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The Mayor's "Henchmen and Henchwomen, Both White and Colored": Edward H. Armstrong and the Politics of Race in Daytona Beach, 1900-1940

by Leonard R. Lempel

Writing about his early twentieth-century childhood in Daytona, the renowned theologian Howard Thurman related a story about his older cousin and idol, Thornton Smith. A semi-pro baseball player in his youth, Smith had established himself by the 1920s as a successful restaurateur in Midway, the most business-oriented of Daytona's three black neighborhoods. He purchased supplies from Edward Armstrong, a white grocer and aspiring politician who wanted to loosen the Ku Klux Klan's grip on the city; Smith suggested to him that the Klan could be defeated only if blacks were allowed to vote. After initially rejecting the idea, the grocer and his political allies finally agreed to grant the franchise to black property owners and taxpayers, and the biracial alliance eventually managed to unseat the Klan. After thanking Smith, Armstrong offered the black businessman an envelope stuffed with cash, which Smith rejected. Instead, he demanded and received from the Armstrong faction a new school for black children and uniformed black policemen to patrol African American neighborhoods.¹

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1. Maxine D. Jones and Kevin M. McCarthy, *African Americans in Florida* (Sarasota, Fla., 1993), 155; Howard Thurman, *With Head and Heart* (New York, 1979), 9, 21-22.



Mayor Edward H. Armstrong, circa 1930s. *Courtesy of Marion Irene Armstrong Trzeciak, Huntsville, Ala.*

Parts of the story are most likely apocryphal. Daytona's blacks probably were never disfranchised completely, and black policemen patrolled African American neighborhoods before Thornton Smith's intervention. The story does accurately reveal, however, the burgeoning political involvement of Daytona's blacks during the 1920s and in-

dicates that they received benefits in exchange for their votes. More importantly, this temporary union between whites and propertied African Americans to oust the Klan blossomed into a broad-based biracial political alliance by 1927. Over the next decade, Armstrong secured election and re-election as Daytona Beach's mayor with the aid of black voters, granting in return patronage and community improvements.

This biracial coalition proved exceptional, for in most southern cities, black political participation during the Jim Crow era was minimal at best. Clarence A. Bacote describes Atlanta from 1908 to 1943 as the "Dark Ages" for African American voters, finding that blacks who participated in the city's special elections during the 1920s and 1930s numbered only in the hundreds. Ralph Bunche reports that of Atlanta's 54,155 voting-age African Americans, only 2,106 were registered in 1940, and many did not vote—comparable to black voting patterns in Miami, Tampa, Jacksonville, Mobile, and Birmingham where black political activity remained marginal until after World War II.²

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2. Clarence A. Bacote, "The Negro in Atlanta Politics," *Phylon* 41 (December 1955): 342-43; Ralph J. Bunche, *The Political Status of the Negro in the Age of FDR* (Chicago, 1973), 485-86, 477-81, 451-54. In his detailed study of Norfolk, Virginia, Earl Lewis concluded that while blacks comprised about one-third of the city's eligible voters during the 1920s and 1930s, at no time did more than 7 percent register; Earl Lewis, *In Their Own Interests: Race, Class, and Power in Twentieth-Century Norfolk, Virginia* (Berkeley, Calif., 1991), 85-86. Both David R. Colburn and David Nolan noted that political activity among African Americans in St. Augustine, Florida, was negligible between 1902 and the 1960s; David R. Colburn, *Racial Change and Community Crisis: St. Augustine, Florida, 1877-1980* (Gainesville, Fla., 1985), 20-22; David Nolan, "Lincolnville: History," unpublished manuscript, 5-6, in author's possession. In Chattanooga, the black vote, a real factor in the city's political scene during the late nineteenth and opening years of the twentieth century, was rendered inconsequential by 1911; Nancy J. Potts, "Unfilled Expectations: The Erosion of Black Political Power in Chattanooga, 1865-1911," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 54 (summer 1990): 112-128. In Tampa, blacks valiantly persisted in exercising their franchise during the opening years of the twentieth century, but black voting dropped substantially in 1910 after a white primary for city elections was instituted. As late as 1939, African Americans comprised less than 5 percent of the city's registered voters, though 25 percent of Tampa was black. In Miami and Dade County, blacks only accounted for 7 percent of the vote by 1920, even though they comprised 25 percent of the population. Similar to Tampa, black voting in Miami remained minuscule until 1939; Gary R. Mormino and George E. Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City: Italians and Their Latin Neighbors in Tampa, 1885-1985* (Urbana, Ill., 1987), 58-59; Marvin Dunn, *Black Miami in the Twentieth Century* (Gainesville, Fla., 1997), 193-95; Raymond A. Mohl, "The Pattern of Race Relations in Miami since the 1920s," in *The African American Heritage of Florida*, eds. David R. Colburn and Jane L. Landers (Gainesville, Fla., 1995), 346.

