleven months after the Emancipation Proclamation had been issued—when Bishop Daniel Alexander Payne arrived in Nashville, bringing with him letters from the nation's Secretary of War and the Secretary of the Treasury. These communications he presented to the Honorable Andrew Johnson, Governor of Tennessee, who received him cordially and granted him permission to organize African Methodist churches in the state.





At this same time, some officers and members of Capers Chapel M.E. Church, the first Negro meeting house in Nashville and built with the help of the member of McKendree Methodist Church, became dissatisfied with the connection with the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, because of its stand on slavery. Led by the Reverend Napoleon Merry, a thirty-nine-year-old free black, they made application to become a part of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Bishop Payne accepted the application, received the officers and members, and organized St. John AME Church. Reverend Merry became the first pastor, and the first house of worship was located at Spruce (now Eighth Avenue) and Gay streets.

This small band of members thus became part of a connectional church which, by this time and in less than fifty years since its conception as a denomination, had accomplished many “firsts” for black people. The African Methodist Episcopal Church had published the first Book of Discipline and the first hymn book; it had purchased Wilberforce University, which became the oldest university owned and controlled by black; it had organized a missionary society, ordered a magazine to be published quarterly (*The AME Review*), and established *The Christian Recorder*. The philosophy which gave rise to this growth and development likewise motivated the newly-born St. John.

In 1872, nine years after its founding, the Reverend J. W. Early became the pastor and during his tenure led the church to such growth—536 members, four preachers, two Sunday School superintendents with an attendance of 579—that a larger church building was needed. Property on the corner of Cedar and Spruce streets was purchased to accommodate a larger structure.

It was the ninth pastor, Reverend T.A. Thompson, who is credited with building what is not referred to as “Old” St. John. At the time of its construction it was said to be the largest ever undertaken by a group of blacks in the city of Nashville. In 1890 the membership proudly marched to this new edifice which was still not complete.

In 1903 the Reverend James A. Davis was transferred from a pastorate in Indianapolis with the instructions to “finish that church and make it the pride of Tennessee,” which he was able to do in two years and two months. Records indicate that between 1890 and 1956 St. John served not only its members but also made its facility available for community events requiring a large auditorium. During World War II, for example, the basement of the church was used as a substitute USO center for black soldiers denied access to the USO for whites only.

The year 1956 brought a drastic and unsettling change to St. John. The Capitol Hill Redevelopment Program displaced many churches and residents of the area near the State Capitol. Under the leadership of Reverend J.M. Granberry, Jr. (1950-1959), the church was relocated and a new building erected at 1822 Formosa Street.

From 1863 to the present, St. John has had thirty-five pastors whose tenures ranged from five months to eleven years, the longest to date under the pastorate of the Reverend E. Douglass Coleman, Sr. (1935-1946). The present pastor, the Reverend C.E. Jenkins, Sr. is in his seventh year. Two of its pastors became bishops; the Reverend Evans Tyree, M.D., in 1900, and the Reverend Noah W. Williams, in 1932. Two other ministers and one layperson were elected General Officers. The Reverend D.L. Witherspoon (1932-1935) was the first Secretary-Treasurer of the Pension Department, a direct result of his crusading efforts. The Reverend J.M. Granberry was elected to that same position in 1960 and served until his retirement in 1984. That same year, Jamye Coleman Williams was elected Editor of *The AME Review*, becoming the first woman elected a major General Officer in the 197-year history of the church.

From its humble beginning, from the toil and labor of its first members, some of whom were former slaves, and through the trials and tribulations of an impoverished and unlettered people, St. John has attempted to fulfill the mission of the church whose philosophy of self-help and theology of liberation have permeated the life of its members.

*Jamye C. Williams, 1988*

### **STONE SISTERS (1879-1975)**



The Stone sisters became the proprietors of the first black-owned beauty parlor in downtown Nashville. Their business was on the corner of Sixth Avenue,

North, and Union Street near the present site of the Tennessee Performing Arts Center. The sisters catered to a clientele of wealthy white women, and they introduced the first permanent-wave machine, which they learned to use at Frederick's in New York City. They sold hair pieces and wigs from France and used hair-weaving equipment, hair dryers, and hair-cutting tools, among other innovations. The sisters developed "Stone-White," a skin bleach lotion, and sold it at their beauty parlor. The Stone sisters resided at 1613 Jefferson Street, immediately across the street from Fisk University's Jubilee Hall.

Lee Stone (1879-1954), Sallie K. Stone (1881-1954), and Nannie Stone (1885-1975) began working in the early 1900s as apprentices at McIntyre Beauty Parlor, after arriving in Nashville from their birthplace in Maury County, Tennessee. The three sisters were joined by another sister, Emma Stone (1889-1934), who completed the pharmacy program at Meharry Medical College in 1907 and operated the Campus Drug Store at 1712 Jefferson Street. In 1915, the sisters bought the McIntyre Beauty Parlor from its white owner, May McIntyre, for the sum of \$500. The sisters operated the lucrative business until the 1930s. The Luke Leas, the Percy Warners, the Robert Cheeks, and other prominent white families frequented the Stone sisters' downtown establishment.

Two other sisters were not involved in the beauty parlor business: Augusta (1876-1917) and Hortense (1883-1959). Augusta married Jefferson D. Fowler, a physician and teacher at Meharry. Hortense, the mother of the author of this article, married George Richardson White, a former dental student at Meharry.

The mother of the Stone sisters, Sallie Brooks Stone (1858-1923), was born a slave. The father of the girls, John Secrest, was a prosperous white Jewish planter in Maury County. The girls inherited some Indian blood from their maternal grandmother, Sallie.

The Stone sisters held membership at the Gay Street Christian Church. Lee, Nannie, and Emma sang in the church's choir. The Stone family was compassionate and sensitive to the issue of racial oppression. The mother often visited the sick and gave money and food to the poor. The sisters unsuccessfully used money and influence to gain the release of a black Knoxville man accused of killing a white woman in 1919.

The Stone sisters, except for Nannie, are buried in Nashville's Greenwood Cemetery. Nannie was buried in California with her husband, dentist Thomas H. Grantham.

*Emma White Bragg, 1990*

### **SUNDAY SCHOOL PUBLISHING BOARD OF THE NATIONAL BAPTIST CONVENTION, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, INCORPORATED (1915- )**

In September of 1915, at the annual session of the National Baptist Convention, United States of America, held in Chicago, Illinois, the convention split over issues concerning the ownership and control of the National Baptist Publishing Board, of which Robert H. Boyd was secretary. With this chasm the Sunday School Publishing Board of the National Baptist Convention United States of America Incorporated (SSPB, NBC, USA, Inc.), came into existence. The administrators of the National Baptist Convention, Incorporated (NBCI), under the leadership of the Reverend Elias Camp Morris, established the SSPB in Nashville. It was housed at 409 Gay Street and, for the first five years of operation, was under the direction of attorney Solomon P. Harris and the Reverend William Haynes.



During their tenure in office, Harris and Haynes set about the task of fashioning the NBCI's publishing board. They instituted *The Baptist Voice*, which was prepared for publication and edited by the Reverend J. D. Crenshaw of Nashville. Under the joint leadership of Harris and Haynes, the infant publishing board endeavored to meet the needs of the NBCI. However, it was with the calling of the Reverend Dr. Arthur Melvin Townsend as secretary that the Sunday School Publishing Board moved into a phase of

productive growth.

In 1920, the Reverend Dr. A. M. Townsend was called by the NBCI to take over the leadership of its Sunday School Publishing Board. A graduate of Roger Williams University and Meharry Medical College, Dr. Townsend practiced medicine in Nashville and served on the faculty of Meharry Medical College until 1913. It was during 1913 that he began his five-year tenure as president of Roger Williams University. In 1918, Dr. Townsend resigned as president of the university to accept the pastorate of the Metropolitan Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee. He held this position for two years, before becoming secretary of the NBCI Sunday School Publishing Board.

Within a year after Dr. Townsend assumed leadership of the Sunday School Publishing Board, there were more than thirty employees and modern printing equipment was installed. The Sunday School Publishing Board was in need of new facilities. Officers of the Convention assigned this task to a committee of three, headed by Dr. Townsend, and authorized purchase or construction of a building for the Publishing Board. Dr. Townsend recruited persons to traverse the country, raising funds from the Convention's various churches, associations, and individuals. With funds raised from 300 donors who each contributed \$100, he purchased the Commercial Hotel on Fourth Avenue and Charlotte, where during antebellum days slave traders gathered to discuss the buying and selling of slaves, along with other goods and merchandise.

The Commercial Hotel was demolished, and Townsend hired the black architectural firm of McKissack and McKissack to design the new building. The construction contract for the new headquarters of the Sunday School Publishing Board was awarded to T. C. Windham, who also was of African descent. On May 18, 1924, the cornerstone of the building was laid. A year and a half later, the building opened on October 19, 1925. Sixty years after the ending of slavery, descendants of former slaves built and equipped a building valued at more than \$800,000. It was completely furnished and was among the most modern and best-equipped publishing houses of its kind in America. At the recommendation of President Lacey K. Williams, the building was named the Morris Memorial Building, in honor of Dr. Elias Camp Morris, who served the NBCI as president

for more than a quarter of a century (1894-1922). Five years after the erection of its new building, the Sunday School Publishing Board published Louis G. Jordan's *National Baptist History, U.S.A., 1750-1930*.

In less than twenty years, the mortgage on the Morris Memorial Building was paid off. On November 10, 1942, Dr. D. V. Jeminson, president of the NBCI, conducted the formal mortgage-burning ceremony. The "lamp lighter," as Dr. A. M. Townsend was known, continued to lead the Sunday School Publishing Board of the NBCI in a progressive fashion until his death on April 29, 1959. Following his demise, the Reverend Charles L. Dinkins, who was assistant secretary of the publishing board, served as acting secretary until the NBCI met in annual session the following September. At that meeting, the NBCI passed the torch to OF. D. C. Washington. He served as executive director of the Sunday School Publishing Board for the next fifteen years. Upon the death of Dr. Washington in September of 1974, Cecelia Nabrit Adkins served as interim executive director. Adkins had many firsts to her credit as an employee of the Sunday School Publishing Board. She was the first woman to serve as chief accountant, fiscal agent, and personnel director of the denominational publishing board. In January of 1975, during the mid-winter meeting of the NBCI, she was elected as executive director of the Sunday School Publishing Board. With this election, Dr. Adkins made denominational history and continued to add to her list of firsts by becoming the first woman and the first lay person named as executive director of the Sunday School Publishing Board. Not only did she become the first woman to head the Sunday School Publishing Board, but with her election she became the first woman administrator to lead a denominational publishing establishment--an operation serving more than 35,000 Baptist churches, with a constituency of approximately eight million persons.

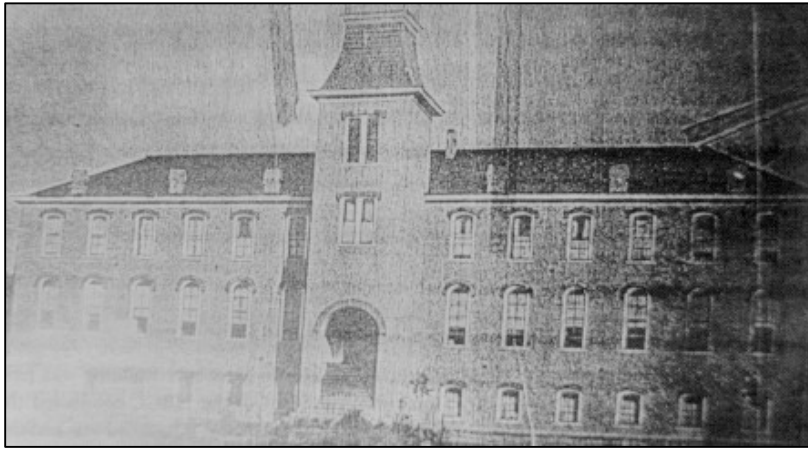
Today, the Sunday School Publishing Board continues to prosper. It not only publishes Sunday school and religious materials, it also publishes works on church administration, denominational history, and renown personages who have made invaluable contributions to the culture and history of African Americans.

*Linda T. Wynn, 1996*

### **SWIFT MEMORIAL COLLEGE (1883-1955)**

William Henderson Franklin, one of the first African-American graduates of Maryville College, was born in 1852 in Knoxville, Tennessee, to slave parents Henderson and Elizabeth (Bates) Franklin. He received his early education in the city's church-operated academies. Later, he was graduated from Maryville College, one of the few white schools of higher learning in the state that accepted students of African heritage. After completing the required course work at Maryville College, Franklin entered Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati, Ohio, and was graduated in 1883. Subsequent to his graduation, Franklin was sent to Rogersville, Tennessee, to establish a Presbyterian Church and assist

the city's African-American populace. The Reverend Franklin became pastor of St. Marks Presbyterian Church in Rogersville (Hawkins County).



The same year he arrived in Rogersville, the Reverend Franklin established Swift Memorial Institute and served as its principal and later as its president. For ten years, classes were conducted in the church. Ten years after the school's founding, the academy's first structure was actualized and named in honor of the Reverend Elijah

E. Swift, president of the Board of Missions for Freedmen and pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Pennsylvania. In 1901, because the state's legislative body enacted a statute that closed Maryville College's doors to African Americans, the school's board of trustees voted to convey \$25,000 of its endowment to Swift Memorial Institute. The \$25,000 transfer carried with it the prerequisite that the Board of Missions for Freedmen erect a dormitory for male students and that the educational institution be elevated to a four-year college. Through the endeavors of Dr. Mary E. Holmes of Rockford, Illinois, and friends of Dr. Swift, the Freedmen's Board built a three-story men's dormitory in 1903. A year later, Swift Memorial Institute became Swift Memorial College offering a four-year curriculum. By 1913, the women's dormitory was inadequate to meet the school's needs, and two wings were added to the main building for dormitory use.

Under President Franklin's leadership, the school experienced growth and prosperity. Franklin retired at the end of the 1926 academic year, and he was succeeded by the Reverend Dr. C. E. Tucker, pastor of the Leonard Street Presbyterian Church in Chattanooga, Tennessee. During the beginning of Dr. Tucker's administration, the Tennessee Board of Education began its program of evaluating all educational institutions. The state board gave Swift credit for only one year of its four-year curriculum. Dr. Turner began the process of reorganizing the school. Three years later, the curriculum was standardized and two years of fully accredited college courses were offered. Swift Memorial College became Swift Memorial Junior College. As a junior college, the school flourished and continued its mission of providing an education to students from Tennessee and other southern states.

After ten years of untiring service, Tucker retired at the end of 1935-36 school year and was succeeded by Dr. Hargrave, head of the English and education departments. Dr. Hargrave retired in 1941 and was followed by Robert E. Lee, who had served the college since 1926 as a teacher, coach, and dean. Under his management, many changes were implemented, including the addition of the Industrial Arts Department, a gymnasium, a home economics cottage, and an expanded library.

During the 1940s and 1950s, the National Board of Missions began reassessing the feasibility of operating the twenty schools located in the South. The National Board of Missions for Freedmen discontinued its support for Swift Memorial in 1952. However, with assistance from the local board of directors and from funds obtained from public sources, receipts from students, and gifts from alumni and friends, Lee was able to keep the school operational until 1955.

In 1955, Swift Memorial Junior College closed. The boys' dormitory was used by the Hawkins County Board of Education as a public high school, and William T. Blevins, a Swift alumnus of Rogersville, was hired as principal. The building was used as a high school until 1964, when Hawkins County schools were desegregated.

*Linda T. Wynn, 1996*

### **THOMAS WASHINGTON TALLEY (1870-1952)**

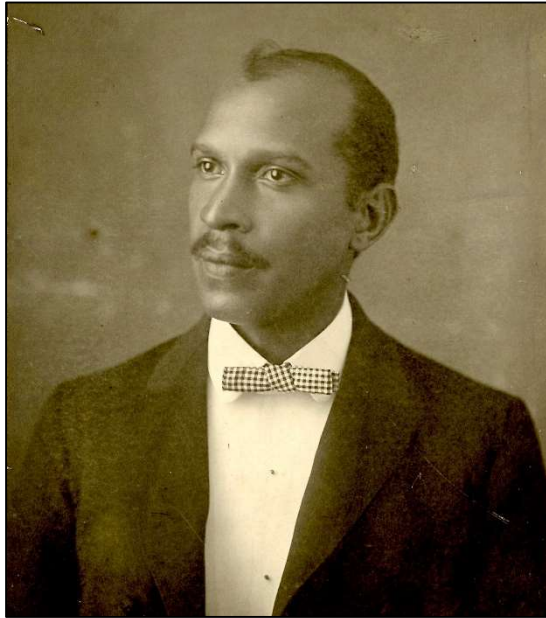
Fisk Chemistry professor and pioneering African American folklorist, Thomas Washington Talley was born on October 9, 1870, in Bedford County, Tennessee. His parents, Charles Washington Talley and Lucinda Talley, were former slaves who had moved with their extended family from Mississippi to near Shelbyville, Tennessee, shortly after the Civil War. One of nine children, young Thomas attended a school for African American children built on a relative's property, and after six years of education, taught at the school before leaving Bedford County for Nashville. In Nashville, he received both his high school and college education at Fisk University, where he studied science and participated in several musical endeavors, including touring with the Fisk Jubilee Singers. Talley graduated from Fisk in 1890. He continued his studies at Walden University, receiving graduate degrees from Walden and Meharry. Talley pursued additional graduate work throughout the course of his life, including summer sessions at Harvard University, and he received a doctorate from the University of Chicago in 1931.

Talley dedicated his adult life to education, holding instructional positions at Alcorn A&M, Florida A&M, and Tuskegee Institute. While at Florida A&M, he also served as Vice-President of the university, and there he met Ellen Eunice Roberts, whom he married in 1899. In 1903, Talley returned to Fisk University, where he spent over thirty years teaching chemistry, biology, and science, and served as the chairman of the Chemistry Department for twenty-five years. Talley was professor and advisor to St. Elmo Brady, who left Fisk following his graduation and became the first African American to earn a doctorate in Chemistry, at the University of Illinois. Talley-Brady Hall on the Fisk campus is named in their honor. Talley also published numerous articles in the sciences in highly regarded journals. He retired from Fisk in 1938.

Remembering the jubilee songs of his youth, Talley enjoyed performing these songs with choral groups, including the Fisk Mozart Society (now Fisk University Choir), with which he participated and directed, along with singing with the choir at the Fisk Union Church.



Preparing for a Christmas program, he wrote a Christmas jubilee song based on the traditional music of his past entitled “Behold That Star,” which has become a widely performed Christmas carol.



A talented singer and musician, and long interested in the stories and traditions learned from his family members on the farm near Shelbyville, Talley began writing down the stories, rhymes, songs, and games he remembered from his youth. He cultivated a friendship with other Fisk scholars interested in African American music and folklore, including John Work II and William J. Faulkner, and collected additional songs and folk tales from his friends, family, colleagues, and students, including from other countries of the African diaspora. His collection of folksongs was published in 1922 as *Negro Folk Rhymes (Wise and Otherwise)*, with a lengthy scholarly analysis by Talley and an Introduction by Vanderbilt literature professor Walter Clyde Curry.

Although ignored by many contemporary white folklorists and journals, *Negro Folk Rhymes* received favorable reviews in the African American and foreign press, and today is highly regarded as the “first serious collection of folksongs from Tennessee, the first compilation of black secular folksong, and the first to be assembled by a black scholar” (Cockrill).

Talley’s work in folklore was not limited to collecting songs and stories. His analyses of folkloric tales, including one published posthumously in the *Tennessee Folklore Society Bulletin* of “De Wull er de Wust (The Will o’ the Wisp),” demonstrate a scholarly understanding of the insight these tales offered in the expression and intellect of African American society from its earliest days. Talley had compiled many other introductory essays and comments on some fifteen lengthy folktales in a manuscript found in his papers after his death, published in 1993 by the University of Tennessee Press as *The Negro Traditions*. Another book-length manuscript he titled “The Origins of Tradition” was published in part and in an early form in *Phylon*, the journal founded by his college friend W.E.B. DuBois, but otherwise remains unpublished.

Talley and his wife Ellen were the parents of three daughters, two of whom survived to adulthood. Both were accomplished musicians. Their daughter Sonoma excelled in piano, studying at the Institute of Musical Art in New York (now Julliard), touring internationally and teaching music at Pearl High School in Nashville. Talley’s daughter Thomasina graduated from Fisk, studied at Julliard, and received a doctorate from Columbia, eventually becoming chair of the music department at North Carolina College for Negroes (now North Carolina State University). She married historian and Civil Rights



pioneer Lorenzo Johnston Greene. Ellen Talley died in 1939; Thomas Washington Talley died July 11, 1952, in Nashville. Both are buried in Nashville's Greenwood Cemetery. Fisk University recently restored the Talley home as the Talley Alumni House; the project received a Preservation Award from the Metropolitan Nashville Historical Commission in 2011.

*Tara Mitchell Mielnik, 2014*

### **MOTHER MARY MAGDALENA L. TATE (1871-1930)**



Saint Mary Magdalena L. Tate is recognized as the founder of the First Holiness Movement in the United States. The Church of God, a member of the Holiness - Pentecostal denomination, is located in dozens of states and Jamaica, with headquarters in Nashville (since 1924).

Saint Mary Magdalena L. Tate was born January 3, 1871. During her youth, because of her character and demeanor, she was called "Miss Do Right." Mary Tate's followers were known as "The Do Rights."

Mary Magdalena L. Tate became known by many of her faithful followers as Mother Tate. In 1903, this unique black woman, along with her two sons, Walter Curtis Lewis and Feliz Early Lewis, founded and established the House of God, which is "the Church of the Living God, the Pillar and the Ground of the Truth Without Controversy" (1 Timothy 3:15-16). (Cited hereafter as House of God).

