

# AFRICAN AMERICAN ARCHITECTS

A Biographical Dictionary 1865–1945



Dreck Spurlock Wilson, Editor

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A Biographical Dictionary 1865–1945

EDITED BY

DRECK SPURLOCK WILSON

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## Preface

African American architects have contributed significantly, albeit often anonymously, to the architectural heritage of America. The veil of anonymity, made denser by racism, has resulted in a dearth of documentation about their role as architects. There are only a few archival repositories with holdings on African American architects. In the District of Columbia, the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center's "Archive of African American Architects" is the largest, composed principally of the papers of ALBERT IRVIN CASSELL, HOWARD HAMILTON MACKEY SR., and HILYARD ROBERT ROBINSON and the ephemera of 140 other architects. The Athenaeum in Philadelphia is the repository for the firm ledgers of the Office of Horace Trumbauer, which *de facto* becomes a repository for Trumbauer's African American senior designer, **Julian Francis Abele**. At the time that this dictionary was being compiled, the Filson Society in Louisville tendered the winning bid during an on-line auction and rescued the papers of **Samuel M. Plato** from an unknown fate. There are only a few other repositories where serious scholars can go to research the contributions of late nineteenth century and early twentieth century African American architects. *African American Architects: A Biographical Dictionary 1865–1945* is intended to rectify the dearth of that documentation if only incompletely in order to "correct or reform the exclusionist tradition of our histories."<sup>1</sup> Some almost comical situations arose due to the dearth of information. Three different contributors claimed their person was "the first" Black architect in the state of Virginia. Often contributors made assumptions about their architect, thinking that a date in the 1920s or 1930s was "early" because they were unaware of architects who were practicing in the 1890s and 1900s. In essence, this dictionary will correct the historic record.

### Note

1. Valencia Hollins Coar, *A Century of Black Photographers: 1840–1960* (Providence: Rhode Island School of Design), 1983 p. 15.



# Introduction

*African American Architects: A Biographical Dictionary 1865–1945* is a single-volume reference work for architectural historians, historic preservationists, architects, historians, curators, students, and the general public seeking to provide reliable information on late nineteenth century and early twentieth century African American architects. The *Dictionary* is composed of 168 entries that were provided by more than 100 contributing authors. The entries, which range in length from 250 to 4,000 words, are arranged alphabetically, internally cross-referenced, and supplemented by photographs of architects and the buildings that they designed. The *Dictionary* includes a building list and, whenever possible, a selected bibliography for each architect. To assist scholars with authoritative references, a general bibliography is included at the end of the dictionary.

The format for this biographical dictionary is modeled after the *Concise Dictionary of American Biography* (DAB), which was first published in 1927 by Scribner & Sons and due to its popularity is in its fifth edition; having been reprinted in 1997.<sup>1</sup> The convention used by DAB's editors was to recruit subject-matter experts or contributors to provide short biographies. This convention was adopted by the editors of this dictionary. Acknowledged for its scholarship and accuracy, the *DAB*, revised through 1997, however it failed to include an African American. Charles Birnbaum and Robin Karson's *Pioneers of American Landscape Design*, the format of which parallels the DAB and the subject matter (i.e., landscape architects) of this dictionary, includes only one African American—surveyor, Benjamin Banneker (1731–1806). Banneker's connection to landscape architecture is tenuous at best and attribution for having re-drawn “the plans from memory” of Pierre Charles L'Enfant's District of Columbia street grid lacks evidentiary proof.<sup>2</sup> Of course, without the inclusion of Benjamin Banneker and having over-looked George Washington Carver horticulturist/agronomist/agriculturist, (1864–1943) they would not have had any African Americans in their book. Since they were apparently not aware of African American landscape architects such as DAVID AUGUSTUS WILLISTON, JOSEPH MANUAL BARTHOLOMEW SR., JASMINIUS WILSONNI RUDOLPHUS GRANDY III, and LOUIS HARVEY BANKS. It is because of these kinds of omissions that this biographical dictionary was compiled.

For this biographical dictionary, the editors used the descriptive term “African American” to describe a racial group. The adjective “Black” is used interchangeably with African American to characterize ancestry, not skin color. Owing to the 100 or so contributors who submitted entries and their individual writing styles, the terms “Negro” and “colored” are used occasionally in historic context, not to be disparaging, but in an attempt to be historically synonymous. The editors approved of their usage in this context. Sometimes an architect's racial identity was decided by examining vintage photographs, cross-referencing them in African American biographical dictionaries, or—

when all else failed—asking relatives and colleagues.

The question of racial identity was a tricky one, individually addressed for each entry. Most of the male architects and all of the female architects felt that “race” was crucial to their identity and relied on their ethnicity to obtain clients. For some race was seen as a negative factor in their professional advancement and therefore it was expedient to play down their ethnicity; for others, it was a philosophic stance—they felt an emphasis on race was divisive to national unity. Inclusion in the dictionary should not be construed as representing that person’s beliefs about race.

The definition of “architect” used by the editors was that the person had to conceive a design and visually present it by means of a sketch, floor plan, drawing, scale model, or mock-up with sufficient detail so that others could build it. Certainly licensure confers the title, but the starting threshold year of 1865 precedes licensing laws for all states and the District of Columbia. Most jurisdictions required an examination for licensing, but some jurisdictions grandfathered-in applicants who could prove that they had been in practice a certain number of years prior to enactment of the licensing law, which was the case with ROBERT L.ROBINSON and brothers CALVIN LUNSFORD and MOSES MCKISSACK III among many others. Some jurisdictions required a college degree in order to qualify to take the examination. The intent of the examination was that a person’s qualifications could be measured and in theory this would be an objective measure of the architect’s knowledge. However, simply by showing up, the test-taker’s racial identity could be deduced by the White proctor and the specter of racial bias could be introduced. Therefore, possessing a license was not a qualifier for inclusion in this dictionary.

To be inclusive rather than exclusive, the editors included designers who were professionally tangential to architects if they were formally educated in the fine arts or civil engineering or demonstrated a design *oeuvre*. This more elastic definition made it possible to include a historic preservationist, a lithographer, two pattern makers, four landscape architects, five bridge designers, and a score of architectural engineers.

The dictionary focuses on African American architects who practiced in the United States between 1865 and 1945. The starting year was chosen because it corresponds to the end of the Civil War, when the majority of African Americans were freed from slavery. In theory they had more control over their lives and increased choices with regard to the type of work in which they wanted to engage. There were exceedingly more opportunities to obtain an education, and nascent vocational schools, industrial institutes, colleges, and universities sprang into existence creating in their wake a clientele for African American architects. Although there were certainly *antebellum* African Americans, such as Youngstown, Ohio architect PLYMPTON Ross BERRY and Chicago’s RICHARD MASON HANCOCK, a pattern maker, it is the editors’ view that they were “exceptions” to the national stereotype of African Americans being naive designers or artless copiers. The presumption that was formative in setting the book ending year was that the number of African American architects dramatically increased after World War II due in large part to the GI Bill, which made a college education financially attainable. The notoriously unreliable Compendium of the United States Occupational Census for 1940, enumerated sixty-eight Black male architects and 15,347

White ones.<sup>3</sup> The Occupational Census for 1950 enumerated 180 Black architects and 22,400 White ones.<sup>4</sup> Nineteen forty-five was a porous year to choose as the ending year because architects who began their apprenticeship or architectural education prior to 1945, and continued their career beyond 1945, were included. However, establishing the book ending year as 1945 created the fortunate circumstance of being able to interview living subjects. Architects CLARENCE CROSS, CHARLES IRVIN CASSELL, and ROBERT PRINCE MADISON contributed their own autobiographies. At the time this dictionary went to press, other living subjects included preservationist ALMA FAIRFAX MURRAY CARLISE, landscape architect EDWARD LYONS PRYCE; and architects ALBERTA CASSELL BUTLER, LEWIS WENTWORTH GILES JR. ROY ANTHONY SEALEY and GOLDEN JOSEPH ZENON JR. Their authentic voices provide a nuanced reality about being a minority within a majority profession.

Initially, the names of architects considered for the dictionary came from the editors' familiarity with topical journals, African American history books, biographical dictionaries, and archived oral histories. To add to those names, State Historic Preservation Offices were surveyed. Over 250 architects (244 males and 7 females) were identified and screened for eligibility. However, it was only possible to identify contributors for 168 architects. Regrettably, 83 architects, who were otherwise eligible, were not included. The editors hope that this dictionary will motivate others to undertake further research.

Contributors to the dictionary were solicited from among the national and, in one instance, international community of architectural historians, historic preservationists, architects, historians, librarians, curators, genealogists, researchers, professors, graduate students, and relatives of architects. For the better-known ones—such as “architect to the stars” PAUL REVERE WILLIAMS, the “dean of African American architects” JOHN ANDERSON LANKFORD, and Booker T. Washington’s son-in-law WILLIAM SIDNEY PITTMAN—it was relatively easy to find a contributor. Five architects have been the subject of university theses: WALTER THOMAS BAILEY, JAMES HOMER GARRETT, VERTNER WOODSON TANDY, PAUL REVERE WILLIAMS, and SAMUEL M. PLATO.<sup>5</sup> The authors of these theses were logical choices to recruit as contributors. The author of *Clarence “Cap” Wesley Wigington, An Architectural Legacy in Ice and Stone* was the logical person to ask to contribute to the dictionary.<sup>6</sup> Sometimes architectural historians or historic preservationists who were known to the editors were asked to submit an entry on an architect in their geographic locale. In addition, if an architect’s children or collateral relatives were found, they sometimes were asked to submit an entry on their family member.

To provide historic context on Black architectural schools and departments that trained the majority of the race’s architects, nine architectural programs are profiled: CLAFIN UNIVERSITY, FLORIDA AGRICULTURAL & MECHANICAL UNIVERSITY, HAMPTON INSTITUTE, HOWARD UNIVERSITY, NORTH CAROLINA AGRICULTURAL & TECHNICAL STATE UNIVERSITY, PRAIRIE VIEW AGRICULTURAL & MECHANICAL COLLEGE, SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE, and TUSKEGEE NORMAL & INDUSTRIAL INSTITUTE. Narrative histories for the schools are offered, recalling architectural

faculty who were instrumental in founding and advancing the program at their respective school, architectural pedagogy, curriculum development, and outstanding graduates.

Eight so-called “Negro Buildings” that were designed by African American architects (with two exceptions) for African Americans at seven southern regional fairs and one world’s fair are included. They were a building type that existed for no other reason than segregation, but much racial pride must have been contained within their walls. One must consider the all-Negro Board of Managers who organized the building into existence, the architect who designed it, the craftsmen who built it, and the fairgoers who experienced it. The fairs with “Negro Buildings” were (in chronological order) COTTON STATES AND INTERNATIONAL EXPOSITION in Atlanta, Georgia (1895); TENNESSEE CENTENNIAL AND INTERNATIONAL EXPOSITION in Nashville (1897); SOUTH CAROLINA INTERSTATE AND WEST INDIAN EXPOSITION in Charleston (1901); ALABAMA STATE FAIR in Montgomery (1906); JAMESTOWN TER-CENTENNIAL EXPOSITION in Virginia (1907); APPALACHIAN EXPOSITION in Knoxville, Tennessee (1910); CENTURY OF PROGRESS EXPOSITION in Chicago, Illinois (1933); and TEXAS CENTENNIAL ExPOSITION in Dallas (1936). Negro Buildings, like their brethren exposition buildings, were not meant to be permanent so their demolition is more palatable than the demolition of culturally and architecturally significant buildings designed by Black architects.

Simmona Simmons-Hodo, associate editor and University of Maryland at College Park and Baltimore County bibliographer, compiled a comprehensive survey of literature on African American architects as an aid for architectural historians and other scholars who are interested in undertaking further research. The general bibliography provides a starting point for serious scholars of domestic architecture. An abridged bibliography for each architect is provided to assist readers who wish to research the specific architect in more depth.

A determined search was undertaken to find a photographic portrait of each architect, and was by and large a success. For many of these architects this is the first time their likeness has been published. The formal portraits should intrigue because of their historic implications and because many of them were photographed by early African American photographers such as Addison N. Scurlock (1883–1964) in Washington, D.C., James Van Der Zee (1886–1983) in Harlem, New York, and Prentice Herman Polk (1898–1984) in Tuskegee, Alabama. These photographers were members in good standing of the same extended fine arts family as were the early Black architects. It was more than coincidence that the areas in which clusters of Black architects were found—such as Washington, D.C.; Harlem; Cincinnati; and Tuskegee—were also where Black photographers were found. They, too, competed artistically and commercially in a highly contested branch of art and were not welcomed by the majority culture.

This dictionary includes a building list for each architect that identifies the client or building name, address at the time the building was constructed (when known), city, state, and year built. The purpose of the list is twofold; it provides information so that the reader can go on a site visit to these historic structures, and it represents an index of sites and structures that deserve consideration for historic landmark designation. It is disappointing to review the building list for some architects and realize that almost their

entire known body of work has been demolished. Deliberate demolition of these buildings was generally government driven and demolition by neglect generally can be blamed on the indifference of the community. It is a damning statement of the avarice and ignorance of history that unravels the cultural and social fabric of Black neighborhoods.

During compilation of the dictionary, questions arose about these architects as a group. Did they know each other? Why did some migrate to the same, nonBlack universities such as Cornell University, Ohio State University, and the University of Illinois? Were there professional networks available to them? Who were their patrons? Were societal pressures on female architects any different than those on their male peers? How did female architects fare within this male-dominated profession? An attempt was made to provide answers to these questions in the context of each architect's biography. Invariably, the question arises as to whether Black architects produced anything resembling an African American architectural style. The dictionary is a biographical compilation and was not intended to be a *treatise* on architectural styles. However, the building photographs provide a visual reference to begin to answer that aesthetic question.

In sketching the life of a particular personality, the student of history finds himself face to face with some of the most serious and dangerous problems in connection with the reconstruction of the past. There is the danger that the writer may oversimplify the period in which his subject lived and thus mislead his readers into thinking that they can understand all the forces that shaped the history of the period by becoming acquainted with one person.... One must keep in mind the fact that sweeping generalizations based on the life of one person are neither good history nor good biography.<sup>6</sup>

## Notes

1. *Concise Dictionary of American Biography*. N.Y.: Scribner, 1997.
2. E.Lynn Miller, "Banneker, Benjamin," in *Pioneers of Landscape Design*, eds. Charles Birnbaum and Robin Karson (NY: McGraw-Hill, 2000), p. 10.
3. Compendium of the United States Occupational Census for the Year 1940 Subject "Architect," (D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1940). Also see the compendium for the year 1950.
4. 1950 population census, special reports occupational characteristics, vol. IV, part 1, chapter B, p. 29.
5. Carson A. Anderson, "The Architectural Practice of Vertner W. Tandy: An Evaluation of the Professional and Social Position of a Black Architect" (master's thesis, University of Virginia, 1982); Wesley H. Henderson, "Two Case Studies of African-American Architects' Careers in Los Angeles, 1890–1945: Paul Williams,

- FAIA and James Garrott, AIA” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, 1992);  
and Jon Smith, *The Architecture of Samuel M. Plato, 1902 to 1921*, (Master’s thesis,  
Ball State University, 1998).
6. David Taylor, *Clarence “Cap” Wesley Wigington, An Architectural Legacy in Ice  
and Stone*. (St. Paul: St. Paul Foundation, 2000).
7. John Hope Franklin, “James Boon, Free Negro Artisan,” *Journal of Negro History*,  
(April, 1945):150.

DR. WESLEY HOWARD HENDERSON,  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR  
SIMMONA SIMMONS-HODO,  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR  
DRECK SPURLOCK WILSON,  
EDITOR

## Acknowledgments

The dearth of reliable information about late nineteenth century and early twentieth century African American architects created the need for *African American Architects: A Biographical Dictionary 1865–1945*.

Research support for the *Dictionary* was provided by the Graham Foundation for the Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts.

The 168 entries in this dictionary could not have been produced without the 115 contributing authors who embraced the project as if it was their own, which, in essence, it was. They “voluntarily” spent hours searching for documentation about the life and career of their subject architect and looking for photographic portraits of their architect or vintage photographs of the various schools of architecture and “Negro Buildings.” Even more hours were spent condensing the disparate information they collected into an insightful, annotated biography or history. To each contributing author, most of whom I have never met, on behalf of the editors and the architects profiled herein whose careers you brought into sharper focus, we thank you. Gracious appreciation is likewise extended to the contributing authors who captured the forgotten institutional histories of the Reconstruction Era schools of architecture and the seldom told histories about the “Negro Buildings at Expositions.”

Dr. Wesley Howard Henderson was an assistant professor at the University of Texas at Austin, School of Architecture when he agreed to become associate editor of the *Dictionary* and take on the enormously time-consuming responsibility of editing the 168 entries submitted by contributors, many of whom had never been published before. His time was additionally encroached upon when he volunteered to contribute six biographical entries of his own. In actuality, the dictionary could not have been compiled without him.

