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African American Biographies : Bulloch County

Charles W. Bonds

Lella Theresa Gantt Bonds

Constance Jones

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AFRICAN AMERICAN BIOGRAPHIES



BULLOCH COUNTY

**African American Biographies
of Bulloch Countians**

by

**Dr. Charles W. Bonds
Dr. Lella Theresa Gantt Bonds
Mrs. Constance Jones
Mrs. Carolyn Postell**

First Edition
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Preface

Biographies and autobiographies are written accounts of the lives and achievements of individuals. The lives and accomplishments of persons recorded in history are remembered because someone or themselves thought their deeds and life accomplishments were worthy of being recorded, of being printed, and of being preserved for future generations to read. Each individual writer/historian, organization, and institution contributing to the effort of producing this publication realizes the importance of recording the achievements of outstanding individuals in the Bulloch county community.

Thousands of people make significant contributions to individual persons and to society during their lifetimes, and these unselfish acts of humanitarianism are never recorded. Often these accomplishments are known only to a few persons close to or in intimate contact with the individual. If the person is fortunate, his or her achievements, deeds, and contributions to society will usually be handed down from generation to generation by word-of-mouth. Because there is no written record from which to relay a person's life and achievements, accuracy and authenticity are often distorted or totally lost. When the conveyer of a person's unselfish deeds and accomplishments is long gone, there is no one to continue to tell the person's life story and his contributions to society.

This publication seeks to fill a void that exists in recording and disseminating the contributions of outstanding African Americans in Bulloch County. These contributions are noteworthy because of the impact they have had not only in the African American community but to the betterment of life in all of Bulloch County.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express affectionate gratitude to my wife, **Dr. Lella Theresa Gantt Bonds**, for her encouragement as the biographies of this book were compiled. She has been especially patient and understanding as I researched and wrote the biographies. I sincerely appreciate her loving motivation and suggestions as I worked on each biography.

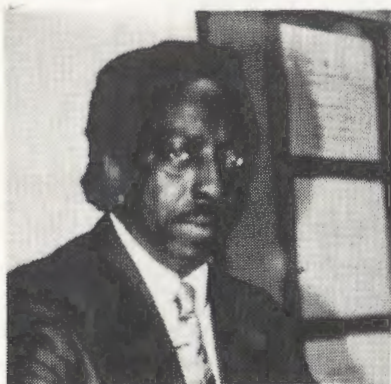
Dr. Kemp Mabry, Professor Emeritus of Georgia Southern University and the "cornerstone" of the Bulloch Historical Society, deserves special thanks. From the first biography researched and presented to the Historical Society, he has been a constant source of inspiration and encouragement.

A special thanks is due to these individuals. **Lawrence Gwynn**, **Elsa Travis**, and **Susan Creasy** deserve special thanks for the time they expended reading, proofreading, and editing the manuscripts. **Charles Bonds, III** and **Alicia Dionne Allen (McGrady)** (then middle school students) deserve special recognition for their reading of the first two biographies at the February 1982 meeting of the Historical Society during my absence. Also, a special thanks is due to the Word Processing Center staff, **Donna Colson**, **Tina Southwell** and **Francis Keene**, for helping put this book together.

Without the knowledge and interviews of family members, some of the information in the biographies would not have been available. A gracious expression of thanks is afforded to those individuals who provided newspaper clippings, church programs, and other materials necessary for documenting the achievements of the individuals whose lives and accomplishments are chronicled in this book.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude and sincere appreciation to **Georgia Southern University** for its publication support and to members of the **Bulloch Historical Society** for their support, enthusiastic reception, and appreciation exhibited as I researched and presented the biographies at our meeting. Their efforts have truly made local African-American History a reality in Bulloch County, Georgia.

About the Authors



Dr. Charles W. Bonds

from the University of Florida. He has been a member of the Bulloch Historical Society for more than 13 years.

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Dr. Lella Theresa Gantt Bonds



Mrs. Constance Jones

MRS. CONSTANCE JONES is a retired elementary/middle school teacher. She has also served as assistant principal and principal of schools in Bulloch County. She has the distinction of being the first African American female to serve on the

Introduction

This collection of biographies of outstanding Black citizens follows nine years of Annual Black History Programs and papers read before the Bulloch County Historical Society by the author, Dr. Charles Bonds, or his designated students from Georgia Southern University.

The basic information in these biographies was originally published by the Historical Society in *Reading in Bulloch History* beginning in 1984. These biographies have been edited by Dr. Bonds for publication in this volume.

This book is a monumental contribution to positive community life by honoring the memory of those who made a difference, often overcoming great odds to serve their fellow citizens.

Dr. Charles Bonds is Professor of Reading at Georgia Southern University where we were professional colleagues for several years. He has served on the Editorial Board and as Black History Editor of the Historical Society for several years.

Nurtured by his mother and father and further supported by his aunts, Dr. Bonds, himself, is an example of outstanding accomplishments. It should be noted that while Dr. Bonds' father did not have the opportunity to learn to read, his son, Charles, now teaches teachers how to teach children to read!

Mabry
N. Kemp ~~Marby~~ *Mabry*, Ph.D.
Professor Emeritus
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Bulloch County Board of Education. She earned a Bachelor of Science Degree from Florida A&M University, Tallahassee, Florida and the Master of Education Degree through the joint programs of Armstrong State and Savannah State Colleges, Savannah, Georgia. She enjoys researching her family's genealogy.



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DR. KEMP ~~MARBY~~ *Mabry*

is Executive Vice President of the Bulloch County Historical Society. He served as President for six years and was General Editor of society publications. He is a graduate of Marietta High School, Georgia Tech, Mercer University, Georgia Southern College, and Florida State University. He is Emeritus of Educational Psychology and Counseling, Georgia Southern University, where he has authored 19 professional books and more than 50 professional journal articles. Additional writing and publishing includes Editor of 15 Bulloch Historical Society Books and newspaper columnist for the *Statesboro Herald*. He has served as President of the Bulloch Retired Teachers Association.



Dr. Kemp ~~Marby~~ *Mabry*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	i
Acknowledgements	ii
About the Authors	iii
Introduction	v
Julia Pearl Armstrong Bryant	1
George Franklin Campbell	3
R. W. Campbell	8
Elridge Cone	12
Minnie Stewart Evans	17
Phoebe Ann Small Floyd	21
William James	23
Reverend Willie Daniel Kent	26
Willie Gordon Lovett	31
Laura Bell Hendly Martin	36
Luetta Leverette Moore	41
Beatrice Riggs	45
Amanda Love Smith	47
Willie Albert Smith, Sr.	51
Harvey Van Buren	56

JULIA PEARL ARMSTRONG BRYANT

By Constance Jones

Mrs. Julia P. Bryant was born in Sandersville, Georgia, where she grew up and received her elementary and secondary education. She attended Tuskegee Institute, Tuskegee, Alabama, and Pratt Institute of Art and Designing in Brooklyn, New York. Later she earned her B.S. Degree from the now Savannah State College and did additional study toward a higher degree at Atlanta University, Atlanta, Georgia.

She was a teacher, a principal and a Jeans Supervisor for nearly a half century. She started her career in Washington County, but spent the great majority of her productive years in Bulloch County.

Her whole life was devoted to the enlightenment of the young black child, and to this end, she worked tirelessly with PTA groups, professional organizations and other agencies to enhance the opportunities for her people and the communities in which she lived.

Mrs. Bryant held elevated positions in many educational organizations on local, district and state levels, including being vice-president of the former Georgia Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers, and also served as treasurer for that organization.

Her dedication extended into the affairs of her community and religious activities. She was always an active member of the First African Baptist Church of Statesboro, where she taught Sunday School and served as president of the Senior Choir.

Mrs. Bryant's work in the schools, churches, and community affairs won her acclaim and honor locally and state wide. Her awards were numerous. Some of them were the Jeans Supervisor Award, Honorary Vice-President for Life of the Georgia Congress of Parents and Teachers Association, Teacher of the Year of Bulloch County in 1956 and 1963, and a Distinguished Service Award in Child Welfare.

But the highest honor of all became hers when the Bulloch County Board of Education named the Julia P. Bryant School in her honor in 1963. This will always serve as a living human monument to her greatness and a lasting tribute to a most renowned personality. May time never cease nor dim this memory.

Mrs. Bryant departed this life on February 21, 1965, but a glance back reminds all who came under the sway of her influence and magnetism that hers was a life well lived and long to be remembered.



Julia P. Bryant Elementary School

GEORGE FRANKLIN CAMPBELL

A BIOGRAPHY

By Charles Bonds



George Campbell with his wife, Ida

George Franklin Campbell was born in 1872, at Whitesville, North Carolina to the union of William and Lillian Campbell. Both of his parents were former slaves.

At the age of 16, he began working with a turpentine firm in North Carolina, and later was transferred by the company to Georgia. The town to which he was transferred was Nellwood, Georgia, better known to us as Brooklet. He was hired out to T. R. Bryan, a local turpentine still operator. George's first job paid only fifty cents per day.

During the time of his work with the T. R. Bryan Company, he met Ida Fore who was also the daughter of two former slaves who had come to Georgia, like George, for work. She came to Brooklet from Mullins, South Carolina. They dated for a while, fell in love, and entered holy matrimony in 1890. The union of George and Ida Jane Fore produced 13 children. Six of these children, who are still living today, are Valarie Campbell Smith of Chicago; Gladys Campbell

Glover, Philadelphia; Bertha Campbell Jackson, Savannah; Evelyn Campbell Summers and Ida J. Campbell Lovette, Millen, and R. W. Campbell, Statesboro. His son, R. W. Campbell, continues the dedication and commitment of his father to the Bethel Baptist Church. He presently served as Chairman of the Board of Deacons of the church organized by his father. R. W. Campbell has served in the position of Chairman of the Board for the past 43 years.

In 1921, transportation in the Brooklet area was mainly of three forms: Horse and buggy, the Old Savannah and Statesboro Railroad, and the Sherwood Railroad. George Campbell was the first black man in the area to purchase an automobile in the Brooklet community. He purchased a Model-T Ford and used it as transportation not only for his family but as a "Taxi Service" for the people of the Brooklet community. His major route was between Brooklet and Savannah. This automobile was also used as the major means of transportation for carrying his children to high school in Statesboro to attend the Statesboro High and Industrial School, later named the William James High School.

William James, Dr. Harvey Van Buren, R. R. Butler, Sr., Fred Pughsley, Sr., Floyd Bellinger, Ed Lattimore, Herbert Riggs, Jim Jackson (of the New Sandridge Community), and Lonnie Simmons, Sr. were all personal friends of George and spent many hours and weekends at his home in Brooklet, hunting, fishing, and just eating "Good Country Meals."

George always seemed sincerely interested in serving his fellow man. This is exemplified through his many contributions in the community. He served as the Chairman of the Executive Board of the Pilgrim Missionary Baptist Association for more than 30 years. In the early 1900's, George, assisted Rev. W. M. Gilmore, Henry (Shorty) Campbell, Steve Hendley, and Jack Johnson in organizing a unit of the

Free and Accepted Masons at Brooklet (then Nellwood, Georgia). During this period of time, this same group of men organized a community assistance program whose functions were to provide an entire work day on the farms of fellow farmers who had hardships in the plowing and/or harvesting of their crops and assist in the building of barns on these same farms.