After she was ordained by God, Mother Tate boldly preached "the Gospel in cleanliness of the word of God and of things pertaining to the Kingdom of God." Many persons were amazed and wondered at the demonstration of the Gospel, which was preached by this blessed servant of God. She preached her first sermon at Brooklyn, Illinois. In 1907, Mother Mary Magdalena climaxed a career as a world evangelist of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In Alabama, over 900 persons were converted to Christianity through her preaching. She boldly went into the water and baptized many of the converts through the physical strength given her by the Lord's power.

Mother Tate was baptized in 1908 and was approved and accepted as Chief Apostle Elder, president, and first chief overseer of the formally organized church in Greenville, Alabama. Additionally, she was ordained to the Bishopric by the Board of Trustees and Bishops of the Church of God. Mother Tate organized and presided over the First General

Assembly of the Church of God from June 25 to July 5, 1908, in Greenville. A number of ministers were ordained, and several pastors were appointed at this meeting.

In 1910, the first Church of God was established in Waycross, Georgia. During the following year, the first Georgia State Assembly of the Church of God was held in Waycross, where the first presiding elders were appointed and pastors received financial support from the general church.

One of the most significant developments in the Church of God was the creation of the Decree (Covenant) Book during the 1914 General Assembly at Quitman, Georgia. Also at this meeting, four state bishops were appointed to serve in Georgia. In 1914, Mother Tate organized the first Church of God in Florida in the city of Ocala. The first Florida State General Assembly followed at Ocala.

By 1916, under the leadership of Mother Tate, charters were issued to Church of God members in more than twenty states and the District of Columbia. Between 1930 and 1962, fourteen state charters were granted to establish the Church of God. Four more states were added to the Church of God roster by 1981. By 1992, some forty-three states and Jamaica were chartered by the Church of God.

In 1924, the Church of God's headquarters was established on Heiman Street in Nashville, Tennessee. The original building, although no longer used for services, still stands on Heiman Street. The present headquarters' sanctuary was dedicated in 1981. The Church of God, a member of the Holiness-Pentecostal denomination, has experienced the greatest growth in membership of any Christian organization in the United States of America.

Mother Mary Magdalena L. Tate died on December 28, 1930, and was buried in the family plot in Dickson, Tennessee. Her remains were relocated in Nashville's historic Greenwood Cemetery in 1963. A marker to memorialize Mother Tate was erected near the entrance to the cemetery.

*F. Dovie Shuford, 1992*

### **GEORGIA GORDON TAYLOR (1855-1913)**

Georgia Gordon Taylor, a native Nashvillian, was an original Fisk University Jubilee Singer. She entered Fisk in 1868 and remained a student in the literary department. She took music lessons from George L. White before becoming a Jubilee Singer in 1872. Georgia was among the first group of singers to tour the United States and Europe in 1872-73, when the Jubilee Singers appeared before Queen Victoria in England. After returning to America, Georgia married the Reverend Preston Taylor, founder of Greenwood Cemetery and Lea Avenue Christian (Disciples of Christ) Church. In 1878, Georgia Gordon Taylor was posthumously awarded a bachelor's degree by Walter Leonard, president of Fisk University. Georgia Gordon was eighteen years old when she

went to Europe in 1873. She sits in a Victorian chair with her feet on a footstool at the extreme right of the oil painting by Haverhill, Queen Victoria's artist-friend, who was so fascinated with the Jubilee Singers' music that he offered his services free of charge to the Queen to paint the group's portrait. This famous oil portrait now hangs in the Appleton Room of Jubilee Hall on Fisk University's campus.



Georgia was born in 1855 in Nashville, Tennessee, to a mulatto mother, Mercy Duke Gordon (1833-1890), and a slave father, George Gordon (1830-1870). Mercy's mother was white, and the law required that children of free mothers were free. Between 1620 and 1820, most American mulattoes had white mothers and black fathers. Mercy had another child, Elwina, born in 1848 and fathered by a white man (a "Doctor Warner") before she married the black slave, George Gordon. It also was common for slaves and free blacks to marry each other. Free blacks comprised nearly twenty-two percent of Nashville's population by 1860, and mulattoes (persons of black and white parentage) made up more than half of the town's free Negroes. Some slaves, perhaps like George Gordon, were quasi-independent persons, who

were allowed to live in their free spouse's household, hire out their own time, and pay part of their wages to their owner. Because Mercy was a free person, all of her children were born free, even though Georgia's father was a slave. Mercy and George had two children: Governor B. (1853-1870) and Georgia.

Georgia married Preston Taylor (1849-1931) and had one child, Preston G. Taylor (1890-91); she was brokenhearted over the death of her seven-month-old son. She became her husband's constant companion, but she gave freely of her singing ability as a soprano soloist throughout Nashville's black community.

Following her death in 1913, Georgia Gordon Taylor was buried in Nashville's Greenwood Cemetery on Elm Hill Pike, where a magnificent and beautiful monument marks her resting place. A plaque denotes that she was an original Jubilee Singer, and her experiences with the Jubilee Singers are well documented in the Special Collections section of the Fisk University Library.

*Emma W. Bragg, 1991*

## **PRESTON TAYLOR (1849-1931)**



Preston Taylor was born in Shreveport, Louisiana, on November 7, 1849, of slave parents. Taylor served as a drummer boy in the Union army during the siege of Richmond, Virginia. After the Civil War, he traveled throughout the North, but settled at Mount Sterling, Kentucky, as a minister. Deeply affected by the exclusion of Negroes from local Reconstruction projects, Taylor secured a contract to build several sections of the Big Sandy Railway from Mount Sterling to Richmond, Virginia. After this successful business venture and extensive work in the Christian (Disciples of Christ) Church, he moved to Nashville.

Taylor arrived in Nashville around 1884. By the early years of the twentieth century, he had become one of Nashville's most influential black business and religious leaders. He married Georgia Gordon, one of the original

Fisk Jubilee Singers. Their son, Preston, died as an infant in 1891, and Mrs. Taylor died in 1913. Taylor then married Ida D. Mallory.

In 1887, Taylor purchased thirty-seven acres of land near "Buttermilk Ridge" at Elm Hill Pike and Spence Lane. Upon this dairy land, in 1888, he established Nashville's second oldest cemetery for blacks, Greenwood. Also in 1888, he founded Taylor Funeral Company at 449 North Cherry Street (now Fourth Avenue).

In 1905, he extended his holdings with the purchase of thirty-seven and one-half acres of land near the corner of Spence Lane and Lebanon Road, for the purpose of establishing the Greenwood Recreational Park for Negroes. The park was elaborate, with fountains, gardens, shows, good stands, a baseball park, rides, band stands, and special attractions. The annual State Colored Fair was held there, where at times some 14,000 persons attended in a single day. His horse-drawn "pleasure wagons" met the electric streetcars at the Green-Fairfield Street turnaround and took the customers to the Lebanon Road entrance of the park. Mysterious fires threatened twice to destroy the park. Otherwise, there was no challenge to Greenwood Park until the first city-owned park for Negroes, Hadley Park, was opened in July of 1912. Taylor's business ventures made him a wealthy man.

After moving to Nashville, Taylor became minister of the Gay Street Christian Church, founded in 1855 as the Negro congregation of the white Vine Street First Christian Church. In 1891, due to a controversy, the Reverend Taylor and a part of the congregation left the Gay Street Colored Christian Church and established a church in a doctor's office building on Spruce Street (now Eighth Avenue). In 1903, the congregation completed a

church building on Lea Avenue near Lafayette Street. After Taylor's death, the two congregations united into today's Gay-Lea Christian Church, located on Osage Street.

Among his other activities were the organization in 1917 of the National Colored Christian Missionary Convention and involvement in the establishment of Tennessee State Agricultural and Industrial State Normal College in 1909. He also helped organize several other Nashville black businesses, including the One Cent (Citizens) Savings and Trust Company Bank.

As a businessman, undertaker, and influential minister, Preston Taylor was one of Nashville's most powerful black leaders. Upon his death in 1931, week-long ceremonies were held before his interment in Greenwood Cemetery. In 1951, a public housing project was named in his honor.

*Joe E. McClure, 1983*

### **COACH EDWARD S. TEMPLE (1927-2016)**

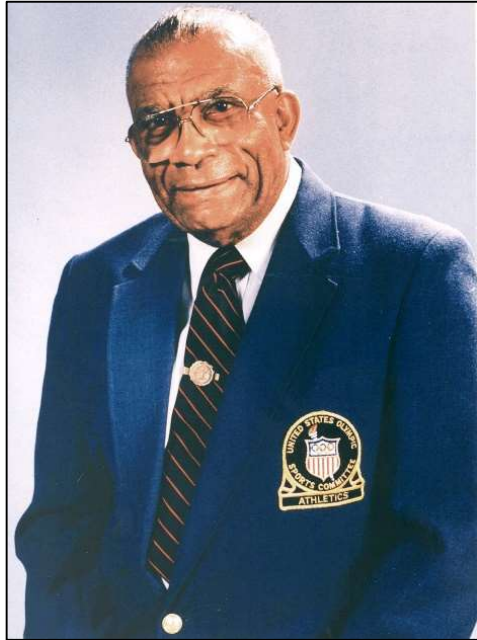
With a career spanning from 1950 to his retirement in 1994, the argument can be made that Edward Stanley "Ed" Temple was the greatest track and field coach of all time. He produced 40 Olympians at TSU between 1952 and 1984 (35 represented the United States, with five others competing for native countries including Panama, Jamaica, Bermuda, and Trinidad); all of them became college graduates, along with hundreds of other "TSU Tigerbelles" affiliated with his track program. They collectively won 23 Olympic medals for the U.S. (including 13 gold; 6 silver; and 4 bronze). Temple made more history as the U.S. women's track team coach for two consecutive Olympiads (Rome 1960 and Tokyo 1964) and assistant coach (1980).

Temple was born the only child of Christopher and Ruth (Ficklin) Temple on September 20, 1927, and spent his formative years in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, where he became an all-state athlete in football, basketball and track at John Harris High School. His destiny was established when he and a rival competitor, Leroy Craig, were both recruited by coach Tom Harris for the men's track team at Tennessee A&I State College in 1946, where he pledged Omega Psi Phi and met future wife Miss Charlie B. Law of Hartsville, Tennessee.

Shortly after graduating in 1950 with a bachelor's degree in health and physical education, Temple was offered a coaching position with the women's track program, the opportunity to teach and pursue graduate study in sociology (eventually becoming an associate professor), and work in the college post office by TSU President Walter S. Davis. He also married his college sweetheart that year, who assisted him in the post office as well as with the track program, and together they had two children (Lloyd Bernard and Edwina).

By 1951 Temple had been promoted to head women's track coach, and in 1952 he received his master's degree in sociology. Despite meager funding and facilities in the segregated South, Temple's first successes were at black college competitions such as the Tuskegee

Relays, and he recruited Olympic gold medalist Mae Faggs to join his program as “Mother of the Tigerbelles.” In 1955 the Tigerbelles won the university’s first national championship in integrated sports competition, going on to win 34 over the course of Temple’s career. Six Tigerbelles (including Faggs and Clarksville, TN high-schooler Wilma Rudolph) made the U.S. team for the 1956 Olympics in Melbourne, Australia, with Faggs, Rudolph, Lucinda Williams, and Isabelle Daniels winning a relay bronze medal. Temple and the Tigerbelles broke national as well as cultural barriers in 1958 by journeying behind the “Iron Curtain” as part of U.S. vs. Soviet Union track competitions.



The Rome 1960 Olympics is considered Temple’s greatest coaching success, as seven Tigerbelles made the U.S. team; Wilma Rudolph became a global icon after becoming the first American woman to win three track and field gold medals in a single Olympiad. The entire U.S. gold medal-winning 4x100 relay team consisted of TSU Tigerbelles Rudolph, Williams, Barbara Jones, and Martha Hudson. Coming a close second are Temple’s “Gold Dust Twins” of the 1964 Tokyo Games, as Wyomia Tyus and Edith McGuire made Olympic history by being the first from the same school (as well as country) to finish first/gold (Tyus) and second/silver (McGuire) in the 100 meter race. McGuire won gold in the 200 meter race, and she and Tyus were half of the silver medal-winning U.S. 4 x 100 relay team.

Temple’s coaching and training made for still more Olympic history during the 1968 Mexico City Games, when Tyus became the first athlete (male or female) to win the 100 meter gold medal in two successive Olympiads, while another Tigerbelle, Madeline Manning, became the first American woman to win the 800 meter gold medal. Kathy McMillian won silver in the long jump during the 1976 Montreal Games, but the possibility of more Tigerbelle Olympians and Olympic medals in 1980 (as well as Temple’s third time coaching) was precluded by the U.S. boycott.

Temple’s last Olympian, Chandra Cheeseborough, was directly affected by the boycott, which ironically coincided with the publication of his autobiography, *Only the Pure in Heart Survive*. Cheeseborough continued her training, made the U.S. team for the 1984 Games in Los Angeles, and won two gold medals as part of relay teams plus a silver medal in the 100 meters. She was personally recruited by Temple, Wilma Rudolph, and others to succeed him as coach of the Tigerbelles upon his retirement in 1994. Despite the death of Wilma Rudolph that same year, and of his wife Charlie B. in 2008, Temple enjoyed a long and productive retirement. He remained involved in his church (Clark Memorial United Methodist); served on the Nashville Sports Authority/Council; provided scholarships for New Hope Academy in Franklin, TN; and served on the U.S. Olympic Council and the International Women’s Track and Field Committee.

Among his voluminous honors and accolades are the Edward S. Temple Track, Seminar Series on Society and Sports, and honorary doctorate (TSU); Ed Temple Boulevard (Metropolitan Nashville/Davidson County); Edward S. Temple Award (NCAA Track and Field Coaches Association); induction into eleven sports halls of fame, including the U.S. Olympic Hall of Fame (the first African American coach and first track coach), as well as the National Track and Field Hall of Fame; U.S. Track Coaches Association; Black Athletes; National Black College Alumni; Pennsylvania; and Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame, among others.

Coach Temple was present for the unveiling and dedication of his statue at First Tennessee Park in Nashville on August 28, 2015. His personal artifacts and memorabilia are in the TSU archives, Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame, and the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C. Coach Temple passed away on September 22, 2016 in Nashville.

*Fletcher F. Moon, 2017*

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### **COACH ED TEMPLE AND THE TIGERBELLES**

Known internationally as a Hall of Fame track coach with a career that spanned over four decades, Coach Ed Temple was born in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, where he excelled as an athlete, competing in high school varsity sports in football, basketball, and track. Following his high school graduation, Temple enrolled at Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial College (now Tennessee State University), where his former Pennsylvania neighbor, Tom Harris, had become track coach. Temple ran track and studied Health and Physical Education at Tennessee A & I, where he met A & I coed Charlie B. Law, who became his wife. At about the same time, Coach Harris accepted a position at another school and Temple graduated from A & I; President Walter S. Davis then appointed Temple as women's track coach to replace Harris.

In those early coaching years, Coach Temple coached track, worked in the university post office, continued his education, and started a family with his new bride. Charlie B. Temple recalled in an interview that "for a hundred and fifty dollars a month, I coached the

women's track team, ran the university post office, and went to graduate school." One of Temple's first runners was Nashvillian Jean Patton, who took first place in the 100 meters at the 1951 Pan American Games. Temple worked with rising track star Mae Faggs, who competed in the 1948 Olympics, and also worked with high school girls interested in running track (including Barbara Jones) as the A & I junior team. Faggs and Jones were part of the world record-setting 1952 Olympic gold-medal relay team, along with Catherine Hardy and Janet Moreau. Jones remains the youngest woman to win an Olympic gold medal in track and field.

Beginning in the 1950s, Coach Temple called his women's track team the "Tigerbelles," an appellation which has remained with the team. Coach Temple and his wife Charlie became surrogate parents to the young track stars, ensuring that they continued to achieve both academically as well as athletically. The Temples helped the young women overcome the adversity they faced as both women and African-American athletes. They faced both stereotypes against women athletes and Jim Crow as they traveled to athletic competitions across the country. Coach Temple's Tigerbelles won the 1955 national AAUP track championship, the first time that Tennessee A & I won an integrated national championship in any sport. Temple later recalled that as the team traveled back to Tennessee, they stopped to eat and were told that the restaurant "did not serve colored people." When the bus driver told the restaurant manager that these "young ladies had just won the national championship," they were permitted to eat.

Coach Temple taught his athletes credos that are applicable to all student athletes:

"Accept hard work in practice with no exception."

"Make the champion's choice. Improve or stand still."

"Make weaknesses work for you by working to correct them."

"THINK you can win; HOPE to win; TRY to win."

"Never underestimate your ability. Who knows how far you can go?"

"Seek perfection. Few attain it, but all who seek it gain."

Under Coach Temple, the Tigerbelles achieved great Olympic success throughout the 1950s and 1960s and beyond. In addition to the gold medalists at the 1952 Olympics, six members of the Tigerbelles returned to the Olympics in 1956. There the entire U.S. 4 x 100 relay team included Tigerbelles Faggs, Wilma Rudolph, Margaret Matthews, and Isabelle Daniels. In a race that featured all three medal teams breaking the existing world record, the U.S. team brought home the bronze medal. Teenage junior member Willye B. White earned a silver medal in long jump, the first time an American received a medal in that event. White became the first American track and field athlete to participate in five Olympic games. Coach Temple was called upon to coach the U.S. Olympic teams in 1960 and 1964, which included several of his Tigerbelles. Rudolph became the first American female athlete to win three gold medals in a single Olympics in 1960. In 1964, the 4 x 100 team took the silver medal. Edith McGuire added a gold in the 200 meters and another



silver, finishing second to fellow Tigerbelle Wyomia Tyus in the 100 meters. Tyus became the first athlete--male or female--to win back-to-back Olympic gold medals, with her performances in the 100 meters in 1964 and 1968. Also in 1968, Tigerbelle Madeline Manning became the first American woman to win gold in the 800 meters, and at that time was the youngest to ever win. Overall, Coach Temple's Tigerbells have received over twenty Olympic medals, including current TSU track coach Chandra Cheeseborough, who won silver in the 400 meters and gold in both the 4 x 100 and 4 x 400 relays at the 1984 Olympics.



Coach Ed Temple is one of America's all-time greatest coaches in track and field. In addition to his Olympic successes, his Tigerbells have won thirty-four national team titles, and thirty medals in the Pan-American Games. In the days of both Jim Crow and the Cold War, he coached the 1958 U.S. Women's track team for the first-ever U.S.-Soviet track meet, and later the 1975 team for the first ever China-U.S. meet. Coach Temple's honors are too numerous to mention but include an honorary doctorate from his alma mater; the Nashville's Sports Council's trophy for best local amateur athlete bears his name; and a Nashville street has been named in his honor. He is a member of a number of Halls of Fame, including the Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame (1972); the

Tennessee State University Sports Hall of Fame (1983); the Pennsylvania Sports Hall of Fame (1987); the U.S.A. Track and Field Hall of Fame (1989); the Ohio Valley Conference Hall of Fame (1995); and the U.S. Track and Field and Cross Country Coaches Association Hall of Fame (1996). He retired in 1993 after forty-three years of coaching at Tennessee State University. The father of two grown children, he now works to provide scholarships for low-income children to attend New Hope Academy in Franklin, Tennessee, through the Ed Temple Fund. He is also a member of the Metropolitan Nashville Sports Authority. Coach Temple opened doors that had previously been closed to young African-American women athletes, and as he led these women he created a wealth of opportunity for his first athletes and the many hundreds that would follow in their fleet footsteps.

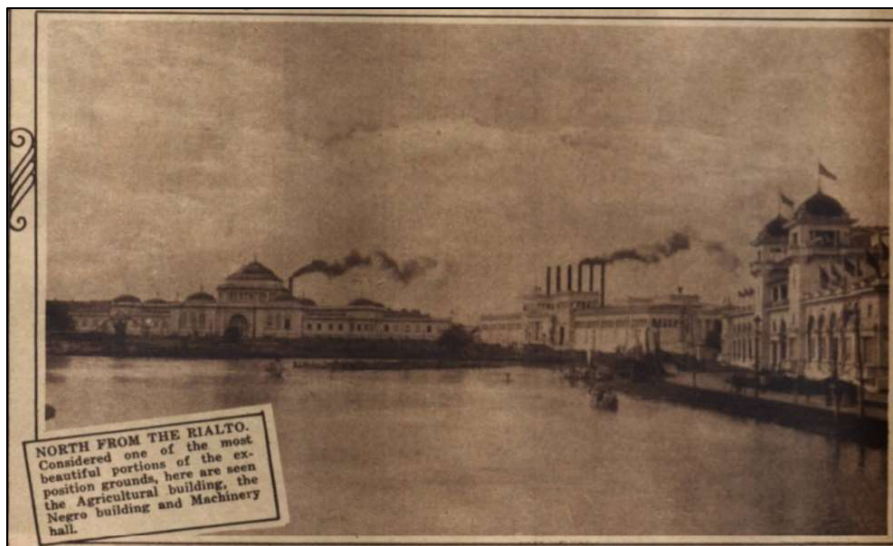
*Yildiz Binkley, Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr. and Tara Mitchell Mielnik, 2012*

## TENNESSE CENTENNIAL EXPOSITION

The Tennessee Centennial Exposition opened May 1, 1897, about one year after the U.S. Supreme Court declared that “separate but equal” racial segregation was constitutional. Frederick Douglass and one Negro newspaper editor called the decision “the most damnable outrage.”

According to the official history of the exposition, edited by Herman Justi, the Tennessee Centennial Exposition had nothing to do with race. It was staged for inspiration and pure patriotism. The expressed desire was to “advertise and develop the matchless and bountiful resources of Tennessee, to increase its population by inviting desirable settlers, and to increase its wealth by tempting foreign capital was an afterthought and subordinate to the noble objectives of honoring the memory and commemorating the deeds of the pioneers of the great commonwealth.”