My discovery of bibliographer Simmona E. Simmons-Hodo, head of Reference Services at the University of Maryland at Baltimore County and adjunct faculty at the University of Maryland at College Park, and her agreeing to become an associate editor added a significant talent to the editorial team. Her near-encyclopedic familiarity with architectural publications and African Americans helped to expand the comprehensiveness of the general bibliography and elevated the quality of individual bibliographic references associated with each entry.

The obscure information that needed to be mined and the mostly forgotten photographs that needed to be dusted off and brought into the public domain made reliance on reference librarians, archivists, government historic preservationists, architectural historians, curators, and collection and historic photograph specialists an absolute necessity. To a person they were knowledgeable generous with their time and on numerous occasions led us to ancillary information.

The associate editors, Dr. Wesley Howard Henderson and Simmona E. Simmons-Hodo, and I are grateful to Mark O'Malley, associate project editor for reference publications at Routledge, whose experience in editing dictionaries adroitly and patiently guided us as we labored to edit the *Dictionary*. Routledge Reference Publishing Director Sylvia Miller is the person most responsible for fashioning my embryonic proposal into a publication. My gratitude to her is limitless.

Chrome Photographic Services Digital Imaging in Washington, D.C. processed film and converted slides into photographic prints for almost all of the images in the dictionary. Graphic Artist Byron Wade in Newberry Park, California digitally restored many images, destined for the dictionary. His painstaking attention to detail dramatically improved many of the images.

Unto myself, I take responsibility for the selection of entries contained herein.

DRECK SPURLOCK WILSON  
WASHINGTON, D.C.



## Contributors

Kira M.Alston  
Carson A.Anderson  
Carolyn Ashkar  
Jane Bettistea  
Ancella R.Bickley  
Bonita Billingsley-Harris  
Lisa M.Boone  
Stanford Britt  
Marshall V.Brown Jr.  
Annette K.Carter  
Lilian B.Cartwright  
Charles I.Cassell  
Anthony Chibbaro  
Andrew Chin  
Donna K.Christian  
Curtis Clay  
Yves Coleman  
Robert T.Coles  
Clarence Cross  
Diane Davis  
Kerry Davis  
Elizabeth M.Dowling  
William M.Drennen Jr.  
Edward D.Dunson Jr.  
DeWitt S.Dykes Jr.  
Wendel Eckford  
Hazel R.Edwards  
Joellen ElBashir  
Patsy M.Fletcher  
Thomas L.French  
James Gabbert  
Bryan C.Green  
Judith E.Greene  
Margaret M.Grubiak  
Phylis Hammonds  
Ronald N.Helms  
Wesley H.Henderson

Mark Hewitt  
Donald Hibbard  
Caroline M.Hickman  
William C.Hine  
Samuel J.Hodges III  
Susan Horner  
Ginger Howell  
Granville Hurley Jr.  
Ruth E.Hurwitz  
Louise D.Hutchinson  
E.Renee Ingram  
Lauren Jacobi  
Doris F.Johnson  
Alice E.Jones  
Audrey Jones  
Katherine M.Jourdan  
Eric Key  
Walter E.Langsam  
William Lebovich  
Lizzetta LeFalle-Collins  
Glen B.Leiner  
Sarah Lenahan  
Jack Lufkin  
John S.Lupold  
Robert P.Madison  
Joel W.McEachin  
Ronnie McGhee  
Joyce Mendelsohn  
William Milligan Sr.  
Kaye L.Minchew  
Melvin L.Mitchell  
Mary Ann Neeley  
Angel D.Nieves  
John C.Norman, Jr.  
Anthony Opalka  
Susan G.Pearl  
T.Thomas Potterfield Jr.  
Peggy S.Ratliff  
Roosevelt Ratliff  
David Riehle  
Carol Roark  
Harry G.Robinson III  
Maisah B.Robinson  
Elizabeth Rosin

Robert W.Rydell  
Mary H.Sadler  
Tim Samuelson  
Constance E.Sarto  
Nancy Schwartz  
Perre deClue Scott  
Vincent A.Shivers  
Richard Singletary  
Calvin H.Sinnette  
John H.Spencer  
Wesley Springer  
Richard M.Standifer  
Albert M.Tannler  
David V.Taylor  
Beverly Tetterton  
Philip Thomason  
John H.Thompson  
Christine Trebellas  
Micki Waldrop  
Monica L.Walker  
Joyce D.Washington  
Roberta Washington  
L.Roger Watson III  
Danette Welch  
Sophonia Welch  
Craig L.Wilkins  
Barbara C.Williams  
Douglas A.Williams  
Paul K.Williams  
Lisa Willis  
Dreck S.Wilson  
Elizabeth Wilson  
Thomas O.Wisemiller  
Thomas M.Wolf  
Sarah H.Zurier



## Alphabetical List of Entries

Abele, Julian Francis

Alabama State Fair Negro Building, Montgomery

Alexander, Archibald Alphonse

Appalachian Exposition Negro Building, Knoxville, Tennessee

Archer, Romulus Cornelius Jr.

Bailey, Walter Thomas

Bankhead, Lester Oliver

Banks, Louis Harvey

Barnett, Carl Eugene

Bartholomew, Joseph Manual Sr.

Bates, Robert Charles

Bellinger, Louis Arnett Stewart

Berry, Plympton Ross

Birch, Edward Eginton

Birch, Ernest Octavius

Blanche, John Henry Jr.

Blodgett, Joseph Haygood

Boles, Henry Clifford

Bow, Cyril Garner

Bowman, Charles Sumner

Boyde, Thomas Wilson Jr.

Brent, Calvin Thomas Stowe

Brent, John Edmonson

Brookins, Sanford Augustus

Brooks, Elizabeth Carter

Brown, Albert Grant

Brown, Georgia Louise Harris

Brown, Grafton Tyler

Brown, Leroy John Henry

Brown, Richard Lewis

Buffins, Robert Lester

Butler, Alberta Jeannette Cassell

Carlisle, Alma Fairfax Murray

Cassell, Albert Irvin

Cassell, Charles Irvin

Century of Progress Exposition De Saible Cabin, Chicago, Illinois

Claflin University, Manual Training Department

Coleman, William Emmett Jr.  
Cook, Julian Abele  
Cook, Ralph Victor  
Cooke, William Wilson  
Cotton States and International Exposition Negro Building, Atlanta, Georgia  
Cross, Clarence  
Decatur, William Jefferson  
Delany, Henry Beard  
Dickinson, Charles Edgar  
Drayton, Clyde Martin  
Duke, Charles Sumner  
Dykes, DeWitt Sanford Sr.  
Edwards, Gaston Alonzo  
Elliott, Curtis Graham  
Farrar, Daniel J. Sr.  
Ferguson, Arthur Wilfred  
Ferguson, George Alonzo  
Fields, Robert Lionel  
Fisher, Orpheus Hodge  
Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University, School of Architecture  
Ford, Wade Alston  
Foster, George Washington Jr.  
Fry, Louis Edwin Sr.  
Furman, Ethel Madison Bailey  
Garrott, James Homer  
Giles, Lewis Wentworth Jr.  
Giles, Lewis Wentworth Sr.  
Grandy, Jasminius Wilsonni Rudolphus III  
Greene, Beverly Loraine  
Griffin, Francis Eugene  
Hamilton, Calvin Pazavia  
Hampton Institute, Department of Architecture  
Hancock, Richard Mason  
Harris, Clinton Stevens  
Hatton, Isaiah Truman  
Hazel, William Augustus  
Henderson, Cornelius Langston Sr.  
Hill, Joseph E.  
Hilliard, Leroy  
Hoban, Stewart Daniel Sr.  
Holloway, John Bunyon Jr.  
Howard University, Department of Architecture  
Hurley, Granville Warner Sr.  
Hutchins, James Edward

Ifill, Percy Costa  
Jackson, Leon Quincy  
Jamestown Ter-centennial Exposition Negro Building, Virginia  
Jenkins, Willie Edward  
Johnson, Conrad Adolphus Jr.  
Johnson, Harvey Nathaniel  
Jones, George Maceo  
Jones, William Thomas  
King, Horace  
King, John Thomas  
Lankford, Arthur Edward  
Lankford, John Anderson  
Lightner, Calvin Esua  
Livas, Henry Lewis  
Mackey, Howard Hamilton Sr.  
Madison, Robert Prince  
McKissack, Calvin Lunsford  
McKissack, Moses III  
Melby, John Alexander  
Meredith, Amaza Lee  
Merrick, John  
Michael, John Henry  
Mickels, Elon Howard  
Miller, Edward Charles  
Moore, John Aycocks  
Moses, William Henry Jr.  
National Technical Association  
Norman, John Clavon Sr.  
North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University, School of Mechanic Arts  
O'Neal, Kenneth Roderick  
Parker, Helen Eugenia  
Parker, Joseph Lincoln  
Pelham, Frederick Blackburn  
Persley, Louis Hudison  
Pittman, William Sidney  
Plater, James Alonzo  
Plato, Samuel M.  
Prairie View Agricultural & Mechanical College, School of Architecture  
Price, Henry James  
Pryce, Edward Lyons  
Ransom, Leon Andrew Jr.  
Rayfield, Wallace Augustus  
Reese, Lawrence  
Roberson, Francis Jefferson

Roberson, Francis Rassieur  
Roberts, Walter Lenox Jr.  
Robinson, Hilyard Robert  
Robinson, Robert L.  
Robinson, William J.  
Rosemond, John Henry  
Rousseve, Ferdinand Lucien  
Russell, Charles Thaddeus  
Sealey, Roy Anthony  
Smith, William W.  
South Carolina Interstate and West Indian Exposition Negro Building, Charleston  
Southern University, School of Architecture  
Spears, Prince W.  
Streat, William Alfred Jr.  
Sulton, John Dennis  
Tandy, Vertner Woodson  
Taylor, Robert Robinson  
Taylor, Robert Rochon  
Tennessee Centennial and International Exposition Negro Building, Nashville  
Texas Centennial Exposition Hall of Negro Life, Dallas  
Thompson, Martha Ann Cassell  
Thornton, William Ferguson  
Tuskegee Normal & Industrial Institute, Mechanical Industries Department  
Vaughn, Ralph Augustine  
Vaughn, Roscoe Ingersoll  
Walker, Josiah Joshua  
Washington, Booker Taliaferro III  
Washington, Robert Edward Lee  
Welch, John Austin  
Wheat, Clarence Buchanan Sr.  
White, Columbus Bob  
White, Donald Frank  
White, Richard Cassius  
Whittaker, Miller Fulton  
Wigington, Clarence Wesley  
Williams, Paul Revere  
Williston, David Augustus  
Wilson, John Louis Jr.  
Woodson, Howard Dilworth  
Young, Edward Walter Owen  
Zenon, Golden Joseph Jr.

## Julian Francis Abele (1881–1950)



*Josephine Faulkner Webster*

Julian Francis Abele was one of the most prolific American architects of the Gilded Age and ensuing Country Estate Era between 1890 and 1920s, having designed over 200 buildings as senior designer for the Office of Horace Trumbauer in Philadelphia. He considered himself an *artiste* beyond racial classification—neither Black nor White. Abele was the living embodiment of Dr. W.E.B. DuBois’ characterization of “double consciousness”: outwardly Black, living in White America “an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled stirrings, two warring ideals in one dark body.”<sup>1</sup>

Julian Abele was wellborn on April 21, 1881, to an Olde Philadelphia family that traced their presence back to William Penn’s grand religious experiment more than 200 hundred years ago. Julian’s father, Charles Abele, was born a freedman in Chester, Pennsylvania, in 1841. He fought for Emancipation, was wounded, and settled in nearby Philadelphia, where he worked as a laborer at the U.S. Treasury Customs House, a coveted patronage position. Julian’s mother, Mary Jones Abele, was a milliner and collateral descendent of Absalom Jones, the first rector of the African Church of Philadelphia.

Julian Abele was the eighth of eleven siblings. In 1893 he enrolled at Philadelphia’s Institute for Colored Youth (ICY), founded by the Society of Friends or Quakers in 1852. In June 1897 Abele graduated from the ICY and won a \$15 prize for the senior who attained the highest mathematics score. His aunt, Julia Jones, who taught drawing at the ICY, steered Julian toward a career in architecture.

In the fall of 1897, at age sixteen, Julian Abele was admitted to the Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industrial Arts. The world-famous museum, which also operated an industrial arts school, offered a prestigious education in the fine arts and technical industries. Abele graduated June 9, 1898, with a Certificate in Architectural Design, the first of his race to do so.<sup>2</sup> He further distinguished himself by winning the \$25 Frederick Graff Jr. Prize awarded to the highest-ranked evening student. In the fall of 1898 Abele

was accepted into the University of Pennsylvania, School of Architecture. The practicing architects who comprised the faculty taught architecture not as a science, but as a fine art in *l'esprit des l'Ecole des Beaux-Arts* in Paris. Abele's matriculation was filled with first placements in juried competitions and honors such as being elected president of the University of Pennsylvania Architectural Society. On June 18, 1902, Abele became the first Black graduate from the School of Architecture and only the second African American to earn a baccalaureate degree in architecture, following ROBERT ROBINSON TAYLOR.<sup>3</sup> In the fall of 1902, Abele passed the entrance examinations to the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. His decision to pursue yet another Certificate in Architectural Design was probably influenced by his desire to further his training in oil and watercolor painting rather than advanced architectural training. On May 30, 1903, Julian Abele received a Certificate of Completion in Architectural Design from the Academy, once again becoming the first of his race to do so.<sup>4</sup>

In the summer of 1906, aided by Warren Poivers Laird, the director of the School of Architecture at the University of Pennsylvania, Julian Abele was hired as a junior architect by Horace Trumbauer (1868–1938). Trumbauer, whose architectural training was gained via apprenticeship, wanted a talented *Beaux Arts*—trained designer who could transform the extravagant demands of his mainline Philadelphia, 5th Avenue Manhattan, and Newport clients into huge mansions, glamorous hotels, and awe-inspiring public libraries. By 1908 Abele was senior designer for the office, and was responsible for the “look” of all major buildings. As a testament to his allegiance to Trumbauer, the rare opportunity to design significant buildings, and his high salary, Abele spent his entire forty-four-year career with the Office of Horace Trumbauer.

The scenario was repeated so often it became redundant. Marriages collapsed, inter-marriages among the wealthy were celebrated, Trumbauer gained another commission, and Abele gained another opportunity to demonstrate his architectural prowess.

In 1915 Louise Cromwell Brooks, the daughter of Eva Cromwell Stotesbury, hired Trumbauer, who assigned Abele to design “Eccleston.” Inspired by Richard Castle's “Powerscourt” (1731) in Ireland, the eighteenth-century English Georgian country house had forty-five rooms, making it the largest private residence in Baltimore County, Maryland.

In 1916 Louise's mother, Eva Cromwell Stotesbury, and stepfather, Edward Stotesbury, who was senior vice president of J.Pierpoint Morgan's Philadelphia investment and banking office, commissioned Trumbauer, who then assigned Abele to design “Whitemarsh Hall.” The limestone behemoth was a *grande trianon* with a total of 147 rooms.

Edward Stotesbury, also a member of Philadelphia's Fairmont Park Commission, hired the Office of Horace Trumbauer in 1927 to design the Philadelphia Free Library at 19th and Franklin Parkway. The rusticated limestone Corinthian colonnade portico and sculptural pediment were patterned by Abele from the *Ministere de la Marine* (1731) in Paris by Jacques-Ange Gabriel.

Julian Abele married late in life to Paris émigré Marguerite Bulle on June 6, 1925. The bride was a graduate of the Conservatoire de Music in Paris with an emphasis on piano and organ. By their ninth wedding anniversary the marriage had disintegrated. Marguerite

abandoned her husband, adolescent son, and infant daughter. Julian Abele never remarried.

In 1920 James Cromwell, Eva's only son, wed Delphine Dodge, the only daughter of Anna Dodge,



The Free Library of Philadelphia, *Print and Picture Collection, The Free Library of Philadelphia*

heir to the Dodge Brothers Motor Company. Anna Dodge retained Trumbauer, who assigned Abele to design a Washington, D.C., mansion for Delphine called "Marly" (1930). At the same time that "Marly" was on the drawing boards, Abele was designing "Rose Terrace" (1931) for Anna Dodge on the shores of Lake Saint Claire in Grosse Pointe, Michigan. James Cromwell, after divorcing Delphine Dodge in 1928, married Doris Duke, who was the daughter of James Duke, president of both the American Tobacco Company and Southern Power Company. James Duke, whose trust indenture built Duke University, was one of Trumbauer's top patrons. Abele had previously designed James Duke's eighteenth-century, French academic style, 5th Avenue, New York City townhouse (1909). Julian Abele, without ever stepping foot on Duke University's campus to avoid the dehumanizing Jim Crow laws in North Carolina, designed eleven Georgian-style and thirty-eight Collegiate Gothic-style buildings for the new university from 1925 to 1940.