In a few southern cities, however, African Americans voted in substantial numbers during the early twentieth century, especially in nonpartisan municipal elections where they did not have to contend with white primaries.³ Sizable black electorates in Memphis, Chattanooga, San Antonio, Raleigh, Durham, and Richmond influenced elections on occasion between 1900 and 1940.⁴ In those southern cities where blacks constituted a political force before World War II, they usually formed an alliance with anti-reform bosses and their machines.⁵ Dan Carter concludes that the disruption of traditional white southern leadership groups enabled such political machines to grasp power in Memphis and San Antonio.⁶

Traditionally, historians have stigmatized the black participants in political machines as pawns in the hands of unscrupulous politicians. Roger Biles concludes that large numbers of blacks in Memphis during the early twentieth century were "herded" to the polls—their votes purchased, manipulated, and controlled by the ma-

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3. All southern states adopted the direct-primary system between 1896 and 1915. This procedure for nominating party candidates effectively eliminated blacks as a factor in most partisan elections until after World War II. During these years blacks were banned from joining the state Democratic parties in the South, thus excluding them from participating in the Democratic primaries, hence the term "white primary." Democratic Party dominance in the South meant that the winner of the Democratic primary would invariably emerge the winner in the general election. So, those blacks who successfully maneuvered around the multitude of electoral obstacles and voted in the general election usually found themselves participating in a perfunctory contest. Black voters were more likely to have a significant impact in special elections and other nonpartisan elections that were common in urban areas; C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge, La., 1951), 372-73; Paul Lewinson, *Race, Class, and Party: A History of Negro Suffrage and White Politics in the South* (New York, 1963), 146.
 4. Bunche, *The Political Status of the Negro*, 69-73; Lewinson, *Race, Class, and Party*, 139, 147-48; George B. Tindall, *The Emergence of the New South, 1913-1945* (Baton Rouge, La., 1967), 166; Raymond Arsenault, *St. Petersburg and the Florida Dream 1888-1950* (Gainesville, Fla., 1996), 206, 267; Alwyn Barr, *Black Texans: A History of Negroes in Texas, 1528-1971* (Austin, 1973), 133-34; Larry Dunn, "Knoxville Negro Voting and the Roosevelt Revolution, 1928-1936," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications* 43 (1971): 88-90, 93; Don H. Doyle, *Nashville in the South, 1880-1930* (Knoxville, Tenn., 1985), 165-77.
 5. In at least two southern cities, however, most black voters aligned with traditional progressives. Blacks in Savannah helped elect a reform mayor in 1923, and in Baltimore a reform coalition which included poor blacks and progressive whites successfully resisted efforts to disfranchise blacks; Tindall, *The Emergence of the New South*, 166; Jack Temple Kirby, *Darkness at the Dawning: Race and Reform in the Progressive South* (Philadelphia, 1972), 46.
 6. Dan Carter, "Southern Political Style," in *The Age of Segregation: Race Relations in the South, 1890-1945*, ed. Robert Haws (Jackson, Miss., 1978), 64.

chine of Edward H. Crump. John A. Booth and David R. Johnson charge that San Antonio's leading black politico of the era, gambler and bootlegger Charles Bellinger, controlled black votes by purchasing poll tax receipts and bribing black church leaders. Similarly, James Button infers that a local political machine manipulated Daytona's large black electorate of the early 1900s by purchasing their votes with money and whiskey.⁷

However, some historians, including Don H. Doyle, William D. Miller, and Dan Carter, claim that urban political bosses substantially benefited their cities' African American communities. In return for votes, Nashville's Hilary Howse supported the establishment of a black tuberculosis hospital, a black library, the Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial Normal School for Negroes, and Hadley Park, the first urban public park for blacks in the United States. Edward Crump provided his black supporters in Memphis with new housing, schools, libraries, hospital wards, parks, water lines, sewers, and lighted streets. San Antonio blacks voted for Bellinger between 1918 and 1935 in return for paved streets, higher teacher salaries, and improved services and facilities in the African American community.⁸

Like Memphis and San Antonio, Daytona Beach was one of those few southern cities where a viable biracial political coalition flourished prior to World War II. Black Daytonans derived many benefits from their alliance with Mayor Armstrong's machine, but in the long run, this alliance did little to further the cause of black civil rights. Daytona Beach's white-dominated political machine had no intention of altering the subordinate role assigned to African Americans. Furthermore, as a consequence of their support of

7. Roger Biles, "Robert R. Church of Memphis: Black Republican Leader in the Age of Democratic Ascendancy, 1928-1940," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 42 (winter 1983): 372-82; idem, "The Urban South in the Great Depression," *Journal of Southern History* 56 (February 1990): 96; John A. Booth and David R. Johnson, "Power and Progress in San Antonio Politics, 1836-1970," in *The Politics of San Antonio*, eds. David R. Johnson, John A. Booth, and Richard J. Harris (Lincoln, Neb., 1983), 16; James W. Button, *Blacks and Social Change: Impact of the Civil Rights Movement in Southern Communities* (Princeton, N.J., 1989), 82-83.

8. Anita Shafer Goodstein, "A Rare Alliance: African American Women in the Tennessee Elections of 1919 and 1920," *Journal of Southern History* 64 (May 1998): 233; Doyle, *Nashville in the New South*, 165-77; idem, *Nashville Since the 1920s* (Knoxville, Tenn., 1985), 64-65; William D. Miller, *Mr. Crump of Memphis* (Baton Rouge, La., 1964), 104, 206; Carter, "Southern Political Style," 58-63.

machine candidates, most blacks alienated themselves from anti-machine reformers. Thus, the biracial political alliance forged by Armstrong produced a mixed legacy for Daytona Beach's African American community.