Although some militant Negroes, like Ida B. Wells, argued that African Americans should not participate in segregated expositions, others believed that these huge fairs were beneficial to the African American community and could provide exposure for the post-Emancipation progress made by freedmen and their descendants. Some organizers believed that Tennessee’s Negro exhibitions would be superior to the ones included in the Cotton States Exposition in Atlanta, Georgia, where in September of 1895 Booker T.



Washington made his racial compromise speech.

The all-European American executive committee formed the Negro Department to foster racial cooperation and include some Negro exhibits at the Tennessee Centennial Exposition; Attorney James Carroll Napier

was selected chief of the Negro Department. On August 31, 1898, however, Napier resigned because of “health and business reasons” and quiet protest about the need for a Negro Building and the “proper” set of exhibits. Napier and the “aristocrats of color” were offended by the Tennessee Exposition’s inclusion of slaves picking cotton - an exhibit that the European Americans adored. Meanwhile, elite blacks insisted on a Negro Building. John Hope of local Roger Williams University had seen the impressive Negro Building and heard Washington speak in Atlanta. Pictures of Atlanta’s Negro Building appeared in

*Alexander's Magazine*, edited by elite Negroes. "If you are to have a Negro Building, why has not the plan...been accepted?" said Napier.

Assuming the chair for the Negro Department was a more compromising Negro, Richard Hill, a local public school teacher who owed his job to the city. His father was Jim Hill whose Hill String Band had performed in Nashville since slavery days, when the wealthiest families called on Uncle Jim Hill to play at their balls and dances. Hill's other committee members included men and women who avoided conflict and more easily accommodated the European Americans' conservative racial attitudes: Randal B. Vandavall (minister), M. B. Salter (minister), Evans Tyree (minister), Samuel A. McElwee (attorney), Preston Taylor (minister), S. A. Walker (businessman), J. H. Petway (businessman), F. A. Stewart (physician), W. S. Thompson (businessman), and W. T. Hightower (junk dealer). Hill's organization also included a Negro women's committee.

The more racially accommodationist committee under Hill was able to persuade the Centennial's executive committee to approve the plans for the Negro Building. At noon on March 13, 1897, a cornerstone-laying ceremony was held for a Negro Building. At a cost of more than \$13,000 the Negro Building was an imposing structure of Spanish Renaissance design, measuring 80 by 250 feet. It had two stories with a pavilion including a restaurant. Frederick Thompson was the architect for the building.

Every effort was made to display racial cooperation and tranquility in this New South city, Nashville. Professor Hill, already a disciple of Booker T. Washington's racial accommodationist philosophy, said: "We (Negroes) are now on trial - the most severe test as to what we have done, and are now doing, since our emancipation." He admonished militant Negroes for focusing on Jim Crow instead of the good in race relations. Hill said that Jim Crow "is for your own good." To quiet rumors about a Negro boycott, the executive committee provided free railroad passes for Hill and his colleagues to tour the state, telling Negroes that the fair was not totally segregated. There were special days for the Negroes, including Fisk University Day, Negro Employees Day, Central Tennessee College Day, Alumni Meharry Medical College Day, National Race Council Day, Emancipation Day and American Medical Association of Colored Physicians Day. Booker T. Washington was the speaker for the opening Negro Day ceremonies.

By the close of the exposition on October 30, 1897, African Americans had been awarded thirty-one certificates of commendation, three gold medals, five silver medals and nineteen bronze medals.

*Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr., 1997*

## **TENNESSEE RURAL AFRICAN-AMERICAN CHURCH PROJECT**

For more than a century, the church has been recognized as the single most significant institution in African-American life. Because of the importance of these sacred places, many of which are associated with cemeteries and schools, a program was recently

established to document the state's rural African-American churches. In the fall of 1997, the Center for Historic Preservation at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) with the assistance of the Tennessee Historical Commission and the Office of Sponsored Programs at MTSU launched the Tennessee Rural African-American Church Project.



The goals of the project were to bring together and establish a network of scholars, activists, and preservationists across the state who are interested in the history and preservation of rural African-American churches; to conduct a statewide reconnaissance survey of extant African-American churches in the Tennessee countryside and small towns; and to prepare for the Tennessee Historical Commission a multiple property nomination that addresses the rural African-American church as a distinct and significant property type and to begin a process of nominating

eligible churches to the National Register of Historic Places. Eleven churches from across the state were included in the first multiple property nomination to come from this project.

With the completion of the project's immediate goals, including a survey of some 350 churches, the Center published *Powerful Artifacts: A Guide to Surveying and Documenting Rural African-American Churches in the South* (2000) with the assistance of the Southern Regional Office of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. This guide, intended to serve a broad audience, begins with brief denominational histories of the primary African-American churches. Next, it addresses the question of what makes these church buildings eligible for listing in the National Register. Attention is given to questions of integrity, date of significance, and criteria of eligibility in the extended discussion of property types and registration requirements. A visual survey form is included to help identify styles and significant features of the church and surrounding landscape. A representative bibliography of scholarship about African American history in general and specific African American religious histories concludes the guide, which also includes photographs of forty-eight Tennessee rural churches.

One church included in both the survey and the publication is Craigs Chapel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Zion Church in the Greenback community of Loudon County. Individually nominated to the National Register of Historic Places, the simple white frame place of worship was built in 1896. Just three years later, the Craigs Chapel elementary school was built and served the black children of the community until the 1930s. By 1940,

the school building was rolled from its original location and attached to the church where it continues to serve as the fellowship hall. An adjacent cemetery, in which two graves of previous white owners of the land are located, was consecrated by Craigs Chapel when the church's first member was laid to rest in 1903.

While Craigs Chapel, the incorporated school and the cemetery are a significant complex in their own right, they are also a part of a larger historical landscape that holds an abiding significance for African Americans and those who believe in basic human freedoms. In the early nineteenth century, the area was known for its abolition sentiments. Spearheaded by Quakers, with settlements in nearby Friendsville and Unitia, local tradition associates several places with the Underground Railroad.

The members and friends of Craigs Chapel consider the Underground Railroad an integral part of their history and heritage. Nearby, though not on church property, is a large limestone cave that is reputed to have been a hiding place and passage for fugitive slaves. The anti-slavery activity of the Quakers and the geographical terrain reinforce strong oral traditions that the cave was used by men, women, and children as a hiding place and passage on the long and dangerous road to freedom in the north.

The AME Zion Church was known as "The Freedom Church," claiming revered abolitionist leaders Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, and Frederick Douglass. Following the Civil War, AME Zion missionaries established six churches in Loudon County between 1884 and 1913. Of these, Craigs Chapel is the only one still in operation. It is indeed a "powerful artifact" symbolizing African-American history, culture, education, religion, and community.

*Caneta Skelley Hankins, 2001*

## **TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY (1912- )**



In 1909, the Tennessee General Assembly authorized a state normal school (teacher training institution) for each grand division of the state and one for Tennessee's 472,987 "colored people." As

cities and towns competed for placement of these schools, the leaders of Afro-American Nashville used their influence to have the black school built in Davidson County.

During the campaign for the state normal school, Nashville's Negro Board of Trade gave its support. Benjamin Carr organized the Colored Agricultural and Industrial Association



as an official lobby group. Preston Taylor, the wealthy black undertaker, solicited funds door to door. Leaders like W. S. Ellington, Henry Allen Boyd, T. Clay Moore, and James C. Napier appeared before numerous legislative sessions until black Nashville received the support of the governor and the mayor. The Davidson County Court also agreed to provide an appropriation to help build the school. At the end of 1910, it was decided that the school would be built in Nashville, not in Chattanooga.

The campaign for the new school took place in a period of growing black influence in Nashville. In January of 1911, Benjamin Carr, formerly of Hickman County, became the Negro advisor to newly-elected Republican Governor Ben W. Hooper, and in February President William Howard Taft appointed James C. Napier Register of the U. S. Treasury. In September of 1911, a heavy black voter turnout elected black attorney Samuel P. Harris to the city council; he was Nashville's first black councilman since J. C. Napier's service ended in 1885. In November of 1911, blacks were allowed a section in Nashville's Ryman Auditorium to hear President Taft speak. By 1912, Democratic presidential candidate Woodrow Wilson was counting local black voters.

Meanwhile, the site selected for the new school was two miles west of Fisk University. It consisted of part of the old Hadley plantation (once home to thirty-four slaves), of which sixty-seven acres of land were sold by the First Bank and Realty Company. On the site was a former Civil War redoubt called Zollicoffer Hill. A physical plant, consisting of dormitories for girls and boys, a main building with offices and classrooms, and several small farm buildings were built at a cost of over \$80,000.

Chattanooga's William J. Hale, a former high school principal, was appointed principal of the new school. He personally supervised the construction of the buildings and the organization of the Tennessee State Normal curriculum. Incidentally, Hale gained acceptance from clannish black Nashville by marrying a local girl, Hattie Hodgkins, in November of 1913.

On June 21, 1912, the school's doors opened to summer-session students. On September 20, the fall term began with 300 students. On February 7, 1913, Booker T. Washington toured the facility and praised its cleanliness, a move that further solidified local white support for Hale. The first commencement exercise took place on May 23, 1913, and the formal dedication ceremonies were held on November 11, 1913.

In June of 1924, Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial Normal School for Negroes granted its first college degree. President Hale resigned in 1943 and was followed by presidents Walter S. Davis (1943-68), Andrew P. Torrence (1968-74), and Frederick S. Humphries (1974-1985).

In 1979, under federal court order, the institution merged with the University of Tennessee's Nashville branch and became the expanded Tennessee State University. By becoming a comprehensive, doctoral degree-granting institution, Tennessee State University gained new presidential leadership: Roy Peterson (acting, 1985-1986), Otis L.

Floyd (1986-1990), George W. Cox (acting, 1990-91), and James A. Hefner (1991 to present).

*Lois C. McDougald and Bobby L. Lovett, 1984*

## **TENT CITIES OF FAYETTE AND HAYWOOD COUNTIES (1960-1962)**

In many states of the South, the voting rights granted Americans of African descent under the United States Constitution's Fifteenth amendment were nothing more than unfulfilled promises drafted on parchment. Not until the ratification of the 24th Amendment in 1964 was the poll tax rescinded in federal elections. Other contrivances implemented to impede the Negroes' right to vote were not abrogated until the enactment of the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

Two years prior to John and Viola McFerren and C. P. Boyd leading the Negro voter registration drives in two of Tennessee's southwestern counties, on September 9, 1957, the Eighty-fifth United States Congress enacted the first civil rights bill since 1875. This civil rights legislation, among other things, empowered the U. S. government to initiate civil suits in federal courts where any individual or group was prohibited from or threatened for exercising their right to vote.

In 1959, blacks in Fayette and Haywood counties fought for the right to vote. The McFerrens of Fayette County and C. P. Boyd of Haywood County shared the same concern about the constitution. This concern was ignited by the absence of Negro jurors for the Burton Dodson trial. Dodson, an African-American farmer in his seventies, was on trial for the alleged 1941 murder of a white man. Because African Americans were intrinsically denied their rights to participate in the electoral process, they were omitted from the pool of potential jurors. John McFerren and others from Fayette County formed the Original Fayette County Civic and Welfare League, Inc., and C. P. Boyd and others formed the Haywood County Civic and Welfare League. One of the primary objectives of both leagues was to initiate a voter-register drive.

Following the 1959 formation of the leagues, a number of African Americans registered to vote at the respective courthouses. However, when the Democratic primary was held in August, those registered African Americans were not allowed to cast their ballots. Leagues members filed suit against the local Democratic party, and in 1960 the court gave African Americans their first taste of victory. According to a statement by a United States Justice Department official published in the 17 November 1959, edition of the *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, this was the first legal action filed against a party primary under the Civil Rights Act of 1957.

Fayette County's residents of European descent began using their economic dominance to castigate African Americans who defied the southern code and refused "to stay in their place." Many lost employment, credit, and insurance policies. Whites refused to sell them

goods and services. White physicians withheld medical care from their African- American patients. Without notice, in the winter of 1960 white property owners evicted more than 400 African-American tenant families from their lands. The leadership of the league did not capitulate to such unconscionable retaliation. Without hesitation and with the support of Shephard Towles, a self-determining African-American property owner, they formed a makeshift community known as “Tent City.”

The authorities and civilians of Haywood County also sought to repress African Americans. Those who registered to vote were evicted by their landlords, their credit was canceled, merchants distributed names to determine with whom and who not to do



business. A much smaller Tent City of approximately thirty families went up in Haywood County. Surplus army tents were erected, and homeless families prepared themselves to face the piercing winds of winter. The substitute encampments became an undaunted declaration against white oppression and an unrestrained manifesto of African-American self-esteem.

By the end of 1960, the racial ferocity endured by African Americans in Fayette and Haywood Counties attracted national attention. An expose' by Ted Poston in the *New York Post* brought the activities of

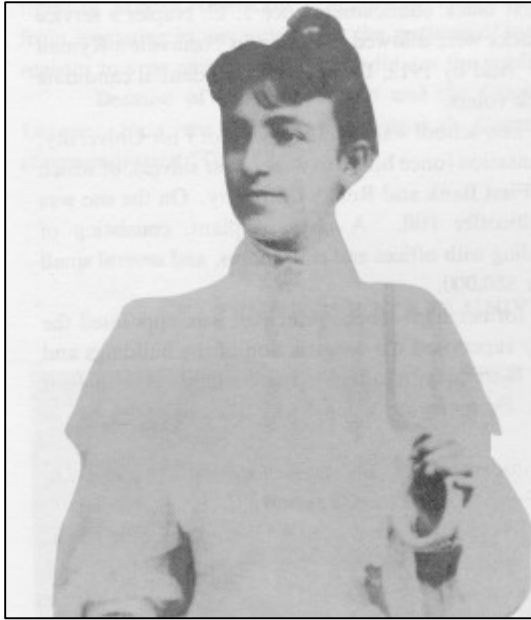
the Fayette County League before the citizens of the country. On November 18, 1960, the Justice Department amended a lawsuit it had brought in September to include thirty-six additional landowners who had evicted their tenant farmers. On December 14, 1960, the Justice Department filed suit against forty-five landowners, twenty-four merchants, and one financial institution in Fayette County for violating the civil rights of African Americans. On July 26, 1962, the “landowners were permanently enjoined from engaging in any acts...for the purpose of interfering with the right of any person to register to vote and to vote for candidates for public office.”

Because of Viola McFerren and the Original Fayette County Civic and Welfare League, Inc., the Tennessee Historical Commission erected a historical marker commemorating “Tent City.”

*Linda T. Wynn, 1996*



## MARY CHURCH TERRELL (1863-1954)



Mary Church Terrell, one of the early women of color engaged in lecturing and other activities for recognition of women and Negroes, was born in Memphis on September 23, 1863, the year of the Emancipation Proclamation. Her father, Robert R. Church, Sr., a pioneer Memphis businessman, was married twice. Mary, known to members of her family as 'Mollie,' and her brother were born during the first marriage to Louisa, which terminated in divorce when the children were very small. Robert, Jr., and his sister, Annette, were born during the second marriage to Anna (Wright) Church.

Because of limited educational facilities in Memphis at the time, while very young she lived with close family friends in Yellow Springs, Ohio, to attend a "Model School" connected with Antioch College. Subsequently, she attended public schools in Ohio, Oberlin Academy, and enrolled in the four-year "Classical" or "Gentleman's Course" at Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio, being graduated in 1884. Mary completed her education by spending two years in Europe, studying French, German, and Italian languages.

In 1891, Oberlin College offered her the position of registrar of the school, including faculty position, but she declined the offer because of her forthcoming marriage. During its centennial celebration in 1933, Oberlin recognized her as one of its one hundred outstanding alumni. In 1948, Oberlin conferred upon her the honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters.

After being graduated from college, Mary returned to Memphis and lived for a year with her father, who discouraged her interest in teaching there. He did not object when she accepted a position as a member of the faculty of Wilberforce University at Xenia, Ohio. She left Wilberforce to accept a teaching position at the M Street High School in Washington, D. C., where she met her future husband.

On October 18, 1891, in Memphis, Mary married Robert Heberton Terrell (1857-1925) at the family home, 384 South Lauderdale Street, where the ceremony and reception took place. Annette Church was the Dower girl and Robert Church, Jr., was the ring bearer. Robert Terrell was a graduate of Groton Academy, Groton, Massachusetts, and magna cum laude graduate in the class of 1884 of Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts. He was graduated as valedictorian of his 1889 class at Howard University Law School, Washington, D. C., and received a master's degree in law from Howard in 1893. Terrell taught at the M Street High School in Washington, and later practiced law

with John R. Lynch, a former member of the U. S. House of Representatives from Mississippi. He practiced law until he received four successive four-year Presidential appointments as judge of the Municipal Court of the District of Columbia, where he remained until ill health forced him to retire.

The Terrells were parents of two children. Phyllis and adopted daughter Mary (deceased). There were no grandchildren.

After her marriage, Mary Church Terrell made her home in Washington and maintained a summer home at Highland Beach, Maryland, which she built next to the home of Frederick Douglass. She became active in the feminist movement, founding a women's club, the Colored Woman's League, in Washington in 1892. This organization merged with the National Federation of Afro-American Women in 1896 and adopted the name National Federation of Colored Women. Mary Church Terrell was elected the first president.

She was a popular speaker and lecturer and wrote many articles denouncing segregation. Her appointment to the District of Columbia Board of Education in 1895 was a first in America for a woman of color. She resigned in 1901, was reappointed in 1906, and held the post until 1911. In 1909, she was one of two Negro women (Ida B. Wells-Barnett was the other, both were former Memphians) invited to sign the "Call" and be present at the organizational meeting of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, thus becoming a charter member of the national organization. She assisted in the formation of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority at Howard University in 1914, accepted honorary membership, and wrote the Delta Creed, which outlined a code of conduct for young women. During World War I, she was involved with the War Camp Community Service, which aided in the recreation and, later, the demobilization of Negro servicemen. She worked in the suffrage movement, which pushed for enactment of the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution.

Mary Church Terrell was involved in the international women's movement on three occasions. She represented colored women on the American delegation to the International Congress of Women at Berlin in 1904 and was the only women to deliver her address in English, German, and French. Her theme was equal rights for women and Negroes wherever they may be found. In 1919, she received international recognition as a speaker on the program at the Quinquennial International Peace Conference in Zurich, and in 1937 she delivered an address before the International Assembly of the World Fellowship of Faith in London. In 1940, she wrote her autobiography, *A Colored Woman in A White World*.

At age 89, she marched with her cane at the head of a picket line, carrying her sign to desegregate Kresge's store and Thompson's restaurant with members of the Coordinating Committee for the Enforcement of the District of Columbia Anti-Discrimination Laws. The Smithsonian Institution acquired from her family a full-length oil portrait of her, which it displays periodically at its National Portrait Gallery in connection with her activities in the feminist and civil rights movements.

On July 24, 1954, Mary Church Terrell died at age 90, after a brief illness at Anne Arrundel General Hospital, Annapolis, Maryland, a short distance from her summer home at Highland Beach.

*Roberta Church and Ronald Walter, 1996*

### **VIVIEN T. THOMAS (1910-1985)**

The contributions by those of black African ancestry to medical science are overwhelming. Imhotep, the Father of Medicine, was African. By the fifteenth century, youth from Africa and Europe traveled to the University of Sankore in Timbuktu for medical and surgical instruction. The first known black physician in colonial America was James Derham, who began his practice in 1754. The earliest known black graduates of medical schools in America were David Peck, who was graduated from Rush School of Medicine in 1847, and Rebecca Lee, who was graduated from the New England Female College in 1864. However, with the growth of slavery and racism in America, it became increasingly difficult for African Americans to advance to the honorable and prestigious status of physician. Vivien Theodore Thomas, a man ahead of his times, personified the struggle against the “racial ceiling” in the twentieth century American South.

Born in Lake Providence, Louisiana, on August 29, 1910, Vivien T. Thomas was the fourth of five children born to William Maceo Thomas and Mary Eaton Thomas. Hoping to improve the family’s condition and escape constant flooding of the Mississippi River, his father moved the family to Nashville, Tennessee in 1912. Maceo Thomas, an industrious carpenter and contractor, bought three city lots containing over a half-acre of land (to facilitate a garden) and built the family home. The structure, just over two miles from Fisk University, stood until it was demolished about 1970 to make way for the expanding campus of Meharry Medical College.

At age six, young Vivien was sent to kindergarten in nearby Fisk University, then enrolled the following year in public school; he was graduated from Pearl High School in 1929. Recalling his youthful acquisition of a strong work ethic, he remarked, “My father took advantage of the propensity of boys to hammer on things and brought us up in his own trade of carpentry...He never kept us out of school for a day of work, but we were required to report after school hours to whatever job he had in progress.”

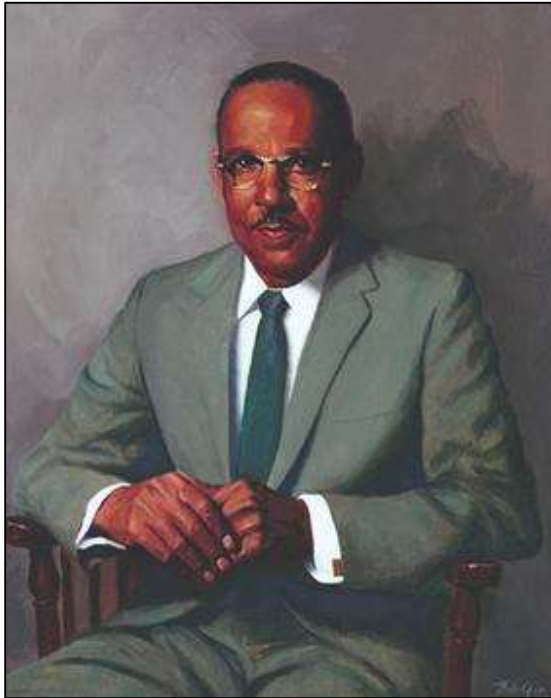
Utilizing his carpentry skills, acquired from age thirteen through his high school years, Vivien worked summers at Fisk University’s physical plant to save money for his college education. His graduation from high school in the summer of 1929, however, found the country in the early throes of the Great Depression. Although he had bought his school clothing and saved enough money for books and tuition for his first semester at Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State College (now Tennessee State University), he had no resources for the school’s second semester. So he held in abeyance his plans for college and medical school until he could earn the needed money.