Julian Abele died alone in his Philadelphia row house after suffering a heart attack on April 18, 1950. He had been among a cadre of Gilded Age architects who favored not originality, but the interpretation of historic precedence. He was buried in Eden Cemetery in Collindale, Pennsylvania. There would be no massive mausoleums like the ones he designed for cigar manufacturer Charles Eisenlohr (1912), traction magnate Peter A.B. Widener (1915), and manufacturer Thomas Develon Jr. (1932). Abele's gravestone, as was the man, is unobtrusive.

### Notes

1. William E.B.DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago: McClurg & Co., 1931), p. 3.
2. Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industrial Art, "Commencement Program 1898," Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives.
3. University of Pennsylvania, The record, "Julian Francis Abele," *Class of 1902* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1902), p. 9.
4. Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Student Records, "Julian F.Abele Registration Card," Archives of American Art, roll 4316, Washington, D.C.

### Bibliography

- American Institute of Architects Philadelphia Chapter. *21st Annual Architectural Exhibition of the T-Square Club*. Philadelphia: Philadelphia AIA, 1915.
- Maher, James T. *The Twilight of Splendor*. Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1975.
- Mao, Jackson B. "The Architecture of Horace Trumbauer Firm." Master's thesis, Drexel University, 1975.

DRECK SPURLOCK WILSON

### BUILDING LIST

Name	Address	City	State	Year	Comments
Baker, Raymond T. "Marly"	2300 Foxhall Rd., NW	Washington	DC	1931	Now Belgium ambassador's residence
Beneficial Savings Bank	826 East Allegheny Ave.	Philadelphia	PA	1923	Kensington branch
Berwind, Herminie "Knollhunt"	Spruce Tree & Berwind Rds.	Radnor	PA	1908	
Brokaw, Howard C.	Northern Blvd.	Brookville	NY	1916	Now Muttontown Golf Club
Brooke, George A. "Almonbury"	Mill & Conestoga Rds.	Villanova	PA	c1925	
Brooks, Walter, Jr.	10729 Park Heights Ave.	Owings Mill	MD	1915	
Bucknell University	Rte. 15 in front of stadium	Lewisburg	PA	1923	Mathewson Gateway

Carhart, Amory S.	3 East 95th St.	New York	NY	1913	Now <i>Lycee Francais</i>
<i>Chateau Crillon</i>	222 S. 19th St.	Philadelphia	PA	1928	
Clanerda Presbyterian Church	34th & Girard Sts.	Philadelphia	PA	1912	
Clews, James B. " <i>La Lanterne</i> "	Wolver Hollow & Piping Rock	Brookville	NY	1929	
Colver Presbyterian Church	7th & Reese Ave.	Colver	PA	1913	
Continental Hotel	820 Chestnut St.	Philadelphia	PA	1922	Now Continental Hotel
Cramp, Theodore W. "Portlege"	464 S. Roberts Rd.	Bryn Mawr	PA	1910	
Darlington, H.S.	Mill & Conestoga Rds.	Villanova	PA	1911	Now American Missionary Fellowship
Dixon, Fitz E. "Ronaele Manor"	Church Rd. & Washington Ln.	Elkins Park	PA	1923	demolished
Dodge, Anna	12 Lakeshore Rd.	Grosse Pointe	MI	1931	"Rose Terrace," demolished
Dows, David "Charlton Hall"	Brookfield SE of Hempsted	Brookville	NY	1916	
Drexel, John R. "Fairholme"	237 Ruggles Ave.	Newport	RI	1910	
Duke, James B.	1 E. 78th St.	New York	NY	1909	Now NYU Institute of Fine Arts
Duke's Chapel	807 Old Oxford Rd.	Bragtown	NC	1926	
Duke University Botany Bldg.	Campus	Durham	NC	1929	
Duke University Chapel	Campus	Durham	NC	1929	
Duke University Dormitories 1-5	Campus	Durham	NC	1925	
Duke University Engineers' Dormitory	Campus	Durham	NC	1925	
Duke University Faculty Houses 1-11	Campus	Durham	NC	1930	

<b>Name</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>City/County</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Duke University Gymnasium	Campus	Durham	NC	1940	
Duke University Hospital	Campus	Durham	NC	1938	
Duke University Indoor Stadium	Campus	Durham	NC	1939	
Duke University Perkins Library	Campus	Durham	NC	1926	
Duke University Physics Bldg.	Campus	Durham	NC	1947	
Duke University Private Patient's Bldg.	Campus	Durham	NC	1938	
Eisenlohr, Otto	3812 Walnut St.	Philadelphia	PA	1911	Now Univ. of Pa. President's Residence
Elmendorf Farm	3931 Park Pike	Fayette County	KY	1911	
Episcopal Hospital	Front & Lehigh Sts.	Philadelphia	PA	1933	
Fifth Baptist Church	18th & Spring Garden Sts.	Philadelphia	PA	1924	
First Church of Christ, Science	138 Lakeview Ave.	West Palm Beach	FL	1927	
Free Library	1901 Vine St.	Philadelphia	PA	1917	
Grace, Joseph P. "Tullaroan"	North Service Rd.	Manhasset	NY	1920	Now Deepdale Golf Clubhouse
Grace Presbyterian Church	444 Old York Rd.	Jenkintown	PA	1909	
Hahneman Medical College Out-Patient's Bldg.	15th north of Race St.	Philadelphia	PA	1947	
Harvard University Institute of Geographical Exploration	2 Divinity Square	Cambridge	MA	1930	
Harvard University Widener Library	Harvard Yard near Mass. Ave.	Cambridge	MA	1913	
Huff, George	1600 New Hampshire Ave. NW	Washington	DC	1906	Now Argentine Embassy

Jefferson Medical College Curtis Clinic	1015 Walnut St.	Philadelphia	PA	1929	
Jenkintown Bank & Trust Co.	400 Old York Rd.	Jenkintown	PA	1924	Now First Union Bank
Keswick Theatre	291 Keswick Ave.	Glenside	PA	1928	
Knight, Edward C. Jr. "Stonybrook"	Stonybrook Rd.	Middletown	NJ	1927	
Lafayette College <i>Chi Phi</i> House	W.Campus Dr. & Sullivan Ln.	Easton	PA	1909	
Martin, John C.	Greenwood & Church Rds.	Wyncote	PA	1922	Now Rabbinical College
McFadden, George H.	200 South Ithan Ave.	Rosemont	PA	1923	
Mitchell, Frank P.	1815 Q St., NW	Washington	DC	1912	Now Argentine ambassador's residence
Montgomery, Robert "Ardrosson"	Newtown Rd. at Abraham's Ln.	Villanova	PA	1911	
New York Evening Post	75 West St.	New York	NY	1925	
North Broad Street Station	2601 N. Broad St.	Philadelphia	PA	1928	
Northern Home for Children	Ridge Ave. & Laurison St.	Philadelphia	PA	1927	
Ogontz School for Girls	1600 Woodland Rd.	Rydal	PA	1916	Now PSU Southerland Hall
Parson, Hubert T.	Cedar & Norwood Ave.	West Long Branch	NH	1927	Now Monmouth College Wilson Hall
<i>Pere Marquette</i> Hotel	501 Main St.	Peoria	IL	1923	
Philadelphia Stock Exchange	1409 Walnut St.	Philadelphia	PA	1912	
Philadelphia YMCA	1007 Lehigh Ave.	Philadelphia	PA	1912	North Branch
Phipps, Henry C.	345 Lakeville Rd.	Great Neck	NY	1916	Now Great Neck School Admin. Bldg.
Phipps, John S. "Westbury House"	71 Old Westbury Rd.	Westbury	NY	1911	

Pulitzer Bldg.	Park Row & Franfort St.	New York	NY	1907	
Rice, Eleanor "Miramar"	Bellevue & Yzanga Ct.	Newport	RI	1930	
Ritz-Carlton Hotel	Broad St. below Chestnut	Philadelphia	PA	1911	
St. Paul's Episcopal Church	Ashbourne & Old York Rds.	Elkins Park	PA	1912	
Stotesbury, Edward T. "Whitemarsh Hall"	Paper Mill & Willow Grove	Chestnut Hill	PA	1916	
University of Pennsylvania Irvine Auditorium	34th & Spruce Sts.	Philadelphia	PA	1928	
Watson, James E. "High Gate"	801 Fairmont Ave.	Fairmont	WVA	1909	Now Ross Funeral Home
Widener Memorial Home	2800 Atlantic Ave.	Longport	NJ	1911	Now Gospel Hall Home
Widener, Peter A.B.	3822 Ridge Ave.	Philadelphia	PA	1915	Mausoleum
Wildenstein Gallery	19 East 64th St.	New York	NY	1931	
Windber Hospital	600 Somerset Ave.	Windber	PA	1930	
Zimmerman, Daniel	800 Georgian Pl.	Somerset County	PA	1915	Now Inn at Georgian Place
Zoological Society	34th & Girard Ave.	Philadelphia	PA	1912	

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## Alabama State Fair Negro Building Montgomery (1906)

Alabama's capital city was the site of the state fair in 1906, as it had been on other such occasions. Located on the Alabama River and with excellent railroad connections, Montgomery was the center of wholesale trade for central Alabama. It was home to an African American population that was in the majority in Montgomery County and sometimes outnumbered Whites in the city. Since the adoption of the new state constitution in 1901, most Blacks and a large number of Whites had been disfranchised. "Separate but equal" had entered the vocabulary, and segregation was a factor in almost

every area of Montgomery and state life. There was a strong connection, however, between the races.

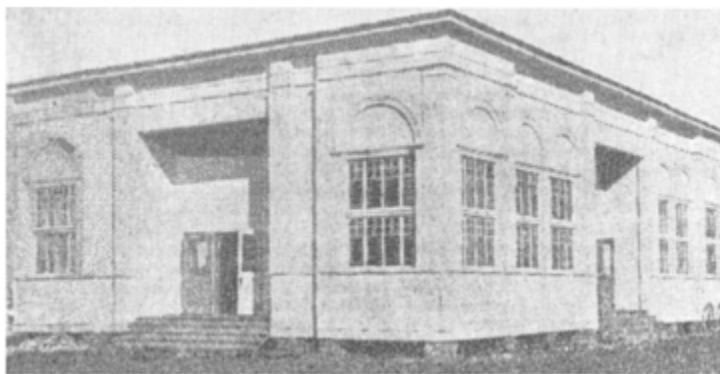
Alabama state fairs went back to antebellum days and continued as popular entertainment for people bolstered by prestigious awards for the accomplishments of those engaged in agriculture. By the turn of the twentieth century, the fair was being held at the fairgrounds, north of the city, and was eagerly anticipated by most of the citizenry. Birmingham also had fairs, as did other cities in Alabama, but the Montgomery fair was very popular.

Sponsored by the Alabama Agricultural Association, the fair encouraged African American entries, and the White directors invited the “Negroes of the state to participate.”<sup>1</sup> According to the *Montgomery Advertiser*, the largest local newspaper that was distributed statewide, there was enthusiasm in the acceptance of the invitation. In the tone and attitude of the day, a reporter wrote,

The Negroes have, without cost to the management, erected a building on the fair grounds which reflects credit upon the Negroes who built it and made the architectural plans for same and upon the whole State Fair Management as well.

Under the direction of Booker T. Washington of Tuskegee Institute, they have worked up interest throughout the State and have put together a collection of exhibits which shows the progress of the Negroes of Alabama. The exhibits focused on the “educational, moral and industrial life of the Negroes.”<sup>2</sup>

The Negro Building, designed by WALTER THOMAS BAILEY of TUSKEGEE INSTITUTE, was “L” shaped with exterior dimensions of 72×90 feet. Inside were an exhibit room, 50×75 feet; a dining room, 22×30 feet; a kitchen and pantry; general waiting room; and rooms for men and women. Three entrances led into the exhibit room from narrow halls. Two rows of columns in the exhibit room, spaced 13 feet on center,



Alabama State Fair Negro Building, *Montgomery Advertiser*<sup>3</sup>

supported the roof. The ceilings were 24 feet high with eleven large windows that were 7 feet wide and 13 feet tall. The reporter added that these windows, with their oval tops,

were one of the most attractive exterior features.

The reporter continued with the description:

Extending around the exterior of the building is a base four feet high. On this base pilasters are placed extending to the corners. The whole exterior is weather-boarded and painted. The interior walls are not covered in any way, but are left with studs exposed. Situated on the corner of two streets, it occupies a very prominent position and thus its pleasing architectural lines are shown to great advantage. This location on two streets gives a splendid opportunity to give easy entrance to all parts of the building, especially the dining room and main exhibit room.<sup>4</sup>

Saturday, October 27, 1906, was set aside for “Negro Day” with an extensive program planned including parades by secret societies, a speech by BOOKER TALIFERRO WASHINGTON, and talks by other leaders of the race. Governor William D. Jelks offered remarks as well. Trotting horses raced in the afternoon, and nighttime fireworks concluded the day.

In urging Negroes to attend, Booker Taliferro Washington stated that the officers of the fair had given great encouragement to them, and he hoped that all would show their appreciation by turning out in great numbers. He added that “thousands of white people in Alabama have visited the Negro Building and have expressed their great satisfaction at the evidences that the race is making.”

The Alabama State Fair Negro Building was demolished after the fair closed.

### Notes

1. “Negroes of Alabama Have A Fine Display at Fair,” *Montgomery Advertiser* 25, October 1906, p. 10.
2. “Today Is Negro Day at Alabama Agricultural Fair,” *Montgomery Advertiser* 27, October 1906, p. 1.
3. “Negroes at Fair Urge Law and Order League,” *Montgomery Advertiser* 28, October 1906, p. 1.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

### Bibliography

“Robert Robinson Taylor.” In *Cyclopedia of the Colored Race*. Montgomery, Ala.: National Publishing Co., 1919.

MARY ANN NEELY,  
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA

## Archibald Alphonse Alexander (1888–1958)



### *Harmon Foundation*

“Engineering is a tough field at best and it may be twice as tough for a Negro,” a professor told Archie Alexander, a student at the State University of Iowa in Iowa City, in 1909. Moreover, the professor had “never heard of a Negro engineer.”<sup>1</sup> Forty years later Carter G. Woodson, founder of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, wrote that Alexander overcame these words of discouragement, and admired Alexander as “The most successful Negro businessman in America.”<sup>2</sup> *Ebony Magazine* echoed these sentiments in two 1949 articles profiling accomplished and wealthy African American businessmen, including Alexander. His commercial success as an architectural engineer is noteworthy for a very unusual business structure: an inter-racial partnership.

Alexander was born in 1888 in Ottumwa, Iowa, where there were approximately 500 Blacks out of a total population of 14,000 people. His parents were Price and Mary Alexander. Price earned a living as a coachman and janitor. One of young Archie’s play activities was building dams with his eight brothers and sisters in a creek behind his home. In 1899 the family moved to a small farm outside Des Moines when his father became head custodian at the Des Moines National Bank, a prestigious job for a Black man. In Iowa’s capital city, Alexander attended Oak Park Grammar School, Oak Park High School, and the now-defunct Highland Park College for one year.

Alexander’s engineering education began in earnest at the State University of Iowa (now University of Iowa). Alexander also played for the school football team, earning the nickname “Alexander the Great,” and joined the *Kappa Alpha Psi* fraternity. During the summer he worked as draftsman for Marsh Engineers, a Des Moines bridge-designing firm. In 1912 Alexander received his bachelor of science degree; he was the university’s first Black football player and engineer. He continued his education at the University of London for some coursework in bridge design in 1921, and obtained his civil engineering degree in 1925 at the State University of Iowa. Alexander received an honorary doctorate in engineering from HOWARD UNIVERSITY in 1947.

Alexander's first years in the business world seemed to bear out his professor's prediction. Every engineering firm in Des Moines turned down his employment application. Initially discouraged, he became a laborer in a steel shop at Marsh Engineering, earning \$10 per week. Within two years he was earning \$70 per week in charge of bridge construction in Iowa and Minnesota.

In 1914 Alexander started his own engineering company, A.A.Alexander, Inc. To extend his construction projects beyond minority clients, in 1917 he became partners with white contractor George F.Higbee, a Marsh acquaintance. Alexander & Higbee, Inc. specialized in bridge construction, sewer systems, and road construction. Alexander lost his partner in 1925 when Higbee died from an injury suffered in a construction accident.

Shortly after Higbee's death, Alexander received his largest contract to date—the construction in 1927 of a \$1.2 million central heating and generating station for the University of Iowa. Perched along the Iowa River, it is still in use. The following year, he finished two other projects for his *alma mater*: a power plant and tunnel under the Iowa River that were designed to pipe steam, hot water, and electricity from the power plant to the campus on the other side of the river.

