

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Ophelia Paine

November 10, 1994

(615)862-7970

14TH ANNUAL AFRO-AMERICAN CULTURE & HISTORY CONFERENCE

The 14th annual Afro-American Culture and History Conference will be held Wednesday, February 8, at the Avon N. Williams, Jr., downtown campus of Tennessee State University, 10th and Charlotte. Co-sponsored by the Metro Historical Commission and the College of Arts and Sciences at TSU, the one-day event features lectures and presentations on the contributions of African Americans to Tennessee's rich history and culture. An exhibit of art works by area high school students will be mounted in the lobby all day. Hours are 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Admission is \$7, \$6 for Senior citizens. To pre-register, call 862-7970.

EVENT: Afro-American Culture and History Conference

DATE: Wednesday, February 8, 1995

TIME: 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

PLACE: Avon N. Williams Downtown Campus of TSU

10th and Charlotte

### MEMORANDUM

TO: Bob Benson and Sandra Duncan

FROM: Ophelia Paine

RE: 14th Afro-American Culture and History Conference

DATE: December 1, 1994

On behalf of the Flanning Committee, I would like to invite Mayor Bredesen to deliver opening remarks at the 14th annual Afro-American Culture and History Conference, scheduled for Wednesday, February 8, 1995, at the Avon N. Williams, Jr., Downtown Campus of Tennessee State University.

Attached is a preliminary release announcing the event co-sponsored by this office and the College of Arts and Sciences at TSU.

Opening remarks are scheduled for 8:50-9:10 a.m. Augustus Bankhead, Vice-President of Academic Affairs; Ann Reynolds, and Dr. Bobby Lovett, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences will be asked to follow the mayor with remarks during the same twenty-minute period.

The following churches and organizations are supporting this year's conference:

AME Review
First Baptist Church, Capitol Hill
First Baptist Church, East Nashville
First Baptist Church, South Inglewood
Frierson Church of Christ Development Foundation
Holy Trinity Episcopal Church
National Baptist Publishing Board
Pleasant Green Baptist Church
Spruce Street Baptist Church
Tennessee Historical Society
Winston-Derek Booksellers
Woodcuts Frame Shop

Please tell the mayor how much we appreciate his past support of this annual event. We hope that he will be able to attend again this year. Wednesday, February 8, 1995 Avon N. Williams, Jr., Campus Tennessee State University 10th and Charlotte

### Afro-American Culture & History

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### 14th Annual Iocal Conference

8:00-8:45 AM Registration and Refreshments, Atrium 8:50-9:10 AM **Opening Remarks** Mayor Philip Bredesen Augustus Bankhead, Vice-President of Academic Affairs, TSU Ann Reynolds, Executive Director, Metropolitan Historical Commission Dr. Bobby L. Lovett, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences, TSU 9:15-9:45 AM "African Americans in the Country Music Business" Cleve Francis, Country Music Performer, Nashville 9:50-10:20 AM "Arbors to Bricks: African American Education in Rutherford Country, 1880-1966" Laura C. Jarmon, Professor, MTSU, Murfreesboro 10:25-10:55 AM "The African American Experience: A Mini Drama" African Affair Repertory Group, Marilyn Harris, Director, Stratford High School, Nashville 10:55-11:10 AM Break and Refreshments, Atrium 11:15-12:00 PM "A Medlev of Music" TSU Meistersingers, Diana Poe, Instructor, TSU 12:05-1:05 PM Lunch (free with registration), Atrium 1:15-1:40 PM "200 Years of Black Culture in Knoxville" Robert J. Booker, Executive Director, Beck Cultural Exchange Center, Inc. Knoxville 1:45-2:15 PM "The Wonders of Education, Helping My Children to Learn: Negro Dolls" Louchrisa Ford-High, Teacher, Nashville 2:20-2:45 PM "Black Bottom, A Time Past: Downtown Nashville's Former Black Neighborhood" William Daniel, Federal Employee, Nashville 2:50-3:20 PM Discussion/Adjournment 11:00-3:00 PM Art Exhibition: Art Works of Local Schoolteachers and Students Michael McBride, Curator, TSU