Early in February 1930, Vivien Thomas approached his friend Charles Manlove about possible openings at Vanderbilt University, where Manlove was employed as a laboratory technician. Through Manlove came an introduction to Dr. Alfred Blalock, a young physician who had headed the Experimental Surgery Laboratory at Vanderbilt Medical School since 1927. Although the salary for laboratory technician was lower than Thomas' salary at Fisk University, he accepted Blalock's job offer. "I was very much interested in what was going on in the laboratory. I had also been favorably impressed by Dr. Blalock," recalled Thomas in his 1985 autobiography, *Pioneering Research in Surgical School and Cardiovascular Surgery: Vivien Thomas and His Work with Alfred Blalock*. Thomas' strong work ethic, attention to detail and skilled hand as a carpenter were precisely what Blalock needed in a laboratory assistant. In correlation, Thomas' native intelligence was stimulated and expanded by his work with Blalock, postdoctoral Fellows, surgical residents, and interns working on experimental surgical procedures. "Until about 1935, the major focus of the work in the laboratory was on the problem of shock," Thomas observed. "Numerous other projects were being done concurrently...[and] these projects involved surgical procedures from which I began to learn something of surgical techniques." By 1935, Thomas was independently performing preparatory procedures on animals for Blalock's review and recording copious notes on each experiment. In mid-1936, when Blalock decided to try the first transplantation of a kidney, none of them had experience in vascular surgery. "This was the project on which we...learned or taught ourselves vascular surgery," Thomas recalled. "We had so much technical success with the kidney transplantation that sometime later Dr. Blalock decided we should try to transplant the adrenal gland. The rate of success of the transplantation was about 50 percent."

Reflective of his growing reputation in surgical research, Dr. Blalock received an invitation in late 1940 to become Surgeon-in-Chief and Chairman of the Department of Surgery at Johns Hopkins Hospital; he asked Vivien Thomas to accompany him as surgical research technician. Thomas agreed and on July 1, 1941, joined Blalock's surgical team at Johns Hopkins. A month later, he brought his wife and two daughters to a small apartment in the "congested, treeless, grassless environment" of urban east Baltimore, Maryland. Never one to sidestep a challenge, Thomas set about acclimating himself to his new environment and adjusting to being the only African American working on the Johns Hopkins surgical staff.

Over the next three years, Thomas' prowess with surgical research procedures rapidly increased, as did the range of his responsibilities to include chemical determinations for their experiments, calculation of the results and the maintenance of precise records, and creation of more efficient surgical instruments. He became a major contributor to the development of operative techniques, and he and Blalock collaborated on the design of surgical equipment. A clamp devised for Blalock's use for the temporary occlusion of the pulmonary artery became known as the "Blalock clamp." Thomas was also a "key player in pioneering the anastomosis of the subclavian artery to the pulmonary artery...[and] the work he performed with Alfred Blalock paved the way for the successful outcome of the Blalock-Taussig shunt," performed on November 29, 1944, when surgeon Blalock saved

the life of a fifteen-month-old “blue baby” by creating an artificial channel between the aorta and pulmonary artery. “The procedure, developed in conjunction with Hopkins pediatrician Helen Taussig and surgical assistant Vivien Thomas, ushered in a new era for heart surgery,” according to writer Melissa Hendricks’ “Pioneers of Discovery” in *Johns Hopkins Magazine* (April 2000).



Thomas supervised the surgical laboratories at Johns Hopkins for over 35 years. While performing his work in surgical research, he also helped train many of the hospital's surgeons in the delicate techniques necessary for heart and lung operations. In 1969, the Johns Hopkins Hospital expressed its appreciation for Thomas' contributions by commissioning an oil portrait of him by artist Bob Gee; the portrait was unveiled in the School of Medicine in 1971. Five years later, Thomas was presented with the degree of Honorary Doctor of Law by the Johns Hopkins University and appointed instructor in surgery at the university's School of Medicine. In 1979, upon his retirement, he became instructor emeritus of surgery at the School of Medicine, a position he held until his death on November 26, 1985. His

personal papers from 1980-1986 make up the Vivien T. Thomas Collection of the Alan Mason Chesney Medical Archives at the Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions.

On June 7, 1995, Vivien Thomas' work again was honored when the Johns Hopkins departments of Surgery and Pediatrics celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the first Blalock-Taussig shunt in 1944 and the men and women who made it possible, including chief surgeon Alfred Blalock, pediatric cardiologist Helen Taussig, and surgical research technician Vivien Thomas. Further recognition will come to Thomas in February 2002, when Spark Media, Inc., of Washington, D.C., premieres its documentary film, *Partners of the Heart*, a chronicle of the collaboration between Thomas and Blalock, on Maryland Public Television.

*Reavis L Mitchell, Jr., 2001*

### **FRANCES EUPHEMIA THOMPSON (1896-1992)**

Artist and educator Frances Euphemia Thompson was born in Spring Hill, Tennessee, and studied in the United States and Europe. With a career spanning over five decades, she was named one of the “greatest influences on Tennessee African-American visual

arts.” Thompson's education began at the Agricultural and Industrial Normal School (now Tennessee State University/TSU) where her instructor, Olive Gorane Taliaferro, encouraged her to continue her artistic training at Massachusetts College of Art in Boston. After graduating with honors in 1923, Thompson returned to Nashville to begin her long career at Tennessee A&I teaching, creating art and promoting art education. She served as the art department director, a professor of art beginning in 1944, and professor emeritus beginning in 1974.

In the 1930s, with an increasing interest in art as an educational tool, Thompson returned to the Massachusetts College of Art to study. In 1936, she graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Art Education. Following her return to school, Thompson applied for a Rosenwald Fellowship to continue her studies in art and art education in Czechoslovakia. These fellowships were available through the Julius Rosenwald Fund for both black and white southerners who wanted to research a topic related to the South and planned to work in the region following their fellowship. Thompson's application was accepted and she left for Prague, Czechoslovakia, in September 1937 to study the folk art of middle Europe at Charles University. Thompson visited Sweden, Denmark, Germany, England and France. While in Prague, she stayed at a student dormitory run by the Protestant Church, visited museums, learned Czech silversmithing and lacemaking, lectured on art and art education, and performed recitals of African-American folk songs and spirituals. The German military action that preceded World War II forced Thompson to leave Europe earlier than anticipated; however, her fellowship and study in Czechoslovakia remained a pivotal experience in her life.

Thompson returned to her teaching position at Tennessee A&I following her European fellowship. After three years, she enrolled at Radcliffe College in Boston to earn a Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) in education and fine arts and graduated in 1945. She once again returned to Nashville to accept a professor position and spent the rest of her career at Tennessee A&I, where she directed the art department and taught. In 1943, the Tennessee State Department of Education published her book, entitled *Art in the Elementary Schools, A Manual for Teachers*.

In addition to teaching, Thompson helped organize and participated in the “Faculty Breakfast Group,” an intercollegiate group made up of faculty members from Tennessee A&I, Meharry Medical College and Fisk University—all historically black colleges in Nashville. The cooperative organization held discussions and lectures on a variety of topics related to higher education and scholarly fields. Thompson was also a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha, the Gaieté de Coeur Art Club, and the National Art Education Association. Throughout her life, she remained an active club member, member of First Baptist Church Capitol Hill, artist, teacher, speaker and writer. Her speeches and writings combined her philosophy on art, religion and education. She saw art as a media for expression. In 1974, she observed, “Education should aid the realization that art expression touches all of life's objective functions. It always has, and I believe it always shall. Art sometimes is not beautiful. According to known standards of beauty it is often

ugly. But whichever it is accorded to be, it must be right. And right means order, harmony, proportion, balance, rhythm and emphasis.”

Thompson took private commissions for paintings and sculpture, working in a variety of media including oils, polymers, watercolors, German pastels, gesso, gold silver, enamels, wood, bone and plastics. She painted murals, portraits and landscape scenes. She exhibited her work at TSU, the Van Vechten Gallery at Fisk, the Parthenon in Nashville, the Massachusetts College of Art, and Harvard University. Thompson also designed baptistry murals for many churches, including the Progressive Baptist Church in Nashville, the Ramsey Street Church of Christ in Nashville, her own First Baptist Church Capitol Hill, the Indianapolis Metropolitan Baptist Church, the Fairfield Baptist Church in Nashville, and the Antioch Baptist Church in Nashville. Her baptistry paintings in the Fredonia Baptist Church in Haywood County, First Baptist Church East Nashville, and the First Baptist Church in Gallatin depict scenes of flowing water in a natural landscape. Thompson also demonstrated her commitment to faith-based art by illustrating church literature for over fifty years for the Baptist Sunday School Publishing Board in Nashville.

Her commissions came from many prominent people in Tennessee and outside the South. Some of her portraits included attorney J. C. Napier; Meharry Medical College doctor C.W. Johnson and his staff, Dr. and Mrs. William Crump from Washington, D.C.; Dr. and



Mrs. Charles Nobles from Baton Rouge; and Dr. Elsie Lewis Makel of New York City. She designed two-dimensional sculptures on the façades of four Tennessee State University buildings--Memorial Library, Educational Agriculture, Health, and Physical Education--for the Nashville architectural firm of McKissack and McKissack. Her other work with the firm for the college included mosaic floor designs for the library and Physical Education buildings.

In the 1970s, the Alumnae Association of her alma mater, Massachusetts College of Art, named the college's art gallery and a minority scholarship after her. Unfortunately, when the school moved the gallery in 1986, her name was not retained on the gallery. The scholarship has since been absorbed by a more general one.

Thompson was a contemporary and friend of the prominent Harlem Renaissance painter Aaron Douglas (1898-1979). From New York, Douglas came to Nashville in 1940 to start an art department at Fisk University, where he taught for almost thirty years. Both Thompson and Douglas represent the increasing stature of African-American visual artists within the art community. Whereas Douglas has received national recognition for his paintings and his role in providing blacks with



art education opportunities, Thompson's work is relatively unknown as an artist and art educator. More research is needed to fully document her career. However, her legacy can still be seen in her public art in churches and on the TSU campus, which includes the current school seal that she designed for Tennessee A&I in 1922.

Leslie N. Sharp, 2005

### **ARTHUR MELVIN TOWNSEND (1875-1959)**

Arthur Melvin Townsend was born on October 26, 1875, in Winchester, Tennessee, to the Reverend Dock Anderson and Emma A. (Singleton) Townsend. Townsend was a minister and the director of the Franklin County Negro Elementary Schools. Mrs. Townsend was a Shelbyville schoolteacher. Arthur Townsend graduated from Roger Williams University in 1898 and in 1902 graduated with honors from Meharry Medical College in pathology and pharmacology. While practicing medicine, he served on the Meharry faculty from 1902 until 1913. He also served as president of the Robert F. Boyd Medical Society and the State Medical Association. In 1910, he published his research on the disease pellagra in two volumes of the *Journal of the National Medical Association*. In 1923, he became the first alumnus of Meharry to serve on its board of trustees, and he served on the board for thirty-six years.



Townsend was quite active in church affairs. He served as organist in several Nashville churches and conducted Sunday school classes and missions to hospitals and jails. He met his future wife, Willa Hadley, at Spruce Street Baptist Church. From 1917 to 1957, he periodically pastored Spruce Street Baptist Church and served as pastor to Metropolitan Baptist Church of Memphis from 1918 to 1921. He became a leader of the Negro Baptist Association of Tennessee and its Tennessee Baptist Missionary and Educational Convention, which reestablished Roger Williams University in 1909. Townsend received an A.M. degree in 1912 and a D.D. degree in 1915 from Roger Williams University. He was president of the university from 1913 to 1918.

The scope of Dr. Townsend's activities included many facets of Afro-American culture. He was involved in the International Sunday School Association, the North American Committee for the World Council of Christian Education, the Free and Accepted Masons, the Knights of Pythias, and the International



Order of Odd Fellows. He served as the cashier of Peoples' Bank and Trust Company and as a leader in the establishment of the Masonic Home for the Aged. He received many honors, including citations for outstanding services to the church and community. Under the auspices of the National Baptist Convention, Townsend headed the committee to purchase and renovate the John Webb Bathhouse in Hot Springs, Arkansas. He also became secretary of the Sunday School Publishing Board of the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc. In 1926, under his leadership the Board constructed its new headquarters, known as the Morris Memorial Building, at Fourth Avenue, North, and Cedar (now Charlotte) Street. Townsend also helped to found the National Baptist Training School in 1918 and the American Baptist Theological Seminary in 1924. Twice he led the Spruce Street Baptist Church on Eighth Avenue, North, in major rebuilding programs.

On Monday, April 20, 1959, while preparing to go to his office, the builder and lamplighter died at the age of 83. He was survived by his son, Arthur, Jr. (now deceased), and grandchildren, A. M. Townsend, III, a Memphis obstetrician, and William M. Townsend, an Atlanta businessman.

*Linda T. Wynn, 1984*

### **WILLA ANN HADLEY TOWNSEND (1880-1947)**



Willa Ann Hadley Townsend was born April 11, 1880, in Nashville to Sam P. and Mary Hadley. She was educated in Nashville public schools and received degrees from Fisk, Roger Williams, and Northwestern universities, as well as a degree in religious education from the National Baptist Missionary Training School. She taught in Nashville's public schools, at Roger Williams University, and at the Howe Institute in Memphis. She also served as organist and music director for Spruce Street Baptist Church, where she met and married Arthur M. Townsend, a physician.

When her husband became president of Roger Williams University, Willa Townsend served as head of music and director of the university's singers. The Roger Williams Singers toured to raise funds and to erect three buildings on the campus. They "sang the University back into Roger Williams," a local black school that struggled to survive, but closed in December 1929.

As a hymnologist, songwriter, and music director, perhaps one of Willa Townsend's most outstanding works was the *Baptist Standard Hymnal*. She served as chairperson for the music committee for the Sunday School Publishing Board of the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc., and compiled and edited *Gospel Pearls and Spirituals Triumphant*. This work is still used today by many black Baptist churches. Willa Townsend also edited *The Beginner's Quarterly*, *Special Day Programs*, and other Baptist publications.

Willa Townsend was an active leader in the Sunday School Publishing Board and many other religious organizations. In 1934, she represented the board at the World's Baptist Alliance, held in Berlin, Germany. This trip afforded her the opportunity to tour the Holy Land and be baptized in the River Jordan. She was a member of the board of directors of the National Baptist Training School, president of the Women's Auxiliary of the Tennessee Baptist Missionary and Education Convention, vice president of the Women's Auxiliary, and held many other offices at the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A. She used her talents to organize a \$200,000 bond campaign to pay off the debt for the Board's Morris Memorial Building and helped to raise over \$10,000 for the Tennessee Baptist Missionary Education Convention's educational programs. She belonged to several civic organizations, including the Women's Auxiliary of the Nashville Medical Association and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

Willa A. Townsend died on Sunday morning, May 25, 1947. Her funeral was held on May 30, when the president of the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., the mayor, and other public officials and religious leaders paid their final respects to this educator, hymnologist, music director, civic and social leader. Willa Townsend is interred in the Townsend Mausoleum in Nashville's Greenwood Cemetery.

*Linda T. Wynn, 1988*

### **TSU ARISTOCRAT OF BANDS**

As early as 1928, Professor Clearance Hayden Wilson, the author of the music of the Tennessee State Alma Mater (lyrics by Laura M. Averitte), laid the groundwork for a music program at Tennessee A & I State College. It was not until 1946, when President Walter Strother Davis inaugurated an instrumental music and band program, that a formal music program made available the opportunity for formal training, structured educational courses in music, and planned curricular experience and application to high school graduates who qualified for scholarships. With the scholarship students as a nucleus, students whose primary academic disciplines were in other areas augmented the band program. The instrumental program developed and expanded qualitatively and quantitatively.

In 1946, President Davis selected Jordan Douglas (Chick) Chavis as band director. A native of Greensboro, North Carolina, he attended Tennessee State and was graduated

from Fisk University. A Bandmaster at Washington Junior High School and Pearl Senior High School, he served in the United States Navy as assistant leader of the Black Naval Band at the Great Lakes Naval Station and later at the Seattle, Washington Navy Base.

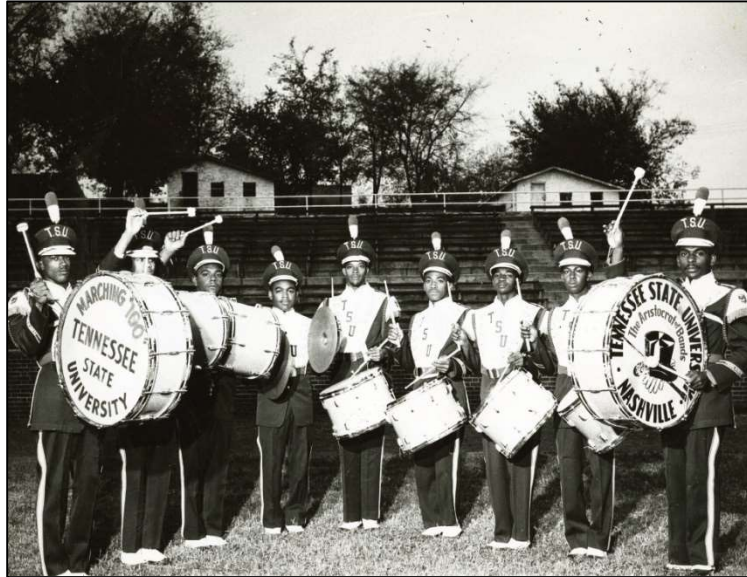
Chavis began the organization with 100 pieces. After more than a few weeks of practice the band marched onto the field. In addition to the 100-piece marching band, Chavis also directed a 60-piece concert band, and a 17-piece orchestra. However, the marching band captured the heart and soul of the football team's fans and spectators. Originally known as the Marching 100, the Aristocrat of Bands has had four band directors. In addition to Chavis, Jr., who served from 1946 to 1951, other directors include Frank Terry Greer (1951 to 1972); Clifford Watkins (1972 to 1979); and Edward L. Graves (1979 to the present).

Under Chavis' leadership, the marching band grew and developed into a premier university band that gave extraordinary performances in parades and half-time shows at football games. In 1947 and 1948, the marching band performed in the Washington Classic in Washington, D.C., where top historically black colleges and universities competed for national championship, or as stated by Chavis, "the black Super Bowl of that era." The band participated in a large parade and furnished the half-time show each year. Three years after the Marching 100 appeared in Washington, D.C., Chavis' term as band director ended in 1951. Again, President Davis was interested in further developing the band into a show band and again he tapped one of the university's former students, Frank T. Greer. Greer attended the university for two years; however, because of the diminished financial resources he left the school. A music major, Greer later completed his education at West Virginia State College (B.A. 1948; he later earned a M.A. from Marshall State University in 1954) and became a band director of a West Virginia high school band. Davis read about Greer's West Virginia band and asked him to join the faculty and become director of bands in 1951, where he remained until his retirement in 1979.

Soon after taking the baton as director of bands, Greer brought in Anceo Francisco as his assistant band director. Under Greer's leadership, the band made extraordinary advances, both in numbers and musical excellence. He transformed the marching pattern, taking on the Michigan influence of quick steps, high bent knees, and pointed toe. Colleges and high schools across the nation emulated this marching form for more than two decades. Four years after Greer began his tenure as director, the band was invited to perform during the half-time show of the Chicago Bears and Los Angeles Rams professional football game. The performance was the first of a series of nationally televised half-time shows for the band. It was also the first time that a historically black university band appeared on national television.

The "Aristocrat of Bands," the appellation given to the school's "Marching 100," brought national recognition and distinction to the university when it performed on national television in 1960 at halftime during the Baltimore Colts-Green Bay Packers professional football game in Baltimore, Maryland. Reportedly, TV announcer Lenny Nelson declared that he had never seen stadium spectators remain in their seats amazed and electrified at the performance of the "Aristocrat of Bands," as they went through their thirty-two

intricate steps and drills on the field. Greer's Aristocrats had the unique distinction of combining high-quality musicianship with high-quality showmanship, never sacrificing their booming symphonic sound regardless of the movements and intricate dance steps. Between 1955 and 1978, the TSU band performed half-time shows at nine professional



football games. TSU's Aristocrat of Bands also appeared in the Orange Blossom Classic in Miami, the Blues Bowl in Memphis, and the Grantland Rice Bowl in Wichita Falls, Texas.

In 1961, the band again made history and added another first to its record when it became the only historically black college or university to march in President John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Parade. One of the students who marched in that parade was Edward L. Graves, who later

became the band's director. In addition to marching in Kennedy's Inaugural Parade, Greer's band also played for President and Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson on their visit to Nashville. "The Aristocrat's Aristocrat," a designation given him by Robert Churchwell, Greer passed the baton to Dr. Charles Watkins in 1972, when he resigned as director of the Aristocrat of Bands to become the university's chief recruiter of students. Watkins continued the high-quality musicianship and excellent performances of both the Marching and Concert bands. After serving as the band's director for seven years, Watkins was succeeded by Edward L. Graves.