Mathias Day, an Ohio entrepreneur, founded the Daytona settlement in 1870, and African Americans played an integral part in developing this frontier Florida community from its inception. Two African Americans, John Tolliver and Thaddeus Gooden, were among Daytona's twenty-six electors who voted to incorporate the town in 1876. Tolliver played an important role in the town's early development, receiving several contracts from the town council to build roads, including a large section of Ridgewood Avenue which later became the Dixie Highway (U.S. Route 1). Thaddeus Gooden, who worked at the Palmetto House, Daytona's first hotel, was active in the local Republican party and was one of two blacks elected as delegates to the party's county convention in 1884.⁹

In 1889, however, it became increasingly difficult for black Daytonians to vote when Florida enacted an annual one-dollar poll tax and a multiple-ballot-box law. These measures dramatically reduced the size of Florida's electorate, taking aim at the state's poor and illiterate voters. African Americans, disproportionately poor and uneducated, suffered the most from these changes. The poll tax required payment of the previous two years' assessment at least thirty days before the election. The multiple-ballot-box law, which mandated separate ballots and ballot boxes for each office contested, disfranchised illiterate voters who had difficulty determining the correct boxes in which to deposit their ballots. Then, in 1895, the Australian ballot replaced the multiple-ballot-box, making straight ticket voting even more difficult by listing candidates under the offices they sought without identifying their party affiliation. Illiterate citizens, who found it easier to vote for a list of can-

9. Leonard Lempel, "African American Settlements in the Daytona Beach Area, 1866-1910," *Annual Proceedings of the Florida Conference of Historians* 1 (June 1993): 112, 117, 119; Ianthé Bond Hebel, "Daytona Beach, Florida's Racial History," 1966, typewritten manuscript, 2, P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville; L. D. Huston to Maria Huston, Daytona, 1 August 1884, in *All We Have to Fear is the Lonesome: The Letters of L. D. Huston From Pre-Civil War Days Through His Relocation to the Florida Frontier in 1874*, ed. Maria M. Clifton (Daytona Beach, Fla., 1993), 211.

didates under a party symbol, were disfranchised as much by the Australian ballot as by the multiple-ballot-box.¹⁰

Despite the restrictive legislation, a small but tenacious coterie of black Daytonans continued to participate in the town's politics. At least twenty African Americans had registered to vote in Daytona during the 1870s and 1880s, and at least seventeen remained registered during the early 1890s. In 1890, Joseph C. Coombs, a freedman and headwaiter at the Palmetto House, lost an election to the city commission by a single vote. In 1898, Joseph Brook Hankerson, a respected African American barber, was elected to the city commission.¹¹ This political assertiveness reflected the resolve of several black Daytonans to exercise the hard-won rights of citizenship and to resist any attempts to diminish those rights. It also signified a relatively high degree of racial tolerance among the town's white citizenry which probably endured because most of Daytona's early settlers came from former abolitionist strongholds of the North, including Ohio, New York, Michigan, and Massachusetts. Republicans remained in control of Volusia County well into the 1880s. White abolitionist John Milton Hawks, who had established a colony of several hundred freedmen in nearby Port Orange after the Civil War, remarked in 1887 that "the spirit of the white citizens of East Florida toward colored people in general, is so much more

10. Only 22 of 5,309 white males ten years or older could not read and write in 1915 in Volusia County, where Daytona is located, as compared to 1,106 of 3,801 black males ten or older. In 1890, about 45 percent of Florida's adult black population was illiterate. This dropped to 39 percent by 1900; *Fourth Census of the State of Florida* (Tallahassee, Fla., 1915), 65; Charles D. Farris, "The Re-Enfranchisement of Negroes in Florida," *Journal of Negro History* 34 (July 1954): 260-61; J. Morgan Kousser, *The Shaping of Southern Politics: Suffrage Restriction and the Establishment of the One-Party South, 1880-1910* (New Haven, Conn., 1974), 50; James Owen Knauss, "The Growth of Florida's Election Laws," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 5 (July 1926): 14; H. D. Price, *The Negro and Southern Politics: A Chapter of Florida History* (New York, 1957), 13-15, 17; Frederick D. Ogden, *The Poll Tax in the South* (University, Ala., 1958), 115-16, 137.

11. Ellwood C. Nance and Helen C. Nance, eds., *The East Coast of Florida: A History, 1500-1961*, 2 Vols. (Delray Beach, Fla., 1962), 1: 242-43; Daytona City Council Minutes, 24 July 1890, in "Minutes of Meetings of Daytona City Council, July 26, 1876 through June 19, 1893," handwritten volume, 308, Daytona Beach Records Department, City Hall Annex, Daytona Beach; *Daytona Beach Evening News*, 8 August 1967; Clifton, *All We Have to Fear is the Lonesome*, 11; "Registration List of Daytona[,] Volusia Co.[.] Fla.," 1877-1893, Daytona Beach Records Department. A review of registration lists reveals that there were approximately 180 registered voters in Daytona during the early 1890s.

just and fair, that for such citizens to emigrate from South Carolina to this region is like escaping from slavery to a land of freedom."¹²