Planning Committee: Yildiz Binkley Bobby L. Lovett Michael McBride Lois C. McDougald Reavis Mitchell Ophelia T. Paine Vallie Pursley Linda T. Wynn Financial Supporters:

AME Review

First Baptist Church, Capitol Hill

First Baptist Church, East Nashville

First Baptist Church, South

Inglewood

Frierson Church of Christ

Development Foundation

Holy Trinity Episcopal Church

Jefferson Street Baptist Church National Baptist Publishing Board Pleasant Green Baptist Church Spruce Street Baptist Church Tennessee Historical Society Winston-Derek Booksellers Woodcuts Frame Shop Co-Sponsored by:
Tennessee State University
College of Arts and Sciences
Metropolitan Historical Commission

# Afro-American Nashville

Nashville's' Freedman's Bank (1865-1874)

In December 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 that 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. 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 (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 immigrant from Canada, became the permanent cashier. By June 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 because of the economic depression of 1873, the accumulated 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 Douglas received appointment as the first black president of the troubled banking system shortly before its collapse, but he had no choice except to ask Congress to liquidate all remaining assets. The United States Comptroller of the Currency closed all Freedman's Banks.

When rumors about the impending disaster circulated in Nashville, John Cary tried to allay the depositors' fears. He published a sound financial statement in the <u>Union and American</u> 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. On December 21, 1874, the court appointed Cary the 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

## Jeaders of Afro-American Nashville



Dr. Lemuel Arthur Bowman (1887-1965)

Lemuel Arthur Bowman was born in Bowman, South Carolina, on 24 July 1887, to Vastine and Eliza (Richardson) Bowman. He received his early education in the public schools of Bowman, South Carolina. Bowman came to Nashville and entered Walden University. In 1908, he entered Walden's Meharry Medical Department's School of Dentistry, which in 1915 became Meharry Medical College. 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. Because of his knowledge and skill in the dental profession, his disposition, and congenial manner, Dr. Bowman attracted African Americans and whites to his practice. According to reports, within ten years of opening his dental office. Bowman established a large and lucrative dental practice. It has been asserted that Dr. Bowman "used part of his fortune to extend a helping hand to his fellow race, men and women."

While engaged in his gainful dental practice, Dr. Bowman felt the need to become more proficient in financial matters. He readied himself for this undertaking by fastidiously studying the methods of monetary affairs and establishing a rapport and networking with Nashville's financial leaders. Bowman's financial acumen soon earned him respect and admiration from the Nashville business community.

By the late 1920s, Dr. Bowman had established seven business enterprises. Like many businesses across the nation during this period of economic depression, four of his business ventures failed. However, Bowman did not let the collapse of these undertakings deter him from entering other businesses. 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 intent of moving into the private sphere, content to live on the income from his remunerative financial investments. Notwithstanding his desire for a private life, Bowman's financial astuteness, cognition, and his recognition among Nashville's financial and business communities led to his being persuaded to contribute his renaissance spirit to the nation's largest African-American Baptist denomination.

Soon after his retirement, Dr. Bowman was called upon by the secretary of the Sunday School Publishing Board of the National Baptist Convention, USA, Incorporated, the Reverend Dr. Arthur Melvin Townsend, to render his financial genius to the Baptist Convention. 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. The middle-aged pecuniary sage devoted himself to the task and to the goal of the publishing board's administrators to make the organization one of the world's 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. An unpretentious but self-assured man, Bowman gave his time and capabilities to members of his race.

A self-made business leader and gifted financier, Bowman successfully directed the financial affairs of Nashville's largest African-American private business, the Sunday School Publishing Board of the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. 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 not only served the convention's Sunday School Publishing Board, but he 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's Board of Trustees. In addition to serving the National Baptist Convention, USA, 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 is 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, USA, Inc., Bowman was one of the few lay persons ever honored for his work in the denomination's convention.