A year after completing these projects, Alexander teamed with his second White partner, Maurice A. Repass, a football teammate who was also an engineering graduate. He joined forces with Alexander in 1929 when they bid for a Michigan contract. The City of Grand Rapids awarded the new partnership the contract to build a \$1 million sewage treatment plant in 1930. Columbus, Nebraska, also hired Alexander & Repass to build the Loup River Power Plant in 1933. As the Great Depression worsened, the firm struggled to stay in business despite its good reputation. The partners laid off all of their workers and grabbed any sort of work, such as repairing sidewalks, patching streets, and other miscellaneous building and repair jobs—doing the work themselves.

Alexander & Repass fortunes improved considerably after they affiliated with Des Moines' Glen C. Herrick, a prominent White contractor and road builder. Herrick, who was under contract to develop a canal system in Nebraska, had accompanying bridge work and hired Alexander & Repass for the task. Herrick also provided financing for a number of projects by Alexander & Repass. The firm's next large project also occurred in the Cornhusker state, where, in 1935, they designed and began construction of the Union Pacific Railroad Bridge crossing the North Platte River. At about the same time, the firm was awarded bridge-building projects in Des Moines.

A salutary reputation, proven ability, solid financial resources, and capitalization positioned the firm to bid on projects in other parts of the country. The expanding area of federal contracts brought on by the war effort enabled Alexander & Repass to successfully bid on the construction of the airfield at the U.S. Army air base in Chewhaw, Alabama, the 99th Pursuit Squadron Air Base and Pilot Training School, where the Tuskegee Airmen trained.

During World War II, Alexander & Repass opened a second office in Washington, D.C. This became a profitable necessity because the federal government accepted their bids for a number of lucrative and publicly visible construction projects around the nation's capital. Alexander designed the granite and limestone Tidal Basin Bridge and Seawall, which employed 160 workers and cost \$1 million to build. Other Washington,

D.C., projects included the K Street elevated highway and underpass from Key Bridge to 27th Street, NW; the \$3.5 million Whitehurst Freeway alongside the Potomac River, which carried traffic around Georgetown; and the overpass that took Riggs Road under the tracks of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. Alexander also designed and his company built the Frederick Douglass Memorial Estate Apartments in Washington, D.C.'s Anacostia neighborhood in 1955.

Archie Alexander's role as designer in his other construction projects is not documented. His role in the partnership was to pursue contracts. "Some of them act as though they want to bar me but I walk in, throw my



Steam Plant, University of Iowa, *University of Iowa Archives*

cards down and I'm in. My money talks," Alexander once asserted, "just as loudly as theirs."<sup>3</sup> Known for a "commanding personality and imposing appearance," Alexander, with his football-player bulk, was a capable taskmaster and known for his directness, honesty, and bluntness.<sup>4</sup> Repass served as the inside man, reviewing contracts and handling mechanical details.

Alexander's stature in the Black community in both Des Moines and the nation's capital garnered him a leadership role in a number of civic-improvement and racerelements efforts. His many civic involvements around the country included being a trustee at both TUSKEGEE INSTITUTE and HOWARD UNIVERSITY, a member of a 1934 team that investigated the economic development potential of Haiti (at the request of the Haitian president), and national polemarch of the *Kappa Alpha Psi* Fraternity. Other achievements included receiving the Harmon Award in 1926 for outstanding achievement in Negro business and winning the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's Spingarn Medal in 1934 as the second most successful Negro in American business. In Iowa Alexander served as state chairman of the Iowa Republican Party and was a board member of the Colored Young Mens Christian Association. He headed the Des Moines branch, National Association for the

Advancement of Colored People; served on the Des Moines Inter-racial Commission; chaired the Polk County, Iowa, draft board; and presided over the Negro Community Center.

Alexander's prominence did not allow him to escape the tentacles of racism. One of the worst examples occurred in 1944 when he purchased a large house in a fashionable White Des Moines neighborhood and had to fight a restrictive racial covenant. The first morning after he moved into his home, he and his wife Audra woke up to a burning cross in their front lawn.

The culmination of his public service was his selection by President Dwight David Eisenhower in 1954 to serve as governor of the Virgin Islands, which turned out to be an unhappy experience. His blunt, outspoken style and aggressive agenda to develop the islands did little to endear him with the population. Moreover, because he had already begun to develop business interests in South America and the Caribbean he was being accused of cronyism and as a result was being attacked by a growing number of members of the island's legislature. Alexander lasted in this position for eighteen months, resigning partially because of declining health.

Following his unsatisfying foray into politics, Alexander retired and moved back to Des Moines. He died of a heart attack three years later in 1958.

### Notes

1. Charles E. Wynes, "Alexander the Great, Bridge Builder," *Palimpsest* (1985):80.
2. Mary McGaffin, "Alexander and White Partner Amaze Capital," *Des Moines Sunday Register*, 18 December 1949, p. 116.
3. "Alexander Won't Let Color Handicap Him in Getting Jobs," *Ebony Magazine* (December 1949): 60.
4. Ibid.

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- "Personal Papers of Archie Alexander." Special Collections Department, University of Iowa Libraries, Iowa City, Iowa.
- Peters, J. Jerome. *The Story of Kappa Alpha Psi*. Philadelphia: *Kappa Alpha Psi* Fraternity, 1967.

JACK LUFKIN,  
CURATOR, STATE OF IOWA MUSEUM

## STRUCTURE LIST

Name	Address	City	State	Year	Comments
4th Avenue Viaduct	Over Des Moines River	Des Moines	IA		
Alexander, Archie	2901 5th Ave.	Des Moines	IA	1913	
Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Bridge	Over Missouri River	Kansas City	MO		Kansas City short-line
College Street Viaduct	Loup Rock Island tracks	Iowa City	IA		
River Power Plant	Platte River Basin	Columbus	NE	1933	
Des Moines River Highway Bridge	Over Des Moines River	Mt. Pleasant	IA		
Des Moines Sewage Disposal Plant	300 Vandalia Dr.	Des Moines	IA		
East 14th Street Viaduct	Over Des Moines River	Des Moines	IA	1937	
Fluer Drive Bridge	Over Racoon River	Des Moines	IA	1937	
Francis Scott Key Bridge	Over Potomac River	Washington	DC		Widening
Frederick Douglass Public Dwellings	1200 Alabama Ave., SE	Washington	DC	1941	Hilyard Robinson, assoc. Architect
Grand Rapids Sewage Plant	NR. Grand River	Grand Rapids	NE	1930	
Independence Avenue Bridge	Over Tidal Basin	Washington	DC		
James River Bridge	Over James River	Mitchell	SD		
Union Pacific Bridge	Above North Platte River	North Platte	NE	1935	
University of Iowa Steam Plant	Campus	Iowa City	IA	1927	
University of Iowa Power Plant	Campus	Iowa City	IA	1928	

## Appalachian Exposition Negro Building, Knoxville, Tennessee (1910)

The Negro Building was heralded as one of the most beautiful buildings constructed for the Knoxville, Tennessee, Appalachian Exposition of 1910.

What colored man could visit the magnificent structure at the head of the lower lake and know that it is a product of colored mind and muscle from its very conception in the architect's brain to the last nail driven by black hands without experiencing a thrill of inspiration?<sup>1</sup>

asked Dr. Henry M.Green, president of the Colored Department, in his speech for the fair's opening ceremonies in Chilhowee Park. The media agreed. "It is doubtful, very doubtful, if ever a more perfect presentation of progress and achievements of the Negro race has ever been made in the South."<sup>2</sup>

JOHN HENRY MICHAEL, head of the Mechanical Department at Knoxville College, designed the building while his business partner William Stacy supervised its construction by Knoxville College carpentry students and the Stacy & Michael Contracting Company. The Appalachian Exposition's architectural commission had asked for plans for a 6,600-square-foot structure to be built in a combination of Oriental and Modern styles and the building resulting from the plans Michael submitted to fit those criteria came to be called the greatest exhibit of the Colored Department.

Fifty feet wide, sixty feet long, and thirty feet tall, the 2-story stucco building occupied a hill at the north end of the park's lower lake. Its silhouette was outlined by hundreds of tiny electric lights that illuminated its white facade for fairgoers across the entire park to see after dark. Inside it featured a monumental double stairway leading to a mezzanine that overlooked a 25×50 foot open court of exhibition space on the floor below. Additionally, a fully equipped hos-



Appalachian Exposition Negro Building, *McClung Historical Collection Knox County Public Library*

pital emergency area was installed in two rooms at the far end of the second floor and staffed by doctors and nurses from Knoxville College ready to treat “colored” fairgoers in need of medical assistance.

Knoxville’s Appalachian Exposition was the first such large-scale fair held in the city. Inspired by the recent Atlanta COTTON STATES AND INTERNATIONAL EXPOSITION of 1895, the Appalachian Exposition was intended to present a regional—if not national—forum for Knoxville, not only to celebrate the city’s coming of age as an industrial center of the South, but also to showcase its beauty, its resources, and its position as a ripe spot for further economic and commercial growth. The Appalachian Exposition was a success for Knoxville’s civic boosters and was so popular that it was repeated in 1911 and again in 1913 as the National Conservation Exposition.

All the other original buildings built for the fair were renovated or completely reconstructed in preparation for the subsequent expositions. However, the Negro Building and the Main Building from the first Appalachian Exposition were deemed exemplary structures by the architectural commission and allowed to stand as they were. Later, Chilhowee Park passed into private ownership and eventually fell into disrepair, during which time the Negro Building was demolished. Today, Chilhowee is once again a public park, but all that remains of the Negro Building is a memory.

### Notes

1. Henry M.Green, “Negroes’ Day at Exposition,” *Daily Journal and Tribune*

(Knoxville), 25 September 1910, p. 2.

2. "Buildings of the Appalachian Exposition," *Daily Journal and Tribune*, (Knoxville), 1 September 1910, p. 3.

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Booker, Robert J. *And There Was Light!* Virginia Beach: Donning Company, 1994.

Goodman, William, ed. *The First Exposition of Conservation and Its Builders*. Knoxville: Lithographing Company, 1914.

DANETTE WELCH,  
KNOX COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY,  
CALVIN M.MCCLUNG HISTORICAL COLLECTION

## Romulus Cornelius Archer Jr. (1890–1968)



*Washington Evening Times*

Romulus C.Archer Jr. was born in Norfolk, Virginia, on March 11, 1890. His father, Romulus Cornelius Archer Sr., was a plastering contractor in Norfolk and probably the motivator behind his son's decision to become an architect. His mother, Mary Poindexter Archer, was a homemaker. Romulus Jr. graduated from Norfolk Public High School after five years of study in 1908. He was the oldest of five siblings, and had two brothers, William A. and Andrew E., and two sisters, Mary E. and Carey V. Romulus Jr. went on to enroll at Norfolk Mission College, where he remained until 1910. For the next several years, Archer studied architecture through the International Correspondence School in Scranton, Pennsylvania, a path of study also chosen by SAMUEL M.PLATO, JOHN ANDERSON LANKFORD, and many others. Archer's final year of formal architecture education was received at Columbia University, where he studied for one year in 1913.

Archer enlisted in the U.S. Army on March 11, 1918. Late entering World War II, he did not see combat after being assigned to the regimental band, where he was promoted to the rank of corporal. He was honorably discharged approximately a year and a month later on April 8, 1919. Archer would return to active duty during World War II as a mechanical drafting instructor.

From June 1 until November 15, 1921, Archer was employed briefly as one of the few Black architects in the U.S. Treasury Department, Office of Supervising Architect in Washington, D.C. Probably the only other Black professional in the office was supervising architect WILLIAM WILSON COOKE. Also in 1921 Archer joined Florida Avenue Baptist Church, located in northwest D.C., and he remained a member for nearly fifty years.

In December 1921 Archer opened a solo practice from his home. Two years later, with his business fortunes improving, he relocated to an office building at 1449 Florida Avenue, NW, near U Street, NW, D.C.'s bustling Black business corridor. In January 1926 the D.C. Board of Examiners and Registrars of Architects issued license No. 117 to Archer, making him the second Black architect in D.C. to be licensed, following John Anderson Lankford.<sup>1</sup> The three architects Archer selected "to certify to his character, competency and qualifications" were D.C.-based architects Lankford, ROSCOE INGERSOLL VAUGHN, and Lee L. Wise, an African American architect based in Portsmouth, Virginia, who Archer probably knew from his earlier years in nearby Norfolk. Archer's office was known as a training ground for inexperienced Black architects, and the Young Mens Christian Association in 1964 named him "Citizen of the Year" for apprenticing so many young architects.

Romulus Jr. married Louise Williams in the 1920s. She was a public school teacher formerly from Durham, North Carolina. No children were born to their union, and she died in 1948. Romulus Jr. married a second time, to Nettie Archer, who passed away in 1965. They had no children.

Archer fashioned a career as an architect of structures located predominately in the northeast Brook-



First Baptist Church, *Pamela Scott*

land neighborhood of D.C. He designed apartment buildings, churches, and medium-sized commercial buildings. During the 1920s and 1930s he designed eleven houses in Brookland, all of which were red brick Georgian style—the style preferred by his Howard University and federal employee clients. Archer’s building list also included five churches in Washington, D.C., and churches in Norfolk, Lynchburg, and Danville, Virginia. Archer’s full-time office staff probably never exceeded five employees. Three who were with him the longest were architectural draftsmen Frederick W. Thomas, Clayton Kelly, and Gustavus N. Bull.

Archer was a long-time treasurer of the D.C. chapter of the NATIONAL TECHNICAL ASSOCIATION and a member of the American Art Society.

Romulus Archer Jr. died November 29, 1968, in the Beverly Nursing Home located in Washington, D.C.<sup>2</sup> His funeral was held at Florida Avenue Baptist Church, where he had been baptized forty-seven years earlier. Corporal Archer chose burial in Arlington National Cemetery.

### Notes

1. D.C. Board of Examiners and Registrars of Architects “Romulus Cornelius Archer Jr.,” Certificate No. 117, issued 15 January 1926.
2. “Romulus C. Archer Jr., 77, Architect Here for 40 Years,” *Washington Post*, 1 December 1969, p. B6.

DRECK SPURLOCK WILSON

### BUILDING LIST

Name	Address	City	State	Year	Comments
—Baptist Church	209 K St., NE	Washington	DC	1954	
—Apartments	910 Shepherd St., NW	Washington	DC	1947	
—Apartments	337 Oakdale Pl., NW	Washington	DC	1939	
—Baptist Church	935 Florida Ave., NW	Washington	DC	1926	
—duplex	501–03 Oakwood St., SE	Washington	DC	1941	
—duplex	512–16 Oakwood St., SE	Washington	DC	1940	
—duplex	525–27 Oakwood St., SE	Washington	DC	1941	
—duplex	528–30 Oakwood St., SE	Washington	DC	1940	
—duplex	532–34 Oakwood St., SE	Washington	DC	1940	
—duplex	536–38 Oakwood St., SE	Washington	DC	1940	
—duplex	519–21 Oakwood St., SE	Washington	DC	1940	

—duplex	520–24 Oakwood St., SE	Washington	DC	1940
—house	634 O St, NW	Washington	DC	1939

<b>Name</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Allen Realty Co. House	452 Lebaum St., SE	Washington	DC	1938	
Allen Realty Co. House	456 Lebaum St., SE	Washington	DC	1938	
Allen Realty Co. House	460 Lebaum St., SE	Washington	DC	1938	
Anchor Apartments	1901–16th St., NW	Washington	DC	1934	
Archer, Romulus	215 Florida Ave., NW	Washington	DC		
Asbury Methodist Church	1110 K St., NW	Washington	DC	1950	Alterations
Brooks, J.R.		Washington	DC	1957	
Capitol View Baptist Church	5201 Ames St., NE	Washington	DC	1947	Demolished
Chandler, George M.	1416 Hamlin St., NE	Washington	DC	1955	
Chandler, George M.	2960–13th St., NE	Washington	DC	1956	
Church of God	1512 K St., SE	Washington	DC	1948	
Curtis, J.S.	1413 Hamlin St., NE	Washington	DC	1935	
D'April Brothers Housing		Wheaton	MD		Tract houses
David, George	3790 Nichols Ave., SE	Washington	DC		Demolished
Dillard Apartments	2nd & A Sts., NE	Washington	DC	c1925	
Ephesus 7th Day Adventist Church	3985 Massachusetts Ave., SE	Washington	DC	1956	
Executive Motel	1635 New York Ave., NE	Washington	DC	1957	
First Baptist Church	50th & B Sts., SE	Washington	DC	1924	
First Baptist Church	623 Florida Ave., NW	Washington	DC		
Franklin, Homer	1518 Jackson St., NE	Washington	DC	1938	
Froe, U.M.	1509 Girard St., NE	Washington	DC	1937	
Galilee Baptist Church	523–55th St., NE	Washington	DC	1938	Demolished
Garrett Congregational Methodist Episcopal Church		Norfolk	VA	1920	Demolished
Grant Street Holiness Church		Norfolk	VA	1920	Demolished