In the early 1900's, Campbell was instrumental in introducing formal education to the black youth of Bulloch County. Rev. W. M. Gilmore requested the assistance of George F. Campbell in the organizing of schools for black youth in Bulloch County. Three schools were started in the 1900's: one at Pretorius Station, one at Little Bethel Church (Brooklet), and one at Hutchinson Longstreet (Stilson). Rev. R. I. Hagins was an important person in the organization of the school in Stilson. With the founding of these three schools, Campbell worked with Steve Hendley, H. W. B. Smith, Sr., and Professor A. R. Pope to organize a community school at Brooklet. This school operated for many years in the St. Mary's A. M. E. Church.

Campbell's association with one of the major black educators of Bulloch County afforded him another opportunity to help his fellow man financially. Under the leadership of William James, founder and principal of the Statesboro High and Industrial School, Campbell, along with Steve Hendley, Jack Johnson, Henry (Shorty) Campbell, and Clem Rivers, organized the first Christmas Savings Club in the Brooklet Community. One of the major objectives of the Club was to impress on the members that the people of the Brooklet Community should save a portion of what they earned each month.

This group of men who had begun the Brooklet Christmas Savings Club not only had monetary values at heart when they met. They held barbecues, fish fries, and cake suppers. At the cake suppers,

people would bid on the cakes, and the person with the highest bid would have the honor of sitting at the table with the girl who baked the cake. The funds from these activities resulted in the building of the "Little Red School House" at Brooklet. In this school, students of the primary grade through seventh were taught.

He shared a good friendship with Dave Turner, owner and publisher of the Bulloch Times. George would take pride in bringing in the first open "boll of cotton", the first watermelon, and the first bale of cotton to be ginned. Uncle Dave (Turner) as he was affectionately called, would publish all of the news in his weekly edition of the Bulloch Times.

Through the efforts of T. R. Bryan, George Campbell was able to place a down payment on 125 acres of land at \$10.00 per acre. At a time when wages were very low, George was determined that he would own his own farm and home for his family. T. R. Bryan and George made an agreement that allowed Bryan to "pay" for the land and build a home on the property for George and Ida. As George did not have a steady income, periodic payments were made by George to the T. R. Bryan Company until the land and the home were debt-free. The farm and family home that George and Ida had worked so diligently to pay off was located near Brooklet in the vicinity of the present-day Southeast Bulloch High School. (The property is presently owned by W. C. Cromley, Jr.). Two other ambitious and insightful black men also bought property adjacent to the Campbell property. They were Jack Johnson and Walter Cromartie.

On April 30, 1983, William Smith, Clem River, Jack Johnson, and George Campbell and their wives joined with the Reverends James M. Jones and A. T. Grant in the organizing of the Little Bethel Baptist Church on a plot of land donated by the late C. S. Cromley. This land was given to the church group to use as long as the church

existed on that plot of ground. George Campbell served as the first Chairman of the Deacon Board of the Little Bethel Baptist Church.

George F. Campbell never liked being second. He may have been considered at the time a second class citizen, but he was never contented with the label, nor did he wish his children to be contented with being second. He taught his children that second place was not and should not be the goal in life. He wanted each of his children to come in first. He did not specify what first, but encouraged them to be the best of whatever they chose to be. He further realized that in matters where it really made a difference to society and the individual that if one were to make a lasting mark, education would be paramount. He insisted that each of his 13 children complete high school.

One of George Campbell's favorite expressions was: "As you climb the ladder to success, remember those you pass on the way up. They will be the first ones to catch you if you fall."

This quote exemplifies George's caring attitude for his fellow man.

In 1938, George sold his farm in Brooklet and moved to Roundtree Street in Statesboro. In November 1947, he passed, but he left with us in Bulloch County, a better place because he left North Carolina and decided that his destiny was in Bulloch County.

R. W. CAMPBELL
DISTINGUISHED EDUCATOR

By Charles Bonds



R. W. Campbell

Roosevelt Wilbur Campbell, Sr. (1917-1994) was the eleventh child born to George F. Campbell and Ida Jane Fore Campbell in Bulloch County, Georgia. In 1943, Roosevelt married Miss Geraldine Moody of Waycross. Geraldine was employed as a teacher in the Bulloch County School System until her retirement in 1986 after 43 years of dedicated service in education. While employed in Bulloch County, she worked as a teacher at Pope's Academy (Middle Ground Community), Statesboro High and Industrial School, Julia P. Bryant Elementary School, and the William James High School.

They had two children, R. Wilbur Campbell, Jr. and Ronald Campbell, who were employed at the Fayetteville State University, Fayetteville, North Carolina, for a brief period. R. W. Jr., the older son, served the university as Registrar, and Ronald served as Assistant Comptroller. Both sons later returned to Georgia where they were employed by the State of Georgia.

Affectionately called R. W. by family and friends, he attended the public schools of Bulloch County and completed his elementary education in a Bulloch County school in Brooklet, Georgia. Upon completing his elementary education, he enrolled at the Statesboro High and Industrial School (later named the William James High

School) where he graduated as valedictorian of the class of 1934.

Upon completing high school, he matriculated at Johnson C. Smith University in North Carolina. Wanting to be nearer to his home and family, after one year he transferred to Georgia State Industrial College (Savannah State College) and was awarded the Bachelor of Science Degree in Agriculture in 1938. Realizing the importance of furthering his education, he entered Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and earned the Master's Degree in School Administration in 1957. Additional work at Temple University included study towards the Doctorate Degree in Education.

His first position in public education was that of principal and teacher at the Willow Hill School of Portal, Georgia. He worked as principal of the Evans County Training School of Claxton (Evans County), Georgia for two years. He returned as teacher of Vocational Agriculture at Statesboro High and Industrial School in 1944. His fourteen years of work in Bulloch County carried him to Edward Johnson School in Brooklet, Georgia, and to the Julia P. Bryant School in Statesboro, Georgia. Additional educational experience was gained as he was employed at Butler High School in Eatonton, Georgia, and Blakeney Junior High School in Waynesboro, Georgia.

In 1973, while working at Blakeney High School, he retired from a distinguished career of public school service in Georgia after 36 years. Not contented to lead an unproductive life, he later joined the Georgia State Department of Corrections and worked for 18 years as Education Supervisor of the school at the Coastal Correctional Institution in Savannah, Georgia, where he retired on December 31, 1991.

R. W.'s involvement in the community in which he lived and worked was most noteworthy because his efforts included making the community a better place for all citizens. As he attempted to improve

the quality of life for the community, he served as the Executive Secretary of the Negro Chamber of Commerce during the 1940's. As a result of the work in this organization led by R. W., the Blich Street Center was designated for use by the Black youth of Statesboro. His work with Max Lockwood gave the youth of Bulloch County an excellent facility for recreation. He was instrumental in organizing the William James Elks Lodge #1346, Improved Benevolent and Protective Order of the World. As an officer in the Lodge, he was a significant force in convening the Georgia Elks Association Convention in Statesboro. The convention attracted more than one thousand delegates from across the nation and state. He was a charter member of the civic organization, STABUC (an acronym for Statesboro and Bulloch County). This organization, through his outstanding leadership, has given more than \$5,000 in scholarships to high school graduates of Bulloch County schools. He served four terms as the president of the organization and also held other positions as president-elect and secretary in the organization. Under his leadership, the organization influenced policy decisions affecting the Statesboro-Bulloch County community. Because of his outstanding leadership, the organization received numerous awards of recognition for service to the community.

Recognition for his outstanding service was noted on numerous occasions. He was honored as a Fellow by the Instructional Development Educational Association in 1967. For this recognition, he received a vacation trip to Honolulu, Hawaii. He received the STABUC Man of the Year Award and other recognitions from the organization. Upon his retirement, R. W.'s contribution to the state of Georgia through education was recognized by the Georgia Secretary of State when R. W. was presented a proclamation from the Honorable Max Cleland. He received one of the most prestigious awards given

to citizens of Bulloch County from the Statesboro Herald for his unselfish and dedicated service to the community. In 1993, he received the Deen Day Smith Service Award to Mankind from the Herald.

R. W.'s accomplishments are further reflected by his membership in numerous professional societies and community organizations. He served as president of the Department of the Elementary School Principals Association from 1955-61. He was an active lifetime member of the Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., the National Education Association, the American Correctional Education Association, the National Institute of Corrections, the Order of the Elks of the World, Member and Charter member of STABUC, Inc., and the Bulloch County Historical Society.

R. W.'s work in the church was exemplary. At an early age, he became a member of the Little Bethel Baptist Church of Brooklet, Georgia, where his father was the first Chairman of the Deacon Board and R. W. served as the third Chairman of the Board of Deacons of the Little Bethel Baptist Church from 1945 until 1994. Deacon Walter Cormartie was the second Deacon Board Chairman in the church's more than 90 years of history. As a member of the church, R. W. also served as the Associate Editor of the church bulletin. He spent many hours working with the youth of the church. In 1974 he was recognized by the congregation as the Outstanding Deacon of Little Bethel Baptist Church of Brooklet, Georgia. As a representative of the church to the Pilgrim Missionary Baptist Association, he served as clerk of the organization for several years.

Roosevelt Wilbur Campbell dedicated his life to education and to the service of his fellowman through his unselfish leadership and service to the Statesboro-Bulloch County community. During his lifetime, his deeds have influenced the lives of numerous individuals.

ELDRIDGE CONE
Farmer-Sharecropper, Community Leader,
and Humanitarian
By Charles Bonds



Eldridge Cone

Eldridge Cone (1887-1966) was born in Bulloch County, Georgia, in the small community of Stilson. His parents were Sarah and George Cone. He was married to Agnes Donaldson (1890-1961) of Bulloch County. Agnes' parents were Handy Donaldson and Agnes Parrish Donaldson, both former slaves.

After living in the Stilson area for many years, Eldridge and Enoch, his older brother, moved to Portal. Admiring his brother, Eldridge followed his brother, Enoch, to Portal; however, they both continued to work in Statesboro for many years while commuting to Statesboro. While in Statesboro, Enoch also became acquainted with Eldridge's wife's sister, Sula. Sula and Enoch fell in love and were married. As in many communities even today, it was not uncommon for brothers to marry sisters of the same family.

Education during this period was restricted for the privileged few. As a result, Eldridge nor his brother Enoch received much of a formal education. Rural schools of the time were mostly of the one-room or church type, and education was usually provided for a few months of the year when families did not have to farm or have the children devote their time to contributing to the family's livelihood. Eldridge, like most children of the time, attended the rural school of the Antioch Baptist Church in the Stilson area. He attended this

school for two years where he received most of his formal education.