During the opening decade of the twentieth century, an increasingly rigid color line replaced Daytona's relatively congenial racial climate of earlier years. In the late nineteenth century, several of Daytona's more prominent African Americans owned homes and shops alongside whites in the center of town. But once Jim Crow took hold after 1900, virtually the entire black population became concentrated in three adjacent neighborhoods west of the Florida East Coast Railroad—Midway, Waycross, and Newtown. Black resident Anthony Stevens recalled that in 1902, he "didn't notice any significant signs of segregation," but upon his return to Daytona in 1906 Stevens "noticed very significant signs of separation of the black and white community. Everywhere were signs, 'colored—white.'" In 1907, whites in Daytona lynched a black man and paraded his corpse through an African American neighborhood as a warning for blacks "not to get out of their place."¹³

Daytona's hardening color line was consistent with the deterioration of race relations that occurred throughout the South at the turn of the century. The progressive impulses unleashed during this period were reserved for whites only. Like most whites, southern Progressives assumed the biological inferiority of blacks and viewed racial segregation as a requisite for social stability. Popular literature and the consensus of the academic and scientific communities bolstered such views. Moreover, the disfranchisement of

12. In 1880, of the 135 whites 21 years of age or older, seventy-eight (58 percent) were born in northern states, mostly in Ohio and the Northeast. Of the remaining fifty-seven whites, twenty-three were foreign born, mostly in Great Britain, and thirty-four were born in the South, mostly in Florida and Georgia; Manuscript Census Returns, Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Volusia County, Florida, Population Schedules, National Archives Microfilm Series T-9, roll 102, frames 406-09; Mark Lane, "Census Recalls 1880 Daytona," *Daytona Beach Sunday News-Journal*, 7 October 1990; idem, "GOP Bucked History to Emerge in Volusia," *Daytona Beach Sunday News-Journal*, 13 November 1988; John Milton Hawks, *The East Coast of Florida: A Descriptive Narrative* (Lynn, Mass., 1887), 72.

13. Hebel, "Daytona Beach, Florida's Racial History," 1; Thurman, *With Head and Heart*, 10; Anthony Mark Stevens, interview by Joseph E. Taylor, 28 August 1976, Daytona Beach, privately owned; Leon Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York, 1998), 13. Howard Thurman recalled that for Daytona's blacks during the early twentieth century, the white community was "no place for loitering. Our freedom of movement was carefully circumscribed." He succinctly categorized race relations in Daytona during these years: "white and black worlds were separated by a wall of quiet hostility and overt suspicion"; Thurman, *With Head and Heart*, 10.



Second Avenue at Pine Street, in the heart of Daytona Beach's black business district, photographed by Gordon Parks for the Office of War Information in January 1943. *Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.*

African Americans was generally seen by southerners as facilitating important Progressive goals such as "good government," prohibition, and women's suffrage.¹⁴

The rapid growth of Daytona's African American community undoubtedly increased racial tensions. In 1885, 152 of Daytona's

14. George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (New York, 1971), 61, 324-25; Dewey W. Grantham, *Southern Progressivism: The Reconciliation of Progress and Tradition* (Knoxville, Tenn., 1983), xvii-xix; Howard Schuman, Charlotte Steeh, and Lawrence Bobo, *Racial Trends in America: Trends and Interpretations* (Cambridge, Mass., 1985), 8-9; William A. Link, *The Paradox of Southern Progressivism, 1880-1930* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1992), 70-75.

648 residents were black. Twenty years later, the city boasted 2,199 residents, with African Americans numbering 1,151. Blacks filled many of the tourist industry and railroad jobs created by Henry Flagler's Florida East Coast Railroad, which arrived in 1888. Turpentine camps and lumberyards which dotted the area also employed blacks. Devastating freezes in 1886 and 1894-1895 destroyed the region's burgeoning citrus industry and may have forced many African American farm workers to seek employment in Daytona.¹⁵ Fears of the increasing black population coupled with concerns about competition for jobs may have precipitated efforts to strengthen racial barriers in Daytona during the early twentieth century.

Nonetheless, Daytona's racial climate remained milder than that of most other southern communities, largely due to the moderating influence of the many northern visitors who wintered in Daytona. Howard Thurman testified to the influence of the town's famous turn-of-the-century "snowbirds": "The Rockefellers, the Gambles, the Whites, and many other old rich families," he recollected, "employed local people, black and white, as servants and household retainers, while their chauffeurs and personal maids usually traveled with them, returning north at the end of winter." These northern families, he added, "made contact between the races less abrasive than it might have been otherwise."¹⁶ Several of the wives of wealthy northern visitors joined the Palmetto Club, a female civic, cultural, and philanthropic organization founded in 1894. The club demonstrated its goodwill toward African Americans in 1899 by establishing kindergartens in Waycross and Midway for the children of black workers and, in the fall of 1904, welcomed a new school to Midway—the Daytona Educational and Industrial Training School for Negro Girls, founded by Mary McLeod Bethune.¹⁷

15. Manuscript Census Returns, Florida State Census of 1885, Volusia County, Fla., National Archives Microfilm Publication M 845, roll 13, frames 113-27; *Third Census of the State of Florida* (Tallahassee, Fla., 1905), 51; Button, *Blacks and Social Change*, 82.