Since taking over as Director of Bands and Associate Professor of Music in 1979, Graves has developed a band program acclaimed both within the country's borders and abroad for its amazing musical performances, innovative arrangements, and meticulous marching. Under his direction, the band traveled to Japan to perform at halftime in the Mirage Bowl, and the Jazz Ensemble has traveled to Switzerland as part of the Montreaux Jazz Festival and toured Nigeria. In 1993 and 1997, the band performed in the Inaugural Parades of President Bill Clinton. In addition, the band has been featured during numerous television halftime shows and specials.

From 2000 to the present, TSU's famed marching band has added numerous appearances to its credit, including but not limited to: the CBS All American Happy Thanksgiving Day Parade; the American Celebration of Music in China; the Inaugural Honda Battle of the Bands Invitational Showcase in Atlanta, Georgia; the CMT Music Awards, with country music stars Big and Rich; Porgy and Bess with the Nashville Symphony; and as a featured performer at the Second HBCU National Band Directors Consortium Convention in Atlanta, Georgia. In 2003, the Aristocrat of Bands was named the official spirit band of

the National Football League's Tennessee Titans. On August 6, 2011, in Canton, Ohio, when Richard Dent became the first football player from TSU enshrined in the Pro Football Hall of Fame, the Aristocrat of Bands served as his escort during the Timken Grand Parade.

For over sixty years, audiences have been thoroughly entertained by the band's unique marching style and musical versatility. Recognized by their appellation as the "Aristocrat of Bands," TSU's marching band has performed in parades, half-time shows, music videos, movies, and television commercials. The band's majorettes enhance its dynamic style and sound. From 1956 to 1974, the majorettes were under the direction of Carrie Gentry. Later, under the direction of Judy Fenton Gentry, the majorettes were given the appellation "Sophisticated Ladies."

*Linda T. Wynn, 2012*

## TSU AT THE CENTENNIAL

Nashville and Tennessee African-American leaders bemoaned the lack of a publicly-funded higher education system for black students as early as 1880, but it was not until 1912 that a state-funded college for African-American students joined the private colleges of Roger Williams, Walden, Fisk, and Meharry to offer higher education for the state's African-Americans. In 1909, the Tennessee General Assembly authorized the state to establish public normal schools for teacher training, one in each Grand Division for whites, and another for African-Americans. Nashville's African-American elite quickly mobilized, led by Benjamin Carr, and lobbied for the school to be located in Nashville.

In January 1911, the State Education Board awarded the Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State Normal School for Negroes to Davidson County, and the State purchased

thirty-three acres of land that had been part of the Hadley plantation, and an additional sixty-seven acres adjacent and north of downtown Nashville for the school's campus. Carr promoted this location to the governor and stated that manual and agricultural training would be the basis of "the curriculum for former slaves and their descendants" at the new school. The building of a



campus commenced and by 1912, two dormitories, a main building for offices and classrooms, and several small farm buildings had been constructed. The first classes at Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial (A & I) Normal School for Negroes were held on June 21, 1912; the fall term opened on September 20, 1912, with 247 students enrolled. Formal dedication ceremonies were held in January 1913; Booker T. Washington visited the school in March of that year.

William Jasper Hale (1874-1944) of Chattanooga was chosen at the school's first principal; he oversaw the initial construction of the campus buildings, and hand-selected the faculty from graduates of Atlanta, Fisk, and Howard. Although an outsider, he married a local woman, Hattie Hodgkins, in 1913 and quickly gained acceptance among Nashville's elite African-American community. Hale was a shrewd advocate for Tennessee A & I, promoting the school's manual, agricultural, and industrial education programs among white politicians and patrons. The school's motto "Enter to Learn, Go Forth to Serve" and the words on the school's seal "Think, Work, Serve" were interpreted differently by white patrons and black students and faculty. For example, Hale and the faculty developed a course called "Industrial Education with emphasis on Negro Problems," which in actuality was the college's first African-American history class. Hale served as president for the first three decades of the school's history, a time of great expansion in the school's student body, physical plant, and academic offerings. By 1927, the size of the campus had doubled, with the construction of a library, a science building, a social science building, and new dormitories; enrollment had increased from 247 in 1912 to almost 2000 students enrolled in 1927-28. Additional campus buildings were constructed in 1932, and athletic facilities including a football field, field house, and tennis courts were added in 1935 under the auspices of the Works Progress Administration. The school's name was changed to Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial College in 1935. Hale's children were all distinguished graduates of Tennessee A & I: William Jasper, Jr. (1931), Gwendolyn Claire (1939), and Edward Harned (1941). By the year of Hale's resignation (1943), A & I added a graduate school and had awarded its first master's degree. Hale resigned under pressure from white state officials in 1943, and he died in New York the next year.

Tennessee A & I initially offered elementary and secondary education courses and a high school diploma, in a state where African-American students rarely finished sixth grade. With the publicly-funded school, suddenly education at all levels was much more readily available for the state's African-American students, and enrollment quickly grew. Students paid approximately \$100 a year for books, room, board, and fees, and students also worked a required two hours a day on campus. Simultaneously to the growth of A & I, the Anna T. Jeannes Fund and the Julius Rosenwald Fund were working throughout the state to improve education for African-American children. Tennessee A & I was able to end its elementary and high school divisions in the 1930s.

Walter S. Davis (1905-1979) succeeded William Hale as president of the school in 1943, and presided over the next twenty-five years of growth and success at Tennessee A & I. A 1931 graduate of Tennessee A & I, Davis served as the school's first football coach in the 1930s, and on the agricultural faculty prior to his appointment as president. In September

1951, the school received university accreditation, and the name was changed to Tennessee A & I State University. During Davis' presidency, the school's enrollment grew to over 6,000 and the faculty to some 250. Several other campus buildings were added, including the Graduate Building, Clay Hall, Lawson Hall, Home Economics, and new dormitories. Also during Davis' presidency, the school's athletic achievements became legendary: the basketball team won the NAIA championship in three consecutive years, the football team won the Grantland Rice Bowl Classic four times, and the women's track team, the Tigerbelles, achieved international recognition under Coach Ed Temple, who led the U.S. Olympic Track Teams in 1960 and 1964. In 1968, the year of Davis' retirement, the school's name was changed once again to Tennessee State University.

As at the neighboring schools of American Baptist, Fisk, and Meharry, TSU students participated in the nonviolent activism in the struggle for civil rights. Nashville students organized and participated in a widespread campaign of civil disobedience, both in Nashville and throughout the South. Fourteen TSU students who participated in the Freedom Rides of 1961 were expelled from the university. In recognition of their leadership and sacrifice, TSU awarded them honorary doctoral degrees in 2008.

In recent decades, Tennessee State University has continued to grow. As the result of a landmark desegregation case, TSU merged with the University of Tennessee's Nashville campus in 1979 and renamed that campus the Avon Williams Campus. New campus buildings added in the 1970s and 1980s included the Gentry Physical Education Complex, the School of Business, a new library, and an engineering building. By 2000, the student enrollment had reached over 8,600 students, and the alumni of TSU have come from fifty-one nations and forty states. TSU is the sixth largest historically African-American university. A list of notable TSU alumni reads like a Who's Who among the sports, entertainment, science, and educational worlds, and includes television personality Oprah Winfrey; artist Gregory Ridley; actor Moses Gunn; football players Joe Gilliam and Richard Dent; Olympic track and field coach Ed Temple and numerous Olympians, including Wilma Rudolph, Ralph Boston, and Chandra Cheeseborough; gospel music great Bobby Jones; communications pioneer Jesse Russell; and surgeons Dr. Levi Watkins and Dr. Edith Peterson-Mitchell.

*Tara Mitchell Mielnik, 2012*

Revised and expanded from the 1984 Profile  
by Lois McDougald and Bobby L. Lovett

### **UNION TRANSPORTATION COMPANY (1905-1907)**

The Union Transportation Company was chartered on August 29, 1905, because of Tennessee's new streetcar segregation law (July 1905). The company was capitalized at \$25,000, in shares of ten dollars each. The incorporators were leaders of black Nashville: Preston Taylor, president; George W. Henderson, treasurer; Richard Henry Boyd,



purchasing agent; James C. Napier; C. Victor Roman; Bishop Evans Tyree; George W. Washington; William D. Chappelle; Luke Mason; T. G. Ewing; J. W. Grant; H. T. Noel; A. T. Sanders; J. G. Merrill; Robert Robertson; and William Beckham.

The Union Transportation Company was organized to provide “a convenient transportation for Negro messengers, merchandise, traffic and freight throughout the cities and towns of Tennessee and the United States.” Although the charter was worded to allow for the operation of streetcar facilities in other parts of Tennessee, Nashville was its immediate goal. News of the new business venture and the appearance of a temporary system of horses and wagons for transporting black passengers around the city gave new life to the two-month-old boycott. The white street railway operators endured economic hardship in the face of determination exhibited by black Nashvillians. For example, the Nashville Transit Company reportedly lost \$500 per week by mid-September.

The purchasing agent for the Union Transportation Company, Richard H. Boyd, bought five large (fifteen passenger) steam-propelled automobiles and took an option to buy twenty more vehicles. The company employed ten men, and the officers donated their time. The autobuses arrived in Nashville on September 29, and the dedication ceremonies were held in Watkins Park on October 2, 1905. The regular lines of travel were started on Tuesday, October 3. Four of the five cars were in constant service and a fifth car was held in reserve.

The Union Transportation Company soon experienced problems. The steam-propelled buses lacked adequate power to traverse the steep grades of Nashville's terrain and keep regular schedules. To correct the problem, the company's officers traded the machines for fourteen electric automobiles that carried twenty passengers each. Emboldened by the



support of the *Nashville Globe*, the company put its electric cars into operation in January of 1906. After having its batteries ruined by overcharging at the Nashville Railway and Light Company's facilities, the Union Transportation Company installed its own dynamo and electric-generating equipment at the Nashville Baptist Publishing Board's facilities. This proved to be a futile effort because the batteries could not be adequately charged by the new generator.

The demise of Union Transportation was waiting in the wings. The impetus required to maintain the enormous financial undertaking had ceased, and payment on the subscribed stock slowed. In addition, in April of 1906 the City of Nashville indicated its plan to levy an annual privilege tax of \$42 per car. These taxes and persistent battery trouble caused the company to cease



operations by mid-summer. In 1907, Boyd sold the company's cars to the Jamestown Exposition in Virginia.

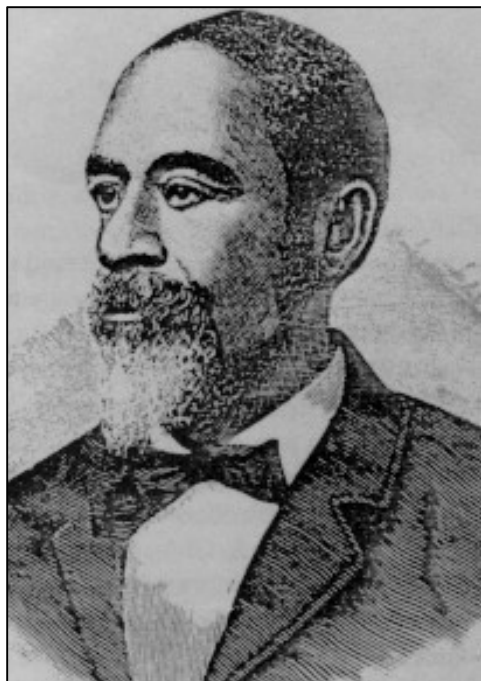
Black Nashvillians were brought to the gateway of significant black enterprise and victory over Jim Crow by the Union Transportation Company.

*Linda T. Wynn, 1986*

### **RANDALL B. VANDAVALL (1832-1898)**

Randall Bartholomew Vandavall was born a slave on March 23, 1832, near Neely's Bend, about ten miles above Nashville on the Cumberland River. He was one of eleven children born to slaves Sylvonia and Lewis. The mother came from Virginia to Middle Tennessee as a baby; the father was a coachman. When the mother died, the owner hired the large family to local employers. Randall's father was no longer able to make his weekly visits to see his family.

Young Randall's new employer forced him to sleep on the ground. Later, he slept in the white family's house and attended school with the master's sons. Now living in Nashville, at age sixteen Randall joined the First Colored Baptist Mission and later professed to be a preacher. He became a slave to two more owners and worked on a railroad. After returning to Nashville from the railroad construction project, Randall became a "quasi-independent slave" by paying his owner \$200 per year from his wages as a drayman (taxi driver). He married Martha Nicholson, a slave whose master also allowed her to hire out



to others. These kinds of arrangements were common in a boom town like antebellum Nashville, where twenty-two percent of the blacks were free persons and a quarter of the slaves were hired out. Just before the Civil War began, Randall arranged for a friendly white lawyer to obtain an \$1800 loan to purchase his and Martha's freedom.

Vandavall was elected pastor of the "African Mission," a black congregation established in January of 1862 by the white Spring Street (Central) Baptist Church. The Union army arrived in the city in February and forced the Spring Street Church's pastor and Confederate-sympathizing members to flee, thereby causing the "African Mission" to disintegrate before it could firmly establish itself as a black church.

Two years later, the Spring Street Baptist Church reopened with a white minister from the North. Vandavall's fortunes rose again in 1864 when the new minister, Daniel W. Phillips, recruited him to help form the "Baptist

College” to train black preachers. In 1866, this school became the Nashville Normal and Theological Institution (Roger Williams University) on Sixteenth Avenue, North, where Phillips served as president and Vandavall became one of the trustees.

In 1866, Vandavall formed the Second Colored Baptist Church (“Vandavall’s Baptist Church,” later named First Baptist Church of East Nashville). The congregation worshipped in Vandavall’s home on Berry and Second streets in Edgefield before moving to the old Union army barracks on Mark and Stevens streets and later to McClure’s Hall on Woodland between Second and Third streets.

Vandavall rose to prominence in black Nashville. Edgefield’s black public school at Wetmore and Spring streets was named in his honor in 1880, and Roger Williams University awarded him an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree in 1886. He served on the Negro Committee of the Tennessee Centennial Exposition in 1897. The Reverend Vandavall’s name sometimes appears in historical sources as “Venable, Vandervill, Vandervall, and Vandevall.” He was pastor of the First Baptist Church of East Nashville until his death in 1898.

*Bobby L. Lovett, 1989*

### **HIRAM VAN GORDON (1918-1979)**

Hiram Van Gordon, artist, military cartographer, and longtime chair of Tennessee State University’s Art Department was born on September 23, 1918, in Maury County, Tennessee. Born the son of William G. and Louell Gordon, Gordon would rise from humble beginnings in Maury County to become a nationally-known professor of Art and serve as inspiration for countless aspiring artists during the twentieth century.

Hiram Gordon entered the world during one of the most tumultuous periods in U.S. history, when African-Americans suffered through several episodes of racial violence throughout the country. Between July and September 1919, riots in Washington D.C., Chicago, Omaha, Nebraska, and Elaine, Arkansas, shook many African-Americans’ belief that they could ever obtain full inclusion in American society. Yet throughout this period, the Gordon family persevered to survive like Maury County’s almost 12,000 residents. Gordon’s father, William, worked as a corporate local barrel factory while his mother supplemented their income by working as a washerwoman from their home on Pulaski Pike. Although William Gordon owned his Maury County home, he would move his family to Nashville by 1930, purchasing a home and working as an ice dealer on the city’s historic Jefferson Street.

It was from their home located at 2707 Jefferson Street that Hiram Gordon’s more than forty-year relationship with North Nashville and Tennessee State University began. Gordon attended and graduated from the community’s highly-regarded Pearl High School and enrolled at Tennessee A & I in 1940. While in school, Gordon took various jobs

to assist with the cost of his education, working in warehouses and stores loading and unloading cargo in local Nashville businesses.

Gordon suspended his quest for a college degree on May 23, 1942, when he enlisted in the United States Army, five months after the start of World War II. Shortly after his enlistment, he received orders to serve in the European theater. Gordon worked as a cartographer while in theater and had the task of drawing maps of German ammunition dumps. At the conclusion of the war, he returned to Tennessee A & I, earning both bachelor's and master's degrees in Art. In 1951, while still in school, Gordon received an appointment as a graduate assistant in the Department of Art and became a sign painter for the university. Two years later, Tennessee State University hired him as a part-time instructor of art.



Upon the 1958 retirement of Frances Thompson, the dynamic head of the Department of Art and one of the major influences on Gordon's career, he received a promotion to the position of assistant professor of Art and was appointed as Head of the Department of Art, a position he would hold for the next twenty-one years. As Head, Gordon envisioned a department that would fulfill what he saw as the purpose of art schools in America and create an environment that would "stimulate those creative arts that give inward satisfaction, install confidence, and arouse new interests." The Department of Art's objectives at the time of Gordon's arrival were to "guide students in the understanding of arts as it appears in everyday living" and "to stimulate students to express themselves in various media as part of their cultural growth." As Head of the department, Gordon continued to strive to meet these goals, teaching his students to

understand the intrinsic relationship between art and other fields of learning. The department flourished under his guidance, offering students a wide array of courses in design, lettering, manuscript writing, and crafts.

Gordon maintained a vibrant Art department that frequently placed the work of its faculty, students, and famous and amateur artists on full display for the university and the city of Nashville to enjoy. Art jamborees, Design Spectrums, and other artistic programs became common features of the art program under Gordon's leadership, providing forums for students to explore, discover, and express their artistic passions. During Gordon's tenure, Tennessee State University's reputation blossomed as a place where young aspiring artists could thrive.

Following Gordon's retirement due to illness and his subsequent death in March 1979, the department took up his mantle and it continues to build upon the legacy and

foundation he helped establish as its leader. Current faculty in the Department of Art remains active and can boast of having their work featured on television and at historic places around Nashville. Likewise, the Hiram Van Gordon Memorial Gallery, located in Elliot Hall on the campus of Tennessee State University, stands as a monument to his life's work by providing a venue where TSU students can express, cultivate, and showcase their work.

*Dr. Learotha Williams, 2013*

### **REVEREND C.T. VIVIAN (1924-2020)**

Cordy Tindell (C. T.) Vivian, the only child of Robert and Euzetta Tindell Vivian, was born on July 28, 1924 in Boonville, Illinois. At the height of the severe global economic depression that began in the late 1920s, his mother and maternal grandmother lost everything, including their marriages, agricultural holdings, and their house in the city. Wanting Vivian to have the best education possible, they moved to McComb, the county seat of McDonough County, which had a desegregated educational system. Young Vivian received his primary education at Lincoln Grade School. While there, he refused to let school bullies beat up weaker students and recalled to the *Peoria Journal Star*, "Those incidents meant nobody was going to mess with me and I could be free, in fact, [I] ... could use [my] ... position to free other people." His actions on behalf of others opened his eyes to the power of nonviolence. Vivian continued his education at Edison Junior High School and McComb High School. An active youth member of Allen Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church, he taught in the Sunday school and served as the youth group president.

After graduating from high school in 1942, Vivian entered Western Illinois University (WIU) as a social science major, where he clashed intellectually with the department head. White male students tried to protect white females from black men on campus. These covert racial issues proved difficult for Vivian. Thinking that the behavior of the social science department's head was the exception rather than the rule, Vivian changed his major to English, only to find the same issues. Vivian was refused entrance to the English Club and students who were his friends received threats. Vivian realized how deeply racism permeated the culture. Just as he had become aware of the power of nonviolence, he now recognized that the beliefs entrenched in the upper echelons of the social order were not the same as those held by the people at the opposite end of the social strata. In the mid-1940s, Vivian left WIU and moved to Peoria, Illinois, where he worked for the Carver Community Center.

Two years after arriving in Peoria, Vivian participated in his first sit-in demonstrations, which ushered in a lifetime of activism for equality and justice. Unlike the South's *de jure* segregation, the country's northern region practiced *de facto* segregation, an approach that Vivian found little better than the South's. Although the region's businesses posted

no racially-specific signs, its customs and traditions were well known by residents. Vivian set out for change and became an active participant in an integrated group working to open restaurants and lunch counters to all races. While working in Peoria, Vivian met Octavia Geans (1928–2011) of Pontiac, Michigan, and they married on February 23, 1953. That same year, the Peoria National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) chapter elected Vivian as vice president. A year later, he accepted his call to the ministry and made plans to attend Nashville's American Baptist Theological Seminary. Unknown to him, Vivian was about to embark upon one of the most important social movements of the twentieth century. Vivian came to Nashville the same year (1955) that the actions of Rosa Parks sparked the Montgomery Bus Boycott, which catapulted the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King into the national spotlight. In addition to attending the seminary, he pastored the congregants of the First Community Church and worked as an editor at the National Baptist Sunday School Publishing Board of the National Baptist Convention.

In late 1956, Vivian boarded a Nashville Transit Authority bus and seated himself near the front of the half-filled vehicle. The driver of the bus, adhering to the city's customs, ordered him to the rear. A heated debate ensued and Vivian refused to acquiesce to the driver's orders. The driver ordered other passengers to vacate the bus and drove Vivian downtown to police headquarters. The U.S. Supreme Court's earlier decision in the *Browder v. Gayle* (1956) case ruled in favor of the Montgomery plaintiffs with regard to the desegregation of intrastate transportation. After making phone calls to city hall,



Nashville's law enforcement learned that the city was in the process of desegregating seating on public conveyances.

Four years after arriving in Nashville, Vivian joined other ministers under the leadership of Kelly Miller Smith, Sr. and established the Nashville Christian Leadership Conference (NCLC), a local affiliate of King's SCLC. During NCLC's organizational meeting, Vivian was elected vice president. He met the Reverend James Lawson and others who ultimately brought about the end of Nashville's racial segregation. Vivian also affiliated with Diane Nash, John Lewis, Bernard Lafayette, Marion Berry, and James Bevel, who became the student marshals of the Nashville movement. As vice president, Vivian managed the NCLC's direct-action component. Lawson joined

and served as chair of NCLC's Action Committee. After formulating a plan to conduct workshops on Gandhi's method of protest, NCLC leaders and students tested Nashville's segregation policies in November and December of 1959. Due to a lack of media coverage,

Nashville's 1959 sit-in movement was eclipsed by the Greensboro, North Carolina sit-in on February 1, 1960. Within twelve days of the Greensboro sit-in, Nashville students moved into full action. Two months later, NCLC and the Student Committee, with the assistance of Fisk University economics professor Vivian Henderson, launched an economic boycott of Nashville's retail district.