Hamline Methodist Episcopal Church	1500–9th St., NW	Washington	DC	1946	Alterations
Holy Trinity Apostolic Church	1618–11th St., NW	Washington	DC	1955	Alterations
Jackson, F.	1352 Newton St., NE	Washington	DC	1950	
Johnson, Morris	1515 Jackson St., NE	Washington	DC	1950	
Jones Memorial Methodist Church Education Bldg.	5600 G St., NW	Washington	DC	1952	
Kapnick Apartments	4428 Benning Rd., NE	Washington	DC	1945	Demolished
Kramer, J.W.	623 Mellon St., SE	Washington	DC	1937	
Kramer, J.W.	625 Mellon St., SE	Washington	DC	1937	
Kramer, Leon A.	532 Lebaum St., SE	Washington	DC	1937	
Kramer, Leon A.	460–62 Mellon St., SE	Washington	DC	1939	
Kramer V.W.	515 Lebaum St., SE	Washington	DC	1937	
Loyal Street Baptist Church	468 Halbrog St.	Danville	VA	1924	
Macedonia Baptist Church	2625 Stanton Rd., SE	Washington	DC	1946	
Mentrotone Baptist Church	5126 B St., SE	Washington	DC	1955	
New Hope Free Church Parsonage	1104 W St., NW	Washington	DC	1938	
Okert, D.M.	1415 Oak St., NW	Washington	DC	1935	
Robinson, H.J.	1300 Hamlin St., NE	Washington	DC	1941	
Saterwhite Store	1212 U St., NW	Washington	DC	1922	
Shaw United Methodist Church	2525–12th Pl., SE	Washington	DC	1954	
Shop-Rite Liquor Store	6333 New Hampshire Ave.	Takoma Park	MD		
Southern Baptist Church	134 L St., NW	Washington	DC	1938	
St. Paul Congregational Methodist Church	401 I St., SE	Washington	DC	1924	
Tabernacle Baptist Church	719 Division Ave., NE	Washington	DC	1936	Demolished
Virginia Baptist Convention School	Campus	Lynchburg	VA	1924	
Virginia Theological Seminary Administration Bldg.	Campus	Lynchburg	VA	1920	

Yenching Palace Restaurant      3524 Connecticut      Washington DC      1945  
Ave., NW

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## Walter Thomas Bailey (1882–1941)



*Courtesy of the University of Illinois Archives*

Walter Thomas Bailey was born in Kewanee, Illinois, on January 11, 1882. He was the son of Emanuel and Lucy Reynolds Bailey. A graduate of Kewanee High School, he entered the University of Illinois in Champaign in September 1900. He undertook studies in the architectural program and was a member of the student “Architects’ Club.” He married Josephine L. McCurdy on October 15, 1904, and they had two daughters—Edyth Hazel born in 1905 and Alberta Josephine born in 1913.

After graduating from the University of Illinois in June 1904 with a bachelor of arts in architecture, Bailey returned to Kewanee, where he worked as a draftsman in the office of architect Henry Eckland. By February 1905 he had returned to Champaign, where he briefly worked in the architectural office of Spencer & Temple. A turning point in Bailey’s career came in September 1905 when he went to work for Booker T. Washington’s TUSKEGEE INSTITUTE, where he headed the school’s Mechanical Industries Department and also supervised the architectural and planning aspects of the campus.

Bailey left Tuskegee Institute in 1916 to open his own office in Memphis, Tennessee, where he maintained a successful practice specializing in churches. While in Memphis Bailey obtained beneficial business contacts through the lodges of the Knights of Pythias, an African American fraternal organization. These contacts resulted in many commissions. Most notably, this connection netted Bailey the largest project of his career and one of the major African American building projects of the early twentieth century—the 8-story National Pythian Temple in Chicago. Conceptualized in 1922, the building was planned to be the headquarters of the Knights of Pythias and to house the lodge’s

combined national offices, numerous meeting halls, and rent-producing stores and offices. The site was in the heart of Chicago's thriving Bronzeville "city-within-a-city" Black business community on the South Side, which already had several major commercial buildings that were developed and built with Black capital during the 1910s and 1920s. Estimated to cost over \$1 million dollars, it was bragged about as "the largest building financed, de-signed and built by African Americans" and towered above its more modestly scaled neighbors.<sup>1</sup>

When construction began in 1924, Bailey moved his architectural practice to Chicago, where he was the first licensed Black architect in the city. He rented an office in the Overton-Hygenic Building, a Black-owned office building near the construction site. Financial difficulties caused construction to proceed slowly. By 1928 the massive, yellow brick exterior enlivened by terra-cotta ornaments with Egyptian motifs had been completed, but the interiors remained unfinished. Bailey relocated his architectural office to a space in the mostly vacant building. The lodge eventually lost ownership of the property, and it was finally built out as multi-family housing as part of a Works Progress Administration project. Abandoned in the 1970s, the building was demolished in 1980.

Despite the fact that Chicago's Black business community was noted for its sponsorship of new buildings during the 1920s, Walter Bailey had few substantial commissions—aside from the ill-fated Knights of Pythias Temple—during this period. His subsequent architectural practice was largely devoted to smaller commercial, church, and remodeling projects. With the onset of the Great Depression, his practice shrank significantly, paralleling the widespread financial collapse of Chicago's African American business community as a whole.

Bailey's final major project was the design for the First Church of Deliverance (1939) in Chicago, a streamlined *Art Moderne* church that radically broke with established traditions of ecclesiastical architecture. The unconventional design was undoubtedly guided by the forward-thinking ideas of its pastor, Reverend Clarence Cobbs, who was among the pioneering Black ministers to broadcast his sermons on the radio. The project was an extensive rebuilding and extension of a factory building that Reverend Cobbs had previously remodeled for the church. Instead of the soaring verticality of typical churches, Bailey's design hugged the ground with horizontal ribbons of glazed terra cotta, alternating with expanses of glass block. Inside, a wide expansive sanctuary had a low acoustically treated ceiling that allowed the space to double as a broadcast studio, complete with all the modern radio technologies. Clearly, Cobbs and Bailey collaborated to redefine the form and needs of the modern African American church. The building still stands, but was modified in December 1945 following a fire. The alterations involved the addition of a canopy and double towers on the facade as well as modifications to the interior. The building was given protective "Chicago Landmark" status on October 5, 1994.

On February 21, 1941, Walter Thomas Bailey died in Chicago at the age of fifty-nine.<sup>2</sup> The cause of death was pneumonia caused by complications from



Knights of Pythias Building, *Chicago Historical Society*

heart disease. According to his obituary, Bailey was working on two projects at the time of his death.<sup>3</sup> The first was the interior remodeling of the Olivet Baptist Church, one of the most prominent of Chicago's African American churches. Bailey also reportedly was working on the Ida B. Wells Homes, a large public housing project for African Americans on Chicago's West Side; it was dedicated the year of his death. However, Bailey is not listed as one of the official architects of the project and therefore most likely worked on the Ida B. Wells homes in a secondary capacity.

### Notes

1. Lee Bey, "Black Designer All But Forgotten," *Chicago Sun Times*, 9 February 1998, p. 13.
2. "Architect Aids on Col. Wolfe School Dies," *Urbana Courier*, 3 February 1941, p. 4.
3. Commission on Chicago Landmarks, *First Church of Deliverance*, (Chicago: Commission on Chicago Landmarks, Department of Planning and Development, 1994), p. 4.

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Kriz, Mikel. "Walter T. Bailey and the African-American patron." Master's thesis, University of Illinois, 2002.

Taitt, John. *The Souvenir of Negro Progress*. Chicago: The De Saible Association Inc., 1925.

TIM SAMUELSON, CITY OF CHICAGO HISTORIAN

### BUILDING LIST

Name	Address	City	State	Year	Comments
Alabama Agricultural Fair Negro Bldg.	Fairgrounds	Montgomery	AL	1906	
Colonel Wolfe School	4th & Healey Sts.	Champaign	IL	1905	
First Church of Deliverance	4315 S.Wabash Ave.	Chicago	IL	1939	Alterations
Fraternal Savings & Trust Bank	Beale St. at Church Park	Memphis	TN	1924	Demolished
Ida B. Wells Homes	38th St. & Rhodes Ave.	Chicago	IL	1940	
Knights of Pythias Bath House & Sanitarium	358 Beale Ave.	Hot Springs	AR	1923	
Knights of Pythias Bldg.	3737 S.State St.	Chicago	IL	1924	Demolished
Knights of Pythias Bldg.		Nashville	TN	1924	
Momence Country Club	Along Kankakee River	Momence	IL	1928	Plans only
Mosaic State Temple Bldg.	9th & Broadway	Little Rock	AR	1922	
Mt. Moriah Lodge No. 28 Free & Accepted Masons	1223 Emerson St.	Evanston	IL	1929	
Olivet Baptist Church	3101 S.King Jr. Dr.	Chicago	IL	1941	Alterations
Woodmen of Union Bath House	Malvern Ave. at Gulpha	Hot Springs	AR	1924	Now National Baptist Hotel

## Lester Oliver Bankhead (1912–1997)



### *Elvenia Bankhead*

Lester Bankhead, the eldest of six children, was born on April 20, 1912, in Union, South Carolina. His parents were John Hayes Bankhead and Pearl Eugenia Eskew.<sup>1</sup>

Lester's early education was provided by his mother in a one-room Rosenwald School in Cherokee County, South Carolina. Information about his secondary education is vague. Finally oral history says that he was taught at home and he possibly attended Simms High School.<sup>2</sup> His father was a minister and farmer, and his mother was trained as a teacher at TUSKEGEE INSTITUTE. Although he grew up on a farm in Cherokee County, unlike most African Americans during the time, his family owned their own land and were not sharecroppers. Lester credited his mother with recognizing his skills in math and drawing and providing him with inspiration to look toward architecture as a future life endeavor. His mother told him on numerous occasions that he would "grow up to be an architect."<sup>3</sup>

Although his mother died of influenza when he was twelve, Lester Bankhead never lost sight of her desire that he receive a technical education. Bankhead had hoped to attend Tuskegee Institute, but lack of financial support forced him to seek training elsewhere. He wrote to Voorhees College in Denmark, South Carolina, and inquired if there were any jobs on campus for a barber. When a college official acknowledged that they needed a barber, Bankhead enrolled at Voorhees College in 1937 and graduated with a degree in agriculture and a certificate in carpentry in 1941.<sup>4</sup> While at Voorhees College, Bankhead was singled-out for his drafting ability and was given the opportunity to assist drafting instructors with work on campus buildings and tutoring other students.

After graduating from college, Bankhead was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1942. After completing basic training and ordnance training at Fort McClellan, Alabama, his unit was ordered to Casablanca, Morocco, to liberate North Africa during World War II. Bankhead rose to the rank of sergeant in the Ordnance Corps.<sup>5</sup>

Bankhead moved to Los Angeles after discharge from the U.S. Army in 1945. He

married Mary Wright in 1946 and they had two children, Patricia and Elvenia. He settled just a few blocks from Central Avenue, then the hub of Black life in Los Angeles. While in Los Angeles, Bankhead continued to improve his skills and education. He attended the University of California at Los Angeles extension school, Otis Art Institute, Los Angeles City College, and Los Angeles Trade Technical College. Bankhead attempted to find work with Los Angeles architect PAUL REVERE WILLIAMS. According to Bankhead, Williams would not hire him because his skills were beyond entry level. Bankhead found various opportunities to develop his skills as an architect. For a time he worked for Roab Construction Company and eventually began practicing on his own in the 1950s. One of his first buildings was an apartment building on Washington Boulevard.

By 1962 Bankhead had received a contractor's license from the state of California and founded Bankhead's Building Design Services, which later became the Lester O. Bankhead Design Group. He also continued working as a barber while he sought contracts and commissions. He opened Bankhead's Barbershop shortly after arriving in Los Angeles.

Bankhead was among a handful of pioneering Black architects in Los Angeles. Although he faced the racial prejudice of his times, he—like Paul Revere Williams—was able to obtain work from some of Hollywood's celebrities. He designed palatial houses for actor Loren Green of *Bonanza* fame; Kelly Lang, a well-known Los Angeles news anchor; and H.B. Barnum, noted music producer and arranger for Frank Sinatra, and Smokey Robinson and the Miracles.<sup>6</sup>

Bankhead's main emphasis was church design, and he is credited with designing ten churches. Bankhead's notable church designs include Chapel of Faith Baptist Church, Greater Life Missionary Church, New Jerusalem Missionary Baptist Church, Miracle Baptist Church, Trinity Baptist Church, and the United Revelation Church of God in Christ. Although Bankhead's work marks a reasonable contribution, his work did not achieve the notoriety of other Black architects during his era such as Paul Revere Williams or JAMES HOMER GARROTT. Many of Bankhead's designs were in the Modernist style. Like many architects of his era who had to do more with less, Bankhead utilized contemporary architectural devices to give modestly funded buildings a sense of form. The New Jerusalem Missionary Baptist Church of Los Angeles is a fine example of Bankhead's architectural style.

Bankhead's contribution to architecture in Los Angeles was his willingness to mentor promising young African American architects. Bankhead is credited with apprenticing over forty young Black architects. He believed in service to his community and encouraged women to pursue careers in architecture. He took his two children, Patricia and Elvenia, to job sites and taught them basic drafting. Always looking to encourage young people in the discipline of life, Bankhead remarked, "there is no such thing as time, only life circumstances."<sup>7</sup>

Voorhees College honored Bankhead as one of "100 Distinguished Alumni" at the Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education in 1988. Lester Oliver Bankhead died in Los Angeles in 1997; he was eighty-five.<sup>8</sup>

**Notes**

1. Interview with Lester Bankhead, by Wesley Henderson, Los Angeles, California, 1992, University of California at Los Angeles Oral History Program, p. 6.
2. Ibid., p. 81.
3. Interview with Elvenia Bankhead (daughter of Lester Bankhead), Los Angeles, California, 18 August 2002.
4. Lester O.Bankhead, certificate in carpentry, Voorhees College, 1937.
5. Henderson, p. 72.
6. Interview with Patricia Bankhead (daughter of Lester Bankhead), Los Angeles, California, 18 August 2002.
7. Patricia Bankhead, interview.
8. Inglewood Grace Chapel Funeral Program, "In Loving Memory of Lester O.Bankhead," 15 February 1997, frontispiece.

WENDEL ECKFORD, POMONA, CALIFORNIA



New Jerusalem Missionary Baptist Church, *Elvenia Bankhead*

**BUILDING LIST**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Apts	4400 Washington Blvd.	Los Angeles	CA		
Barnum, H.B.			CA		
Chapel of Faith Baptist Church	7931 S.San Pedro St.	Los Angeles	CA		

Miracle Baptist Church	8318 S. Central Ave.	Los Angeles	CA
New Jerusalem Missionary Baptist Church	430 Santa Fe Ave.	Compton	CA
Trinity Baptist Church	2040 W. Jefferson Blvd.	Los Angeles	CA
United Revelation Church of God in Christ	655 E. 43rd St.	Los Angeles	CA

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## Louis Harvey Banks (1868–1935)

Louis Harvey Banks was born in Caroline County, Virginia, on January 26, 1868, to Esau and Alice Banks—both natives of Virginia.<sup>1</sup> Louis appears in the 1870 U.S. Census with his parents. Esau was a farmer in Bowling Green Township, Caroline County, Virginia. Louis was the oldest of ten children. Where and when he may have attended school is not known.

Louis Banks was a glassworker and living in Ford City, Pennsylvania, when he married Margaret “Maggie” Enty at Templeton, Armstrong County, Pennsylvania, on October 2, 1894. They had one son, Thornton Kenneth Banks, who was born September 2, 1895, in Ford City, Armstrong County, Pennsylvania.

Louis Banks moved his family to Toledo, Ohio, circa 1900. He first appears in the *Toledo City Directory* in 1901 as a grinder for the Edward Ford Plate Glass Company, which opened in Rossford, Ohio, two years earlier.