Around 1907, Eldridge moved from Statesboro to Portal. He felt that he needed to be closer to his job. Eldridge had become a share-cropper with H. P. Wommack, a Portal farmer. Eldridge lived in the "... Willow Hill Community, and was known far and wide as one of the best farmers in Southeast Georgia, as reported in the August 9, 1944 edition of the Savannah Morning News. Writing for the Savannah Morning News, Benjamin F. Hubert, then president of Georgia Industrial College (Savannah State College), noted that "Cone was a stimulating example, and the finest evidence of the sympathetic understanding and spirit of cooperation that should exist between landlord and tenant."

Eldridge sharecropped with H. P. Wommack, who was an educator and superintendent of Bulloch County Public Schools. However, their relationship was not just that of employer and employee. They were good friends and developed a lasting respect and confidence in each other, and these qualities increased as they worked with each other over the years. Because of a common need of both men, Wommack needing a good farmer, and Eldridge needing land and resources for farming, they worked mutually to help each other. Eldridge soon became known by all farmers in the area as "Bulloch County's Best Farmer." In 1944, Eldridge "...had under cultivation a five-horse farm. There were twenty-five acres of cotton, eighty acres of corn, twenty-five acres of solid peanuts and peanuts planted in all of his corn." During this same year, he grew crops of melons, sweet potatoes, and an acre of vegetables. Benjamin F. Hubert also noted that Eldridge Cone marketed thirty bales of cotton from twenty-eight acres of land. This was quite unusual during this time. He also sold three tons of peanuts, \$350 worth of melons, \$2,000 worth of hogs and cattle and over an acre of tobacco. Truly a remarkable achievement for a share-cropper during the 1940's, as reported in the Savannah Morning News.

Although Eldridge was an excellent sharecropper and developed a lasting friendship with H. P. Wommack, he yet desired to own his own farm. He often related to friends and relatives how good it would be to own his own farm. Eldridge was not only a prolific farmer, but also a frugal and thrifty man. He had for many years desired to own his own farm, and his dream finally came to reality when in the early 1950's he purchased 106 acres of land from Mrs.

Julia Ellis. He continued to be a very productive farmer of his own land, and was the first black farmer in the area to purchase a tractor for farming the land. The 106 acre farm is located on the John H. Moore Road near the town of Portal. Cone acquired some of his knowledge from the then county agent, A. T. Hubert, who noted that Cone's success was because he was a hard worker and was not afraid to accept suggestions for improvement of his farming.

Eldridge not only possessed an exceptional attitude for farming, but he also worked in turpentine, at the local sawmill, and at the local slaughter house.

Eldridge was known throughout the Bulloch County area as a man of great character and great ability, and most of all common sense, which even today is valued more than a formal education. He not only led the community in farming, but was in the forefront of everything important that pertained to the community, school and church. The people would frequently seek his advice about community problems and concerns prior to acting upon their problems. He served as member of the Trustee Board of the Willow Hill School. His involvement with the school did not limit itself to just trustee, but he also took care of the physical needs of the school such as repairs and being sure that wood and coal were there for proper heating of the facility. He saw to it that the school grounds were attractive and neat. Cone was instrumental in the selection of quality teachers for the school. Wanting the students attending the school to have local role models to emulate, Cone made a special effort to select teachers who had attended Bulloch County Schools and become teachers to work at the Willow Hill School.

Eldridge may not have had much formal education, but his ability as an articulate and persuasive speaker is exemplified by presenting concerns of the Portal community to the Board of Education. On numerous occasions he would present to the Board the concerns of teachers and parents related to transportation, school supplies, school facilities, and other matters that would enhance and improve the education of the boys and girls.

Eldridge's interest in education and securing the best teachers for Willow Hill School is further shown by his being influential in securing R. W. Campbell, later to become a prominent educator in the area, as principal of the school in the '40's. He also was instrumental in hiring John Lawton as the first agricultural teacher for the Rosenwald

School which had grades one through nine. He also worked with the county agent M. M. Martin of the Statesboro Industrial High School, later to be named the William James High School. Eldridge knew professor William James, president of the Statesboro Industrial High School, very well. They often discussed educational matters and how to improve education for the area.

Ell, as Eldridge was affectionately called by friends, was also a dedicated and active community leader. He served on the Trustee Board and was Deacon of the Scarboro Grove Baptist Church of Portal. He was often described by his fellow Christians as a "quiet kind of person who knew how to get things done." In 1929 a devastating tornado struck the area. Much property was destroyed, including the Scarboro Grove Baptist Church. During this period, there was very little cash money available to hire a construction firm to rebuild the church. Deacon Cone viewed the devastation of the church not as a misfortune which lessened his Christian faith, but as a challenge in which the Lord would provide the resources and energy to rebuild the area's house of worship. He, along with other members of the church, became neophyte carpenters, cut logs, and did what was required to rebuild the church. Eldridge's leadership and undaunted faith helped the people of the community and of his church renew their faith in Christ.

Although Eldridge was a prominent individual in the rebuilding of the Scarboro Grove Baptist Church, other deacons of the church also contributed significantly to the effort to rebuild the church. Some of these members included his brother Enoch, John Green, George Jones, Mat Simpkin, Aaron Johnson, Mark Brown, Tom Bivins, and the then pastor, Reverend L. H. Lawton. These individuals have descendants currently residing in Bulloch County.

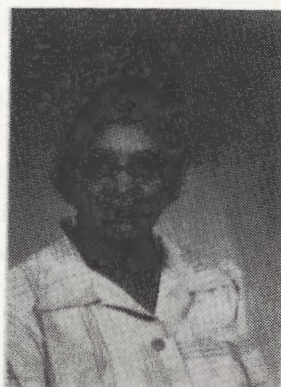
One of the most prominent religious leaders of the area was also selected to become a minister of the Scarboro Grove Baptist Church. This individual was the Reverend W. D. Kent. He was selected to be the spiritual leader of the church while Eldridge served as one of the church's trustees. Reverend Kent faithfully served the congregation of the Scarboro Grove Baptist Church for 44 years. Another significant accomplishment of Deacon Cone was the addition of a piano to the church to enhance the worship services at a time when such musical instruments were not considered appropriate for the church's sanctuary.

Eldridge was an affectionate and loving husband and father, not only to his own children, but to other boys and girls who needed a father figure and a loving male. He and Agnes had 12 children. He attempted to formally educate everyone. They all, at one time in their childhood, attended the Willow Hill or Rosenwald School and completed the highest level of education the school had to offer. Gordon (1908-1980), Enoch (1909-1985), Brooks (1910-1963), Fred (1912-1929), Ruby Cone Jackson (1914-1954), and Amos (1915-), all completed their formal education at the Willow Hill School. Trudie Cone Washington (1918-1973) attended Georgia State College (Savannah State College); Bessie Mae Cone Ashley (1920-) attended Edward Water College and the University of Florida. George completed the tenth grade, Sarah Agnes Cone Lee (1927-) attended Fort Valley State College and Georgia Southern College; and William James Cone (1930-) attended Broward Junior College of Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Agnes and Eldridge had one other child, Erma (1926), who died as an infant. He instilled in all of his children the importance of an education and its value in our society.

Eldridge was not only concerned with the education and care of his children, but also with the welfare of other boys and girls in the community. He possessed the unselfishness and compassion to extend whatever he had to help others. This is exemplified by his taking four other children into his home and raising them as his own. These children were Willie Brown, Bob Brown, Floyd Blackman, and Lloyd Blackman, and his granddaughter Elaine Brown. He reared and loved these children as his own. Each one completed the highest grade that was offered at the Willow Hill School. His Christian beliefs that he learned and taught at the Scarboro Grove Baptist Church were not idle words of love and brotherhood, but they were demonstrated in his daily life in the community and his love of all men.

June 3, 1993

MINNIE STEWART EVANS
Educator and Religious Leader
By Charles Bonds



Minnie Stewart Evans

Minnie Stewart Evans was born in Coats, North Carolina in Harnett County. Her parents were Hillery and Larceny Stewart. Minnie was born on their 500 acre farm of which the father sold timber, operated a sawmill, and several other small businesses to pay for the property that he had purchased. Hillery and Larceny were the parents of twenty children of which Minnie was the 18th.

Minnie began her formal schooling around 1917 where she attended the rural Black River Grove School. This was a small one-room school which comprised grades 1-5. To attend grades 6 & 7, she had to move to the small town of Coats. She moved to Coats and lived with one of her sisters. She attended school and helped her sister raise her nine nieces and nephews. Upon completion of the 7th grade at the Coats school, her education was interrupted for the next 5 years. However, Minnie never gave up on continuing her education. Five years later she enrolled at the Harnett County Training School in Dunn, North Carolina. She persisted and earned her high school diploma in 1932.

Having completed high school and unable to attend college immediately, Minnie continued to be thirsty for knowledge and a career in teaching. This void was to be filled when she entered the Fayetteville State Teachers College in 1937. This was not only an exciting year for Minnie because she was entering college, but his was also the year she married James Evans. She matriculated at Fayetteville

State Teachers College for the next two years. Since her husband was a farmer and felt he needed her home to assist in the operation of the farm, Minnie did not attend school for the following two years. Being a persistent and persuasive person, she convinced her husband that she desired to complete her education program begun at Fayetteville State Teachers College. He tended the farm for the next two years while she attended college. She earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Education from the Teachers College the summer of 1943.

Although Minnie was a very good student in college and maintained good grades to prepare her for teaching, she did not begin teaching immediately. She would not begin teaching until 1947, after she had devoted the next four years to the care of their child, Vivian Elaine. (They also have a son, Ranier Decarlo Evans).

In 1947, she received a message from Fayetteville State Teachers College president, Dr. Seabrook. He informed her that he had received word that there was a need for a Teachers College graduate to teach school in Bulloch County Georgia. From President Seabrook's and Miss Thedora Thomas' recommendations, she obtained her first official teaching position in Bulloch County.

She was employed to teach in a Bulloch County School located in Mt. Olive Church near the Evans County (Claxton) line. There she taught with enthusiasm and commitment for two years (1947-1949) in grades 1-7. The next appointment of both teaching and principalship from the Bulloch County School Superintendent was in 1949 when she was moved to the Harmony School which was located in Harmony Baptist Church. There she taught a combination of grades 1-7. During the spring of 1949 she became ill, and Laura Bell Martin taught her class until she recovered and returned to school the following fall.

Minnie instructed for the remainder of her teaching career in several schools in the system. She taught at the Piney Grove School for approximately 15 years. At this school near Denmark, she taught 5th, 6th, and 7th grades. Upon consolidation of the school in Bulloch County, Minnie taught in Nevils for several weeks. Then she was placed at the Julia P. Bryant School in Statesboro for two years where she taught reading, writing, and arithmetic. Her last 12 years of teaching in Bulloch County were completed at the Brooklet Elementary School. There she taught reading and mathematics. While employed in the Bulloch County system, she worked with Dennis Raith, Billie Bice, and Linda Lewis in Brooklet. While employed at

Julia P. Bryant School, she had the opportunity to work with Mr. Julius Abraham. She also worked with Mr. J. D. Redwine and Mr. Rufus Butler who was a principal and whose name is remembered by Butler Homes.

