

Wednesday, February 11, 1998
Avon Williams, Jr., Campus
Tennessee State University
10th and Charlotte

Afro-American Culture & History

17th Annual Local Conference

8:00-8:45	AM	Registration and Refreshments, Atrium
8:50-9:20	AM	Opening Remarks Dr. James Hefner, President, Tennessee State University Mayor Philip Bredesen Ms. Ann Reynolds, Executive Director, Metropolitan Historical Commission Dr. Bobby L. Lovett, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences, TSU Mr. Michael McBride, Curator, Department of Art, TSU
9:25-9:45	AM	"The Great '97: Underground Railroad Tour," JoAnn Sebastian, Antioch, TN
9:50-10:15	AM	"Profiles of Civil Rights Leaders in Nashville, TN," Elizabeth McClain, TSU
10:20-11:00	AM	The Tennaissance Theatre Company: "Ida B. Wells" The performance by Tennaissance Theatre Company is funded in part by the Metropolitan Nashville Arts Commission and the Tennessee Arts Commission.
11:00-11:10	AM	Break and Refreshments, Atrium
11:10-11:35	AM	"The Civil War Reenactment: Black Union Army Soldiers," Norm Hill, Murfreesboro, TN
11:40-1:00	PM	Lunch (free with registration), Atrium
1:05-1:50	PM	The TSU Jazz Band
1:55-2:15	PM	"Archaeological Results: The Negro Cemetery on Ewing Lane," Dan Allen, DuVall & Associates, Inc.
2:20-2:45	PM	"Tennessee Rural African American Church Projects," Carroll Van West, MTSU
11:00-3:00	PM	Art Exhibition: Michael McBride, Curator of Tennessee State University's Hiram Van Gordon Memorial Art Gallery

Planning Committee:

Yildiz Binkley
Sharon Hull
Bobby L. Lovett
Michael McBride
Reavis Mitchell
Ophelia T. Paine
Pamela Smoot
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
Jefferson Street Baptist Church
Spruce Street Baptist Church
Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church
Schrader Lane Church of Christ

Winston-Derek Booksellers
Victory Baptist Church
Friendship Baptist Church
Fifteenth Avenue Baptist Church
Berean Baptist Church
TSU Friends of the Library
The Hermitage

Co-Sponsored by:

Tennessee State University's
College of Arts and Sciences
Metropolitan Historical Commission

17TH ANNUAL LOCAL CONFERENCE ON AFRO-AMERICAN CULTURE AND HISTORY

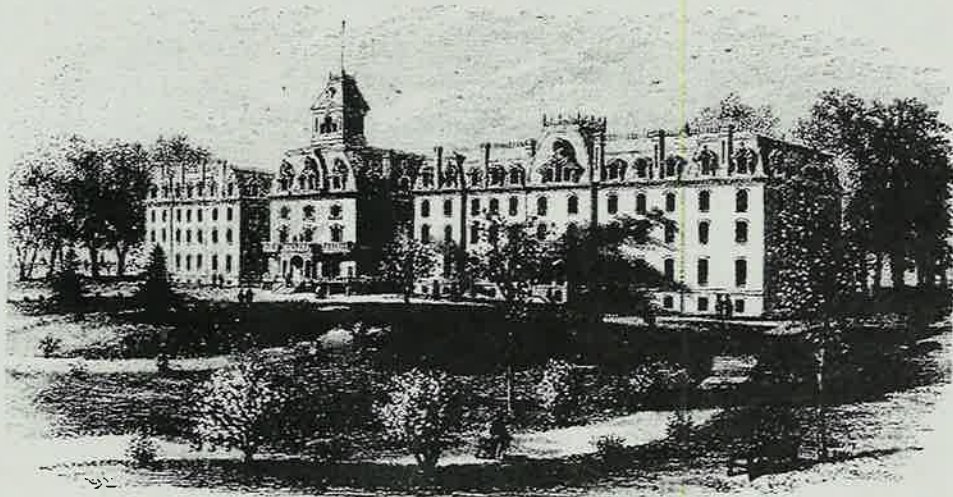
REGISTRATION FEE: \$7 (Adults) \$6 (Senior Citizens) \$5 (Students) Includes lunch and publications.
REGISTRATION DUE BY FEBRUARY 4, 1998 – NO RESERVATIONS MAY BE MADE OVER THE PHONE

Make check payable to: **TSU Foundation - Local Conference**
Mail form and check to: **Metropolitan Historical Commission**
209 Tenth Avenue South, Suite 414
Nashville, TN 37203

NAME _____ ADDRESS _____
CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Afro-American Culture & History

Tennessee State University and the Metropolitan Historical Commission are the sponsors of the seventeenth in an ongoing series of annual conferences which coincide with Black History Month. The conference will bring together historians, educators, students, and other interested individuals for a program on local African American history and culture. The conference will be held at Tennessee State University's Avon N. Williams, Jr., Campus, Downtown, 10th and Charlotte, Wednesday, February 11, 1998.



Roger Williams University
1874-1905

Afro-American Culture & History

17th Annual Local Conference

Bulk Rate
U.S. Postage
PAID
Nashville, TN
Permit No. 2673

Metropolitan Historical Commission
209 Tenth Avenue South, Suite 414
Nashville, TN 37203
615-862-7970

Leaders of Afro-American Nashville

Harold M. Love (1919-1996)



Harold M. Love was born September 8, 1919, to Samuel DeGreer Love, Jr., and Lillian Cinclair 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 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

(continued)

This publication is a project of the 1998 Nashville Conference on Afro-American Culture and History. Information was compiled by the Department of History, Tennessee State University. The Metropolitan Historical Commission assisted with editing and design.