16. Thurman, *With Head and Heart*, 9.

17. Daytona City Commission Minutes, 10 April 1905, microfilm, Daytona Beach City Hall; *Daytona Morning Journal*, 2 February 1919, 15 January 1916. For a discussion of the impact of Bethune and her school on Daytona, see Audrey Thomas McCluskey, "Ringin' Up a School: Mary McLeod Bethune's Impact on Daytona," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 73 (October 1994): 200-17. For a discussion of Bethune's efforts to combat racism in Florida, see Maxine D. Jones, "Without Compromise or Fear": Florida's African American Female Activists," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 77 (spring 1999): 475-83.

Bethune's school quickly endeared itself to moderate elements in the white community by emphasizing domestic and industrial training and "Negro uplift." After receiving a letter from Bethune in the spring of 1905, the city commission unanimously passed a resolution endorsing her industrial school. She soothed white anxieties by inviting campus visitors to come and see "The Booker T. Washington Idea of Education Demonstrated" and to hear the "Old Plantation Melodies and Jubilee Songs."¹⁸ Bethune's endeavors to improve community life extended beyond the classroom. In 1905, she convinced the city council to approve the installation of storm sewers in Midway and the employment of two black policemen, one to patrol Midway and the other Waycross. Her efforts inspired grassroots reform in 1908 when Midway's black residents petitioned the council to lay cement sidewalks through their neighborhoods.¹⁹

As Daytona's color line solidified, black voting seems to have dwindled. Joseph Coombs ran for alderman for the last time in 1901 and received only twelve votes (an African American would not run for city office again until after World War II). Yet, he remained a registered voter until 1908, when his name appeared on a roster of those to be stricken from the registration list. Hoping to draw more blacks to the polls, in 1910, mayoral candidate Henry T. Titus advertised that if elected he would administer "justice to all in Municipal Court, regardless of standing, class or color" and suggested that "the city should build a side-walk from Midway to Waycross . . . for the benefit of the colored school children." Apparently, Titus went beyond mere verbal promises in attempting to attract black voters. Years later he tacitly admitted that he had paid the poll taxes of some black registrants.²⁰

Daytona's African Americans demonstrated renewed political vitality beginning in 1916, when the city approved by one vote a

18. *Daytona Morning Journal*, 7 November 1916; *Daytona Daily News*, 16 February 1906.

19. City Commission Minutes, 10 April, 8 May, 8 August, 14 August, 28 August, 11 September 1905, 12 February 1906, 27 January 1908; *Daytona Daily News*, 13 February, 27 February 1906; Record of Ordinances, 26 July 1876-January 1912, 254-55, Daytona Beach Records Department.

20. *Daytona Gazette-News*, 16 February 1901; City Commission Minutes, 13 January 1908; *Daytona Daily News*, 28 January 1910. While running for mayor in 1927, Titus denied that he had paid the poll taxes of black voters in the *current* campaign, claiming that "he had not purchased a single negro vote in six years"; *Daytona Beach News-Journal*, 24 November 1927.

new charter adopting a commission form of government. Suspicious that the change would dilute their political leverage as it had done in other southern cities, and believing the claims of anti-charter advocates that the new government would disfranchise them, most of the hundred-plus African American voters opposed the change.²¹ Despite the new charter, they continued to play an important, albeit modest role in Daytona's political affairs. By 1919, a revitalized black electorate helped elevate E. L. Bond to the city commission. Bond, owner of one of the largest retail lumber companies in Florida, solicited the votes of his African American employees to secure victory.²²

Daytona's tradition of racial moderation could not completely insulate it from the post-World War I violence that swept the South and inspired the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan.²³ In 1920 and 1921, the Klan burned two black theaters and a Catholic church in Daytona, and were blamed for the murder and beatings of several residents. The night before the 1920 elections, when Klansmen discovered that Bethune was encouraging her students to vote, they marched on the school. Refusing to be intimidated, Bethune instructed the students to start singing: "We sang them [the Klan]

21. *Daytona Morning Journal*, 5 January 1916. In Knoxville and Nashville, Tennessee, and Norfolk, Virginia, cities where there was substantial black political influence during the late nineteenth century, the elimination of the ward system in favor of a city commission chosen in city-wide elections diluted the influence of the black vote; Potts, "Unfulfilled Expectations," 112-28; Don H. Doyle, *New Men, New Cities, New South: Atlanta, Nashville, Charleston, Mobile, 1860-1910* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1990), 273; Lewis, *In their Own Interests*, 21-22. No official count of registered black voters is available for 1916, but the *Daytona Morning Journal* makes reference to pro- and anti-charter city commission candidates of that year addressing over one hundred "interested and intelligent colored voters" in Midway; *Daytona Morning Journal*, 25 January 1916.

22. *Daytona Morning Journal*, 15 January, 5 February 1919; T. R. Townsend, "The Great Agricultural Advancement," in Ianthe Bond Hebel, ed., *Centennial History of Volusia County, Florida, 1854-1954* (DeLand, Fla., 1955), 32; Hebel, "Daytona Beach, Florida's Racial History," 4.