Because of his love of flowers, Louis Banks went into business for himself as a landscape architect/gardener around 1913. It is possible that he may have learned horticulture from one of his brothers, Chastine Banks, who was also a landscape gardener and joined his brother in Toledo around 1918. Louis Banks designed residential gardens in the Old West End and Ottawa Hills. There are no records of the families for whom he worked. The Old West End is a neighborhood of Victorian mansions just west of downtown Toledo. Construction of the palatial homes in the Old West End began in the 1870s. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the wealthiest and most prominent families of Toledo lived in this area. Ottawa Hills began in the early 1900s as an upper-class community planned by E.H. Close, a local realtor who platted several neighborhoods in Toledo. The village was planned with spacious estates, and 35 of the original 100 acres were set aside for parkland. Ottawa Hills celebrated its grand opening on August 1, 1915. Louis Banks employed a crew of two or three laborers. His own garden at 628



Louis Banks House, *Toledo-Lucas County Public Library*

Pinewood Avenue in Toledo was one that people came from all over the city to see.<sup>2</sup>

Louis Banks was widowed when Maggie died on November 28, 1928, in Templeton, Pennsylvania. She had moved back home with her sister when she developed tuberculosis. Louis Banks died March 19, 1935, of cancer of the stomach and was buried in historic Woodlawn Cemetery in Toledo on March 22, 1935.<sup>3</sup>

### Notes

1. Louis Banks's death certificate lists his birth date as January 26, 1875. However, U.S. Census entries for 1870 and 1880 in Caroline County, Virginia, and for 1910, 1920, and 1930 in Lucas County, Ohio, all give an age consistent with a birth year of 1868.
2. Interview with Calvin K. Banks Sr. (grandson of Louis Banks), Toledo, Ohio, 26 August 2002. Tape held by Local History Department, Toledo-Lucas County Public Library, Toledo, Ohio.
3. Ohio Department of Health, Columbus, Ohio, "Louis Banks Death Certificate," No. 854, issued March 1935; Historic Woodlawn Cemetery, Toledo, Ohio, "Louis H. Bank [*sic*], Burial Record"; Center for Archival Collections, Bowling Green State University, micro-publication, roll 1.

### Bibliography

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Toledo, Ohio: Local History and Genealogy Department, Toledo-Lucas County Public Library, 1981.

DONNA KAY CHRISTIAN,  
GENEALOGY DEPARTMENT,  
TOLEDO-LUCAS COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

### LANDSCAPE PROJECT LIST

Name	Address	City	State	Year	Comments
Banks, Louis H.	628 Pinewood Ave.	Toledo	OH	1915	

## Carl Eugene Barnett (1895–1978)



*Ancella Bickley*

Carl Eugene Barnett was born in Keyser, West Virginia, on January 7, 1895. His parents were Carter Harrison Barnett and Caroline “Callie” Jackson Barnett. He had one sibling, Nelson LeRoy Barnett. In 1897 Carl Barnett and his family moved from Keyser to Huntington, West Virginia, where he remained until he became of school age. At that point he and his brother were sent to their maternal grandmother in Granville, Ohio, because his parents felt that the Granville public schools were better. When Carl Barnett’s father took a job in Columbus, Ohio, the family was reunited there. Carl Barnett graduated from North High School in Columbus in 1912. He enrolled at Ohio State University in the fall of 1914 and graduated in 1918 with a bachelor of science degree in architectural engineering.

Unable to find work in the architectural profession, Carl Barnett accepted employment as a teacher of manual training and science at the all-Black Kelly Miller School in Clarksburg, West Virginia. While in Clarksburg he met Carrie Thomas, who became his

wife in 1921. The couple had no children. Long widowed, Barnett later married a Huntington woman, Viney Dotson, who also preceded him in death.

In 1920 Barnett took a position as a teacher of carpentry and mechanical drawing at Central State University in Wilberforce, Ohio. He returned to West Virginia in 1922 and began teaching at Henry Highland Garnet High School in Charleston.

Barnett sat for and passed the state of West Virginia licensing examination and on July 23, 1924, received certificate No. 133, the third architectural license issued to a Black architect in West Virginia.<sup>1</sup> In spite of being licensed, however, opportunities to practice his profession in West Virginia eluded Barnett. He returned to Columbus, Ohio, and took a job as an architectural engineer with the Black-owned C.W.Bryant Construction Company from August 1925 to November 1927. From 1927 to 1929 Barnett maintained a solo practice with an office at 1005 East Long Street in Columbus.

Barnett designed the Long-Garfield Filling Station and developed the plans and specifications and supervised the construction of the Adelphi Savings and Loan Building. According to his nephew, Nelson L. Barnett Jr., Carl Barnett found this Columbus period to be professionally rewarding but financially disastrous, and in 1930 he returned to Huntington, West Virginia, to teach art, European history, and mechanical drawing at Douglass High School.<sup>2</sup> Barnett supplemented his teaching income by opening Notan Studio, a photography business, and by preparing permit drawings for houses. He retired from teaching in 1960.

In his practice, Carl Barnett designed larger structures, including the Mount Zion Baptist Church in Fairmont, West Virginia, and renovations on his home church, the First Baptist Church of Huntington. How-



First Baptist Church, *Notan Studio*

ever, he considered the design of small houses his architectural specialty. Barnett designed and built houses for professors while he was at Central State University and he designed and built his own home while he was teaching in Huntington.

In 1965, when he was seventy, Barnett engaged in what was probably the biggest architectural undertaking of his career—he was commissioned to design and supervise the building of the replacement for Huntington’s First Baptist Church, which had been destroyed by fire.

On December 18, 1978, Carl Eugene Barnett died in Huntington.<sup>3</sup> He was buried in Huntington’s Springhill Cemetery.

### Notes

1. West Virginia Architectural Records Office, Huntington, W.Va., “Carl Eugene Barnett,” License no. 133, issued 23 July 1924.
2. Nelson L. Barnett Jr., “A Short History of Seven Generations of Barnetts,” unpublished, Columbus, Ohio, 1987.
3. “Carl Eugene Barnett,” *Herald Dispatch*, 21 December 1978.

### Bibliography

Barnett, Nelson LeRoy Jr. *Aesculapius Ebony*, unpublished, 1987.

ANCELLA R. BICKLEY,  
RESEARCHER, THE VILLAGES, FLORIDA

### BUILDING LIST

Name	Address	City	State	Year	Comments
Adelphia Savings & Loan Bldg.		Columbus	OH	1928	
Barnett, Carl E.		Huntington	WV		
First Baptist Church	801 6th Ave.	Huntington	WV	1965	
Frances, D.S.	1825 Dalton Ave.	Huntington	WV	1942	
Long-Garfield Filling Station		Columbus	OH	1926	
Mt. Zion Baptist Church		Fairmont	WV		
Ohio State University Testing Laboratory	Campus	Columbus	OH	1928	

## Joseph Manual Bartholomew Sr. (1881–1971)



*Ruth Creech*

Joseph M. Bartholomew Sr. was born in a modest house on the corner of Cherokee and Ester Streets in New Orleans, Louisiana, on August 1, 1881. He was one of four children. His father was an African American cook and his mother was of Cajun descent.

Joseph Bartholomew attended public school in New Orleans, but did not advance beyond the eighth grade. In his preteens he began caddying at the nearby Audubon Park Golf Course, where he taught himself to play. He soon became so proficient at the game that he began teaching others. When Freddie MacLeod, the 1908 U.S. Open champion, became the club professional at Audubon Park, he recognized Bartholomew's golfing abilities and persuaded Bartholomew to caddie for him.

In 1922 a group of wealthy White golfers in the New Orleans area decided to build a golf course in Metairie, a suburb of New Orleans. Many of them had hired Bartholomew initially as a caddie and then later for private instructions. Moreover, they were impressed with his groundskeeping skills and felt that he could be relied on to build a first-rate course. To further refine his golf course design skills, they sent him to New York to study with Seth Raynor, a renowned golf course architect. After a year under Raynor's tutelage, Bartholomew returned to New Orleans to start construction on his first golf course. Prior to his return, however, the aspiring golf course architect had the foresight to make plasticine models of some of the famous bunkers, greens, and fairways that Raynor had used for instructional purposes. The scale models proved invaluable to Bartholomew in later years.

The site chosen for the new course was in an obscure section of Metairie. Fearful that jealous competitors might attempt to sabotage his progress, Bartholomew worked at night. After the Metairie course was completed—to the praise and satisfaction of club members—Bartholomew endured the bitter sting of racial prejudice. Because segregation was the order of the day, he was not permitted to play on the course that he had designed and built. Nevertheless, when word of his accomplishment at Metairie spread through the

White golfing community, Bartholomew was deluged with offers to design and construct other golf courses.

In the following few years, he built the Number One and Number Three courses at City Park, the allBlack nine-hole course at Pontchartrain Park, and a course in the suburb of Algiers; all in New Orleans. Throughout Louisiana, he designed and built courses in Hammond, Abita Springs, Covington, and Baton Rouge. At each one, except for the segregated Pontchartrain Park facility, Bartholomew was denied access to play on the courses he had created.

As the years passed, the successful golf course architect acquired a number of pieces of heavy earthmoving equipment. Initially he rented equipment to local (predominately White) contractors. When he realized that the heavy construction equipment provided significant financial return, Bartholomew decided



Pontchartrain Park Municipal Golf Course, *Courtesy of New Orleans Planning Commission*

to venture into excavation, foundation construction, and large-scale landscaping projects. Soon he established one of the largest, Black-owned construction firms in New Orleans.

With profits from his construction firm, Bartholomew invested in an insurance company. He then began to acquire real estate and shortly thereafter became a partner in a land-development company. Finally, with the purchase of an ice cream manufacturing plant, Bartholomew's new worth had grown to the extent that he was described in a national business magazine as someone who was "an instinctive moneymaker and worth half a million [dollars]."<sup>1</sup>

A quiet, modest man who shunned the limelight, Joseph Bartholomew was a devout Catholic, as well as a devoted husband and father. He married Shreveport-born Ruth Seque in 1918 and the couple had twin daughters and a son. Joseph Bartholmew had a

generous spirit and in addition to providing substantial financial support to historically Black Xavier University and Dillard University he helped a number of local Black businessmen. On his property in Harahan outside of New Orleans, Bartholomew built a private seven-hole golf course, where he frequently taught local youngsters and invited members of the African American community to play free of charge.

Joseph Bartholomew died in his home on October 12, 1971. Four months later he was inducted into the Greater New Orleans Hall of Fame, the first African American so honored. On July 2, 1979, the newly renovated Pontchartrain Park Municipal Golf Course, now expanded to eighteen holes, was officially renamed the Joseph M. Bartholomew Sr. Municipal Golf Course in honor of the facility's initial landscape architect.

### Notes

1. "Negro Businessman of New Orleans," *Fortune Magazine*, November 1949, p. 112.

### Bibliography

McDaniel, Pete. *Uneven Lies: The Heroic Story of African-Americans in Golf*.  
Greenwich: American Golfer, 2000.

Sinnette, Calvin H. *Forbidden Fairways: African Americans and the Game of Golf*.  
Chelsea, Mich.: Sleeping Bear Press, 1998.

CALVIN H.SINNETTE,  
RETIRED PHYSICIAN AND AFRICAN AMERICAN  
GOLF HISTORIAN, ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

### LANDSCAPE PROJECT LIST

Name	Address	City	State	Year	Comments
Abita Springs Golf Course	7343 Oliver St.	Abita Springs	LA		
Bartholomew, Joseph	Colonial Club Dr.	Harahan	LA	1940	7 Hole Course (Demolished)
City Park No. 1 Golf Course	1040 Filmore	New Orleans	LA	1923	
City Park No. 3 Golf Course	1040 Filmore	New Orleans	LA	1923	
Covington Country Club Golf Course	200 Country Club Dr.	Covington	LA	1954	

Hammond Country Club Golf Course		Hammond	LA	1921	Now Oak Knoll Country Club
Metairie Golf Course	580 Wood Vine Ave.	Metairie	LA	1922	
Pine Wood Country Club Golf Course	405 Country Club Blvd.	Slidell	LA	c1963	
Pontchartrain Park Municipal Golf Course	6514 Congress Dr.	New Orleans	LA	1924	Renamed Bartholomew Golf Course
Web Park Golf Course	1352 Country Club Dr.	Baton Rouge	LA	1926	

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## Robert Charles Bates (c1872–unknown)

Robert C. Bates was born circa 1872. His father was a farmer and his mother was a housewife in Columbia, South Carolina.

It is likely that Bates gained his training in mechanical drawing from correspondence courses like the ones offered by the Scranton Correspondence School in Pennsylvania. Although only two years removed from graduation from CLAFLIN UNIVERSITY'S Normal School for teachers, he was appointed by the Freedmen's Aid and Southern Education Society as general superintendent of manual training at his *alma mater*. By the fall of 1890, Bates was teaching "the properties of bodies, the rudiments of natural philosophy, drawing and design."<sup>1</sup> Each of the 820 students who was enrolled at Claflin University during the year of his appointment were required to take at least one hour per day of a shop trade. Those enrolled in the architectural drawing course were exposed to much more than the basics of mechanical drawing. Bates introduced students to the history of architecture, historic styles of architecture, ornamentation, principles of architectural design, construction details, proper ventilation, strength of various timber, and sound construction supervision practices. He considered that his students were in the loftier training of "architecture" and not "vocational" training. Bates' course in architectural drawing was the first architecture course taught at a historically Black university, pre-dating ROBERT ROBINSON TAYLOR'S course at TUSKEGEE INSTITUTE by several years.

In 1893 Robert Charles Bates compiled a series of his class lectures into a book, *The Elementary Principles of Architecture and Building*. In the introduction he wrote that his purpose was "to make a concise statement of the rudimentary principles of architecture as an art, and impart instruction in regard to what constitutes good building."<sup>2</sup> This 147-page book was possibly the first book on architecture authored by an African American. The quality of the book was uneven, which, in an unflattering way, exposed Bates' lack

of formal training because his knowledge about architecture was gleaned from pattern books and periodicals, and correspondence courses.

It is believed that Robert Bates was the architect for the Claflin University Chapel (1890), the Claflin Library (1899), and the John F.Slater Manual Training Building. It is known, however, that he designed additions to Boston architect C.H.McClare's Main Building (1894). Bates added well-proportioned, 4-story



Claflin University Main Building, *The Christian Educator*

towers to the north and south ends of the building in 1899 and a classroom annex in 1900. It took students from the Industrial Department—who were supervised by Bates—five years to construct the towers and annex. Fire destroyed the Main Building in 1913. The trustees of the Slater Fund and its president, Rutherford B.Hays—who were generous donors to the Freedmen's Aid and Southern Education Society—expressed high praise of Bates.

In 1897 the state of South Carolina withdrew its financial support to Claflin University and transferred its Morrill Act land grant funds “across the fence” to the State Colored Normal, Industrial, Agricultural, & Mechanical College. Coinciding with the state's action, Bates decided to leave Claflin University. He moved to upstate New York to teach mechanical drawing at the New York State Reformatory at Elmira. The \$1,800 annual salary lured him, as did the opportunity to teach in the well-equipped vocational shops in America's first adult reformatory, which offered indefinite sentences based on conduct, individual psychological counseling, and liberal parole policies. He remained in Elmira until 1900.

Dedicated to teaching juvenile delinquents and orphans, an article in *The Christian Educator* announced that Bates had accepted an offer to teach at the Jacob Tome Institute, presumably referring to the one in Port Deposit, in northeast Maryland. The institution was founded by White philanthropists who moralized that they were faced with “a large colored population among us...in a desperate state of ignorance... children found guilty of incorrigibility, vagrancy and stealing...some children had lost one or both

of their parents...others removed from their homes... because both of their parents were 'intemperate.'"<sup>3</sup> From 1900 to 1940 Robert C.Bates taught vocational trades. It is presumed that Bates would have designed and led his students to construct needed buildings over the course of his four-decade employment; however, documentation to support this supposition has not been found.

The circumstances and place of Robert Charles Bates' death are not known.

### Notes

1. Zack Rice, "Claflin University: Educating African-Americans for Architecture and Building" (paper presented at the 47th annual meeting in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania of the Society of Architectural Historians, April 1994), p. 4.
2. Robert Bates, *The Elementary Principles of Architecture and Building* (Boston: Geo. H.Ellis, 1892), p. 8.
3. Ibid.
4. Laura Rice, *More Than Meets the Eye: History of Maryland through Prints, 1750–1900* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 2002), p. 1.

DRECK SPURLOCK WILSON

### BUILDING LIST

Name	Address	City	State	Year	Comments
Claflin University Chapel	Campus	Orangeburg	SC	1890	
Claflin University Main Bldg.	Campus	Orangeburg	SC	1899	North & south towers
Claflin University Main Bldg.	Campus	Orangeburg	SC	1900	Classroom annex
Claflin University Manual Training Bldg.	Campus	Orangeburg	SC		

## Louis Arnett Stewart Bellinger (1891–1946)



*Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh*

Louis Arnett Stewart Bellinger was born on September 29, 1891, in Sumter, South Carolina.<sup>1</sup> His parents were native South Carolinians; they had five sons, George, Louis, Henry, Walter, and Eugene, and daughters, Esther and Cassandra.