In the community in which she was employed as an educator, Minnie was not only involved in the schooling of boys and girls but also very active in community affairs. As a pianist, she has taught music to numerous boys and girls. This music instruction was often provided at the church-schools where she worked and for many years, she taught music in her home. She loved music and wished to pass the ability to play and enjoy music on to others through her teaching.

Minnie began her work as a religious leader at an early age when she became a member of the Coats Chapel Freewill Baptist Church of Coats, North Carolina. One of her earliest recollections of church work was when, as a little girl, she was asked to become church secretary. She accepted this position with reservation, but her brother assisted her with keeping records and she soon became a very capable and accurate church secretary.

Being a very good musician, especially with Christian music, Minnie has performed as musician for numerous churches in the area.

Several of the churches in which she has played, she was instrumental in organizing church choirs. She has been musician at the following churches: Mt. Olive Baptist Church, Harmony Baptist Church, Piney Grove Baptist Church, Little Bethel Baptist Church of Brooklet, Bethel Primitive Baptist Church, Magnolia Baptist Church, and Scarboro Grove Baptist Church of Portal.

In Bulloch County, Minnie has distinguished herself in the religious community through her unselfish dedication and commitment to working for Christ and helping others. She was instrumental in maintaining the Sunday Schools of several churches. Noteworthy is her work with the Education and Youth Departments of the Original First African Baptist Church. She served many years as a Sunday School teacher not only for the youth of the church but also for the adult Sunday School Class.

Minnie's most outstanding and noteworthy service to mankind is through her church involvement. She has given innumerable hours of missionary work to helping the less fortunate. She is well known in the community as a person who will help the less fortunate in any way possible. Through her work as a member of the Original First

African Baptist Church Missionary Society, she continued to visit the sick and provide food and other goods and services for poor if she knew they needed help. She has been named mother of the church for more than twenty years. This position of respect and honor is delegated to that female of the church who exhibits those qualities of love, caring, and concern for any member of the church and community.

Minnie has helped or been a part of numerous organizations and efforts to the church. She has served as president of the Deaconess for three years. She was the principal organizer of the Weekly Prayer Service Meetings, and has served as president of the Original First African Baptist Church's Senior Choir.

Minnie did not relinquish her love of working with children when she retired from teaching after 36 years in Bulloch County. She worked as a volunteer teacher in the Bulloch County NAACP Summer Tutorial Program for three years. She was instrumental in developing two special programs at First African Baptist Church for youth involvement and training. She sponsors the Mother's Day Program and the Children's Day Programs which involve the youth of the community and the Original First African Baptist Church. She has served as teacher of Vacation Bible School numerous summers prior to and after her retirement from the teaching profession. She continues to see the value of working with and training youth.

Minnie Stewart Evans, educator and Christian leader will be remembered for the many years devoted to educating the boys and girls of Bulloch County and the unselfish service she rendered to the Christian community.

PHOEBE ANN SMALL FLOYD

By Constance Jones

Mrs. Phoebe Ann Small Floyd was the daughter of the late James and Mariah Small. She was a native of Savannah, Georgia. She attended the public schools of Chatham County; received a normal diploma from Georgia State College, now called Savannah State College, and a B.S. Degree from Georgia State, Savannah, Georgia.

At a very young age, Miss Small came to Statesboro, Georgia to teach. While teaching in Statesboro, she met and was married to Mr. Guss Floyd. She was the proud mother of seven (7) children: Clay, Mariah, Augustus, Hernandez, Marion, and Mildred.

After teaching in Bulloch County for several years, she founded the Phoebe Floyd School at 12 Elm Street, Statesboro, Georgia, where she taught grades one through seven for several years. She later closed her school and became a classroom instructor at the Statesboro Industrial and High School where she taught English and Latin.

Due to poor health, Mrs. Floyd retired in June 1933. After an extended illness, she died December 27, 1937.

Mrs. Floyd was an outstanding classroom teacher and a civic leader. She was a member of First African Baptist Church; served as a Sunday School Teacher and was a member of the Adult Bible Class, a member of the Eastern Star, Woodsman, and Good Samaritan where she held office as secretary for several years.

A devoted wife and mother who taught her children to love, obey, pray, work and respect all: this is a verbal picture of Phoebe Ann Small Floyd.

Gibran has said, "The Teacher who walks in the shadow of the temple among his followers, give not of his wisdom, but rather of his faith and his lovingness. If he is indeed wise, he does not bid you enter the house of his wisdom, but rather leads you to the threshold of your

own mind." And so it was with Phoebe Ann Small Floyd.

Phoebe Ann Small Floyd was first and above all a true lady. She was a pioneer in the field of education in Statesboro, Georgia. She was of such great character, a strong and loving person, for all around her to pattern themselves after her. Her motto was "Be the best of whatever you are and give the world the best you have and the best will come back to you."

A devoted wife and mother who gave her all to her family, students and the community. A courageous person who gave inspiration, wisdom and guidance to all around her—truly a great lady of the times.

WILLIAM JAMES

Educator of His People

By Charles Bonds

William James (1872-1935) was born in Bartow, Washington County, Georgia on December 23, 1872. He was born to tenant farmers, Alfred James and Rainey Smith. His parents were hard workers who cherished education and instilled in their children the importance of education.

During his childhood years, James attended the small schools of Washington County where, it is reported, he "attacked his lessons with enthusiasm and vigor." Upon completion of his school in Washington County, he attended Atlanta Baptist (now Morehouse College) where he earned the Bachelor of Arts degree. He returned to Washington County upon completion of his degree program at Atlanta Baptist and began his teaching career. He taught in Washington County for several years.

In 1907 James came to Statesboro at the age of 30. When he arrived in Statesboro, there were plans being made to establish an industrial school for the Negro community. Apparently Mr. James worked untiringly, and the Statesboro Industrial and High School began matriculating students in 1907 with William James serving as its first principal.

The school's enrollment grew very rapidly. In four years the school's enrollment reached a high of 230 students. During the year of 1911, James saw the need for providing rooming and boarding facilities for students. It was during this year that he began raising funds to construct a dormitory in connection with the school. His dream of having a dormitory for the school was not realized until 1915 because of economic complications. The school continued to grow and by 1918, the school had an enrollment of approximately 260

students.

In 1915, the school graduated its largest class in its history. Fifteen students were handed diplomas by Col. Fred T. Lanier, Chairman of the Statesboro Board of Education.

Thomas Proctor of New York City took a special interest in the school and donated \$500. Following Proctor's donation, it was announced that the school would erect a new building.

In 1924, disaster struck the school in the form of a fire that destroyed two of the school's buildings. Even the new building was entirely destroyed and the old building was heavily damaged. In a few minutes it seemed that seventeen years of hard work and dreams had been almost completely destroyed by flames. However, James' dream did not burn, and he immediately began planning to rebuild. In May of 1925, a board of trustees was elected and an auditorium with a seating capacity of 600-700 was build at a cost of \$3,500.

The school received recognition that few Negro schools of the time could boast of in 1930. It became an accredited and recognized quality Negro high school. It is reported that James made the following comment about the school, his work, and his dream, "I have spent the best years of my life in building this school, sometimes teaching all day with a very small salary, and plowing by moonlight so that my family and the students of the school might have food. With the help of my friends, I am building a school for colored people which I am proud of. It is the thing nearest and dearest to my heart."

James was a well-known and respected educator in many parts of the country, as well as Georgia. He had friendly contacts in such places as New Jersey, New York, and Washington, D.C. Striving to give his students new experiences and new insights, he would often invite his friends to Statesboro to lecture to his students. His leadership ability and respect of his friends was demonstrated by his

being elected vice president of the State Association of Negroes.

Professor James died on May 5, 1935, at the age of 63 after becoming critically ill and undergoing a serious operation. He served as head of the school for 28 years. He was buried in Bartow, Georgia, alongside his wife, who had preceded him in death three years earlier.

In a tribute to and memory of Professor James, the Statesboro Industrial and High School was changed in 1948 to the William James High School. When the Statesboro City and Bulloch County Boards of Education merged in 1951 and new schools were constructed, a new high school for Negroes was constructed, and it was named in honor and memory of Professor James. The name of Professor James continues to be an integral part of education in Bulloch County. The William James Middle School, with an enrollment of approximately five hundred and seventy (570) seventh and eighth graders, bears his name today.

Surviving Professor James are three of his children who all were educators of their people. Ms. Ruby J. Roach, Brunswick, Georgia, retired teacher; Ms. Serena Juanita Johnson, teacher, Florida State University in Tallahassee; and Ms. Eleanor James, retired school teacher, Los Angeles, California. Ms. Madie Scott, Professor James' daughter-in-law, lived in Statesboro.

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REVEREND WILLIE DANIEL KENT

Minister and Civic Leader

by Charles Bonds



Dr. Willie D. Kent

William Daniel Kent, a native of Screven County, was born in Dover, Georgia in 1909 to Dolphus and Emma Kent. In 1920, at the age of eleven, he joined the New Bethlehem Baptist Church of Register, Georgia under the Reverend Norris Walker. After moving to Statesboro, he joined the First African Baptist Church.

He attended the public schools of Screven and Bulloch Counties and Georgia State College (now Savannah State College) in Savannah, Georgia. Prior to becoming a minister, he was employed by the Lannie F. Simmons Company, an automobile dealership in Savannah. After serving there as an auto mechanic from 1929-1941, he assumed the position of head mechanic at the Helmley's Garage from 1941-46.

In 1946, Mr. Kent and Gordon Lovett became partners in the L & K Garage of Statesboro which provided service in auto repair and paint/body work. The garage was located on the corner of Blich Street and U.S. Highway 80 West where the Wheeler Company is now located. When he and Gordon Lovett opened their establishment, Kent felt it would be a rewarding experience and a challenge. More

than just a Black business, this garage would meet and serve the needs of all people. During the operation of the garage, he repaired automobiles and tractors for Blacks in the community as well as members of the faculty, staff, and student body of Georgia Southern. Among his clients were GSC staff such as Dr. Zack Henderson, Dr. Pope Duncan, Dean Starr Miller, and other prominent citizens of Statesboro. Even in his work as an auto mechanic, Kent felt the need to help people.

Reverend Kent's compassion for his fellowman was not limited to those with whom he worked and received compensation in his auto repair business and church congregation. It extended out into the community as in the instance when the first Black students enrolled at Georgia Southern College. He would often take them to dinner and church while consistently encouraging them to remain in school and be persistent at the task of receiving a quality education which would pave the way for other Blacks. These were not all local students or students whom he had pastored. They were students from Savannah and Sylvania, students who truly needed a friend, companion, father, and motivator. They found all these qualities and more in Reverend Kent.

Brother Kent was always a very religious person and was ordained into the ministry in 1940 under Rev. J.P. Murphy. After entering the ministry, he developed a need and desire for additional formal training in the ministry and study of the Bible. He sought this intellectual and spiritual growth by attending the Morehouse College School of Religion in Atlanta, Georgia, and the American Baptist Theological Seminary in Nashville, Tennessee. His thirst for a more thorough understanding of the Bible did not cease upon his completion of courses at Nashville and Morehouse. He enrolled in courses offered by the Drew University School of Theology of Madison, New

Jersey. These courses were taught at the Log Cabin Center located in Sparta, Georgia. Additional study was completed at the Interdenominational Theological Seminary in Atlanta, Georgia.

