

Profiles of *African Americans* in Tennessee



Alfred C. Galloway and Community Federal Savings and Loan

As one of the founders of the Community Federal Savings and Loan (S & L), Nashville's only African American owned S & L, Alfred Campbell Galloway had an important role in providing homes for African Americans in the mid-20th century when redlining by neighborhoods and financing was paramount in Nashville. A *Tennessean* article about his retirement in May 1985 quoted Galloway, "When we first opened, black people couldn't get loans to build houses, and they couldn't get loans to buy existing houses unless it was in an established black neighborhood."

Galloway was born June 20, 1915, in Nashville. His education included attending Tennessee A and I (now Tennessee State University), obtaining a master's in organic chemistry from Fisk University, and studies at Iowa State University and University of California, Los Angeles. Around 1937, Galloway became the maintenance supervisor of Nashville's Andrew Jackson Homes and in 1940 he was named resident manager of the Napier Homes. He served in the Navy during WWII and after the war, Galloway started Alfred C. Galloway Contractors. Galloway may have been the first local contractor to hold electrical, plumbing, heating, and building contractor licenses. Willing and able to build houses but with little financing available, he ended his construction business and worked to establish Community Federal Savings and Loan. Although eventually successful, the S & L did not pay Galloway until 1968. While serving as Chairman of the board when he retired, Galloway stated that the S & L financed about 500 houses and twenty-five churches. He stated that the board was all Black, but included white investors.

Galloway married Lettie Stanley in June 1933. Upon her death in 2007, the newspaper headlined her obituary, "Humanitarian Lettie Galloway Dies, Nashville woman worked tirelessly to improve lives." A graduate of Pearl High School, Tennessee A and I, and the University of Tennessee, while her husband built houses, Lettie worked to improve the lives of people living in them. She was the first director of South Street Community Center (Edgehill Center), the first African American director of the 18th Avenue Community Center, held faculty positions at Meharry

and Tennessee State University, and served on many local boards.

In addition to his involvement with the S & L, Galloway was part of numerous boards in Nashville. He was a proponent of the new charter for Nashville in 1958. He served as the vice chairman of the Citizens Committee for Metropolitan Government, believing that a metropolitan form of government would be beneficial to African Americans and county residents. Beginning in 1973, Galloway was a founding member of the Public Broadcasting Service's (PBS) board as it changed from National Educational Television to PBS. From 1975-1986 he served on the board of the Nashville Electrical Service, including as chair from 1980-1982. He was Tennessee's representative to the American Public Power Association and on the board of the National Association of Public Television Stations. Galloway was the first African American member of the local Chamber of Commerce and served as a member of Mayor Briley's Committee on Human Relations.

In 1959, Galloway and others began working to open the S & L. When the S & L was planned, the *Tennessean* reported, "Negroes plan their own savings, loan unit." The organizers were six African American community leaders and one white attorney, J. Victor Barr, Jr. The founding members included Alfred Galloway, general contractor; Dr. Harold D. West, Meharry Medical College president; Dr. Walter S. Davis, Tennessee A and I president; Austin G. Swett, operator of two grocery stores; Jasper D. Martin, secretary-treasurer of Martin Brothers Funeral Home; and Hobart T. Martin, owner of Martin Funeral Home. The board members changed over the years and continued to function as important community members.

In February 1962, dignitaries attended the ribbon cutting of the S & L's offices at 2430 Jefferson Street. U.S. Senator Estes Kefauver, City of Nashville Mayor Ben West, and Olympic gold medalist Wilma Rudolph were among those in attendance. Designed by Lewis Winter McKissack, the one-story brick and glass building exemplified modern design. Community

Federal's vice president and Tennessee A and I president, Walter S. Davis, officiated at the opening dedication held on the university's campus. Inman Otey, a licensed real estate and insurance contractor, served as Nashville's first African American realtor and the first manager of the S & L. The *Tennessean* stated that their board was biracial but the plan was to serve the African American community. Though it started with \$400,000, by 1963 the S & L had amassed \$750,000 in assets and 850 savings accounts. Community Federal focused on providing neighborhood service and helping to relocate those displaced by urban renewal. According to executive vice president Galloway, the S & L wanted to expand from just offering loans to helping build homes and neighborhoods. The property was owned by the Golden Circle of Life Insurance Company Corporation.

In an August 5, 1979, *Tennessean* article, Galloway reminisced about how difficult it was for African Americans to get financing for home buyers or contractors. He recalled, "I was the first Black contractor to ever get financing for construction and it wasn't easy...After I persisted, they decided to finance one home for me and said that if that worked out, they would finance another. The savings and loans never provided financing for another Black contractor until I got out of building and into banking."

In 1969, when plans for Interstate 40 showed that it would be almost on top of the building, the S & L moved to a rental property at 2605 Jefferson Street and occupied it until their new offices were built at 2701 Jefferson. Donald E. Stoll and Associates, Architects, designed the 12,000-square-foot building, expected for completion in 1973. Community Federal would be on the first floor, with rental space above. The new building would be owned by a corporation and leased to the S & L. Galloway stated that he was not against the new interstate, but noted that there was no consideration of changes to businesses due to the construction, no re-planning for the area, and no plans for relocation. An ad in the *Sunday*, January 13, 1974, *Tennessean* had a drawing of the new building and read, "Thank You! For making our new home a reality." That year, the S & L was the 25th largest in the United States.*

The S & L continued to grow and in 1972 they held \$4.25 million in assets. The following year, the newspaper reported that a new bank was planned, making three African American financial institutions in the city: Citizens Bank, the first Black bank in the U.S. and located in the Morris Memorial building;

Community Federal Savings and Loan; and the new bank planned for North Nashville. Galloway announced his retirement in May 1985 and died in December 1986. Though it functioned as Nashville's first federally insured home loan banking company, by June 1985 Community Federal was in debt and subsequently closed by the Federal Home Loan Bank Board. Although others tried to buy the financial institution, the Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corporation did not accept offers. Despite this end, the legacy of Community Federal is a significant part of Nashville's 20th century history, as it provided a critical bridge to financing and a path to homeownership for African Americans.

Claudette Stager

*All buildings appear to be extant but have been altered from their original appearance.

Further Reading:

David L. Mason, *Homeownership Is Colorblind: The Role of African American Savings and Loans in Home Finance, 1880-1980*. The Business History Conference, 2010.