Louis Bellinger attended elementary and secondary schools in Charleston, graduating from Shaw School in 1906 and from Avery Normal Institute in 1910. In September 1910 he entered the College of Arts and Sciences at HOWARD UNIVERSITY. At Howard University Bellinger focused on mathematics, physical sciences, and architectural engineering; he also studied Greek, Latin, and German. He withdrew from the university in June 1913 for an unspecified reason, but returned and graduated with a bachelor of science degree in architecture on June 3, 1914.

Bellinger accepted a teaching position in Florida at Tessenden Academy. Around this time he married Ethel Connel, who was born in New Jersey, was two years younger than her husband, and became a music teacher at Robert Vann Elementary School in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The Bellingers had no children.

In 1916 Louis Bellinger joined the faculty of Allen University in Columbia, South Carolina, as a teacher of mathematics. He spent part of 1917 in the military, returning to the university in 1918. The following year the Bellingers arrived in Pittsburgh, where Louis Bellinger began a twenty-six-year career in architecture.

“Bellinger, Louis A.S., Arch[itect]” appeared in the 1919 *Pittsburgh City Directory*.<sup>2</sup> In 1922 Bellinger opened an office at 525 Fifth Avenue, across from the Allegheny County Courthouse in downtown Pittsburgh, took out a listing in the classified directory, and designed a house for an unidentified client in Pittsburgh’s Greenfield neighborhood. The house and a 1923 apartment building on Junilla Street in the Hill District are Bellinger’s first documented Pittsburgh commissions.

In 1923 Bellinger became an assistant architect in the office of the city architect, John P. Brennan. During his three-year term of employment, he designed a police station and

remodeled park buildings. He also took a course in advanced construction at Carnegie Institute of Technology.

Bellinger's return to full-time private practice in 1926 was marked by a major commission not in Pittsburgh, but in Philadelphia—the Publication Building for the African Methodist Episcopal Book Concern at 19th and Pemberton Streets.

Early in 1927 Bellinger designed a building in Pittsburgh that became his best known. The Pythian Temple, dramatically sited in the 2000 block of Centre Avenue, was built for the Knights of Pythias fraternal lodge and provided meeting rooms and a drill area as well as commercial space and an auditorium open to the public. Construction began in the summer of 1927—Bellinger served as general contractor—and the formal opening was celebrated on March 25, 1928.<sup>3</sup> The brick building occupies the entire hillside block between Wylie and Centre Avenues. The 3-story Wylie Avenue side is simply patterned brick;



Knights of Pythias Temple, *Archives Service Center, University of Pittsburgh*

over the doorway is inscribed “Pythian Temple A.D. 1927.” The 4-story Centre Avenue side is ornamented with terra-cotta crenellations, crests, and finials in the Tudor style, befitting a fraternal knighthood. (The doorway’s grand Tudor arch has been covered or removed.) The auditorium held 1,500 and was “decorated in classical style, with myriad lights, finished walls, box seats, hardwood floor and a new innovation in seating arrangement”<sup>4</sup> to transform the main floor into a basketball court. Popular Black entertainers were soon appearing on the Pythian Temple stage. Eight years later the building was sold and remodeled by architect Alfred M. Marks as the New Granada Theatre.

In January 1928, as the Pythian Temple was nearing completion, Bellinger participated in the pioneering exhibition of African American art sponsored by the Harmon Foundation of New York City. He submitted a “Proposed Plan for Church and

Apartments.”<sup>5</sup> Later that year Bellinger designed his own house; he and Ethel lived on the second floor of the duplex at 530 Francis Street. Documented projects during the remainder of the decade are relatively modest: two small apartment buildings, two houses, and various remodeling jobs.

With the onset of the Great Depression, Bellinger gave up his downtown office and sold his home. Around 1933 he and Ethel moved to 3171 Centre Avenue, which became his office as well as home address. His largest recorded project during the 1930s was an apartment building designed for Albert S. Knott in 1932. Bellinger was again invited to display his work at the Harmon Foundation exhibition held in 1933; his entry, possibly a design of a Masonic Temple, was damaged in transit and never displayed.

Bellinger’s solution to economic adversity was to take a position in late 1936 or early 1937 as an inspector for the City of Pittsburgh Bureau of Building Inspection. He held the position for approximately three years (through 1939), and then, after an unsuccessful attempt to reestablish his private practice in 1940, he worked as an inspector again in 1941 and 1942.

Bellinger’s only documented work from 1943 to 1944 was a church basement renovation. In 1945, near the end of World War II, business improved. On July 10, 1945, he was elected to membership in the American Institute of Architects.<sup>6</sup> By late December Bellinger was juggling three commissions. On February 3, 1946, he died<sup>7</sup> at the age of fifty-four.

Louis Bellinger was buried in historic Allegheny Cemetery. He was eulogized on the front pages of the *Pittsburgh Courier* and the *Builders’ Bulletin* (Pittsburgh’s premier building industry journal). His education, professional affiliations such as the Pittsburgh chapter of the American Institute of Architects and the NATIONAL TECHNICAL ASSOCIATION, and work for both public and private sectors of the community were respectfully noted.

Much of Bellinger’s work remains undocumented; virtually all of his documented buildings have been altered or demolished. The Pythian Temple—nominated to the National Register of Historic Places—survives, but is endangered. Louis Bellinger persevered in a time of limited opportunity and economic hardship to become, and remain, an architect. That may be his greatest achievement.

### Notes

1. Although Bellinger’s Howard University Certificate of Applicant for Admission (prepared by his Avery Institute teacher, Mattie May Marsh) gives his birthplace as Charleston, Sumter is the location identified in the Allegheny County Census of 1920.
2. *Pittsburgh City Directory*, “Bellinger, Louis A.S., Arch.,” (Pittsburgh: Polk & Co., 1919), p. 515.
3. “Many Witness Corner-Stone Laying of Pythian Temple,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 31 March 1928, p. 11.
4. The description of the interior appears in a reporter’s recounting of an interview

with Bellinger when the project was announced. *Pittsburgh Courier*, 12 March 1927, p. 1.

5. Harmon Foundation, *Negro Artists: An Illustrated Review of Their Achievements* (New York: Harmon Foundation, 1935), p. 43.

6. American Institute of Architects, Pittsburgh Collection, Membership Records, "Louis Bellinger," Carnegie Mellon University Architecture Archives.

7. "Louis A. Bellinger, Architect, Buried," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 9 February 1946, p. 1.

### Bibliography

*Builders Bulletin*. Pittsburgh Builders' Exchange, vol. 3, 1919, through vol. 30, 1946.

Cederholm, Theresa Dickason. *Afro-American Artists: A Biobibliographical Directory*. Boston: Boston Public Library, 1973, p. 22.

Kidney, Walter C. *Pittsburgh's Landmark Architecture: The Buildings of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County*. Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation, 1997.

Smoot, Pamela A. "The First One-Hundred Years of Ebenezer Baptist Church of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1875–1975." Master's thesis, Tennessee State University, 1979.

ALBERT M. TANNER,  
HISTORICAL COLLECTIONS DIRECTOR,  
PITTSBURGH HISTORY AND LANDMARKS FOUNDATION

### BUILDING LIST

Name	Address	City	State	Year	Comments
House	Greenfield nr. Hazelwood Ave.	Pittsburgh	PA	1922	
African Methodist Episcopal Book Concern	19th & Pemberton Sts.	Philadelphia	PA	1926	
American Legion Post No. 7	207 Jefferson St.	Fairmont	WVA	1945	
Bellinger, Ethel C.	530 Francis St.	Pittsburgh	PA	1928	
Burchett Apts.	Junilla St.	Pittsburgh	PA	1923	
Ciaramella, John	5100 2nd Ave.	Pittsburgh	PA	1929	
Crunkleton, J.H.	Camp & Finland Sts.	Pittsburgh	PA	1945	Addition
Cutts, W.G., Dr.	1921 Perrysville Ave.	Pittsburgh	PA	1927	
Greenlee Store	1401 Wylie St.	Pittsburgh	PA	1933	Alterations
Iron City Lodge Post No. 17	1847 Centre Ave.	Pittsburgh	PA	1945	Alterations
Johnson, Luther H.	2105 Centre Ave.	Pittsburgh	PA	1945	Demolished

Knights of Pythias Temple	2009 Centre Ave.	Pittsburgh	PA	1927	Demolished
Knott Apartments	2803 Centre Ave.	Pittsburgh	PA	1932	Alterations
Mutual Real Estate Co.	2801 Wylie Ave.	Pittsburgh	PA	1928	Alterations
Pittsburgh Police Station		Pittsburgh	PA	1923	Demolished
Prince Hall Temple Association Lodge and Apartments	2611 Centre Ave.	Pittsburgh	PA	1928	Alterations
Rodman Street Baptist Church	6011 Rodman St.	Pittsburgh	PA	1929	Alterations
Sixth Mt. Zion Baptist Church	Joseph St. nr. Larimer Ave.	Pittsburgh	PA	1930	Demolished
Smith, Robert T.	85 Sylvania Ave.	Pittsburgh	PA	1928	Demolished
St. John's Evangelical Baptist Church	4535 Chatsworth Ave.	Pittsburgh	PA	1943	Plans only
St. Mark African Methodist Episcopal Church	1409 Montier St.	Wilksburg	PA	1927	Plans only

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## Plympton Ross Berry (1834–1917)



*Mahoning Valley Historical Society*

Plympton Ross Berry was born a free man of color in Mount Pleasant, Pennsylvania, in 1834. When Plympton Berry was six, his father, Thomas D. Berry, relocated the family to Lawrence County, Pennsylvania, where the Berry family became the first African Americans to live in the New Castle area.<sup>1</sup> Thomas Berry operated a successful barbershop. Plympton, known to all as “Ross,” was trained at an early age to be a bricklayer.

At the age of sixteen, P. Ross Berry worked on his first major building, the construction

of the Lawrence County Courthouse and jail.<sup>2</sup> This project was a monumental task for such a young man; nonetheless, Berry rose to the occasion. It is not known where Berry obtained the “look” of the courthouse—perhaps from a periodical. As stated in an 1852 edition of *The New Castle Gazette*, “It [the courthouse] will stand for the ages as a monument of youth vigor and taste. For a century to come our citizens will be content with their public building, nor desire to tear them down to erect more splendid ones.”<sup>3</sup> Construction commenced in 1850 and was completed in 1852. The cost of the building was \$32,000.<sup>4</sup> Over the years there have been three additions not executed by Berry, and the original clock tower has been removed. The courthouse is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.<sup>5</sup>

Berry married Mary Long in 1857. Nine children were born to their union. All of Plympton and Mary’s children were educated, including their daughters, which was another unique accomplishment for the era. The girls were taught music, and the boys, bricklaying.

In 1861 Berry moved his family west across the Pennsylvania state line into Ohio. The family settled in Youngstown. Although Youngstown was just a hamlet in 1860, the town was on the verge of a construction boom. Berry’s contracting company was involved in many of the town’s major building projects between 1860 and 1880. For years he was the only building contractor listed in the *Youngstown City Directory* and one of the few builders with architecture experience. Buildings designed and built by Berry included banks, schools, hotels, factories, churches, and a courthouse. There are sixty-five documented structures attributed to Berry as either brick mason, architect, or builder. Among the residences designed and constructed by Berry was Youngstown’s first mansion. Youngstown was the home of Governor David Tod, who commissioned Berry to build a mansion in 1867. Some months after the mansion was completed it caught fire; the governor insisted that no one other than Berry rebuild the mansion. The Tod mansion was an elaborate 35×60 foot building that cost \$50,000 to build. The front-to-rear wings were 93×73 feet. The first floor consisted of nine rooms and the second floor had eleven rooms. The roof was dark slate bordered with green slate. The mansion was demolished in 1929.

After the Civil War, Berry’s reputation as a master builder with architecture experience grew. He was kept busy with contracts to construct buildings in



Rayen School, *Vince Shivers*

other towns. Berry owned his own brickyard, where he burned a unique, reddish orange brick for some of his jobs. Work took Berry to Mercer, Oil City, and New Castle, Pennsylvania; and Struters, Poland, and Warren, Ohio. In addition to Civil War veterans that he hired, Berry taught bricklaying to his oldest son, Thomas. In 1881 Berry and thirty-five mostly White bricklayers met to charter Local 8 Bricklayers Union in Youngstown, which remains active today.

P.Ross Berry was a well-respected businessman in the community. In 1878, when the City of Youngstown called on its philanthropists to contribute money to build the city's first courthouse, Berry donated \$1,000—a significant contribution by the standards of the day. Later Berry was awarded the contract to provide bricks for the Mahoning County Courthouse.

Berry was also well known within the African American community. During crises he was known to call individuals together to seek resolutions to conflicts. In 1867 Berry was one of the organizers of the “Emancipation Ball and Dinner.” African Americans came from all over northeastern Ohio and western Pennsylvania to attend. When local members of the U.S. Colored Troops returned after the Civil War, Berry offered them training and jobs with his construction company. Although the majority of the laborers who worked for Berry were African American, he also employed several White workers. The sight of a Black man supervising White laborers was rare.

P.Ross Berry started to lighten his work schedule around 1901, after almost fifty years of bricklaying, designing, and building. He continued supervising construction projects until 1916. He died in 1917 and was laid to rest in the historic Oak Hill Cemetery in Youngstown. An obelisk similar to ones found in Egypt marks his grave.

### Notes

1. Population Schedules of the Eighth Census of the United States, Pennsylvania, Lawrence County, 1850, National Archives.
2. "Plympton Ross Berry," files of Lawrence County Historical Society, New Castle, Penn.
3. "Courthouse," *New Castle Gazette*, 1 June 1852, p. 2.
4. L.H.Everts & Company, *History of Lawrence County, 1770–1877* (Philadelphia: L.H.Everts & Company, 1877), p. 31.
5. U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service, "Lawrence County Courthouse," 21 June 1978, National Register of Historic Places.

### Bibliography

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VINCENT AJAMU SHIVERS,  
RESEARCHER, YOUNGSTOWN, OHIO

### BUILDING LIST

Name	Address	City	State	Year	Comments
Covington Street School	706 Covington St.	Youngstown	OH	1890	Demolished
Dollar Bank	Central Square	Youngstown	OH	1901	Now National City Bank
First Baptist Church	Market & Boardman Sts.	Youngstown	OH	1863	Demolished
First Presbyterian Church	201 Wick Ave.	Youngstown	OH	1866	Demolished
Front Street School	Front & Hazel Sts.	Youngstown	OH	1871	Demolished
Grand Opera House	Public Square	Youngstown	OH	1872	Demolished
Hitchcock, William	Wick Ave.	Youngstown	OH	1863	Demolished
Homer Hamilton & Co.	Boatman & Canal Sts.	Youngstown	OH	1861	Demolished
Howell's Business Block	2 W.Federal St.	Youngstown	OH	1865	Demolished
Lawrence County	430 Court St.	New Castle	PA	1852	

## Courthouse

Mahoning County Courthouse	E.Market & Wick Sts.	Youngstown OH	1875	Demolished
McMillian Free Library	Market & Front Sts.	Youngstown OH	c1899	Demolished
New Discipline Church	23 W.Washington St.	New Castle PA	1868	
Ohio Governor's Mansion	429 Holmes St.	Youngstown OH	1868	Demolished
Rayen School	20 W.Wood St.	Youngstown OH	1861	Now Youngstown Board of Education Bldg.
St. Columbia Cathedral	W.Wood & Hazel Sts.	Youngstown OH	1863	Demolished
St. Joseph's Cathedral	Rayen St. & Wick Ave.	Youngstown OH	1881	Demolished
Tod House Hotel	Public Square	Youngstown OH	1869	Demolished
West Side Schoolhouse	755 Mahoning Ave.	Youngstown OH	1877	
Youngstown City Jail	Boardman & Hazel Sts.	Youngstown OH	1866	Demolished

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## Edward Eginton Birch (1888–1974)

*William Gordon*

Little is known about African American architects in the Cincinnati area between the

subject years of 1865 and 1945. Because Cincinnati and most of northern Kentucky city directories have been “color blind” since at least the Civil War, a common way of identifying the race of an architect is of no use here. The most valuable and virtually only firsthand source of Cincinnati’s African American community, including its history back to the beginning of European settlement, is *Cincinnati’s Colored Citizens, Historical, Sociological, and Biographical*, written by the editor of the Black weekly the *Union*, Wendell Phillips Dabney (1865–1952).<sup>1</sup> He references a number of Black builders in Cincinnati during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but refers to only four architects: WALLACE AUGUSTUS RAYFIELD, the Birmingham, Alabama-based architect of Antioch Baptist Church in Cincinnati (1926); CURTIS GRAHAM ELLIOTT, an architect at Howard University’s Building and Grounds Department who is a descendant of the Elliott Brothers who operated a successful construction company in Wyoming, a close-in suburb of Cincinnati; a one-sentence mention of “A. Townsend,” about whom we know nothing; and Edward Birch.