Reverend Kent began his pastorate as minister of the Durden Grove Baptist Church in Twin City, Georgia in 1943. Since his first church pastorate, he has ministered to thousands and many have received Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. He also served two years as pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dover, Georgia; he served five years as pastor of the Freewill Baptist Church of Sylvania; seven years as pastor of the Hodges Grove Baptist Church of Statesboro; two years as pastor of the Lawton Grove Baptist Church of Sylvania; one year as pastor of the St. John Baptist Church of Oliver; twenty-three years as pastor of the First African Baptist Church of Statesboro; thirty-six years as pastor of the Piney Grove Baptist Church of Nevils; thirteen years as pastor of St. Mary's Baptist Church; and forty-two years as pastor of the Scarboro Grove Baptist Church. (Several of these pastorates were held simultaneously.)



Original First African Baptist Church

Reverend Kent did not restrict himself to ministering the gospel in the counties immediately surrounding his home of States-

boro. For many years he has been a highly sought after evangelist. This is evident in his conducting revivals not only in Georgia, but in Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Alabama. One of Reverend Kent's greatest desires was to walk in the land where Christ walked. In 1969 the dream became a reality when he visited the Holy Land. During that trip he also visited other countries and Europe.

Reverend Kent has been very active with many local and state organizations related to the ministry. He was past-president of the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance and president of the Pilgrim Missionary Baptist Convention for 28 years. He also was a member of the New Era Missionary Baptist Convention of Georgia, and he served as the Treasurer and Finance Committee Chairman for fifteen years. He was appointed to the Education Committee for the Progressive National Baptist Convention of the United States of America.

Scarboro Grove Baptist Church honored Reverend Kent and bestowed upon him the title "Pastor Emeritus" on November 9, 1985. This title was given in recognition of "...evidence by the fruit of his labor of love and Christian service to the people of Bulloch County..." He has also been honored with the title "President Emeritus of the Pilgrim Missionary Baptist Sunday School Convention." He continues to remain busy visiting hospitals, attending district meetings, conventions, associations, and churches throughout the surrounding counties.

In addition to providing Christian leadership and service to his fellowman, Reverend Kent has also found time to render many volunteer and civic services to the community. He was instrumental in the first major voter registration effort in Statesboro/Bulloch County. He used his personal car, gas, and time to drive citizens to the Poll to vote during the 1952 Voter Registration Drive. He worked for equality of citizens in all aspects of the community, not only as part

of his responsibility as a minister, but as a citizen concerned with the God given and constitutional rights of others.

In the Statesboro/Bulloch County Community, he was Chairman of the Bi-Racial Committee for School Integration. As a result of his efforts, the integration of the schools was achieved smoothly and without violence. While serving on this committee, he conferred with State Superintendent Mr. Oscar Joyner and Assistant School Superintendent Dr. R. Cousins on the School Consolidation Committee of Bulloch County. This committee was designed to eliminate many of the county's two-teacher, two-classroom schools. He also served on the State Committee on Human Relationships. This statewide committee was established to stimulate interest in encouraging cooperation of the races for the improvement of education. He served on this committee from about 1940 to 1950. Reverend Kent was married to the former Elise Joyce on July 18, 1932. They have one daughter, Prethenia Kent Jones, and a deceased son Willie Daniel Kent, Jr. They are the grandparents of Mary Elise Jones, Sam H. Jones, Jr., Michael Kent Jones, and Willie Daniel Kent, III.

This poem by Helen Steiner Rice best describes Reverend Kent:

Show me the way,
Not to fortune and fame,
Nor how to win laurels
or praise for my name.
But show me the way
to spread "The Great Story,"
That "Thine is the Kingdom
and Power and Glory."

WILLIE GORDON LOVETT

Entrepreneur, Civic and Church Leader

by Charles Bonds

An entrepreneur is defined by the *Webster Dictionary* as one who organizes, manages, and assumes the risk of a business or an enterprise. This description aptly describes Mr. Willie Gordon Lovett of the Bulloch County Community.

He was born in Bulloch County on November 11, 1901. His parents were Willie Lovett, a farmer and auto mechanic from Bulloch County, and his mother was Ella Munlin Lovett, a native of Bulloch County. In the Willie Lovett family there were eight children: three girls, Susie, Alma, and Grace; and five boys: George, Gordon, Rufus, Grady, and Fredd.

Gordon's first marriage was to Naomi Johnson Lovett, a native of Metter, Georgia. To this marriage there were born three children: Vondell, Willie C., and Colonel. Naomi passed away in 1951.

On November 23, 1953, he married Deotha Williams Lovett of Pembroke, Georgia in Bryan County. To this marriage there was one child born, Karen. He also has two stepdaughters, Glamarita and Elaine.

Gordon received his education in the public schools of Bulloch County.

Around 1935, he opened a garage in the uptown Statesboro district where he began working as a mechanic. In 1946, he moved from the uptown Statesboro location to what is presently U.S. Highway 80 and Blich Street. This is the present site of the Wheeler Company. There he remained and worked as an auto mechanic until 1972. At the garage, Gordon was the main auto mechanic and his brother, Grady, was the auto painter and body repairman. Gordon later became partners with W. D. Kent at the L & K Garage. Gordon,

a dedicated man, would work late into the night in order to complete repair jobs. His commitment to honest work was not only reflected in his early work at the garage, but in his everyday conversations with people. He sought every opportunity to encourage youth to work hard and honest for a living. He believed that work was one way of escaping poverty and discrimination. Though Gordon saw voting and equal rights as steps toward equality, he felt that economic opportunity and power could only be realized by those who were willing to work hard.

In 1968 Gordon demonstrated his belief in the necessity of possessing tangible assets by constructing a small shopping center on Blich Street. This was the first complex of its type in the Black community and the area. The shopping center contained a barber shop, laundromat, and a variety/convenience store. Gordon had constantly talked about how he could help his people. Investing in a project that would offer convenience and service to Blacks was the major purpose of his developing the shopping center. He also desired that Blacks in the community would have decent and attractive places where they could conduct business. The site of the shopping center was next to his home on approximately one and one-half acres of land located on the corner of Blich and Roundtree Streets. Today the shopping center is known as Donaldson Square, and continues to be a place of convenience for the people of the community.

Gordon's skills as a mechanic enabled him to operate the laundromat and make repairs of washers and driers when needed. Occasionally, he would have to acquire the services of a person more expert with washers and driers, but for the most part, he maintained the laundromat. Gordon and Deotha, his wife, operated the convenience store.

In 1974, the complex was sold to a young man whom Gordon

had admired and felt had the ability to maintain the complex and develop it into an even more successful business. It was sold to Bobby Donaldson for whom the shopping was named. Following the sale, Gordon retired from formal business.

Willie Gordon was eminently concerned with the quality of education that children received in Bulloch County. He served on the Planning and Advisory Committee for Vocational Education in Bulloch County in 1975. Gordon served as vice president of the Altamaha Area Community Action Authority, whose goal was to more effectively appropriate federal, state, local and private resources for the purpose of eliminating poverty. Many times he spoke of the advantages that Blacks would have if they received a good education. He believed that a good education would lead to a better life, not only for the individual, but for society.

Gordon's commitment to educating his children is reflected in his sending them to college and providing them whatever assistance they needed to acquire a good education. His daughter, Vondell McKenzie, attended college in California and is now Sales Director of Fashion Dynamics in San Jose. His son, Willie C., is a graduate of Tennessee State University with a degree in industrial engineering. He is presently employed with IBM Corporation in the Research Division. His son, Colonel, attended Howard University and earned a Master's Degree in engineering and is a part-time instructor of mechanical engineering at Howard University. Presently he is employed by the Department of Commerce in Washington, D.C. His daughter, Glamarita Yancy, attended Paine College, Augusta, and is employed with the U.S. Internal Revenue Service as a tax specialist. His daughter, Elaine Douglas, is a nurse at the Chatham Health Department's Lead Poison Unit in Savannah, Georgia. His daughter, Karen Lovett, earned a Master of Education Degree in Exceptional

Children from Georgia Southern College.

Gordon was also interested in the affairs of government that directly affected people. This interest is reflected in his chairmanship of the General Registration Committee of Bulloch County in 1952. He was also a member of the Bulloch County Civic Committee of Concerned Citizens whose goal was to increase the number of Black voters, which at that time numbered only 92 for the entire county. He helped register "qualified" Black voters in Bulloch County by taking them to City Hall where they were registered to vote. He wanted Blacks to have more privileges and opportunities. Having seen people removed from voting lines when they attempted to vote, he worked diligently to eliminate this injustice by becoming a member of the General Registration Committee of Bulloch County.

Gordon's concern for his fellowman was not restricted to the rights that were guaranteed Black people in the U.S. Constitution. He was also concerned that there were few decent neighborhoods for Blacks. In 1971 he purchased land on what is now known as Route 4, Miller Extension (Colfax Road). With this thirty acres of land, he left his long time residence on Roundtree Street, which he had occupied since 1946, and built a new home. He did not desire to keep all of this land for himself. His goal was to provide land at a reasonable price so that Blacks could build homes and have a decent neighborhood. Soon after this thirty acres of land was acquired, he divided it into tracts and began selling sites for homes. Today, this community is growing, and in the very near future its citizens have agreed to name it in honor of Gordon Lovett's memory.

Gordon was a devout Christian, and this dedication was reflected in the time and contributions to his church, Bethel Primitive Baptist Church, located on Williams Road. He was instrumental in securing the site of the present building and devoted many hours of

labor to its design and construction. As a member of the congregation, he served as Chairman of the Deacon Board for many years. During his tenure, many improvements and innovations were made at the church.

Willie Gordon Lovett's entrepreneurship did not go unnoticed for it was well known that he was a man of business. He learned very early to save part of what he earned, and encouraged many young people to do the same. His management of finance and business affairs were highly respected, and this became evident when he was appointed Administrator of the Kennedy Estate in Cobbtown.

On May 22, 1982, Mr. Willie Gordon Lovett passed from this life at the age of 74 at his residence on Route 4, Miller Extension (Old Colfax Road). Mr. Lovett's entrepreneurship shall always distinguish him in the Bulloch/Statesboro community. However, his love for his fellowman will always be a beacon through his work in the community and church.

These final words of this bibliography probably best describe Mr. Willie Gordon Lovett: husband, father, worker, philanthropist, civic leader, entrepreneur and, most of all, Christian.

LAURA BELL HENDLEY MARTIN
School Social Worker and Humanitarian

By Charles Bonds



Laura Bell Hendley Martin

Laura Bell Hendley Martin (1920-) was born in Bulloch County to the late Jeff and Laura Moore Hendley. She received her primary school education at the Riggs School near Statesboro and her high school education at the Statesboro High and Industrial Institute. Upon completing her high school education at the early age of 15 and earning her high school diploma in 1936, she matriculated at Spelman College and later at Savannah State College in 1957. Ten years later she completed study at the University of Georgia and earned a Masters Degree in education with an emphasis in school social work. While attending the University of Georgia, Laura Bell was elected to membership into the prestigious education society of Kappa Delta Pi.