YMCA, and North End Citizenship Association. He served on the Board of Directors of Nashville OIC 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

Leaders of Afro-American Nashville

African-American Builders of Sevier County, Tennessee

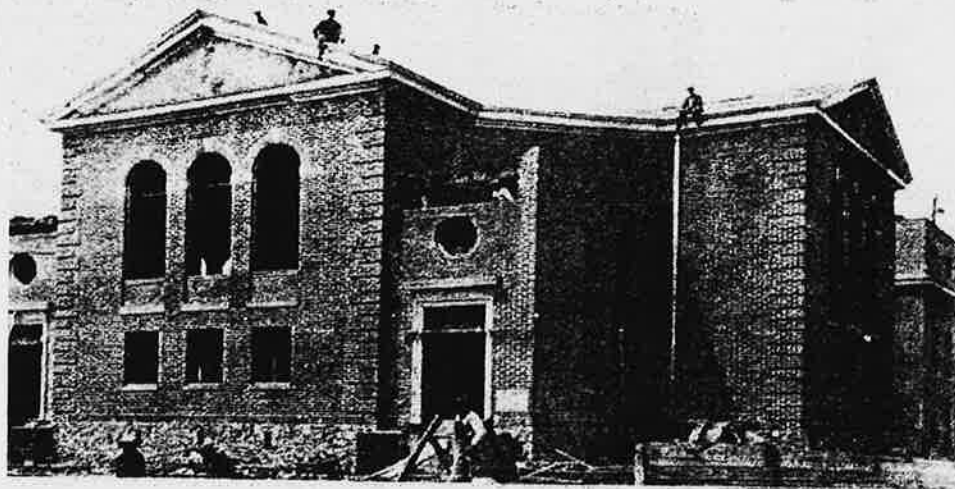
The architectural landscape of Tennessee's rural areas, small towns, and large cities is comprised of hundreds of historic buildings designed and built by African Americans. One rural county in East Tennessee has an extraordinary history of African-American builders. Established in 1794 along the North 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 had 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

(continued)



First Baptist Church of Sevierville (1926), built by J.F. & N. McMahan Construction Co. (under construction).
Photo courtesy: *In the Fork of the Little Pigeon River: A History of Sevierville's Business and Residential Districts.*

This publication is a project of the 1998 Nashville Conference on Afro-American Culture and History. Information was compiled by the Department of History, Tennessee State University. The Metropolitan Historical Commission assisted with editing and design.

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

Leaders of Afro-American Nashville



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, attorney Robert Lillard sponsored legislation that provided for the land and financial resources for the course's development. Built near the

(continued)

This publication is a project of the 1998 Nashville Conference on Afro-American Culture and History. Information was compiled by the Department of History, Tennessee State University. The Metropolitan Historical Commission assisted with editing and design.

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-Second World War 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 18-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's 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

Leaders of Afro-American Nashville

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."*

The mid-west background of Douglas—who was born on May 26, 1899, to Aaron and Elizabeth Douglas in Topeka, Kansas, and was graduated from the University of Nebraska School of Fine Arts in Lincoln in 1922—was an unlikely indicator of this man who would rise to meet W. E. B. Du Bois'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. Yet, after a year of 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 had captured the attention of leading black scholars and activists.

About the time of his marriage on June 18, 1924, to Alta Sawyer, Douglas began to create illustrations for periodicals. Early the following year, one of his illustrations appeared on the front 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*. Publisher 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*. In 1927, after illustrating an anthology of verse by black poets, *Caroling Dusk*, Douglas completed a series of paintings for poet 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 black Americans, biblical stories, and contemporary black history. The series, soon to become among the most 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'Academie Scandinave* in Paris. When he returned to New York in 1932, the Great Depression was engulfing America.

Under the auspices of the United States Public Works of Art Project, Douglas completed for the New York Public Library in 1934 a series of murals depicting "the entire African-American experience from African heritage, the Emancipation, life in the rural South, and the contemporary urban dilemma." Three years later, after Douglas was recruited to establish an art department at Nashville's Fisk University by his long-time friend Charles S. Johnson—one of the "midwives" of the Harlem Renaissance, who joined the Fisk University faculty and became the university's president

(continued)

This publication is a project of the 1998 Nashville Conference on Afro-American Culture and History. Information was compiled by the Department of History, Tennessee State University. The Metropolitan Historical Commission assisted with editing and design.

in the 1940s— Douglas and a fellow black artist, Edwin Harleston of Charleston, South Carolina, completed a series of highly significant murals (begun in 1929), depicting "the course of Negro History" for the Erastus Milo Cravath Library (Cravath Hall Administration Building since 1969) at Fisk University. Douglas taught painting and was chair of the art department at Fisk from 1937 until his retirement as professor *emeritus* 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 "pioneering Africanist" Aaron Douglas was featured in numerous exhibitions and in critical publications such as *Flash or 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. As further study of Douglas's art unfolds, additional credence will accrue to the belief that the artistic insight and influence of "the father of Black American art" continues to live far beyond the time and place of the Harlem Renaissance.

-Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr.

* Unless otherwise noted, all quotations come from *Harlem Renaissance: Art of Black America* by Mary Schmidt Campbell, David Driskell, David Levering, and published by The Studio Museum in Harlem: Harry N. Abrams.