Edward E. Birch, the youngest of three brothers, was born on October 31, 1888, to Samuel and Jane Busch Birch of Winchester, Kentucky. Edward’s oldest brother was ERNEST BIRCH. The family resided at 125 3rd Street in a modest house. Edward completed high school in the Winchester public schools and attended HAMPTON UNIVERSITY from 1907 to 1908, pursuing studies in architectural engineering. He worked in Hampton Institute’s laundry to pay his tuition. Birch apparently withdrew before earning his diploma.

From about 1908 until 1934, Edward and his brother, ERNEST OCTAVIUS BIRCH, a graduate of Kentucky Normal and Industrial Institute for Colored Persons, practiced together. Attribution for buildings designed by the brothers could not be differentiated. Edward Birch’s business card stated that he was an architect and consulting engineer doing business out of his home at 1123 Yale Avenue in the Walnut Hills neighborhood of Cincinnati. Up until 1945, he listed himself in the *Cincinnati City Directory* as an “architect” even though he was not licensed by the state of Ohio.<sup>2</sup>

Edward Birch designed Brown Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church; the cornerstone was installed in 1929, but the church was not completed until 1951. Brown Chapel was built on land donated by Lane Presbyterian Theological Seminary, where the Reverend Lyman Beecher and his daughter, Harriet Beecher Stowe, were associated. In the early years worship services were held in the basement, which was nothing more than a shell. Some years later the church was put under roof. The original roof was flat but over the years was replaced with a more utilitarian gable and hipped roof.



Brown Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church, *Walter E.Langsam*

Edward Birch married Eva Downey Birch in 1908, but they were separated by 1916. They had one son, Augustine Edward Birch, who was eight years old when his parents divorced. Augustine, after serving with the heroic 99th Pursuit Squadron (the “Tuskegee Airmen”), returned to Cincinnati and worked for the Cincinnati Recreation Department and retired from the Cincinnati Bureau of Employment Services. Edward Birch remarried to Susie Whittaker Birch of Cincinnati.

In 1923 Edward Birch designed an 8-room, \$80,000 hospital addition at the rear of the home of Dr. A.F.Lyons in the predominately White community of Fort Thomas near Covington, Kentucky, across the Ohio River from Cincinnati. During World War II, Edward Birch received U.S. Civil Service status as an assistant engineering draftsman in the Engineering Division at Wright Patterson Airfield in Dayton, Ohio.

Edward E.Birch died on July 31, 1974. As a longtime member of the First Church of Christ, Scientist in Walnut Hills, his passing was mourned quietly.

### Notes

1. Wendell Dabney, *Cincinnati's Colored Citizens, Historical, Sociological, and Biographical* (Cincinnati: Dabney Publishing Co., 1926).
2. Roger Clark, *Architects' Directory from the Cincinnati City Directories* (Cincinnati: Cincinnati Historical Society, 1989), N.P.

WALTER E.LANGSAM,  
ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN AND HISTORIC  
PRESERVATION CONSULTANT, CINCINNATI, OHIO

**BUILDING LIST**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Brown Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church	2804 Alms Pl.	Walnut Hills	OH	1929	
Lyons Hospital	727 N. St. Thomas Ave.	Covington	KY	c1940	Additon

## Ernest Octavius Birch (1885–1951)

The Birch family was from Winchester, Kentucky, where Ernest, the older of three boys, was born on September 16, 1885. He attended public schools in Winchester.

Ernest and his brother, EDWARD EGINTON BIRCH, were associates for twenty-five years (1908 to 1933), a partnership that likely began after Edward left HAMPTON UNIVERSITY and joined his older brother in Cincinnati. They were among the first two Black architects in the city. Ernest Birch attended Kentucky Normal and Industrial Institute for Colored Persons in Frankfort from 1900 to 1903. He started in the normal school hoping to become a teacher and switched to carpentry. The carpentry shop would later be housed in the beautiful stone Trades Building (1909), which was designed by WILLIAM SIDNEY PITTMAN and constructed by legendary local stonemason James C. Brown. Toward the end of his life Edward Birch took extension courses at the University of Cincinnati Evening College in 1945 and returned in 1948.

Neither brother was licensed, but that did not stop them from advertising themselves in the *Cincinnati City Directory* as “architects.” They worked together as Birch Bros., first at 835 West 7th Street in the West End near downtown Cincinnati, then the center of professional and fashionable African American life. In the 1920s their office was at 3146 Gaff Avenue in Walnut Hills, where Ernest Birch continued to live until his death. Beginning in 1934, Ernest Birch was employed as a facilities maintenance engineer for Rubel Baking Company.

He married Emma Birch and they lived together in their Walnut Hills home located in a historically Black Cincinnati neighborhood. The couple had no children.

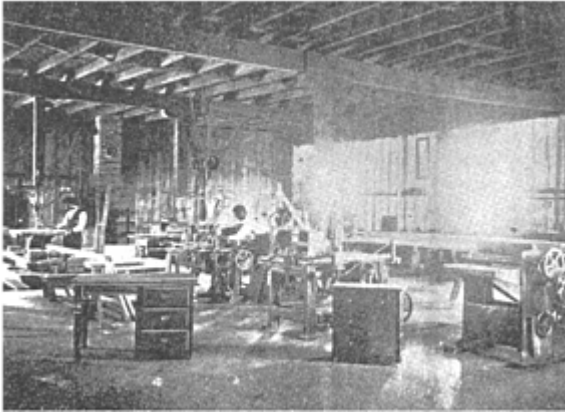
During his leisure time, Ernest Birch was a member of the Cincinnati Colored Young Mens Christian Association of Cincinnati.

Ernest O. Birch died of a heart attack on March 3, 1951.<sup>1</sup> His funeral was held at Bethel Baptist Church, where it is more than likely he was a member. He was buried in Union Baptist Cemetery, the oldest cemetery in Cincinnati for Blacks, dating to 1831 and located in the Price Hill neighborhood of Western Hills, Ohio.

**Note**

1. "Ernest O. Birch," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 4 March 1951, p. 6.

WALTER E. LANGSAM,  
ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN AND HISTORIC  
PRESERVATIONIST, CINCINNATI, OHIO



Ernest Birch (right) inside the Kentucky Normal & Industrial School Trades Building, *Kentucky State University Archives and Special Collections*

## John Henry Blanche Jr. (1908–1960)



*Eva Blanche*

John Henry Blanche Jr. was born November 11, 1908, in Charleston, South Carolina, the youngest of three sons born to John H. Blanche Sr. His mother died before he reached four years old. When his father died a short time later, he was taken in and reared by his mother's first cousin, Hattie Bynum.

John Blanche received his early education in the public schools of Charleston, South Carolina. When he was in the eighth grade he met MILLER FULTAN WHITTAKER, a student recruiter from South Carolina State Colored Agricultural & Mechanical Institute. At that time the college had a high school component. While in Charleston recruiting students to attend high school, Whittaker invited John Henry Blanche to Orangeburg to enroll. Blanche accepted his invitation and began matriculating at the institute in the ninth grade. Whittaker saw great potential in John Henry Blanche and became his mentor and surrogate father. Moreover Whittaker, as the first Black registered architect in South Carolina, was committed to teaching the young, astute, and talented Blanche all that he knew so that he might one day become successful. On completion of high school at South Carolina State Colored Normal Institute, Blanche remained and began his undergraduate education majoring in building and woodworking. During his matriculation at the college, Blanche supported himself in the practical use of his major and was often in great demand because of his talent in building and woodworks. Blanche served an architectural apprenticeship with Whittaker. For his senior final project, Blanche designed Dukes Gymnasium. He graduated in 1930. Later Blanche received his master of arts degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1939.

After graduating from college, John Henry Blanche began a teaching career in Greenville, Newberry, and Rock Hill, South Carolina. In 1936, when Sterling High School in the Greenville School District was out for summer vacation, Blanche returned to his *alma mater* to work for the summer. There he met Eva Mae Gibbs, a Home Economics major from Pamplico, South Carolina. Their relationship grew and in 1937, while she was a senior, he proposed to her and asked her father for her hand in marriage. Although her father sanctioned the marriage, Eva told John that he would have to wait five years because she wanted to work and show her parents her appreciation for their support during the pursuit of her college education.<sup>1</sup> On June 6, 1942, the couple married. No children were born to their union.

In the fall of 1936, at the invitation of Whittaker, who was now president of the South Carolina State College, Blanche resigned from public school teaching and returned to South Carolina State as a tenure-track instructor and eventually became an associate professor of architectural engineering.

While at South Carolina State College, Blanche also served as band director for two years in the absence of Reginald Thomasson. At South Carolina State he taught Drawing 301, a course that was a requirement of all students. Blanche also served as a role model for many students. During one summer he met Barbara Thompson, who was then a junior in high school. Barbara Thompson's aunt, Mamie Thompson, introduced her to Blanche because Barbara had an interest in drawing. Blanche worked with her and assisted her in developing her drawing skills. Later, when she entered South Carolina State College, she decided to major in architectural engineering because there was no organized art program. Thus Barbara Thompson, under Blanche's tutelage, became the first female to

major in and complete an architectural engineering degree at South Carolina State College.

When Blanche came to South Carolina State College he was not a registered architect. However, he designed many buildings under Whittaker's license, such as the Mechanical and Engineering Building at South Carolina State College. It was Whittaker who encouraged him to take the examination to receive his architect's license. Blanche was hesitant because of the blatant practice of discrimination against African Americans during the time. However, in 1948 he went to the University of South Carolina to take the Architectural Board of Examinations. He was the only Black out of thirteen people who were taking the examination. Blanche was not allowed to take the exam in the same room with the Whites, where there were canted drafting tables and overhead fluorescent lighting. Whereas the other test takers were comfortable and provided with the drafting tools they needed to take the exam, Blanche was placed in a small storage room. The room contained a 40-watt lightbulb, a stool, and a flat board, which was elevated with bricks. He could not even go into the cafeteria for lunch, but had to bring lunch with him. Despite the hardships, Blanche was informed by Dean Rowe of the School of Architecture that he had passed the State Board of Examinations to become a registered architect. Blanche was licensed to practice not only in South Carolina but also in North Carolina.

Blanche's architecture career began when he designed Dukes Gymnasium as his senior final project in 1929. He also designed the Science Building at CLAFLIN UNIVERSITY in Orangeburg, South Carolina; the Gymnasium and Home Economics Buildings at Morris College in Sumter, South Carolina; and the plans for Layman Hall and Reid's Hall at Allen University; and supervised the renovation of the Girls Dormitory. Additionally, he created plans for many hotels, including the Holiday Inn Motel in Orangeburg, which later became the South Campus of South Carolina State University; and the Slumberland Motel located in Orangeburg. At the time of his death in 1960, he was completing two buildings for Benedict College in Columbia, South Carolina.

One of the few Black architects in South Carolina, Blanche's services were always in demand. He was called to design many churches, including Antioch Baptist Church in Bowman, St. Mark Baptist Church in St. George, Mt. Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church in Florence, Lovely Hill Baptist Church in Holly Hill, and Orangeburg Lutheran Church in Orangeburg. He also designed the parsonage for his home church, Williams Chapel African Methodist



Dukes Gymnasium, South Carolina State University, *Eva Gibbs Blanche*

Episcopal Church in Orangeburg, South Carolina, contributing his free time and service to the planning and supervision of the church parsonage; and aided and supervised the renovation of the church itself, Williams Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church. Blanche created the plans for several prominent citizens' homes in Orangeburg, including those of the president of South Carolina State College, Dr. Maceo; James L. Wells Sr.; and the late Mr. Rhude Cherry, a prominent businessman who was the owner of Cherry Feed & Seeds. Blanche also designed his own home.

Blanche was a gifted architect, a musician, and a quiet man who did not participate in arguments. John Blanche died on January 14, 1960, at Orangeburg Regional Hospital.<sup>2</sup>

### Notes

1. Interview with Eva Gibbs Blanche (wife of John Blanche), Orangeburg, South Carolina, 17 October 2002.
2. "Final Rites: Mr. John Henry Blanche," *Times and Democrat*, 17 January 1960, p. 1.

PEGGY STEVENSON RATLIFF,  
CHAIR, DIVISION OF HUMANITIES  
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES AND PH.D,  
ROOSEVELT RATLIFF JR., PHD,  
ASSISTANT VICE-PRESIDENT  
FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT,  
CLAFLIN UNIVERSITY

**Bibliography**

“John Blanche,” personal folder, South Carolina State University Historical Collection  
Whittaker Library, Orangeburg, South Carolina.

**BUILDING LIST**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Aiken Low-Income Housing		Atlanta	GA		700 Dwelling units (du)
Allen University Girls Dormitory	Campus	Columbia	SC	1950	Alteration
Allen University Ministers' Hall	Campus	Columbia	SC		Now Faith Hall
Antioch Baptist Church	7640 Charleston Hywy.	Bowman	SC		
Benedict College	Campus	Columbia	SC		
Blanche, John H., “Home on the Hill”	2689 Magnolia NE	Orangeburg	SC	1945	
Clafin University Science Bldg.	Campus	Orangeburg	SC		
Holiday Inn Motel	415 Calhoun Dr.	Orangeburg	SC		Now South campus
Lovely Hill Baptist Church	631 Hesseman Ave.	Holly Hill	SC		
Morris College Home Economics Bldg.	Campus	Sumter	SC		
Mt. Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church	1305 E.Cheves St.	Florence	SC		
Orangeburg Lutheran Church	610 Ellis Ave.	Orangeburg	SC		
Slumberland Motel	1440 Five Chop Rd.	Orangeburg	SC		
South Carolina State University Dukes Gymnasium	Campus	Orangeburg	SC	1931	
St. Mark's Baptist Church	Ridge St.	Saint George	SC		
Williams Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church Parsonage	1198 Glover St.	Orangeburg	SC	c 1950s	

Williams Chapel African  
Methodist Episcopal Church

Glover St.

Orangeburg SC

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## Joseph Haygood Blodgett (1858–1934)



*Courtesy of Thomas G. Carpenter Library, Eartha M.M. White Collection,  
University of North Florida*

Although he had very little formal education, Joseph Haygood Blodgett became one of the most respected and successful African American business and community leaders in Jacksonville, Florida, during the first quarter of the twentieth century. Born in Augusta, Georgia, on February 8, 1858, Blodgett left the farm as a teenager and moved to Summerville, South Carolina, where he hauled phosphate and later cut cross ties for the South Carolina Railroad Company. Blodgett relocated to bustling Jacksonville, Florida, in the 1890s, reportedly with only one dollar and ten cents in his pocket.<sup>1</sup>

From this humble start in Jacksonville, Blodgett, who initially worked for the railroad, went on to open his own drayage business that was later expanded to include a wood yard, restaurant, and farm. By 1898 he had entered the construction and real estate business and had constructed numerous houses and offices, many located on parcels he owned. Blodgett lost most of his buildings in the Great Fire of May 3, 1901, which destroyed almost all of downtown Jacksonville, including parts of the outlying, adjacent neighborhood of LaVilla. He borrowed five thousand dollars from the State Bank of Florida and revived his construction and real estate businesses and by 1919 had designed and constructed 258 houses—100 of which he kept and rented out.<sup>2</sup> In 1910 Blodgett was one of only five African American architectbuilders in the Jacksonville area.

By 1919 Blodgett had designed and built his own elegant residence, “Blodgett Villa” on West 8th Street in the middle-class African American neighborhood known as Sugar Hill. While residing at “Blodgett Villa,” he and his wife, Sallie Barnes Barnett of Barnwell, South Carolina, entertained many notable visitors, including the principal of

TUSKEGEE INSTITUTE, BOOKER TALIAFERRO WASHINGTON. Blodgett went on to design and build many houses in Sugar Hill and the Durkeeville area that were characterized by his trademark 2-story residences with a small upper porch over a larger lower porch. Blodgett reportedly designed and built similar houses in Durham, North Carolina; Savannah, Georgia; Springfield, Massachusetts; and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. One of the more noted buildings designed and constructed by Blodgett in 1915 was the Lawton-Pratt Funeral Home at 525 West Beaver Street in the LaVilla section of downtown Jacksonville.

In his obituary, the *Florida Times Union* proclaimed Joseph H. Blodgett a leader among the African American community as well as one of the wealthiest Blacks in Duval County.<sup>3</sup> This declaration was based not only on his business success, but also on his demonstrated community leadership and civic involvement. For example, immediately after the 1901 fire, Blodgett was tapped by Black community leaders to direct a Colored Relief Association to coordinate relief efforts among the African American community. A strong and active supporter of both his church, Ebenezer United Methodist Church, and Edward Waters College, Blodgett also supported the local chapter of the Negro Business League.



Lawton-Pratt Funeral Home, *Evelyn Hillman Kennebrew*

Because of declining health due to high blood pressure, Blodgett retired from his businesses by the early 1920s and relocated to one of his houses on Hart Street in Durkeeville, where he died on June 5, 1934.<sup>4</sup>