23. Florida was especially prone to racial violence during the early twentieth century. Arthur Raper concluded that African Americans were more at risk of being lynched in Florida than in any other state between 1900 and 1930; Arthur F. Raper, *The Tragedy of Lynching* (Chapel Hill, 1933), 28. David Chalmers documented the extensive Klan violence which racked Florida during the 1920s; David Chalmers, "The Ku Klux Klan in the Sunshine State: The 1920's," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 43 (January 1964): 209-15. For a contemporary account of Klan violence in Florida during the 1920 election, see Walter F. White, "Election Day in Florida," *The Crisis* 21 (January 1920): 106-9.

right off the campus, and the next day we all voted too!"²⁴ At the peak of its influence in early 1922, the Klan once again sought to frighten blacks from the polls. On March 3, just four days before city commission elections, thousands witnessed 106 Klansmen parading in full regalia through downtown Daytona. In spite of this demonstration, the city's African American electorate was not cowed, and four days later 115 blacks joined 713 whites in the voting booths.²⁵

After 1922, Klan activity receded as economic prosperity and local development began to take center stage, thereby reducing overt racial tension.²⁶ By mid-decade, the city was riding the crest of the great Florida real estate and tourist boom. Along with land values, the city's population grew dramatically, increasing from 6,270 in 1920 to 10,121 by 1924. Daytona's African American population kept pace, rising to 4,975 by 1924.²⁷ However, the land boom collapsed in 1926, and while the real estate market and tourism partially rebounded in 1927 and 1928, the 1926 catastrophe presaged the start of the Great Depression in 1929.²⁸

Dramatic changes in Daytona's political landscape also occurred during the 1920s and 1930s. In early October 1925, a special election was held to choose the four commissioners and the mayor of a consolidated municipal entity. On January 1, 1926, the "triple cities" of Daytona (located on the mainland), Daytona Beach, and Seabreeze (both located on the peninsula or "beach

24. *Daytona Morning Journal*, 2 October 1921; Racham Holt, *Mary McLeod Bethune* (Garden City, N.Y., 1964), 119-23; Jesse Walter Dees Jr., "Bethune-Cookman College," in Hebel, *Centennial History of Volusia County*, 59-60.

25. *Daytona Morning Journal*, 4 March, 8 March 1922. In June 1922, the Klan succeeded in electing several of its hand-picked candidates in Volusia County, including Daytona; Chalmers, "The Ku Klux Klan in the Sunshine State," 210.

26. The Klan's political victories in Volusia County in 1922 proved to be short lived. The mayor of DeLand, the Volusia County seat, refused to take orders from Klan leaders. When the Klan sought to impose discipline, many of its more prominent supporters, including the mayor, withdrew their support; Chalmers, "The Ku Klux Klan in the Sunshine State," 210-11.

27. *Daytona Morning Journal*, 14 September 1924.

28. Michael G. Schene, *Hopes, Dreams, and Promises: A History of Volusia County, Florida* (Daytona Beach, Fla., 1976), 124-25; William W. Rogers, "Fortune and Misfortune: The Paradoxical Twenties," in *The New History of Florida*, ed. Michael Gannon (Gainesville, Fla., 1996), 293-98. For Florida's real estate market in the 1920s, see William Frazer and John J. Guthrie Jr., *The Florida Land Boom: Speculation, Money, and the Banks* (Westport, Conn., 1995).

side") consolidated to form Daytona Beach. At the time of consolidation, 46.5 percent of Daytona's population was African American. After the addition of all-white Seabreeze and Daytona Beach, blacks comprised 33.3 percent of the new Daytona Beach.²⁹ The 1926 election was the city's first as a unified municipality but the last in which only moderate numbers of blacks participated. The following year Edward H. Armstrong established a biracial coalition of voters.

Born in St. Louis where his father, Ben Armstrong, founded and edited the baseball weekly, *The Sporting News*, twenty-year-old Edward moved to Daytona in 1900 and worked as a salesman for the Ralston Purina Company flour mill. He later opened his own grocery business, and by 1927, the Armstrong Grocer Company had several branches in east central Florida.³⁰ Armstrong became interested in politics as well and found opportunity in addressing the needs of black citizens. In all but two years between 1927 and 1937, Armstrong and his city commission allies controlled Daytona Beach's government. During those years, race became an increasingly prominent issue in municipal elections as blacks, encouraged by the mayor, asserted themselves at the polls and achieved their greatest political influence of the pre-Civil Rights era.

In December 1927, newly consolidated Daytona Beach held its first municipal election. Of 4,805 registered voters, 753 or 15.7 percent were black, about half of Daytona Beach's voting-age black

29. *Daytona Beach Journal*, 6 October 1925; *Daytona Beach Sunday News-Journal*, 5 December 1937. In 1925, the combined population of Daytona, Daytona Beach, and Seabreeze was 13,912 (9,266 were white and 4,628 were black). For Daytona only, there were 4,603 blacks and 5,297 whites; *Fifth Census of the State of Florida* (Tallahassee, Fla., 1925), 52. After consolidation, Daytona Beach was divided into four zones. Zones One and Two, located on the peninsula (beach side), included the old towns of Daytona Beach and Seabreeze respectively. Only a handful of blacks lived in these zones. Old Daytona, located on the mainland, became Zones Three and Four, with Zone Three covering the northern half of old Daytona and Zone Four the southern half. Despite their significant African American population, Zones Three and Four were gerrymandered so that both had white majorities. Under the consolidation plan, municipal elections took place every two years to elect four commissioners, one from each zone. A commissioner-at-large was elected by all the qualified voters of the city and served as mayor; *Daytona Beach Journal*, 7 October 1925.