She began her career in education at Harmony, Sandy Grove, and Willow Hill Schools. In 1965, the Bulloch County School System recognized the need for a second visiting teacher, and she was sought by school officials for the position, the second person to be so named in the school system's history. She capitalized on this opportunity and accepted the position as visiting teacher. She felt that this was an occasion for her to have more far-reaching impact on the lives of not

just students, but parents in helping them discern the need for their children to receive an education.

Her responsibilities as a visiting teacher were not always the most pleasant for they were filled with moments of distress and frustration. It was not always a simple task to make the parents realize that they were denying the child the right to an education by keeping him out of school or permitting him to skip school. She endeavored to convince the parents that things would be better for the child later in life if the child were in school. Frequently, the reasons why a child remained from school was not simply to remain absent or to work on the farm to help support the family, but because of a lack of such necessities such as clothes. Laura Bell's visiting teacher's responsibilities included, but did not require her helping indigent parents and children receive clothes and social services from governmental agencies. These afforded a child a better chance to attend school and learn better without the stress and constant concern about life's necessities and the welfare of the family.

Her position as a school social worker included more than attempting to persuade parents to send their children to school. In some respects she was more than a school employee in that she was concerned with children being happy during their school attendance. As she attended schools and homes to gain insight into why a child failed to attend school, she observed signs reflecting that the child was unhappy at home or in school. She observed signs of daydreaming, shyness, withdrawal, cheating, fighting, defying authority, misbehaving, sulking, etc. She used this information to work with the parents, the child, the teacher, and other school officials in attempting to solve the child's problem.

She made numerous visits to the homes of students who had poor attendance records. With some of these visits, in the interest of the child, she requested that the courts appoint a guardian to insure that students would attend school. Her career has afforded her the opportunity to convince students who had dropped out of school to return and continue their formal education through attendance at adult

education classes. Many of the students were influenced to attend adult education classes, complete their courses of study and earn their high school diplomas.

As a school social worker, Laura Bell adopted the ecological approach to working with students to increase their school attendance. She felt that every significant person in the student's life affected or would have some influence on his attendance, perception of, and performance at school. She worked cooperatively with teachers and principals to help students. During her more than 20 years of work as school social worker in Bulloch County, she consulted with the parents to help them gain insight into the problems of their children. She recognized early in the position as school social worker the importance of the family and its relationship in the total adjustment and education of the child.

Though the nature and confidentiality of her work as a social worker prevented divulging of accounts of cases in which she achieved great success, she states that, "my career has been most rewarding and has provided me with a genuine sense of personal fulfillment. I have experienced real joy in helping young people, especially the needy, find themselves and discover their self-worth. Some of the greatest thrills of my career were the results of children when they had come to the realization that someone cared for them," she said in an interview reported in the *Statesboro Herald* (Sunday, June 9, 1986).

Even though Laura Bell was not your typical classroom teacher, she did not separate herself from other important functions and auxiliaries of the school system. She worked with the school PTAs. For her work with the Bulloch County Association of Educators, she received recognition in 1986 for her dedicated service and commitment to the professional organization. While teaching at the Willow Hill School, she received the Teacher of the Year Award in 1967.

Laura Bell's commitment, dedication, and exemplary work as a school social worker was recognized and appreciated in the area. In April of 1975, she received the prestigious Award of Merit from the First District Georgia Visiting Teachers Association.

Reflecting evidence of her commitment and service to education in this area, even after her retirement, she was nominated as a recipient for the Georgia Association of Educator's Human Relations Award. This nomination was based on her promoting training programs for people from all segments of the community and from area communities. She participated in programs and committees for the Upward Bound Project at Georgia Southern College. This project seeks to prepare disadvantaged high school students for successful college entrance and successful completion of a college program. She has consulted or served on decision-making committees for Adult Education Leadership, the Bulloch County Board of Education, the Migrant Education Program, the High Hope Foundation, the County Bulloch Association for Retired Citizens, the Community Acting Together and Interagency Council Community Meeting, the Bulloch County Health Department. The nominating committee, in describing her service and eligibility for the award stated, "Both the quality and quantity of participation in these training programs by Mrs. Martin have enhanced educational aspirations of all involved."

Laura Bell's work in the area of human relations began as early as 1950 when she served as consultant to the NAACP's tutorial program. In 1981 she worked with the Inter-Agency Council which included various community agencies coming together to discuss and solve problems of troubled children. Her work with the Migrant Education Program began in 1983 where she assisted parents in seeking health care, clothing, and food for their children attending schools in Bulloch County. Her work with the High Hope Foundation in 1976 afforded her the opportunity to approve and monitor programs specifically designed for the handicapped. As a member of the Adult Education Leadership Committee during 1983, she approved persons for entrance into the adult education program. In 1980 with the funding of the Upward Bound Program at Georgia Southern College, she worked cooperatively with college officials in recruiting and approving students from Bulloch County Schools and from the surrounding counties of Evans, Candler, and Screven for entrance

into the program. This extraordinary amount of human relations work reflected her sincere interest in the education of youth.

When Laura Bell retired, the Bulloch County Community felt one of its most prominent and dedicated educators was retiring, leaving a void that would be difficult to fill. However, Laura Bell's love for people and her desire to improve the conditions of the poor and needy of the community would not cease. She continued enthusiastically in such services as volunteering for the local hospital, the Community Action Agency, and participated actively in local civic organizations which have as their objective the improvement of life for the citizens of the Bulloch County/Statesboro community.

She was active in numerous civic and education organizations during her tenure as school social worker. She served on the High Hope Foundation, and education agency whose programs are specifically designed to provide services for the handicapped. She was a member of the Bulloch Association of Educators, the Georgia Association of Educators, and the National Education Association. Her biography appears in "Who's Who in Education," and she continues as a member of the American Association of University Women.

She is an active member of the Bethel Primitive Baptist Church of Statesboro. She has four children, three daughters who are educators and a son who is an accountant. Her husband is Eugene Martin, a retired service worker.

Laura Bell Hendley Martin - Educator and Humanitarian - who is best known for her service to the students and people of Bulloch County.

LUETTA LEVERETTE MOORE

Recreation Pioneer

By Charles Bonds



Luetta Leverette Moore

(Please note that portions of this biography are taken from the *Statesboro Herald* and a personal interview with Mrs. Moore's husband, Mr. Jesse Moore and her two children, Marcia and Michael of Statesboro).

"Don't believe you're better than anyone else, but always believe you are as good as anyone," is a bit of philosophy that governed the life of Mrs. Luetta Moore, a woman who has made outstanding achievements and contributions in the Statesboro-Bulloch County community in her lifetime.

This philosophy is one which Luetta and her husband, Jesse, a bricklayer, have endeavored to instill in their seven children: Joyce and Michael, Statesboro, Georgia; Jo Ann Pointer, Atlanta, Georgia; Cornell, Minneapolis, Minnesota; Bernard, Virginia Beach, Virginia; Kenneth, Stillwater, Oklahoma; and Marcia Moore-Foster, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Born Luetta Leverette on October 17, 1920, in Lincoln County, Georgia, but reared in nearby Wilkes County, to Anthony Leverette and Sally Will Bates, she was one of 13 children.

Mrs. Moore attended schools in Wilkes County for her early education, and for her education beyond the elementary level, she attended Brewer Normal School in Greenwood, South Carolina, and

Savannah State College.

Luetta set goals for herself early in life. This is reflected in a quote from the Statesboro Herald, "I was determined to outshine my older sister whom I adored," she said. "I didn't consider myself pretty, so I turned to books. By nature, I'm curious." she noted. Being from a large family, she learned to get along well with all ages and groups.

In 1940, the Moores moved to Bulloch County. They had two children at that time, and Luetta became interested in scouting and became an assistant leader. In 1947, the family suffered a severe setback. A house fire destroyed most of their belongings and Jesse, her husband, was severely injured. "It was tough" she admitted, as she reflected in an interview in the Statesboro Herald. Jesse was hospitalized, and Luetta had the sole responsibility of supporting the family for 13 months while Jesse remained in the Bulloch Memorial Hospital. Meanwhile, to support the family, Luetta did domestic work. This was her first work outside the home to earn a living for her family. Jesse had always managed to support the family comfortably until his accident.

The tragedy of the accident was lessened by the caring concern and support of friends from the community. Friends and relatives gave Luetta and her family much support. Luetta was a determined woman. She was determined not to surrender to welfare by taking a variety of jobs. A quote of hers was, "Don't ever say 'I can't or won't do this or that,'" she counseled. "If you need to, you can do anything." These quotes also reflect insight that Luetta gained in her personal perseverance during a trying and tragic period of her life. She believes that many times people can help themselves if they are not stubborn.

In 1956, the Statesboro Recreation Director, Max Lockwood, hired Luetta to organize a recreation program at a site on Blich Street. She saw this request to work with the recreation department of Statesboro as a challenge and opportunity to influence the lives of young people. She agreed to take the job although it meant giving up her studies at Savannah State College to become a teacher. Part of her reason for taking the position at the Blich Street Center was that she

believed a recreation center would be beneficial for Blacks in Bulloch County.

When Mrs. Moore accepted Mr. Lockwood's offer to become the first director of the Blich Street Recreation Center, she stipulated that she be given autonomy in establishing the regulations, rules and recreational programs of the center. This autonomy was granted Luetta for the nearly 17 years she was director of the center. She retired from the position of directress of the center in 1970 because of health reasons.

Under the guidance and direction of Mrs. Moore, the Blich Street Recreation Center became the nucleus for youth activities and character building in Statesboro. Many programs and activities were planned and implemented under her guidance including the following: a beauty pageant held every summer with high school students participating in categories of talent, beauty, and poise. She believed that such activities helped develop qualities of character, friendship, trust, love and caring in young ladies. These pageants were usually held around the pool of the center. Other activities sponsored by the center were Teen Town, the Miss Blich Street Beauty Pageant, a water show, golf clinic, day camp, and many team sports.

Mrs. Moore's ability was not limited only to sports and recreation, she also possessed a keen sense for business. This ability was evident in her operation of her own business as a Mary Kay Cosmetic Consultant. However successful her cosmetic business, her heart was always with developing character in young people. She took much pride in the Blich Street Center because it was "...such an integral part of our community. Recreation is my heart," she once said. Noteworthy among her work with youth was her job as a substitute teacher in Bulloch County for many years.

In 1965, the Georgia Recreation and Parks Society recognized Luetta Moore's "dedicated and loyal service" to recreation. This recognition reflected not only her involvement and promotion of efforts of the local Statesboro Recreation Program, but also her influence and recognition in the state as an outstanding leader in the

field of public recreation.

Mrs. Moore was appointed to the Advisory Board of the State of Georgia Recreation Department in 1976. Until her death, she continued her interest and service to the recreation department and youth of Bulloch County. She served 29 years on the Statesboro Recreation Staff and effected many positive changes in the department and lives of many people with whom she was associated.