On Friday, March 26, 1965, Dr. Lemuel Arthur Bowman, dentist, financier, and churchman, died at age 77. The service of triumph was held four days later at Spruce Street Baptist Church. Presided over by Pastor L. H. Woolfolk, it was attended by a veritable "Who's Who" of the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. Tributes were given by Dr. W. T. Crutcher, Chairman, Sunday School Publishing Board; the Reverend C. R. Williams, Executive Secretary, National Baptist Training Union Board; and Dr. D. C. Washington, Executive Director of the Sunday School Publishing Board. Other tributes included Deacon H. E. Clark, Church Clerk, Spruce Street Baptist Church: Miss H. Lucie Jordan, Cashier, Citizens Saving Bank and Trust Company; and Mr. Calvin L. McKissack of McKissack and McKissack Architects. Dr. Joseph H. Jackson, President of the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc., and long-time friend of Dr. L. A. Bowman, delivered the eulogy. The remains of the preeminent financier of the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc., and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Spruce Street Baptist Church, were interred in the Bowman Family Mausoleum in 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

# Teaders of Afro-American Nashville

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 25 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. Slaves were owned by 36,894 persons, or 15 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 East Tennesseans opposed slavery and wanted it stopped.

After the Civil War hostilities began at Fort Sumter, South Carolina (April 1861), Tennessee's radical Democrats, slave owners, 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 ordinances to pass. Still, the Confederates were no more than a vocal minority, because white Unionists (35%) and blacks (26%) 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.

However, 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.

A large Union army arrived in February 1862 when General U.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 1864. 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 mistress, 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 great spies.

In September 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 H), 2nd USCHLA(Battery F), and 2nd USCLA (Battery I); 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 T. Sherman with his successful "March through Georgia" (Summer 1864), and they fought in Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. In West Tennessee the USCT fought in the Battle of Moscow, Brice's Crossroads, Memphis, Tupelo, and the Fort Pillow Massacre. At Fort Pillow (April

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 proslavery 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 defiant metal badges inscribed "Remember Fort Pillow": eight months later, revenge came in the decisive Battle of Nashville (December 15-16, 1864) when some 13.000 USCT participated in the humiliating defeat of the ragged Confederate army of Tennessee (including Forrest's unit). The war ended with a Union victory just four months later. Memphis' 3rd US Colored Cavalry joined the pursuit of CSA President Jefferson Davis when he made an unsuccessful attempt to escape to Mexico.

One may find the graves of many of Tennessee's USCT at the national cemeteries in Tennessee: Nashville (1,909), Memphis (4,208) -- includes the "Fort Pillow Section"; Chattanooga (103), Knoxville (663), Cumberland River (12), and Stones River (186). Their gravestones are marked distinctively "USCT." These men and women constitute some of Tennessee's real heroes who defied evil slavocracy principles: racism, treason, and rebellion against citizens of these United States.

-- Bobby L. Lovett

# Afro-American Nashville

### Nashville's 1905 Streetcar Boycott

With the enunciation of the 1896 <u>Plessy v. Ferguson</u> United States Supreme Court decision, white Southerners declared segregation laws permissible as long as they provided equal accommodations for the races. The ruling's effect on African Americans was enormous. It legalized the concept of racial separation and served as the constitutional underpinning for an ever-present Jim Crow system in the South.

Four years later, between 1900 and 1906, African Americans in Nashville and numerous other cities battled against unequal accommodations in public conveyances. The struggle to gain equal accommodations on public transit preceded by five decades the efforts of Rosa Parks and the organizers of the Montgomery bus boycott to secure for Blacks unrestricted seating aboard municipal transportation.

Beginning in 1899, the Tennessee General Assembly attempted to expand the existing scope of segregation in public transportation by proposing legislation to "make the separate coach law apply to streetcars." Although this proposal died in the House Judiciary Committee the same year, it was revived in 1901 and was defeated by a vote of 48 to 30 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 Successful lobbying by the traction enactment. 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 held that the streetcar law was unconstitutional. However, white citizens of Tennessee mirrored the notion of ethnic superiority, as revealed in the range of laws established to separate the

Negro race from white society in other southern states. The issue of the Jim Crow streetcar was far from over, for it was to lie dormant only until the next session of the General Assembly.