30. *Daytona Beach News-Journal*, 7 December 1927, 2 January 1938.

population.³¹ Armstrong, receiving "practically the unanimous support of the negro voters," won the four-way mayoral race. The only real controversy in the 1927 mayoral election was Armstrong's solicitation of black support. Armstrong opponent, Dennis Craig, vehemently denounced his recruitment of blacks and openly advocated that they be banned from city elections. However, Craig's racist appeals yielded him few votes—only 319 of 3,819 ballots cast, compared to Armstrong's 1,768. Overall, Armstrong outpolled his three opponents in all four voting districts.³²

A well organized campaign and Armstrong's reputation as a successful businessman helped him win the election. But the collapse of the real estate boom and consolidation of the triple cities also accounted for his victory since they undermined the power of Daytona's traditional ruling elite. Consisting of white professionals and entrepreneurs who had resided in Daytona for more than a generation, the elite were fiscal conservatives who favored limited government and, by southern standards, were racial moderates who tolerated voting by the "better" class of blacks—the college educated, professionals, and property owners. Beginning in 1926, economic hard times eroded the electorate's confidence in this group's stewardship. In addition, an influx of new residents with no tradition of allegiance to the ruling group undermined its base of support. Consolidation of the triple cities exacerbated the traditional elite's problems by suddenly adding thousands of new residents.³³

It is likely that consolidation also contributed to the upsurge of black voting in Daytona Beach. Political scientists Donald Matthews and James Prothro argue that when African Americans comprised over 40 percent of a region's population, the number of whites tolerating black suffrage dropped rapidly.³⁴ Had Daytona Beach remained half black, Armstrong may have had considerably more difficulty forging a biracial coalition of voters. However, since

31. *Ibid.*, 27 November 1927. Blacks comprised 31.3 percent of the cities' combined voting age population in 1925, 30.1 percent in 1930, and 31.9 percent in 1935; *Fifth Census of the State of Florida* (Tallahassee, Fla., 1925), 52; "Report by States Showing the Composition and Characteristics of the Population," *Population, Vol. III, Part I: Fifteenth Census of the United States* (Washington, D.C., 1932), 421 (hereinafter cited as 1930 U.S. Census).

32. *Daytona Beach News-Journal*, 23 November, 7 December 1927.

33. *Ibid.*, 7 December 1927.

34. Donald R. Matthews and James W. Prothro, *Negroes and the New Southern Politics* (New York, 1966), 118, 132.

blacks comprised only one-third of the new city's population and all commissioner districts possessed white majorities, no serious challenge to white rule existed. Even so, Armstrong's unabashed solicitation of black votes served as a rallying cry for his opponents and resulted in heightened racial tension during the next several municipal elections.

Daytona Beach's traditional elite staged a comeback in the 1929 election. In the weeks leading up to Armstrong's re-election bid, the *News-Journal*, a staunch supporter of Daytona's traditional ruling group, strongly denounced the mayor as a corrupt machine politician who, along with his "henchmen," had "rounded up" ignorant blacks, registered them, paid their poll taxes, and instructed them how to vote. Portraying itself as a "friend of the Negro" and particularly supportive of Mary McLeod Bethune's college, the Progressive-oriented newspaper favored granting the franchise to educated, intelligent blacks. Armstrong's recruitment of the "ignorant Negro masses," according to the *News-Journal*, dimmed prospects for improving the city's political and moral climate.³⁵

By 1929, black Daytonans had indeed registered in large numbers—over two thousand—and comprised one-third of the city's registered voters. In the 1929 election, they cast almost one-fourth of all ballots and overwhelmingly supported Armstrong, though the *New-Journal* claimed that blacks were "corralled, furnished their poll tax certificates and sent in to vote by city hall employees and other Armstrong workers." However, the mayor's opponent, Billy Baggett, received most of the white vote and defeated Armstrong 2,780 to 2,390. Armstrong had ridden into office in 1927 on the heels of economic bad times, and he was swept out of office in 1929 also because of economic adversity. The stock market crash in October precipitated the failure of the city's major banks, and just three weeks before the election, Daytona Beach defaulted on its bonds for the first time in history. A few days later, Armstrong responded by firing scores of city workers. His loyal African American supporters could not overcome the tidal wave of white opposition, and Baggett prevailed.³⁶

35. *Daytona Beach News-Journal*, 24 September, 26 September, 24 November 1929.

36. *Ibid.*, 4 December, 7 December 1929; Fred Booth, "Early Days in Daytona Beach," unpublished manuscript, 5-6, in author's possession.