Mrs. Moore was also very active in community affairs and activities. She was a member of the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church; Chairperson of the Altamaha Area Communities Action Authority, and the Board of the United Way of Bulloch County. One of her most beloved civic organizations was the Garden Club Association of Georgia. She was President of the local Garden Club and held offices at the District and State levels.

To commemorate the noteworthy contributions of Luetta to the Statesboro-Bulloch Community, the organization Sta-Buc, Inc., a civic organization comprised of men, named its highest Scholarship in her honor. The Luetta Moore Memorial Scholarship was first presented in June, 1986 to Julius Abraham, Jr. an honor graduate of Statesboro High School. The Statesboro Recreation Department recognized Luetta's contributions by naming the major baseball field at the Blich Street Center in her honor. The commemoration is noted by a granite historical marker located at the field.

MRS. BEATRICE RIGGS

A Biological Sketch

By Carolyn Postell

Mrs. Riggs was born in Macon, Georgia in 1904 to Jessie Bellingsley and the former Grace Wyche. She was the first of three children.

Her educational background included attending Smith High School, Ballard Normal School, and received her certificate for teaching. She has taught school in Jeffersonville, Cordele, Danville, Fitzgerald, Millen and in Bulloch County.

She was married to the late Herbert H. Riggs, founder of the Riggs Funeral Homes in Statesboro and Sylvania, Georgia and the Georgia Grace Nursing Home in Statesboro. Four daughters and one son (who died early) were born to them.

She and her husband worked in the Juvenile Court System in Chicago and continued this involvement in the Bulloch County Juvenile Court System. They took delinquent youths into their home from jail and made provisions for them until the courts settled the cases. They were also foster parents for many children until the local agencies could provide homes for them.

Over the years Mrs. Riggs has provided housing (apartments and houses) as rentals for local citizens.

She is a member of Bethel A. M. E. Church, Statesboro, where she has been a member since childhood, and a member of the Eastern Star of Charity and Good Will.

She is a member of the local Chamber of Commerce and presently owner of the Riggs Funeral Home and Georgia Grace Nursing Home where for many years more than 100 persons were employed. Upon seeing the need for a modern nursing home to replace the existing one, the firm merged with Simpson and Johnson,

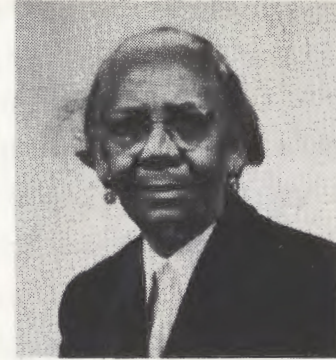
Inc., of Atlanta, Georgia. The new nursing home opened in March, 1988.

Some of her services and contributions to the community include Christmas gifts, food and fruit to the needy, sponsoring and financing a camp for children for five years, providing funds and transportation for 88 children to Disney World and Six Flags, providing funds for Boy Scouts to purchase food for their camping activities, supporting a local black physician in setting up his practice in the community, and many, many other acts of inspiration and charity to local persons and groups.

In July, 1985, a committee of local persons established the Herbert and Beatrice Riggs Scholarship Fund with an initial commitment of \$5000 in her honor. This fund is endowed with the Georgia Southern College Foundation which is held in trustee capacity. Scholarships will be given to out-standing students who are residents of Georgia and to those majoring in any of the human service fields.

AMANDA LOVE SMITH
Humanitarian and Educator

By Charles Bonds



Amanda Love Smith

Among natives of Bulloch County, there lives and walks a giant among women—a quiet giant whose contributions and achievements are of great significance to the history and development of the Bulloch County area. This personality, Amanda Love Smith, epitomizes and embodies the characteristics of a gentle, caring, and Christian woman.

Amanda Love Smith was born in Bulloch County on July 5, 1888 to the late Alf and Reta Love. The oldest of five children, all of which were girls, and presently the only living child, Amanda enjoyed the closeness of family and its responsibilities, the merriment of childhood joys, family gatherings, and special occasions.

Amanda received her early elementary education in a small one room school fondly remembered as “Pretoria School” near Pretoria, Georgia, with her high school education continuing at Dorchester Academy.

She realized early that it was her ambition in life to become a teacher. Her love for children and her desire to help them learn led her to further her education. Through courses taught by commuting

teachers from Georgia State College, she satisfied and completed requirements needed to apply for a teaching license. Georgia State College, now Savannah State College, was then a two year institution. Later Amanda continued her studies at Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama.

Amanda's abilities in the classroom were very diverse as indicated by the various age levels and subjects she taught. After receiving her teaching license, she taught home economics for eleven years at the William James School in Statesboro. She also taught elementary school in Metter and Brooklet, Georgia. She recalls that in Brooklet her husband, H.W.B. Smith, Sr., taught upper elementary students while she taught in the lower elementary school. Her love for teaching young children was not for the monetary rewards but for the joy it brought to her life. The intrinsic rewards for teaching outweighed the inadequate tangible rewards. She humorously reflects on her salary during those early years as being meager, around the amount of \$15.00 per month, "...hardly enough to help maintain a family of four," she recalls.

Amanda's impact and inspiration were felt by numerous youngsters until her retirement in 1945 after 40 years of dedicated service to teaching. Though retired from the school system as a teacher, Amanda did not relinquish her goal of educating young children. After retirement, she missed teaching and continued to reflect on how she could help educate young children for success upon entry to formal schooling at age six. Realizing the importance of early intervention, she organized and opened in her home the first kindergarten for Black children in Statesboro-Bulloch County. She reflects that initially, she opened with only eleven children. At this time in history, the middle 1940's, it was unusual for children to attend kindergarten. Heightened interest in her kindergarten program was

generated when parents began to hear how successful children attending her school were upon entrance to first grade. Mrs. Smith operated and taught in her kindergarten for over nine years until she was required to care for her husband who had been injured in an automobile accident. During this period, the kindergarten closed and was never reopened.

Through her many years as an educator, Mrs. Smith found time to work in various organizations and give of her service to others. Indicative of her qualities and characteristics, a number of plaques, recognitions, and awards presented to her speak for the service she has rendered throughout Bulloch County. She has received recognition from organizations which include the March of Dimes plaque for service rendered as chairperson of fundraising for her ward. She has also been presented a plaque in recognition of her service by the Cancer Crusade Society for her 40 years of service as a volunteer worker and the City of Statesboro presented her with the Citizen's Award of Merit. She was honored by the William James High School PTA at a special event called Founder's Day and presented with a plaque for her dedicated and unselfish service as PTA President for 30 years. In 1983, a reception honoring this humanitarian and educator was hosted by the civic organization Black Women of Profession. Mrs. Smith was again recognized publicly for her outstanding achievements and contributions to the Statesboro-Bulloch County community. The occasion was attended by representatives from Georgia Southern College, and representatives from both the Statesboro City and Bulloch County governmental bodies. Each segment of the community desired to demonstrate to Amanda its appreciation for her dedicated and unselfish service to mankind. At this occasion, she received a commemorative plaque for her outstanding service.

Amanda's beliefs and convictions are predicated on her reli-

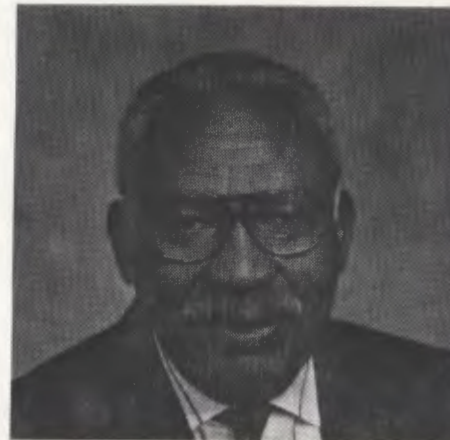
gious faith. Possessing a strong Christian background, she believes that faith preserves, and that one must believe that a task can be accomplished once it is undertaken. A member of the Brannen Chapel United Methodist Church, Mrs. Smith served for a number of years as President of the Women's Society. This position gave her an opportunity to travel to many states and to attend the General Assembly for Women of her denomination. Her travels as a representative of her church include: Iowa, New Jersey, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and Ohio. She continues to be actively involved in church work and is a member of the Women's Society. She was presented a token of recognition by the Brannen Chapel Methodist Women for her many years of service to the church and its state and national organizations.

At the young age of 98, Mrs. Smith continues to be a very active and energetic person. She is president of the Senior Citizens Council at Jo-Li Cottage of Bulloch County where she enjoys the fellowship and participation of close members and longtime friends. She is a member of the Royal Savings Club of Statesboro.

Mrs. Amanda Smith is the mother of one son, H.W.B. Smith, Jr. a retired teacher and principal, and a daughter Annie Mae Belle.

In the seventeenth century, Robert Burton wrote, "I will spend my time and knowledge, which are my greatest fortunes for the common good of all." Mrs. Amanda Love Smith is to be saluted as she stands tall among the rich and remarkable women who have so done. "Let us, then, be up and doing, still achieving, still pursuing."

WILLIE ALBERT SMITH, SR.
Soldier, Civic Leader, Politician, Businessman,
First Elected Black Official
by Charles Bonds



Willie Albert Smith, Sr.

Willie Albert Smith, (1927) a native of Statesboro, Georgia in Bulloch County, was born to the late Sidney C. and Annie Owens Smith. His paternal grandparents were the late Reverend Albert and Eva Smith who migrated to Bulloch County from McDuffie County. His maternal grandparents were the late Will and Mamie Owens who migrated to Bulloch County from Burke County around 1885, settling in the Clito area.

During his early childhood, Smith attended many elementary schools. This was the result of his grandfather Smith's vocation. As an itinerant Methodist preacher, Willie's grandfather was called upon to make several moves during his ministry. His entire family usually accompanied him.

Finally, settling in Statesboro in 1938, Willie Smith entered Statesboro Industrial and High School (now William James). He remained there until 1943. At that time, Smith moved to Columbus, Georgia, where he entered Spencer High School and remained until graduation in 1945.

In 1945, Smith was drafted into the armed forces of the United States and assigned to the Army Air Corps (later to become the United States Air Force) where he remained until graduation in 1968.

These service years, which were spent primarily in the electronics field, eventually found Smith operating as an Airborne Missile Guidance Technician. Because of his duty assignments during his Air Force career, Smith traveled extensively around the world to such places as Alaska, Africa, Guam, England, Japan, France, Italy, Okinawa, Hawaii, and Mexico, as well as throughout the United States. His career in the Air Force was very distinguished, having been decorated with various medals and citations. He retired from the Air Force with the rating of Master Sergeant.

Six years after entering the Armed Forces, Smith married Grace Donaldson, the daughter of George and Gussie Donaldson of Statesboro. She was a teacher at William James School for many years until transferring to Statesboro High School in 1969, where she remains as head of the Social Studies Department. They have two sons, Willie A., Jr. and Eric G.

Upon completing his Air Force career he returned to Statesboro with the goal of making his home town and county a better place to live for all people, both Blacks and Whites. After resettling in Statesboro, Smith immediately became an active part of the community. One of his greatest concerns was related to the quality of support the all-Black William James School was receiving from the community. He noted that there were no organized boosters concerned with the athletic or academic program of the school. Therefore, he took action and became the founding president of the Statesboro-Bulloch County Boosters Club, known as STA-BUC. Under his leadership, the organization raised money to support activities for Black students until they were integrated in the early 1970's.

