

Wednesday, February 10, 1999
Avon N. Williams, Jr., Campus
Tennessee State University
10th and Charlotte
8:40 a.m. – 2:40 p.m.

Afro-American Culture & History



18th Annual Local Conference

- 7:30 – 8:40 Registration and Refreshments, Atrium
- 8:40 – 9:00 Opening Remarks
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
- 9:00 – 9:25 "The African Diaspora's Country Music Heritage"
Pamela E. Foster, Tennessee State University
- 9:30 – 9:55 "African-American Culture and History and the Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture"
Carroll Van West, Middle Tennessee State University
- 10:00 – 10:25 "African-Americans in Sumner County During the Early Years"
Velma Howell Brinkley, Gallatin, Tennessee
- 10:30 – 10:55 "From Winter to Winter: The Afro-American History of Nashville, Tennessee, 1910-1930"
Pamela D. Bobo, Tennessee State University
- 11:00 – 11:10 Break and Refreshments, Atrium
- 11:10 – 12:00 Medley of Gospel Songs
New Directions Gospel Choir, Tennessee State University
Laura Springer, Advisor
- 12:00 – 1:00 Lunch (free with registration), Atrium
- 1:05 – 1:50 The TSU Show Stoppers
Diana K. Poe, Director
- 1:55 – 2:20 "The Annual Commemoration of African Americans in the Battle of Nashville"
Kwame Lillard, Nashville, Tennessee
- 2:25 – 2:40 Wrap Up Discussion
- 11:00 – 3:00 Art Exhibition
Michael McBride, Curator of TSU's Hiram Van Gordon Memorial Art Gallery

Planning Committee

Yildiz Binkley
Sharon Hull
Bobby L. Lovett
Michael McBride
Reavis Mitchell
Anne-Leslie Owens
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
Aramark Food Services
Spruce Street Baptist Church
National Baptist Publishing Board
Schrader Lane Church of Christ
Alkebu-Lan Images
TSU Friends of the Library
The Hermitage

Co-Sponsors

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

Leaders of Afro-American Nashville

PEOPLE'S SAVINGS BANK AND TRUST COMPANY (1909-1930)

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 (Fourth 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.

(continued)

J. B. SINGLETON, Pres. W. T. HIGHTOWER, 1st Vice Pres. D. A. HART, 2d Vice Pres. C. V. ROMAN, 3d Vice Pres. A. M. TOWNSEND, Cashier W. D. HAWKINS, Asst Cashier

The Peoples Savings Bank and Trust Co.

We Pay 4 Per Cent on Time Deposits.
We Administer on Estates, Act as Guardians and Trustee.

410 Cedar St.

Authorized Capital \$50,000

Tel. M. 2554

Bank Closes 3 P. M. Patronage Solicited

Advertisement from 1913 Nashville City Directory

This publication is a project of the 1999 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.

Singleton, Dr. Arthur M. Townsend, attorney Solomon P. Harris, who was 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 the First World War, People'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

Leaders of Afro-American Nashville

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. When the Union army occupied Nashville, 1862-1865, during the Civil War, 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 education opportunities for African Americans. On January 9, 1866, a school named in honor of Union General C. B. Fisk, who was in charge of federal occupation, was opened in Nashville.



Otey's Quality Market at 1801 Jefferson Street.

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 stood on the high point between thoroughfares later named Seventeenth and Eighteenth 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 on what is today Eleventh Avenue, North, and Jefferson Street in the 1870s.

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 Street car line." Through an act of the state legislature, Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State Normal School was chartered and opened in 1912 along the western edge of Jefferson Street. The several residential communities springing up around the A. & I. campus established another populace for the

(continued)

This publication is a project of the 1999 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.

street's commerce. With the return of African-American veterans of World War One, 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. The Cedar Street 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 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 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, and it was not until the late 1930s that the first barbershop for blacks, Crowder's, 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-1930's, 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 Fifth Avenue, North, to Twenty-eighth Avenue, North, also contained some of the oldest church congregations within black Nashville. At Twelfth Avenue and Jefferson, there was a fire hall, Engine Company No. 11, which also

functioned as a gathering spot and an informal community center.