On April 19, 1960 the home of civil rights attorney Z. Alexander Looby was dynamited. Leaders in Nashville's black community called for a mass protest march to the office of mayor Ben West. Familiar with New York's silent march against lynching in the early 1900s, Vivian insisted that the silent strategy be utilized. Over 3,000 persons from both races marched. When West came out to meet with them, Vivian read a prepared speech denouncing the mayor's leadership. This angered West, and the two men in caustic fashion verbally retaliated against each other. According to the *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, when Vivian asked West "if he thought segregation was moral," the mayor answered, "No." Nash continued the questioning and asked the mayor to use the standing of his office to end racial segregation. Immediately, he appealed to all citizens to end discrimination, to have no bigotry, no bias, and no hatred. Taking his answer to the next level, Nash probed, "Mayor, do you recommend that lunch counters be desegregated?" The mayor answered in the affirmative. Vivian's razor-sharp questioning paved the way for Nash's questions, and Nashville lunch counters began the desegregation process on May 10, 1960, two months before Greensboro, which captured national attention.

After the first wave of the Nashville sit-ins, Vivian and his family moved to Chattanooga, Tennessee, where he pastored Cosmopolitan Community Church. His wife gave birth to their youngest son in a segregated hospital. Vivian used this occasion to end segregation in that city's healthcare facilities. A proselytizer of nonviolent resistance, he participated in the Freedom Rides of 1961, where he experienced his first beating en route to Mississippi. "Going to Mississippi in 1961 was a whole different world," said Vivian. "You knew you could easily be killed there." He participated in major campaigns at Albany, GA (1961); Birmingham, AL (1962); St. Augustine, FL (1964); and Selma, AL (1965). In *Confronting the Color Line: The Broken Promise of the Civil Rights Movement in Chicago* by Alan Anderson and George W. Pickering, Vivian argued that "Nonviolence is the only honorable way of dealing with social change. . . if we are wrong, nobody gets hurt but us. And if we are right, more people will participate in determining their own destinies than ever before."

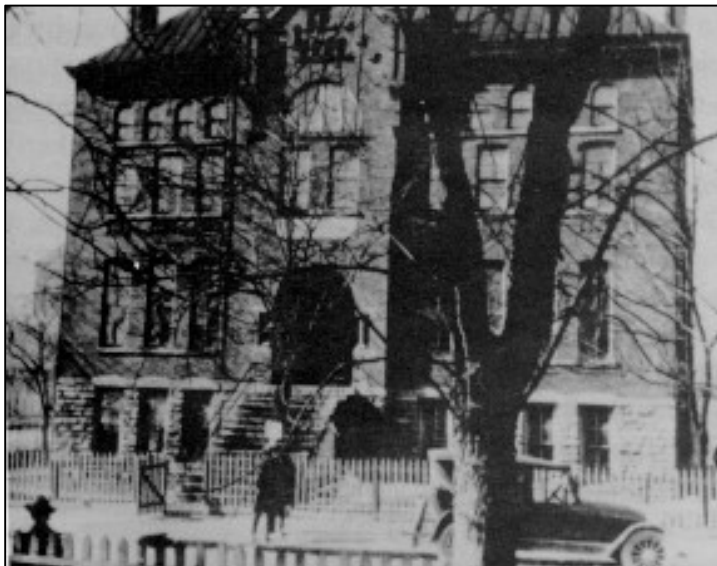
Vivian helped organize Tennessee's contingent for the 1963 March on Washington, and Dr. King appointed him to SCLC's executive staff as national director of affiliates. Vivian later directed Vision (Upward Bound), a program that put over 700 Alabama students in college with scholarships and established the Anti-Klan Network (Center for Democratic Renewal). In recognition of his fervent commitment to the civil rights movement, he has been placed in the Civil Rights Institute (Birmingham, AL); the National Civil Rights Museum (Memphis, TN); the National Voting Rights Museum (Selma, AL); and the Portrait Hall of Fame, M. L. King Chapel, Morehouse College (Atlanta, GA). Several documentaries highlighting the civil rights era spotlighted Vivian, including *Eyes on the*

*Prize and The Healing Ministry of Dr. C. T. Vivian.* He served as director of the Urban Training Center for Christian Missions in Chicago (1966), dean of the Shaw University Divinity School in Raleigh, NC (1972), and deputy director for clergy during the presidential campaign of the Rev. Jesse Jackson (1984).

The Rev. C. T. Vivian lived in Atlanta, where he remained active with numerous civic groups and organizations. He received the Trumpet Award (2006) and the Presidential Medal of Freedom (2013). The life of the paladin of direct nonviolent protest came to an end on July 17, 2020. He was buried in Atlanta's West View Cemetery. Vivian died the same day as his friend and fellow comrade, U. S. Rep. John Robert Lewis.

*Linda T. Wynn, 2021*

### **WALDEN UNIVERSITY (1868-1925)**



Walden University began as a school for freedmen under the sponsorship of northern Methodist Episcopal Church missionaries. In late 1865, the Reverend A. A. Gee and others began classes for freedmen in Andrew Chapel M. E. Church (now Clark Memorial M. E. Church), moving in 1866 to the old Confederate gun factory on College Street (now Third Avenue, South). After the Nashville public schools opened in September of 1867, the school was chartered as Central Tennessee College, under the

Reverend W. B. Crichlow. The school's board of trustees attempted to purchase land on Rutledge Hill, but white residents obtained a court order to block the sale. In 1868, Central Tennessee College purchased the Nance property on Maple Street (now First Avenue, South), where the Bureau of Freedmen, Refugees and Abandoned Lands helped to finance the construction of two brick buildings.

Central Tennessee College operated from 1870 to 1900 under John Braden, a Union army chaplain. By 1874, the school's 240 pupils studied grammar and secondary and normal (classical and teacher training) subjects. During Braden's presidency, the school began to issue college degrees.

In 1876, the Meharry Medical Department was added to Central Tennessee College. The head of the department was Dr. George Whipple Hubbard (1841-1921), a teacher for the

Pittsburgh Freedmen's Aid Commission and former principal of Nashville's first Negro public school, Bellview.

During the 1880s, Central Tennessee College grew rapidly and added several new departments: law (1877-1882), industrial art (1885), dentistry (1886), and pharmacy (1889). In the 1890s, the school expanded its female and industrial education opportunities, adding a nursing department in 1892. Young female students also could learn domestic science in such courses as sewing, cooking, and home economics. Around 1895, the students attempted to stage a rebellion while demanding more black faculty members, but they quieted down because of respect for "old man Braden" and his life-long devotion to freedmen's education.

In 1900, the name of the school was changed to Walden University, in honor of Bishop John Morgan Walden, formerly a freedmen's missionary. Then the school had thirteen departments, a faculty of sixty-eight, and 1,360 alumnae. Thereafter, the suitability and success of Walden declined. In 1911, for example, the school graduated only one law student. Walden University found it increasingly difficult to attract grammar and high school students after the Tennessee Agricultural, Industrial, and Normal State School was opened in Nashville in 1912.

Alumnus Edward A. White became the first black president of Walden University in 1915, which was a year of financial hardship resulting from the depression of 1914-1915. In 1915, Meharry faculty decided to form a separate college. Hubbard secured the charter for Meharry Medical College and remained its president until his death. Meharry retained the old campus.

In 1922, Walden University was renamed Walden College and moved to a twelve-acre campus on the eastern hills overlooking the black neighborhood of Trimble Bottom. The new campus was formerly the site of Stevens Infirmary in 1864. The site was used intermittently by St. Mary's Orphanage from 1863 to 1903. It was a sanitarium from 1905 to 1920 and the home of Judge Chester K. Hart. Walden College operated there until 1925 as a junior college for teacher education, business, the arts, and pre-dental and premedical education. Financial difficulties forced the school to close. Walden College's campus was vacant until 1935, at which time Trevecca Nazarene College leased it, then purchased the campus in 1937.

*Bobby L. Lovett, 1985*



## IDA B. WELLS-BARNETT (1862-1931)



The life of Ida B. Wells covers several epochs of the African American saga. Born six months before the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation and reared during Reconstruction, she came of age during the post-Reconstruction period and spent her adult life fighting to redress the inequities brought about by Jim Crow. One of the first African-American women to serve as an investigative reporter, Wells began her fight at the age of twenty-two when she brought legal action against the Chesapeake, Ohio, and Southwestern Railroad Company. Through written and spoken communication she made known the stark atrocities of lynching in America and conveyed her struggles against all

the acts of inhumanity to the African American in her travels abroad.

Ida Wells was born a slave on July 16, 1862, in Holly Springs, Mississippi, to James and Elizabeth (Warrenton) Wells. The oldest in a family of four boys and four girls, she acquired from her parents a love of liberty and self-sufficiency that characterized her life. She attended Shaw University (later Rust College) in Holly Springs, and, after her move to Memphis, Tennessee, she attended summer sessions at Nashville's Fisk University.

The yellow fever epidemic of 1878 claimed the lives of Ida's parents and youngest brother. Following their deaths, a sixteen-year-old Ida assumed the responsibility of rearing her siblings. Despite seemingly insurmountable obstacles, she took and passed the Mississippi teachers' exam and taught briefly in Holly Springs.

In the 1880s, Wells moved to Memphis. While preparing for the teachers' exam for the Negro Public schools of Memphis, she taught in Woodstock, Tennessee, outside Memphis. In May of 1884, Wells purchased a first-class ticket on a local Memphis-to-Woodstock line. Taking a seat in the white ladies' coach and refusing to move to the segregated "smoker" car when so instructed by the conductor, Wells was ejected from the train. She subsequently filed suit against the railroad company. In December of 1884, the Memphis circuit court ruled in her favor and awarded her damages. On December 5, 1885, Wells lost her suit when the Tennessee Supreme Court reversed the lower court's decision.

Ida B. Wells taught in the Memphis city schools from 1884 to 1891. Using the story of her suit against the railroad and its outcome, Wells contributed to *The Living Way*, a religious weekly, under the pseudonym, "Iola." She also wrote regularly for the African-American press throughout the country. Elected secretary of the Afro-American Press Association in 1889, Wells became known as the "Princess of the Press." During this same year, she

became editor of and partner in the *Free Speech and Headlight*, a militant journal that served as a voice of the African-American community. Wells' 1891 editorials critical of the Memphis Board of Education and its unequal distribution of the resources allotted to the segregated Negro schools led to her dismissal as a teacher.

The Lynching of three young African-American proprietors of the People's Grocery Store, on March 9, 1891, caused Wells to declare journalistic war on lynching. Because of her prickly penned editorials about the issue of lynching, she was banished from Memphis. Exiled from the South, Wells persisted in her struggle against racial injustice and lynching as a columnist for the *New York Age*. In addition to investigating and reporting on the execution of blacks without due process of law, she lectured on the subject and made her findings known throughout the Northeast, England, Scotland, and Wales.

Three years after she was expelled from Memphis, on June 27, 1895, Ida B. Wells married attorney Ferdinand L. Barnett, editor and founder of the *Chicago Conservator*. They had four children: Charles, Herman, Ida, and Alfreda.

Ida B. Wells-Barnett is one of eleven prominent Tennesseans depicted in the official Tennessee bicentennial portrait and one of the founders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). On March 25, 1931, in Chicago, at the age of 68, the ever-vocal "crusader for justice" was forever silenced.

*Linda Wynn, 1996*

### **JOSIE E. WELLS, M.D. (1878-1921)**

Josie E. Wells, known by many of her contemporaries as the "Matron of Hubbard Hospital," was born on November 28, 1878, to John and Eliza Durant English in Mississippi, shortly after the end of Reconstruction. During the last decade of the nineteenth century, Wells moved to Nashville where she would—as a result of her work in the field of medicine, education, philanthropy, and the Colored Women's Club Movement—rise to become one of the most influential African American women in the history of Music City. Josie Wells flourished during a period in which Nashville's African American community groaned under the weight and restrictions placed upon their lives by Jim Crow, and she asserted and made a name for herself in areas historically dominated by men.

Wells graduated from Meharry Medical College in 1904, eleven years after Georgia E. L. Patton became the first woman to earn a degree from the institution. Wells' matriculation through the college differed from Patton's, however, as she was pregnant and gave birth to a daughter, Alma, the year before she earned her medical degree. The timing of Alma's birth may have contributed to Wells' concern for the plight of women and children throughout the remainder of her life. Her graduation also coincided with the rise of the Colored Women's Club Movement in the city. Although she was active in many of the

clubs around Nashville, including the Phyllis Wheatley Club and Federation of Women's Clubs, the two that demanded most of her attention were the Day Home Club, operated by her close friend Nettie Langston Napier, and the Hubbard Hospital Club, the group she organized and led.

The Day Home Club was the creation of Nettie Langston Napier, the preservationist responsible for saving Frederick Douglass' Washington D.C. home and wife of arguably Nashville's most famous African American citizen, James C. Napier. The Day Home provided services for working mothers and their children. Josie Wells' participation in the



Day Home Club allowed healthcare to be listed among the much-needed services provided for this group at little or no cost. Throughout its existence, the Day Home Club sought to serve Nashville's most underserved population. The Hubbard Hospital Club attempted to foster community investment in the new hospital after it opened in 1910. To accomplish this, Wells organized lavish gatherings at her 1205 Second Avenue South home and other homes around Nashville's African American community to bring attention to the hospital and its constant need of financial support. Indeed, for much of her life, Wells' name became synonymous with Hubbard Hospital.

Josie Wells' influence went beyond merely raising awareness of and seeking funding for the hospital. Indeed, she was influential in its day-to-day operations and the training of new doctors and nurses. Noted physician Charles V. Roman remembered that Wells had worked as both a nurse and physician which contributed to her having "her own ideas of how a hospital

should be run." These ideas and her refusal to allow the hospital to receive what she deemed to be unfair treatment sometimes placed her at odds with other notable doctors on staff, including the venerable Robert F. Boyd and the brilliant surgeon, John T. Wilson. Nonetheless, she continued to work with these men in a professional manner despite their differences as demonstrated by her presence as the only woman physician during the free annual surgeries offered to the community by Meharry when Dr. Daniel Hale Williams visited Nashville. After the untimely death of Robert F. Boyd in 1912, she would assume a leadership role in the hospital and become Meharry's president, George W. Hubbard's, chief administrative advisor.

Without doubt, Wells' work at the hospital, Meharry Medical College, the Day Home Club, and her duties as a single parent required a great deal of her time. Nevertheless, she

accomplished some of her most satisfying work in her private practice. Wells believed as more women earned medical degrees they would increasingly become the primary care physicians for women throughout America. Consequently, it should come as no surprise that when she finally opened up her first doctor's office—located at 411 Fourth Avenue North—her business card stated that she specialized in diseases affecting women and children. Wells' practice stood out as a result of her reputation as a physician who was willing to try the latest practices, such as diet, hygiene, and other preventative measures to improve her patients' health. The location of her office also made her stand out among her peers in the city. When she first opened her doors to the Nashville community, her Fourth Avenue address made her the only woman in the city to have an office in downtown Nashville.

Josie Wells' desire to explore and utilize new and alternative forms of therapy contributed to her involvement with Lottie Isabell Blake and the Rock City Sanitarium, a forerunner to Nashville's Riverside Hospital. The sanitarium boasted that it was not a hospital, but the institution described itself as being "a quiet health home that offered treatment for nervousness and other chronic diseases." Patients at the Sanitarium could receive electric therapy, massages, sprays, and hydrotherapy as treatment but "no drugs." Rest, relaxation, and recuperation were the guiding principles of the Rock City Sanitarium during Wells and Blake's tenure at the institution.

Nashville's African American community received the sad news of Dr. Josie Wells passing on the evening of March 20, 1921. With her passing, Meharry lost a visionary teacher and administrator, and the city lost one of its greatest advocates for universal and accessible healthcare for all its citizens regardless of their race or class. Wells was laid to rest under a magnolia tree in Nashville's Greenwood Cemetery with a headstone that reads: "Forgetful of self she gave her life for others."

*Learotha Williams Jr., 2020*

#### Further Reading:

Charles Victor Roman, *Meharry Medical College: A History*. Nashville, Tenn.: Sunday School Publishing Board of the National Baptist Convention, Inc., 1934.

### **WESSYNGTON PLANTATION (1819- )**

Much of the history of local African Americans begins in the chapter on slavery in America. That chapter includes slave farms and plantations common to Tennessee, particularly to Middle and West Tennessee. Whereas white families dominated the history of the plantation era, it was the majority residents (the black workers—the slaves) who built and maintained the economy of Tennessee's plantations. A large portion of black family history and genealogy can be traced through the slave farms and the large plantations, such as the Wessyngton Plantation in Middle Tennessee.

Wessyngton Plantation was settled in 1796 by Joseph Washington (1770-1848) and African and African American slaves he brought with him from Southampton County, Virginia. It was not unusual after the Revolutionary War (1775-1783) for ambitious men to move their slaves from the worn out lands of the eastern slave-states to the cheaper and more fertile lands of the western territories like Tennessee (which, carved from western North Carolina, became a state on June 1, 1796). Joseph was a second cousin to President George Washington, and *Wessyngton* is the Old English spelling of the Washington surname, which dates to A.D. 1260. Joseph Washington and his slaves were among the first settlers in Robertson County, Tennessee, to begin the cultivation of dark-fired tobacco. With the wealth generated by the black workers, the Wessyngton mansion was built in 1819 by slave labor, and it still stands on the original land.

After Joseph's death in 1848, the estate passed to his son, George Augustine Washington, Sr. (1815-1892). Under George's management and with the labor of even more African American slaves, the estate was increased from 3,700 acres of land, seventy-nine slaves, and 15,000 bushels of tobacco in 1850 to 15,000 acres, 274 slaves, and 250,000 bushels of tobacco by 1860. One year before the Civil War, Wessyngton became America's largest tobacco plantation and the world's largest single producer of that crop. The outbreak of the Civil War in mid-1861, however, brought operations at Wessyngton to a halt. Despite the empty rhetoric and boasting of Tennessee's minority Confederates, the Union army and pro-Union citizens quickly took control of Middle Tennessee in early 1862. Many of Wessyngton's black men enlisted with the Union army after the office for the recruitment of the United States Colored Troops (USCT) opened at Nashville in September of 1863. After the war and Emancipation, many of the USCT returned to their families and to Wessyngton to farm. Because the Washingtons never sold any of the slaves from the plantation, the African American families remained intact through recent times. As many as five generations of black families lived at Wessyngton at the same time, and many of them continued to use the Washington surname after slavery.



In this 1892 image, the writer of this article identified four Wessyngton servants; all former slaves, they are also relatives of the writer. Pictured from left to right: Allen Washington (b. 1825; head dairyman), Emanuel Washington (b. 1824; the cook), Granville Washington (b. 1831; body servant to George A. Washington), and Hettie Washington (b. 1839; head laundress and Emanuel's wife).

Wessyngton Plantation remained in the hands of direct descendants of the original white settler until 1983. After that time, the estate was sold to Glen and Donna Roberts. Wessyngton is located in Cedar Hill, Tennessee, about thirty-five miles northwest of Nashville.

In 1964, the Washington family deposited family records in the Tennessee State Library and Archives in Nashville. These records span the seventeenth through the twentieth centuries and are stored on nearly seventy rolls of microfilm. The records yield valuable information on the lives of African Americans before the Civil War, providing a wealth of data on black genealogy, as well as black life on one of Tennessee's premiere plantations. Indubitably, plantation history is important for the reconstruction of black family history and genealogy in Tennessee.

*John A. Baker, Jr., 2015*

### **EMMA ROCHELLE WHEELER (1882-1957)**

A native Floridan, Emma Rochelle Wheeler was born near Gainesville on February 7, 1882. She grew up in Florida, where her intrigue with the medical profession was aroused at the early age of six. An eye problem prompted her father to take her for treatment to a white female diagnostician. Young Emma and the female physician became friends, and when she went to school in Gainesville the doctor's abiding concern for and interest in her continued. She visited Emma at Cookman Institute in Jacksonville. At age seventeen, Wheeler finished Cookman and in 1900 she married Joseph R. Howard, a teacher.

Howard died a year later of typhoid fever, never seeing the son named for him. Shortly after Howard's death, Emma and young Joseph moved to Nashville, Tennessee. She attended Walden University, and in 1905 her dream became a reality when she was graduated from Walden University's Meharry Medical, Dental, and Pharmaceutical College. She also was married to Dr. John N. Wheeler during the week of Meharry's commencement.

Following graduation, John N. and Emma R. Wheeler moved southeast of Nashville to Chattanooga and with meager resources set up their medical practice on Main Street. For ten years, John and Emma practiced together. In 1915, Dr. Wheeler purchased two lots on East Eighth Street at the corner of Douglas, where she had a three-story building constructed. After the structure's completion, on July 30, 1915, the thirty-bed, nine private rooms, and twelve-bed ward of the medical dispensary was dedicated as the Walden Hospital.

Complete with surgical, maternity, and nursery departments, Walden Hospital was staffed by two house doctors and three nurses. Seventeen physicians and surgeons from the Mountain City Medical Society used the new facility and admitted their patients. The median monthly patient load was twelve. Although Dr. John N. Wheeler admitted his patients to the facility, it was managed, operated, and paid for by Dr. Emma R. Wheeler.