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 legislative body by a vote of 81 to 4. It was then transmitted to the upper chamber, where it passed by a vote of 28 to 1. 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. 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, "the day the separate streetcar 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." Prior to the codification of the Jim Crow streetcar statute, black Nashvillians agreed that if the law passed they would cease their patronage of the streetcars and establish transportation companies. 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, the effective date of the law's implementation, the Negroes of Nashville promptly 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 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 as an alternative to Jim Crow streetcars in several southern municipalities. The Union Transportation Company was chartered August 29, 1905, and became operational on

October 3. However, as the company began experiencing difficulty with its steam-driven cars and electric-powered buses, and more and more blacks tired of walking, the boycott came to an end eight months after its inception.

It is not surprising that, in the end, the boycott movements against Jim Crow streetcars failed in all of the cities where initiated. They occurred at a time when southern racism was reaching its apex and when the white southern majority had gained a sympathetic audience in the North.

A half century later, African Americans overturned Jim Crow seating on southern urban transit. In the works of the late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., "...Negro citizens came to see that it was ultimately more honorable to walk in dignity than to ride in humiliation. These people made the decision to substitute tired feet for tired souls and by their actions were able to break down the barriers of bus segregation."

--Linda T. Wynn

# Teaders of Afro-American Nashville

Mount Ararat and Greenwood Cemeteries (1869-)

Mount Ararat Cemetery (1869-) and Greenwood Cemetery (1889-) are the oldest organized burial sites in black Nashville.

Beginning in 1822 about 4,000 blacks (slaves and free persons) were buried in the Nashville City Cemetery on 4th Avenue, South. Other slaves were interred in white family and church cemeteries. After the federal government built the Nashville National Cemetery in 1866, some 1,909 former black soldiers in Union army regiments were buried there with tombstones imprinted 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 one thousand persons for black Nashvillians. Infant deaths comprised 46.5 percent of the total black deaths for 1887 and forty

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 today's Cameron-Trimble Bottom area. 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 one thousand feet north of Murfreesboro Pike where it junctions with Elm Hill (Stones River) Pike. On May 2, 1869, the Mt. Ararat Cemetery lots went on sale. To involve the churches and preachers, a mass meeting was held on Sunday when 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 Mt. Ararat Cemetery. Because of periodic epidemics, some 1,400 burials per year frequently took place at Mt. 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 Street to 47 Cedar Street, to McLemore and Velvet, to 119 McLemore, and finally to 161 Cedar Street. In 1886 Preston Taylor arrived from Kentucky to pastor the Gay Street Colored Christian (Disciples of Christ) Church. He boarded at 119 McLemore Street near Winston's residences at 119 McLemore and later 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 37 acres of land one mile east of Mt. Ararat on Elm Hill Pike and opened Greenwood Cemetery. By 1890, Taylor was in competition with Woodward and Company Undertakers and then with the W. Goff Colored Undertakers in 1891. By 1892, however, Taylor was black Nashville's major undertaker. After Taylor's death and will in 1931, the United Christian Missionary Society of the National Christian (Disciples of Christ) Missionary Convention acquired Greenwood Cemetery.

After 1910 the Mt. Ararat Cemetery deteriorated until it was revived with a charter in the 1920s. By the 1970s, however, much of Mt. Ararat again had turned to trees and brush. Insensitive white businessmen had begun to encroach on the site. In 1982 the Greenwood Cemetery's board of directors were asked to take Mt. Ararat under management. They accepted the property from the Mount Ararat Association and Mount Ararat Cemetery, Inc. The new management, under Robert Mosley, Jr., cleared brush and trees, and restored the neglected sections of Mt. Ararat. In 1983 the Garden of St. James was developed. A landscaping project provided more burial space, and a 112-crypt mausoleum was built on Mt. Ararat property. On June 21, 1986, Greenwood Cemetery's board of directors voted to change the name Mt. Ararat to Greenwood Cemetery West. In 1988 Greenwood Cemetery received mayoral proclamations on its 100th anniversary for contributions to Nashville's history and culture. By 1992 the management had professional color brochures, a new administration building, and various services for its customers.

-- Bobby L. Lovett