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, supperclubs, 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 from the local landmarks designated as Good Jelly's Club to 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 staffs and some with white staffs, were prominent along the thoroughfare. The life-affirming bustle along Jefferson Street flowed through bakeries, hardware stores, service or 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 after-life enterprises of mortuaries or funeral homes.

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-West 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.

-Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr.

Wednesday, February 10, 1999
Avon N. Williams, Jr., Campus
Tennessee State University
10th and Charlotte
8:40 a.m. – 2:40 p.m.

Afro-American Culture & History



18th Annual Local Conference

- 7:30 – 8:40 Registration and Refreshments, Atrium
- 8:40 – 9:00 Opening Remarks
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
- 9:00 – 9:25 "The African Diaspora's Country Music Heritage"
Pamela E. Foster, Tennessee State University
- 9:30 – 9:55 "African-American Culture and History and the Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture"
Carroll Van West, Middle Tennessee State University
- 10:00 – 10:25 "African-Americans in Sumner County During the Early Years"
Velma Howell Brinkley, Gallatin, Tennessee
- 10:30 – 10:55 "From Winter to Winter: The Afro-American History of Nashville, Tennessee, 1910-1930"
Pamela D. Bobo, Tennessee State University
- 11:00 – 11:10 Break and Refreshments, Atrium
- 11:10 – 12:00 Medley of Gospel Songs
New Directions Gospel Choir, Tennessee State University
Laura Springer, Advisor
- 12:00 – 1:00 Lunch (free with registration), Atrium
- 1:05 – 1:50 The TSU Show Stoppers
Diana K. Poe, Director
- 1:55 – 2:20 "The Annual Commemoration of African Americans in the Battle of Nashville"
Kwame Lillard, Nashville, Tennessee
- 2:25 – 2:40 Wrap Up Discussion
- 11:00 – 3:00 Art Exhibition
Michael McBride, Curator of TSU's Hiram Van Gordon Memorial Art Gallery

Planning Committee

Yildiz Binkley
Sharon Hull
Bobby L. Lovett
Michael McBride
Reavis Mitchell
Anne-Leslie Owens
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
Aramark Food Services
Spruce Street Baptist Church
National Baptist Publishing Board
Schrader Lane Church of Christ
Alkebu-Lan Images
TSU Friends of the Library
The Hermitage

Co-Sponsors

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

18th ANNUAL LOCAL CONFERENCE ON AFRO-AMERICAN CULTURE AND HISTORY

REGISTRATION FEE: \$10 for Adults
(includes lunch and publications) \$7 for Students

MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO: TSU Foundation – Local Conference

MAIL COMPLETED FORM AND CHECK TO: Metropolitan Historical Commission
209 10th Avenue South, Suite 414
Nashville, TN 37203

REGISTRATION DUE BY FEBRUARY 3, 1999 – NO RESERVATIONS MAY BE MADE OVER THE PHONE

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ **STATE** _____ **ZIP** _____

Afro-American Culture & History

Since 1982, Tennessee State University and the Metro Historical Commission have sponsored the Local Conference on Afro-American Culture and History. The one-day event brings together historians, educators, students, and other individuals interested in the contributions of African Americans to the history and culture of Nashville and Middle Tennessee.



courtesy Country Music Hall of Fame

Wednesday, February 10, 1999
Avon N. Williams, Jr., Campus of TSU
Downtown at 10th and Charlotte
8:40 a.m. - 2:40 p.m.

DeFord Bailey, a virtuoso harmonica player, was one of the first African Americans to win fame in the field of country music.

Afro-American Culture & History



18th Annual Local Conference

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

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