While maintaining long office hours and serving as superintendent of Walden Hospital, Dr. Emma Wheeler personally performed a number of the surgical procedures. However, she found surgery too exhausting to continue, in addition to her other responsibilities. For more than twenty years, Dr. Wheeler also maintained a school for nurses. She, with the assistance of her husband, taught and trained many students who were interested in becoming attendant caregivers. In 1925, Dr. Wheeler initiated the Nurse Service Club of



Chattanooga, an innovative, prepaid hospitalization plan. The Nurse Service Club, the only one of its type in Chattanooga, was entirely separate from the hospital's operation.

In 1949, the Chattanooga branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) voted Dr. Wheeler the "Negro Mother of the Year." Wheeler was a member of the Mountain City Medical Society; the State Volunteer Medical Association, treasurer and member of the board of trustees of Highland Cemetery; and a member of Wiley Memorial Methodist Church. In January of 1925, she, along with Emma Henry, Zenobia House, and Marjorie Parker, organized the Pi Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha (AKA) sorority, Chattanooga's first AKA chapter.

Dr. Emma Rochelle Wheeler's health began to decline in 1951 and two years later, in June of 1953, she retired from operating and managing Walden Hospital. With her retirement, Chattanooga's first and only African-American owned and operated hospital ceased operation on June 30, 1953, after thirty-eight years of service. For a while, Dr. Wheeler continued to practice general medicine, receiving her patients on the first floor of the former hospital building.

At age 75, on September 12, 1957, Dr. Emma Rochelle Wheeler drew her last breath in Nashville's Hubbard Hospital. The body of the pioneering health-care provider was conveyed back to Chattanooga and funeral services were held on September 17 at the Wiley Memorial Methodist Church. She was buried in Highland Cemetery.

Five years after her death, the Chattanooga Housing Authority named the city's newly completed housing project the Emma Wheeler Homes. Ten years later, as a part of its Black History Week celebration, the Chattanooga branch of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History paid homage to the life and contributions of Dr. Emma R. Wheeler as one of the city's pioneering African-American women. On February 16, 1990, the Tennessee Historical Commission approved the placement of a state historical marker

at the site of Walden Hospital, established, owned, and operated by Dr. Emma Rochelle Wheeler.

*Linda T. Wynn, 1996*

### **CARRIE JOHN RICHARDSON WHITE (1851-1934)**

Carrie John Richardson was born in 1851 in Nashville to Ann McGavock and John Richardson. Her father had been a slave, who purchased his freedom and worked as a barber at the Commercial Hotel. A literate man, he wrote many underground passes for slaves. Ann's father was a white man, and her mother was an American Indian. Thus, Ann McGavock and her four sisters--Susannah, Jo Anna, Martha, and Fannie--were technically (legally) freeborn.

While Ann was in New Orleans, her father died of cholera. A white man, Randal McGavock, took custody of the five children. Randal McGavock migrated from Virginia to Nashville in 1795, established a successful career, and served as mayor before moving to Williamson County to build Carnton mansion. McGavock gave Susannah to his daughter, Elizabeth, who married General William Giles Harding. Susannah remained on Harding's Belle Meade plantation until after slavery and her death.

Carrie's great-grandmother was Jonah, a full-blooded Creek Indian, who lived in a hut on the grounds where the state Capitol stands. Her mate was a Negro. Also, Carrie's paternal grandmother's mate was an Indian, *Tupponce*.

Carrie, born in 1851, was reared in a house on Gay Street, near Summer Street (Fifth Avenue, North). Her mother later sold the property and moved the family home to Grant and Fourteenth Avenue, North. Carrie's early education was received in dames' schools. One school was taught by a white woman at the corner of Fifth and Jefferson streets. Another school was taught by a free black preacher named Daniel Wadkins, who conducted classes in Nashville between 1837 and 1857. The black schools were closed as a result of the December 1856 race riot.

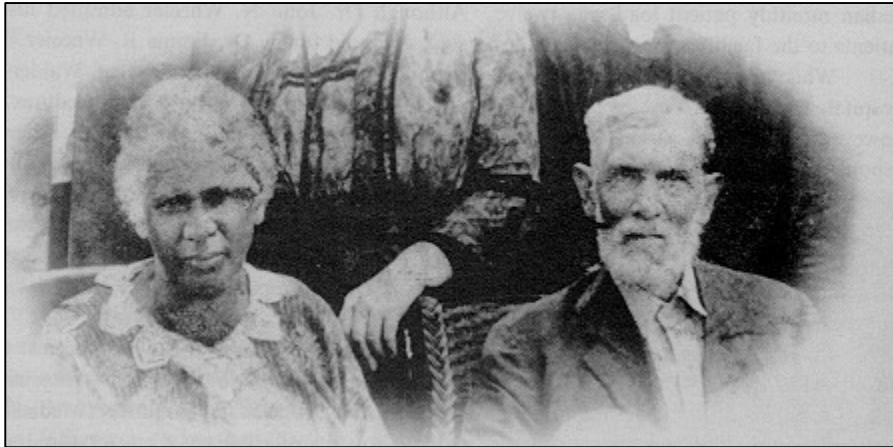
During the Civil War and the Union occupation, like so many of the town's other free Negroes, Carrie continued her formal education. She was enrolled at Fisk University soon after it opened in 1866 and would have graduated from the college course, except that she got married to Charles Henry White in 1868. Charles attended Baptist College (Roger Williams University).

Carrie became an apprentice under Mercy Duke Gordon, a seamstress and the aunt of Charles H. White. Before marriage, Carrie taught at Bell Buckle, Tennessee, and at Trinity School in Nashville. Charles was born of a free mulatto named Yessie Duke and a white judge of Gallatin, named Alfred White. Charles was a barber and later taught school in Franklin. After his marriage, he worked as a shipping clerk on Nashville's Public Square and sold dairy products from his farm.



The Whites bought a forty-five-acre farm in 1875. Located five miles from Nashville on Brick Church Pike, the farm had horses, mules, ponies, guineas, turkeys, peafowl, chickens, hogs, and cows. There was an abundance of fruit trees and children. Carrie White and her husband had ten children: Alfred, James, Randall, Carrie, Charles, George, Maude, Felix, Annie, Gordon, and Howard. Only eight children grew to adulthood; Alfred died as a baby, and Howard passed at the age of seven years.

Carrie's children enjoyed various careers, including doctor, teacher, principal, post office worker, housewife, fireman, undertaker, and transfer worker. Several of the children attended Fisk University's model and preparatory grades. James and Annie received their



bachelor's degrees from Fisk in 1894 and 1906, respectively, and daughter Carrie received her normal school certificate in 1893.

Carrie's two college graduates excelled in their careers. James received the M. D. degree from Meharry

Medical College in 1897. He became a major in the Medical Corps during World War I and was awarded the *Croix de Guerre* from the French government. Annie received certificates in French at the Royal Victoria College of McGill University in Montreal and at the University of Potier in southwestern France. Carrie White died in Nashville in 1934. Charles White preceded her in 1928.

*Emma White Bragg, 1989*

### **AVON NYANZA WILLIAMS, JR. (1921-1994)**

Throughout his career, Attorney Avon Williams was viewed by many as an ardent, controversial, and feared leader of the local Afro-American community and as one of its most dominant and articulate figures.

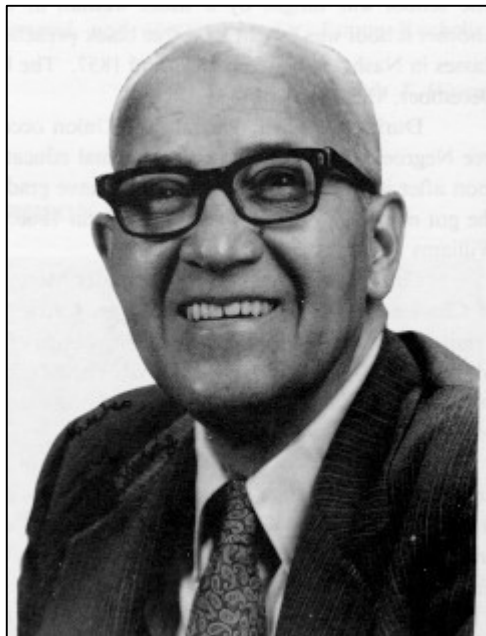
Avon Nyanza Williams, Jr. was born on December 22, 1921 in Knoxville, Tennessee, the fourth of five children of Avon and Carrie Belle Williams. He received his primary and secondary education in the public schools of Knoxville and graduated with an A.B. degree from Johnson C. Smith University in 1940. He later entered Boston University's School of Law, where he received the L.L.B. degree in 1947 and the L.L.M. degree in 1948. In April and August of 1948, he was admitted to the bar in the states of Massachusetts and

Tennessee, respectively. Attorney Williams interned with Nashville attorney Z. Alexander Looby and then returned to Knoxville to set up his own law practice.

Avon Williams exhibited an interest in civil rights cases early in his legal career. He had been in solo practice less than one year when he filed suit for four black students applying for admission to the University of Tennessee graduate school. This case, *Gray v. University of Tennessee*, reached the U. S. Supreme Court; the university capitulated and admitted the young men. In 1950, Williams, Looby, and Carl Cowan filed the Anderson County school desegregation case (*McSwain v. Board of Anderson County, Tennessee*), which was the first such public school case in Tennessee. Williams returned to Nashville in 1953 and went into the general practice of law in association with Z. Alexander Looby, remaining for sixteen years. In 1953, he was admitted to practice in the U. S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit, and in 1956 he was admitted to practice in the U. S. Court of Military Appeals. In 1956, he also married Joan Marie Bontemps, the daughter of poet and writer Arna Bontemps. They had two children, Avon Nyanza, III, and Wendy Janette. In 1963, Williams was admitted to practice in the U. S. Supreme Court.

During the turbulent decades of the 1950s and 1960s, Williams involved himself, without remuneration, in various civil rights suits--many of which reached the state and federal supreme courts. These cases involved such issues as school desegregation, public accommodations, employment and housing discrimination, and police brutality.

Avon Williams was instrumental in the founding of two organizations: the Davidson County Independent Political Council (DCIPC), of which he served as president from 1962 through 1966, and the Tennessee Voters Council, of which he became general chairman



in 1966. He was elected to the newly created nineteenth senatorial district in 1968. He drafted many legislative bills, including one requiring each school system to include Afro-American studies and one forbidding utility districts to discriminate on account of race in laying water lines.

In 1969, Williams established his own law practice. He became a member of the American Bar Association, the American Judicature Society, the Nashville Bar Association, the Tennessee Bar Association, and served on the boards of a number of community and civic organizations, including Davidson County Citizens for TVA and the Davidson County Anti-T.B. Association. He became a member of the executive committee of the NAACP in 1953; became an elder and trustee of St. Andrew's

Presbyterian Church in 1956 and 1966, respectively; a member of the Appeals and Review Committee of Meharry Medical College; and a member of the State Democratic Steering Committee for the re-election of President Lyndon Johnson. In 1972, he was a delegate to

the Democratic National Convention. In 1969 he became a cooperating attorney for the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc., and served from 1963 as special counsel for the Jackson-Memphis, Tennessee and West Tennessee Conferences of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church. Beginning in 1962, Attorney Williams was counsel for the Community Federal Savings and Loan Association of Nashville and in 1978 he became counsel for the Citizens Realty and Development Company and its successor, Citizens Bank Building Limited Partnership. From 1966 to 1975, he was a lecturer on dental jurisprudence at Meharry's School of Dentistry and in 1976 he became a professor at the school.

In 1972, Williams became involved in the Tennessee State University/University of Tennessee at Nashville merger suit as attorney for the plaintiff interveners, successfully persuading the court that U. T. Nashville should be merged into T. S. U. "This became a landmark decision, because this was perhaps the first time in the history of the nation that a major white institution was absorbed by a major black institution." Williams persuaded the U. S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Cincinnati to stay U. S. District Judge Thomas A. Wiseman's desegregation order for public schools in Nashville. The U. S. Supreme Court refused to lift the appellate court's stay. Throughout his adult life, Attorney Williams was the recipient of numerous civic and professional awards and citations.

Avon N. Williams, Jr. died on August 29, 1994 and was buried in Nashville's Greenwood Cemetery.

*Linda T. Wynn, 1985*

### **ELBERT WILLIAMS (1908-1940)**

The year 2015 marks the 50th anniversary of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, which President Lyndon B. Johnson signed into law on August 6, 1965. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 abolished literacy tests and poll taxes designed to disenfranchise African American voters and gave the federal government the authority to take over voter registration in counties with a pattern of persistent discrimination. Before the Voting Rights Act came to fruition, numerous people gave their lives in the quest for social justice and the right of the franchise as granted by the 1870 ratification of 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the United States Constitution. This amendment granted African American men the right to vote by declaring that the "right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude." Using poll taxes, literacy tests and outright intimidation to stop people from casting free and unfettered ballots, Southern states effectively disenfranchised African Americans. Four years prior to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's (NAACP) Legal Defense Fund's litigation of the 1944 *Smith v. Allwright* case that outlawed "white primaries," Elbert Williams, a resident of

Haywood County, Tennessee, and one of the earliest known members of the NAACP, was lynched because of his membership in Brownsville's newly inaugurated chapter of the NAACP. Williams' demise came eleven years before the Christmas night bombing of Harry T. and Harriett Vyda Simms Moore's bedroom; fifteen years before the lynching of 14 year-old Emmett Till; and twenty-three years prior to Medgar Evers' assassination.

When consideration is given to those whose lives were taken in the struggle to gain voting rights, Florida's Harry T. Moore or Mississippi's Medgar Evers are among the first persons to come to mind. Evers, a native of Decatur, Mississippi, and an alumnus of Alcorn University, was a civil rights activist, organizer of voter registration efforts, demonstrations and boycotts of companies that practiced discrimination. He was the first field secretary for the NAACP in Mississippi. Because of his civil rights and voter registration efforts, at 12:40 a.m. on June 12, 1963, Byron De La Beckwith, a white segregationist and founding member of Mississippi's White Citizens Council, shot Evers in the back in the driveway of his Jackson home. He died less than an hour later at a nearby hospital. Evers' life ended twelve years after Harry T. Moore. Moore organized the first Brevard County branch of the NAACP in 1934 and became its president. He later traveled throughout the state of Florida organizing branches. In 1941, he organized and became President of the Florida State Conference of NAACP branches. In 1945, he formed the Florida Progressive Voter's League and became its Executive Director. This organization was instrumental in helping register over 100,000 black voters in the State of Florida. Because of his civil and voter rights activities, as well as his activism in the Groveland Rape Case, on Christmas Day 1951 the Ku Klux Klan placed a bomb beneath the floor joists directly beneath the Moore's bed. Moore died on the way to the hospital; his wife, Harriett, died nine days later. Tennessee's Elbert Williams met an earlier, similar fate for wanting to participate in the political process.

Williams was born on October 15, 1908, in rural Haywood County, Tennessee, to Albert and Mary Green Williams. In 1929 he married Annie Mitchell, and they eventually moved to Brownsville, where they worked for the Sunshine Laundry. The Williamses became charter members of Brownsville's NAACP chapter, organized in May 1939. One of the first actions taken by members of the Brownsville's NAACP chapter was to work to register African Americans to vote in the upcoming presidential election the following year. Although no members of Haywood County's African American community had been allowed to register to vote during the 20th century, on May 6, 1940, five members of Brownsville's NAACP Branch unsuccessfully attempted to register to vote. Within 24 hours, the threats and reign of terror began. White extremists destroyed Brownsville's NAACP branch and over twenty African American families fled the area. Despite the mayhem that catapulted Brownsville into a state of chaos, the Williamses did not leave.

On June 20, 1940, many in Brownsville, including Elbert and Anna Williams, listened to the radio broadcast of the second fight between Joe Louis and Arturo Godoy. Louis successfully defended his title by winning the match over his opponent in the eighth round. After the fight, as Elbert Williams prepared for bed, Tip Hunter and Charles Read, city police officers, and Ed Lee, manager of the local Coca-Cola bottling company,

knocked on their door and forced Williams, who was barefoot and clad in pajamas bottoms and an undershirt, into the awaiting vehicle. They questioned him about his activities with the Brownsville NAACP. That was the last time anyone saw him alive. When



he did not return home by the next morning, Annie Williams attempted to find the whereabouts of her husband. After three days of anxiously awaiting some word about her husband, Annie Williams received that ill-fated call on Sunday June 23, 1940 at 7:30 a.m. from undertaker Al Rawls. He wanted her to come to the Hatchie River because two anglers found the mutilated “body of a colored [sic] man.” Williams, still clothed in what he was wearing the night of his abduction, was found with a rope around his neck, which was fastened to a log. He was beaten and bruised with bullet holes penetrating his chest. His head was twice its normal size. The Coroner ordered no medical examination and held his inquest on the riverbank that same morning. His verdict was “Cause of death: unknown.” Similar to what the Coroner wanted to do with Emmett Till’s body some 15 years later, the Brownsville Coroner did not want Annie Williams to see her husband’s body. However, she insisted. Upon identifying her

husband’s body, she started to cry. One of the white men in attendance told her, “We ain’t gonna have no hollering here.” After she identified the body, they told Mrs. Williams that the body was to be buried immediately. According to his death certificate, Elbert Williams’ death was ruled a homicide by “parties unknown.” After retrieving the body from the Hatchie River and wrapping it in sheets, Al Rawls placed the body in a pine box and subsequently buried the remains of Elbert Williams in Taylor’s Chapel Cemetery. Neither Annie Williams nor members of the family attended the burial. She immediately left Brownsville and ultimately settled in New York.

Because of the atrocities committed in Brownsville, the county seat of Haywood, Thurgood Marshall, the NAACP’s Special Council investigated the murder and interviewed numerous witnesses. Like so many others, these interviewees challenged violent assaults discursively and engaged in what Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub in their work *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History* described as calculated “speech acts,” which should be viewed as a form of direct action protest against racial violence.

Pressured by the National Office of the NAACP, the United States Department of Justice (DOJ) ordered the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to investigate the death of Elbert Williams. The DOJ promised a broad inquiry. It ordered the United States Attorney in Memphis to present the case to a Federal Grand Jury; NAACP Special Council Thurgood Marshall monitored the investigation. Marshall discovered that FBI agents took Tip

Hunter, the leader of the lynch mob, on their rounds to question witnesses. Subsequently, the DOJ reversed its decision and closed the case citing insufficient evidence. Marshall criticized the DOJ for its investigation and failure to prosecute. As in many cases involving the death of those who fought to obtain civil and social justice, no one has ever been prosecuted for the death of Elbert Williams. According to some, Elbert Williams of Brownsville, Tennessee was the first known person affiliated with NAACP killed for his civil rights activities and seeking the right to vote. Twenty years later, at the height of the Modern Civil Rights Movement, Brownsville's NAACP re-organized in 1961. Those responsible for Williams's death have never been prosecuted.

*Linda T. Wynn, 2015*

#### Further Reading:

Heather Catherwood, "In the Absence of Governmental Protection: The Struggle of the Brownsville NAACP to Secure the Right to Vote." Northeastern University School of Law, May 2012, [https://repository.library.northeastern.edu/downloads/neu:mo42t77ok?datastream\\_id=content](https://repository.library.northeastern.edu/downloads/neu:mo42t77ok?datastream_id=content).

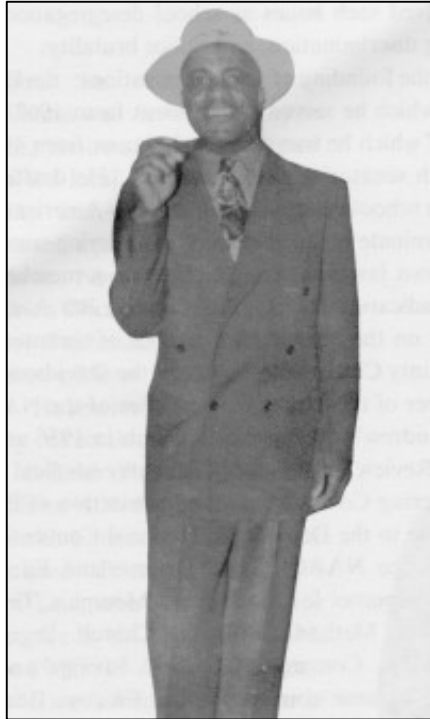
### **JOHN LEE "SONNY BOY" WILLIAMSON (1914-1948)**

John Lee "Sonny Boy" Williamson was born in southwest Madison County on March 30, 1914, to Ray Williamson and Nancy Utley. John Lee's father died when he was a baby, and he was reared by his mother. At age eleven, he received his first harmonica as a Christmas gift from his mother. According to his half-brother, T. W. Utley, when he was not chopping cotton, milking cows, or doing other farm chores, he was teaching himself to play the harmonica by listening to and playing along with records on an old wind-up record player. By the time he was sixteen, Williamson was jamming around Tennessee and Arkansas with guitarist "Sleepy John" Estes and mandolin demon James "Yank" Rachell.

In 1934, Williamson moved to Chicago, where a thriving blues scene was in full swing. An experienced artist, he immediately made his imprint, first as a much-recruited accompanist and, when he began to play his own compositions, as a much-sought-after headliner. Three years after he moved to the "Windy City," Williamson made his first recording, *Good Morning, Little School*, for Victor's subsidiary Bluebird label. This recording introduced his unusual, individualistic, and widely influential instrumental style of "squeezed" notes and "crossed-harp" playing--his distinctive style was imitated by many other musicians. From 1937 to 1945, Williamson recorded for the Bluebird label, sharing many sessions with guitarist Big Joe Williams. From 1945 to 1947, he recorded on the Victor label. When he started recording in 1937, he still maintained his southern roots. With his distinctive vocal style and fluent harp, he sounded like a country boy. "He played with all the rhythmic subtlety of the best country blues, slurring and wailing the harp notes, making the harmonica almost a single entity....But gradually the rural sound

changed, as if the country boy was wising up to city ways,” wrote Giles Oakley, author of *The Devil's Music: A History of the blues*.