The impetus to return to his hometown and make a significant contribution to community life was also stimulated by other events

noticed during his childhood. One of the things that made a distinct impression on Smith was that there was no Black representation in any segment of government in the community where decisions were made that affected Black people. His first attempt to become part of the mainstream decision making process and represent the people was in 1978 when he ran for a seat on the Bulloch County Board of Education. His effort was unsuccessful, and he was defeated by a white candidate, Charles Brown, a local attorney.

Having won the confidence of the Black community, Smith, with the support of community leaders, sought to be appointed to the Board of Education when a vacancy occurred due to the resignation of a board member. A citizen's group request to the Board of Education to appoint Smith to the vacant seat was denied. Smith's dream of representing the people in a public office had been thwarted.

These two disappointing defeats within less than two years did not stifle Smith's dream of representing his people. In 1979, Smith, along with four other citizens of the Statesboro community, filed a federal class action lawsuit against the Bulloch County Board of Education, the City Government of Statesboro, and the Bulloch County Commission. Their suit contended that the way voting took place in these three significant governing bodies of the city and county, diluted the voting strength of Blacks, therefore making it almost impossible for a Black to be elected to a public office. A settlement with the Board of Education and the plaintiffs was formalized. New educational voting districts were redrawn to include seven districts with the majority of voters in one of the districts being Black. Smith ran for the Board of Education seat against another Black opponent and won overwhelmingly to become the first Black elected official in the history of Bulloch County. Smith's vision of representing his people had become a reality; however, his major task of making significant contributions to help all people, Blacks and Whites, had just begun.

On July 12, 1983, at a meeting of the Bulloch County Board of Education, Smith presented a proposal for improving the educational opportunities of Blacks in the schools. Earlier he had recognized a lack of Black students in "honor classes." He believed that there were more Black students who met the existing criteria for enrolling in honor classes and that these students would be successful in such classes if given the opportunity. On July 23, 1983, the Board of Education approved a Citizens Committee to: (1) Study alternative methods of early identification of Black students with high potential; (2) identify counseling and supportive procedures that would facilitate Black participation in more demanding academic programs; (3) facilitate Black participation in more demanding academic programs, and (4) investigate successful parent involvement activities that would complement the school's effort. The recommendations of the "Report of the Citizens Committee" were presented to the Board of Education on October 11, 1983. Among the recommendation of the committee for the improvement of education were: (1) the formation of study groups; (2) the formation of heterogeneous groups for remedial services; (3) the formation of a "Tutor Hotline"; (4) summer enrichment classes for students in elementary/middle school with an emphasis on reading, arithmetic, and creative writing, and (5) allowing students to audit courses offered in summer school.

The importance of the "Smith Report" was that it offered a bold new proposal for the improvement of education with the involvement of major segments of the community and the education system acting as partners.

Even before and after his election as school board member, Smith made significant contributions to the community and to his development. He became a founder of the Community Human Relations Council in 1971. He served on the Board of Education's Advisory Committee for two years. He was the first Black to chair a major commission in Bulloch County (Bulloch County Planning

Commission). He was voted Man of the Year twice by the civic organization STA-BUC for his outstanding leadership and services.

Following retirement from the Air Force, he returned to Statesboro, and enrolled at Georgia Southern College, graduating with a degree in Criminal Justice. An outstanding alumnus, he has been cited as making a significant contribution to bringing smooth transition from a traditionally all white institution to one multi-ethnic and multi-racial. He remains involved in many aspects of the college.

Smith is employed by Communities Acting Together, Inc. (formerly Altamaha Area Community Action Authority, Inc.) where he holds the position of Program Director of Education Talent Search.

He and his wife own Smith Properties, a rental firm located in Statesboro.

Smith is not only active in civic, political and business matters, but is also deeply involved in religious affairs. He is a member of Brannen Chapel United Methodist Church and serves as Lay Leader. He is a member of the Statesboro District Council on Ministries and serves as District Director of Christian Unity and Inter-Religious Concerns. Smith is also a member of the South Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church. He has spoken and continues to share his knowledge and experience with many people throughout the state and region. Smith is listed in "Personalities of the South" and "Who's Who Among Black Americans."

Religiously, W. A. is continuing the tradition of his father, that of working in the Methodist ministry. To increase his effectiveness and to acquire knowledge about the Bible and Christianity, he has studied at the Emory University School of Theology. He is an ordained minister at several churches in the Ogeechee area including churches in Jenkins and Screven counties.

HARVEY VAN BUREN

By Charles Bonds



Harvey Van Buren

Born in Sumter, South Carolina, on March 29, 1884, Harvey Van Buren was the son of James and Harriet (Grantum) Van Buren. His father's occupation was that of carpenter.

At an early age as a young child, Harvey was interested in school and apparently wanted to do his best as to prepare himself for higher education. His father being a carpenter, young Van Buren knew that his parents could not easily afford to send him to college. He realized that although his father possessed a trade, whatever meager resources he earned had to be used for the subsistence of a large family. However, Harvey was not discouraged and continued to pursue his dream with persistent determination. He took a course at Kendall Institute in Sumter, South Carolina, and apparently did well enough in the course to attain admission to college. He was able to matriculate in college with the financial aid of a sister who had just completed Scotia Seminary and began teaching. She had promised Harvey that she would help him with his fees for college out of her first month's salary as a teacher. She kept her promise and Harvey entered Biddle University in 1897.

Realizing that his father and mother could not afford to finance his college expenses and not desiring to put a heavy burden on his sister, upon arrival at Biddle University, he approached the president of the University. He frankly stated his financial condition and determination to receive an education to the president, D. J. Sanders. He asked the president if he could secure a job for him to earn his way through college. Apparently, the University President was not only impressed with the young Van Buren's honesty but also with his determination. Van Buren was employed as a waiter in the dining hall; however, his excellent academic performance made his job in the cafeteria short lived. He soon was awarded an academic scholarship because of his being able to maintain an average of ninety percent in all his studies. This distinction of academic excellence he maintained until he graduated in 1902 with a bachelors degree.

Harvey's quest and thirst for knowledge did not commence when he earned his bachelors degree in 1902. His dreams of becoming a medical doctor had not ended at this stage. He soon entered Howard University in Washington, D. C.

Harvey apparently felt that the first phase of his journey toward a degree in medicine was the worst. He had maintained an "A" average at Biddle. However, at Howard, the scenario was different. He arrived at Howard with one suit and only about half of the required fees for the college term. With this realization, Van Buren had thoughts of delaying his course of study for a year until he could acquire more funds. But a friend, C. W. Maxwell, also of Sumter, South Carolina, and also a doctor, persuaded him not to delay his course of study.

Since Van Buren did not have a scholarship to assist with paying his college fees, he worked at various boarding houses for two years, earning two dollars a week and board. During the summer vacation he would take jobs at hotels. Later he secured a job with the Government Printing Service.

Just when he thought everything would work out well for him to attend classes and have his financial predicament solved, lecture hours at the university were changed, and it became necessary for him to take classes during the day instead of night. Since classes were usually offered during the evening, this arrangement was perfect for his working during the day to earn money to finance his education.

This seemed to be another obstacle to Van Buren's pursuit of a medical degree. He could not attend day classes without the job at the Government Printing Office, and he could not work and attend classes simultaneously. His predicament was further complicated by his being new on the job and a new supervisor having just recently taken the position. Van Buren, too, was concerned with what other employees would think of his requesting a change of shift. However, he soon convinced himself that he must ask the new supervisor, Mr. Stillings, for a change to the night shift if he were to continue his education. To his amazement, when he presented his request on paper, it was accepted, and he was changed from the day shift to the night shift. With this change, Van Buren was able to continue his education but not without its hardships.

Van Buren's unyielding determination is further reflected in his capacity to endure hardships. He continued his employment at the Government Printing Office beginning at midnight and working till 8 a.m., leaving work and going directly to class

until 5:00 p.m. The only time he had to devote to studying and sleeping was between the hours of 5:30 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. This type of intensive activity of working and studying with very little time for rest resulted in his two hundred pound body being reduced to approximately one hundred forty-five pounds by the time he earned his medical degree in 1907.

Apparently Van Buren was not satisfied with the attainment of just a general medical degree, and matriculated in a post-graduate course at Boston College of Physicians and Surgeons. While in Boston, he was a resident at North End Dispensary and Hospital for two years. The course taken at Boston College of Physicians and Surgeons was completed in 1910.

His professional practice of medicine began in Louisville, Georgia, in 1911 where he practiced for four years. In 1915 he moved his practice to Statesboro, Georgia, and established a large medical practice with an emphasis on surgery.

Dr. Van Buren's medical practice in Statesboro was very much needed, and he saw the need to expand this practice to include a hospital.

As noted in *A Century of Progress in Bulloch County*, Bulloch County's hospital was a private one, built with funds raised by stock subscriptions. It was finished and opened in May of 1908, two years after a group of local physicians conceived the idea of a Statesboro hospital. Originally, the facility was known as the Sample Sanitarium, named in honor of Dr. R. L. Sample. However, upon its opening the name was changed to The Statesboro Sanitarium. It was located on Hill Street in the vicinity of the former jail.



The Statesboro Sanitarium

The Statesboro Sanitarium remained the only hospital in Statesboro until 1918 when Dr. Van Buren opened his facility. Just three years after moving to Bulloch county to practice medicine, Dr. Van Buren opened the Van Buren Sanitarium on what is presently Elm Street.

An account of the opening was printed in the local paper, *The Bulloch Times*. The newspaper noted that it was opened in west Statesboro, and was considered to be an event of interest on that Sunday (December 22). The formal dedication of the facility was favored with the presence of the Reverend C. T. Walker of Augusta, one of the best known Black ministers in the country at that time. Reverend Walker was the major speaker for the event which attracted a large number of people.

The newspaper coverage of the event reported that, unlike the Statesboro sanitarium which was formed and built by several physicians, this sanitarium was the personal property of Dr. Harvey Van Buren. It was a bungalow style facility containing approximately twelve rooms, and ventilated and lighted in a modern manner. Apparently alluding to the need for more adequate medical facilities for the Black community.

The *Statesboro Times* further wrote, "Dr. Van Buren...has been a leader among his people in many ways. The establishment of the sanitarium will fill a need which has long existed."

During a critical time during World War I, the "great Flu Epidemic" struck Statesboro and Bulloch County. Dr. Van Buren was cited for the part he played in providing hospital facilities for the flu victims.

Dr. Van Buren practiced medicine and surgery in Statesboro until his death on July 8, 1964. He was buried in Sumter, South Carolina.

In honor of the professional and personal way in which he touched the lives of many people in Statesboro and the surrounding area, the city named a street in his honor, Van Buren Street. The only concrete remembrances of Dr. Van Buren's efforts is the structure that was once the sanitarium or hospital. It yet remains on Van Buren Street as a legacy to a man who so unselfishly gave of his time and service to improve the health of mankind.

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