John Lee “Sonny Boy” Williamson helped propel the country blues of his native Southland toward a more exhilarating, urban-blues sound with his blend of originality, country



intensity, and the electrification of his sound with the piano, bass, and drums. His tempo was so overpowering that he placed a pillow under his feet during recording sessions to silence the sound of his feet keeping time to the beat. Pete Welding, on *Blues Classics Album 21*, described Williamson as “a forceful singer, popular recording artist, and the first truly virtuoso blues harmonica player, whose rich, imaginative solo flights resulted in completely re-shaping the playing approach and the role of his humble instrument in the blues.” Many of his songs are considered today as blues classics.

In the wee hours of the morning, on June 1, 1948, the blues world lost one of its most influential harmonica players when John Lee “Sonny Boy” Williamson was beaten to death as he left one of Chicago’s nightclubs. In keeping with the lyrics he often sung in life, “Now I want to bury my body, way down in Jackson, Tennessee,” Williamson’s body was conveyed to the city of his birth. For forty-two years, his body rested in an unmarked

grave, sheltered by the deep shadows of the Jackson woods and covered with a verdant blanket of kudzu. On June 1, 1990, city officials, family members, friends, recording executives, and blues enthusiasts gathered to celebrate “John Lee ‘Sonny Boy’ Williamson Day” and to dedicate a Tennessee historical marker, placed on Tennessee Highway 18 and Caldwell Road, near the site of the musician’s birthplace. RCA Records, whose corporate history includes the Bluebird and Victor labels on which Williamson became famous, presented a rose granite gravestone to mark the resting place of the forgotten blues great.

Since 1937, Williamson’s first commercial recording, *Good Morning, Little School Girl*, has been recorded numerous times by artists, including The Grateful Dead and Canned Heat.

*Linda T. Wynn, 1996*

### **LEWIS WINTER (1839-1911)**

Lewis Winter lived an amazing life in an era when most Blacks suffered from poverty and the hardships that resulted from Jim Crow laws and practices established after Reconstruction. It was indeed a rare phenomenon for a former slave to find an avenue for

success that led to the building of a business empire that made him and his descendants millionaires.

Winter's amazing story from the rags of slavery to the riches of a successful entrepreneurship in business and banking started in 1839, the year of his birth to a slave mother in Lebanon, Tennessee. Separated from his mother at the age of six and sold to another farmer, he remained enslaved until 1865. With the outbreak of the Civil War and Tennessee's occupation by the Union, Nashville had become a center for a large contraband camp, and he was able to seek safety and opportunity there at age 26. Nashville had become a center for a large contraband camp. With only a few dollars to his name Winter started selling chickens and eggs. Before long he had nurtured his modest poultry business into a success. By 1895, he turned a cart operation into a four-story brick building, which he owned at 211-213 Cherry Street (now Fourth Avenue) and employed twelve people.

Located near Broad Street, competition between black and white merchants selling the similar products became intense. However, much of Winter's business came from blacks who lived in the old contraband camps behind Union Station, in the area now known as the Gulch. When the age of big business caused economic prosperity for whites, blacks suffered economic instability. Nevertheless, Winter prospered because he used the newly



invented refrigerated railroad box cars to ship his products throughout the South. He sold live and dressed chickens, as well as other country eggs, wool, ginseng and bacon in his expanded business. In 1900, he chartered L. Winter Produce Company with \$3,000 in capital and five board members.

Lewis Winter had become one of Nashville's leading elites. He served on the board of Wilberforce (Ohio) University (the oldest private historical black college in the nation), helped establish two of Nashville's financial institutions, was president of the Home Banking Loan Association, and was also one of the founders of the One Cent Savings Bank. In 1920, the latter bank became Citizens Savings and Loan Bank and Trust, which remains today.

When the state of Tennessee decided to celebrate its Centennial Anniversary in 1895, Winter was appointed to the Negro Committee to plan the prominent Negro Building and special events for the exposition, now the site of Centennial Park. Booker T. Washington was invited to be the keynote speaker on Negro Day, a Jim Crow day set aside for black visitors to the Exposition.



Lewis Winter married Elinora Davis (1847-1919) in 1860. She would become a leader among black women to promote relief programs for the poor. She was active in women's groups, such as the Phillis Wheatley Club. They made their home at 74 Maury Street. The prominent couple had four children: a son and three daughters. Only Miranda P. Winter would outlive her father (1879-1955) and become the sole heir of her father's fortune. Miranda married Moses McKissack III, a pioneer architect and co-founder of McKissack and McKissack Architect Firm. Lewis, without a son to bear his name, paid Moses a nice lump sum to name his first-born son Lewis Winter. As the sole heir to a fortune worth over a million dollars, Miranda was able to help her husband financially while he pursued his business venture and established clientele. The company became the oldest black architectural firm in the nation. It is credited with countless homes, public schools, city buildings and structures on the Fisk, Tennessee State University, and Meharry campuses, all built during Moses III's lifetime. In 1912 the couple built their spacious home in the historic Edgehill neighborhood. It remains today.

Unfortunately, in 1911 Lewis Winter had become paralyzed, but the quiet and unassuming, yet bold and daring businessman did not let his poor health stand in the way. He continued to manage his produce business from a wheelchair until his death of dysentery on May 12, 1911. He was buried in the city's black Mount Ararat Cemetery. Many of his direct descendants still live today as part of Moses McKissack's family.

*Gloria H. McKissack, 2019*

### **JOHN W. WORK, III (1901-1967)**

John Wesley Work, III, was born June 15, 1901, in Tullahoma, Tennessee, to John Wesley Work, II, and Agnes (Haynes) Work. Young John came to Nashville because his father accepted a teaching position at Fisk University. Influenced by the musical background of his family, John produced his first composition, *Mandy Lou*, at age seventeen. He received the A.B. degree in history (1923) and decided to enter New York's Institute of Musical Arts (Julliard School of Music). After Agnes Work's death in 1927, John returned to Nashville and completed his mother's appointment as a trainer of singing groups at Fisk University, where he remained for thirty-nine years.

Meanwhile, John returned to New York to continue his studies in 1927. He received the Master of Music Education degree in 1930 from Columbia University, received a fellowship in 1931, and obtained a Bachelor of Music degree in 1933 from Yale University. John Work, III, resumed his duties at Fisk, teaching music education and theory. In 1946, he became the director of the Jubilee Singers and reorganized the group into an ensemble of mixed voices.

From 1946 to 1956, John Work, III, published more than fifty compositions. He received an award from the Fellowship of American Composers for his composition, *The Singers*, in 1946. Based upon a poem by Henry W. Longfellow, this cantata was performed first at

the 1946 Fellowship of American Composers Convention in Detroit. After spending three months in Haiti, Work wrote a suite for strings centered on Haitian themes. The string symphony performed this suite, *Yenvalou*, at the 1946 Saratoga Spring Festival. He completed a manuscript composition, *Golgotha*, based upon a poem by Arna Bontemps. The Fisk Choir performed this composition during the 1949 Festival of Music and Art.



Work's composition, *My Lord, What A Morning*, was performed for the Festival of Music and Art in 1956 by choruses representing choirs from Germany, Sweden, Great Britain, South America, France, Yugoslavia, Japan, Canada, and the United States. The choir toured the United Nations and performed this composition in Philharmonic Hall for the Festival's Gala Concert.

Although many musicians did not consider black folk songs to have musical credence, John Work, III, gave the Negro folk song a musical form. His book, *American Negro Songs and Spirituals* (1960) made an invaluable contribution to musicology. The book contains 230 religious and secular

songs, as well as the origins and nature of the various types of black folk songs.

From 1950 to 1957, Work served as chairman of the Fisk University Department of Music, and he continued to direct the Jubilee Singers until 1956. After touring Europe for twelve weeks, his health waned, causing him to relinquish conducting and administrative duties and concentrate on composing, speaking, teaching, and writing. In 1966, he neared retirement and curtailed his teaching to part-time service. The Fisk class of 1941 commissioned artist Aaron Douglas to paint Work's portrait in 1966.

Work was a member of the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP), among other organizations. He completed more than one hundred compositions, published and unpublished. Not only was he a prolific composer, Work was gifted with talent as an author, lyricist, choral conductor, educator, and ethnomusicologist.

John Wesley Work, III died on May 17, 1967.

*Linda T. Wynn, 1987*

## STEPHEN J. WRIGHT (1910-1996)

Stephen J. Wright., whose career in higher education was described in 1996 by *The New York Times* as “a road map of black educational progress in the 20<sup>th</sup> century,” was born September 8, 1910, in Dillon, South Carolina, to Stephen J. Wright, Sr., and Rachel Eaton Wright. His father was a practicing physician in the Dillon area until his death in 1915, leaving his widow to support Stephen and three siblings. Mrs. Wright took the children to Williamsboro, North Carolina, to be reared by her parents on the Eaton farm while she pursued employment north of the Mason and Dixon Line to support the family.

Stephen Wright attended Williamsboro schools until he was fifteen, then began undergraduate study at Virginia’s Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute (known simply as Hampton Institute by 1930; it became Hampton University in 1984), which his father and a number of relatives had attended. He majored in chemistry and received his Bachelor of Science degree in 1934. He began his career as a teacher at Kennard High School in Centreville, Maryland, and later served as a high school principal in Upper Marlboro, Maryland, to support himself while pursuing graduate studies. In 1939, he was awarded the Master of Arts degree in education from Howard University in Washington, D.C.

In June of 1938, Stephen Wright married Rosalind Elizabeth Person, born June 21, 1912 to the Reverend Shepard S. Person (who performed the 1938 marriage ceremony) and Mary Jones Person, of Franklinton, North Carolina.



Rosalind Person, who had been educated in Franklinton schools, received her Bachelor of Science degree in 1933 from Shaw College (now University) in Raleigh, North Carolina; she celebrated her 75<sup>th</sup> class reunion during Shaw’s 2008 homecoming.

In 1939, Stephen Wright took his young bride to Durham, North Carolina, where he served as assistant professor of education and director of student teaching at North Carolina College (now N.C. Central). He continued graduate studies at Columbia and City College in New York, and in 1943 received his doctorate in education from New York University. He returned to Hampton Institute in 1944 as professor of education and later served as dean of students. In 1953, he was appointed president of Fisk University in Nashville. In the summer of 1957,

Wright became the seventh president of Fisk and the second African American to serve in that position.

While at Fisk, Dr. Wight continued “in the forefront of efforts to improve the quality of black education and to remove the roadblocks that had barred black students from going

to college.” His equal-rights philosophy was mirrored in the rising protests against racial segregation revived by the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, mandating an end to segregation in education. College students throughout the South became active in the Modern Civil Rights movement that “began” the following year on December 1, 1955 in Alabama, when Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on the public Montgomery City Lines bus for a white fellow passenger. During the fall of 1959 in Nashville, James Lawson, an African American student at Vanderbilt University, began to conduct a series of weekly workshops on nonviolent protest of racial segregation. Among the Lawson-trained Fisk students were 20-year-old John Lewis, 22-year-old Diane Nash, white undergraduate Paul LaPrad, and graduate student Marion Berry. These students joined other workshop trainees in the first nonviolent sit-ins in the South in November, 1959, when they went in groups of four to lunch counters of two major Nashville department stores. On February 13, 1960, student leader John Lewis met with 500 students at the Fisk University Chapel to be transported downtown to sit-ins at local lunch counters. As the movement continued, violence erupted when a group of white hoodlums and thugs harassed the sit-in students, leading to arrests of the sit-in students. Although local newspaper headlines condemned the sit-in movement, Fisk President Stephen Wright publicly stated that he approved of student involvement in the necessary action for desegregation, reiterating in the spring of 1960 that “No students will be expelled from Fisk University for participating to bring about change that is good.” Through his support of the students, President Wright became the only college president in Nashville to openly support the movement for civil rights.

As the turbulence of social change continued through the 1960s, Dr. Wright served on the White House commissions by appointment of Presidents Kennedy and Johnson. In 1966, as Fisk University celebrated its centennial year, Dr. Wright resigned his presidential post to become the first full-time president and chief executive officer of the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) in New York. Over the following three years of raising funds in support of the forty-one private colleges under the UNCF umbrella, Dr. Wright’s numerous essays on the value of equal opportunity in higher education were published to national acclaim in both popular and academic venues. In one of his published speeches, he addressed “The Tragic Waste of the Black Mind and Talent,” which later gave rise to the slogan, “A Mind is a Terrible Thing to Waste,” adopted in 1972 by the UNCF.

After Dr. Wright’s tenure at the UNCF, he and Rosalind Wright returned to Hampton, Virginia. He served in five successive positions with the College Entrance Examination Board, where he was “a pioneer in the development of an educational equality program for minority students.” From 1982 to 1990, Dr. Wright served as chairman of the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia. He received alumni awards from Hampton and Howard universities, as well as twelve honorary degrees, and he served on the boards of more than a dozen foundations and educational organizations. He also was the founder of the American Association of the Higher Education.

Dr. Stephen Wright died April 16, 1996, less than five months before his 86<sup>th</sup> birthday, at John Hopkins Medical Center in Baltimore, Maryland. His funeral service was held in the

chapel of Howard University, with Dr. Lawrence Jones presiding. The two men had been lifelong friends, and Dr. Jones had served as dean of chapel at Fisk during Wright's presidency. On February 14, 1997 the Virginia General Assembly adopted House Joint Resolution Number 747 honoring Dr. Stephen J. Wright as "one of the most prominent and accomplished educators of the 20<sup>th</sup> century...[who left] an unmatched legacy of service and dedication to the Commonwealth and the nation." In memoriam, the Stephen J. Wright Scholars Program was established in Virginia.

Rosalind Wright had her husband's remains returned to Franklinton, North Carolina, for burial in Evergreen Cemetery. Three years later, she too returned to permanent residence in Franklin, where she celebrated her 97<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2009.

*Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr., 2010*

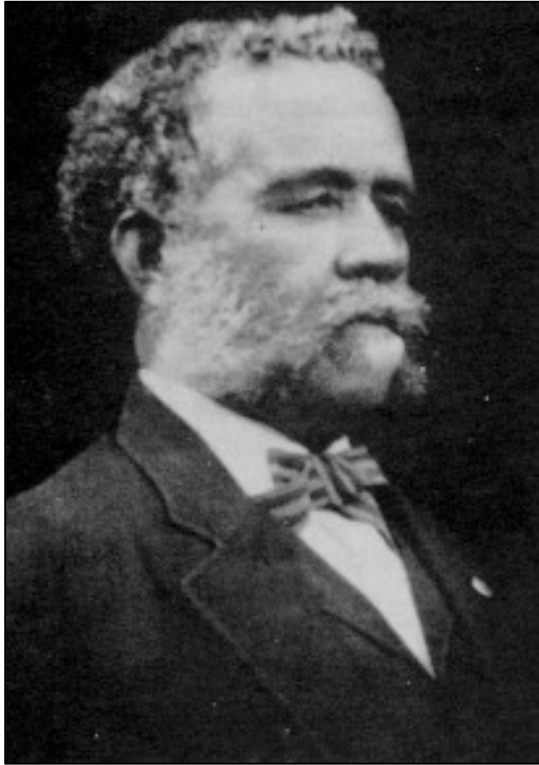
### **WILLIAM FRANCIS YARDLEY (1844-1924)**

William F. Yardley was one of Tennessee's most outspoken citizens and colorful public officials during Reconstruction era times. He was elected to the Knoxville Board of Aldermen (1872-1873) and to the Knox County Court (1876-1882). He was a Republican candidate for governor of Tennessee in 1876.

Born to a white mother and a black father on January 8, 1844, in Knox County, he was literally left on the doorstep of the white Yardley family, who took him in and gave him their name. At an early age he was apprenticed to Squire McClannahan to learn a trade and to read and write. By 1869, Yardley was teaching young black children at the Ebenezer School in west Knox County. He studied law books, read law with a white lawyer, passed the bar, and was licensed to practice law. He became Knoxville's first black lawyer in 1872 at age twenty-eight.

It was during the gubernatorial race of 1876 that Yardley made his reputation as an orator. He was hailed by newspapers across the state for his speech-making abilities on the political trail. He advocated change in the common carrier law, which caused a poor man to pay first class fare and ride second class. He fought the privilege tax on dogs, which was a burden on the poor. He advocated sweeping changes in the labor laws. The election was held on November 7, 1886, and Yardley came in a poor fourth in the four-man race. Some black Republican party brokers, led by Nashville's Randal Brown, opposed Yardley's candidacy because he ran as an independent. Yet, from that day on, people in Knoxville fondly referred to him as "Governor Yardley."

He was considered the dean of the black lawyers in Knox County and taught many aspiring attorneys. He was a member of Knoxville's first fire department and its second assistant chief during 1876-1877.



Partial to wearing Prince Albert coats and derby hats, he represented the Continental Insurance Company of New York and maintained a law office near the heart of downtown Knoxville. Known as an able criminal lawyer “with a quick wit and eloquent speech,” he was characterized by Frederick Douglass, who had been his house guest, as “One of the most remarkable men that I have met.”

In 1870, Yardley married Elizabeth Stone, a native Knoxvillean, who was part American Indian. They had four children. Many prominent citizens, including the mayor and other city officials, attended their golden wedding anniversary celebration in 1920.

In 1878, Yardley was the publisher and editor of Knoxville’s first black newspaper, the *Knoxville Examiner*. In 1882, he organized and published another newspaper, the *Knoxville Bulletin*.

William Francis Yardley died on May 20, 1924.

*Robert J. Booker, 1996*

### **SAMUEL YETTE (1929-2011)**

Prestigious journalist, author, educator, publisher, and social critic Samuel Frederick Yette was born in Harriman, Tennessee on July 2, 1929. The grandson of a slave, Yette was the twelfth child of Frank Mack Yette and Cora Lee Rector Yette. He attended segregated schools in both Harriman and Rockwood and began taking college classes at Morristown College before following some of his siblings to Tennessee State University (TSU) in Nashville in 1948.

While a student at TSU in 1950, Yette discovered that students were paying fees for a student newspaper, though no such paper existed. Yette, a junior, brought that oversight to the attention of TSU President Walter S. Davis, who asked him to propose a plan for one. Yette submitted a Program of Work to President Davis, who asked Business Department Chair Dr. William L. Crump to provide an office and furnishings and to work with Yette, who established the TSU Student Newspaper, *The Meter*. Yette served as first editor-in-chief prior to his graduation from TSU in 1951.

After graduation, Yette served in the United States Air Force during the Korean War. Following the war, he returned to Tennessee to teach high school, first in Rockwood then

in Chattanooga. He also served as a sportswriter and radio announcer in Chattanooga. Yette enrolled in the graduate program in journalism at Indiana University in Bloomington, where he was one of two black students. A strong student and writer for the student newspaper, Yette was inducted into the national journalism fraternity, Sigma Delta Chi in 1956. Yette persuaded another African-American journalist from Tennessee, Carl Rowan, to speak at the induction ceremony. Yette received his degree from Indiana University in 1959, the same year he married his wife, Sadie Walton.

While pursuing a career in journalism, Yette had accompanied renowned photographer Gordon Parks throughout Alabama in the mid-1950s to document the emerging Civil Rights Movement for *LIFE* magazine. This high-profile series led to other journalism assignments for Yette throughout the 1950s and 1960s, including reporting for the *Afro-American* in Baltimore and *Ebony* magazine. He also served as director of information at Tuskegee University before holding positions as press liaison and executive secretary of the Peace Corps and special assistant for civil rights at the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity.

Yette made history in 1968, becoming the first African-American correspondent for *Newsweek* magazine, where he served as Washington correspondent and covered urban issues, including civil rights protests and urban violence. Yette also made appearances on NBC's *Meet the Press*. In 1971, Yette published his first book, *The Choice: The Issue of Black Survival in America*, based on materials gathered from his journalistic experiences. Yette's book was deemed controversial for his arguments involving the American wars on



poverty, on drugs, and on sexual confines, and the effect of these national policies on African-Americans, particularly African-American youth. In part, *The Choice* “asserted that the federal government showed a pattern of repression against African Americans that, left unaddressed, could lead to genocide” (*Washington Post*, 24 January 2011). *The Choice* became an award-winning and popular book, used as a textbook on over fifty college campuses nationwide, but its publication led to Yette's dismissal from *Newsweek* magazine, and a protracted legal battle in which Yette alleged his firing was primarily racially motivated. Although the courts initially ruled in Yette's favor, that decision was overturned on appeal.

Yette became a professor at the new School of Communications at Howard University in Washington, D.C. in 1972, where his charismatic teaching style and devotion to his students earned him widespread popularity. His son, Michael, remembered that his father “was a natural teacher and wanted to spread knowledge and wisdom, to particularly his people, to help them advance the lives of his

people, and journalism was his tool of preference” (Richard Prince’s *Journal-isms*, 21 January 2011). Yette remained at Howard University until 1986. While teaching at Howard, Yette founded Cottage Books, a publishing company, where he reprinted *The Choice* and published another book, *Washington and Two Marches, 1963 & 1983*, a photographic remembrance of the civil rights movement, written and published with his son Frederick. Yette’s personal life took a tragic turn in December 1983, when he and his wife were involved in a car accident in which he was thrown from the car and his wife was fatally injured.

Yette served as an adviser and official photographer for Jesse Jackson during Jackson’s 1984 and 1988 presidential campaigns and in later years was a syndicated newspaper columnist. He eventually returned to Tennessee, serving as Writer-in-Residence at Knoxville College in 2005. Yette was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease and moved back to the Washington, D.C. area to be near family in 2008. Samuel F. Yette died January 21, 2011 in Laurel, Maryland.

*Pamela Foster, 2015*



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