Although Daytona Beach's faltering economy largely explains Armstrong's defeat, the mayor's campaign tactics did little to endear him to many voters. He rarely spoke in public and avoided responding to his critics. On those few occasions when he did make public pronouncements, his comments proved less than reassuring. Just prior to the 1929 election the mayor answered his detractors by exclaiming: "What if I did have my signs on city trucks? What if I did beat my wife and maintain a harem at the city hall? What if I did appeal to negroes? These things are of no importance. We must consider issues that are vital to Daytona Beach." Also, the mayor's proclivity for rewarding only political supporters became a liability. For example, when the city sponsored a beautification contest that awarded palm trees to residents who significantly improved their properties, Armstrong allegedly ordered that palms only be delivered to winners who pledged to vote for him.³⁷

Still, Baggett could not capitalize on his political good fortune. *News-Journal* reporter Fred Booth recounted that the new mayor hired an inept city manager and "a dumb patrolman for police chief [who] was so clumsy in public relations that he let Armstrong fasten the blame on [Baggett] for the Armstrong budget deficit, which Baggett had to finance with a \$250,000 bond issue."³⁸ These blunders paved the way for Armstrong's comeback in 1931, and, as in 1927, African American voters provided crucial support for his victory.

The dispute over the size and alleged manipulation of the black vote in the 1929 election became more acute in 1931. In early November, the *News-Journal* noted with alarm that illiterate blacks were registering in large numbers and claimed that Armstrong's "henchmen and henchwomen, both white and colored" had herded blacks "by the carload . . . to registration places to sign their names or put their cross marks on the books." In a rare front page editorial, the *News-Journal* warned against "this wholesale registration of negroes of all classes" and urged "every intelligent voter" to oppose the political machine.³⁹ By the time the books closed on November 11, 10,454 Daytonans had registered to vote in the city elections, including 3,169 African Americans. An astounding 95.6

37. *Daytona Beach News-Journal*, 3 December 1929; Albert Schellenberg to E. H. Armstrong, 23 October 1929, privately owned, copy of letter in author's possession.

38. Booth, "Early Days in Daytona Beach," 6.

39. *Daytona Beach News-Journal*, 5 November, 8 November 1931.

percent of the city's adult population signed up to vote: 94.3 percent of blacks and 96.1 percent of whites. Since registration in three precincts (two all-white and one approximately half black) exceeded the adult population, questions of illegality naturally arose. An investigation by the Good Government League "disclosed the names of several hundred white and negro registrants whose legal right to vote is questionable."⁴⁰

Despite the controversy over voter registration, no major incidents marred election day—December 1, 1931. The African American vote represented about 24 percent of the election's final tally and helped elect Edward Armstrong mayor of Daytona Beach for the second time. With 43 percent of Daytona Beach's white vote and 82 percent of the black vote, he managed to defeat his opponent, Don Morris, 3,112 to 2,613. The black vote also swept Armstrong supporters Cassie Wingate and William Perry onto the city commission, which gave the Armstrong ticket control of the commission by a three-to-two margin.⁴¹

That Armstrong drew the support of a large minority of whites, in spite of his appeal to blacks, gives credence to the *News-Journal's* suggestion that he benefited from the "anti-vote"—that is, the "anti-administration, anti-police, . . . anti-high salaries, anti-social exclusiveness, anti-high taxes, anti-questionable expenses, and above all anti-hard times."⁴² With the economy collapsing in the fall of 1931, plenty of "anti-votes" existed for Armstrong. Discontent among whites was greatest among the poor and working class, who lived in Democratic neighborhoods located on the south peninsula and mainland. They comprised Armstrong's most loyal contingent, heavily supporting him in 1931 and in subsequent elections. Armstrong's opponents fared best in Daytona Beach's wealthy, predominantly Republican, north peninsula district. The two white precincts where Armstrong had the least support in the 1931 election were the only two city precincts won by Herbert Hoover in the 1932 presidential election. In contrast, two of the three white precincts that highly favored Armstrong in 1931 gave Roosevelt his largest majorities in 1932.⁴³

40. *Ibid.*, 12 November, 14 November 1931.

41. *Ibid.*, 1 December, 2 December 1931.

42. *Ibid.*, 7 December 1927.

43. *Ibid.*, 2 December 1931, 12 November 1932.

The economic difficulties faced by many white Daytonans during the early 1930s paled in comparison to what confronted the African American community. Like African Americans elsewhere, black Daytonans already stood at the bottom of the economic ladder before the onset of the Depression.⁴⁴ In 1930, most of Daytona Beach's black male workforce performed manual labor, and more than three-quarters of black women workers found employment as domestics or in low-end personal service jobs.⁴⁵ As the Depression worsened in 1931 and 1932, blacks in Daytona Beach as well as in other southern cities faced massive unemployment. By the fall of 1932, 600 of Daytona Beach's 992 unemployed were black. Furthermore, blacks on relief in Daytona Beach received less aid than whites—another trend common to southern cities.⁴⁶

The racial tensions that permeated southern cities during the darkest days of the Depression were manifested in Daytona Beach as Mayor Armstrong sought re-election in the fall of 1933. Problems began on the eve of the primary when whites kidnaped two black campaign workers and beat one of them. A third worker, Bethune's son, Albert, was apparently targeted but not actually assaulted. While the motive for the kidnaping remained unclear,

44. George Tindall observed that between 1910 and 1930, most growing areas of the southern economy were reserved for whites, with only the most menial jobs going to blacks. During those years, many of the jobs traditionally filled by blacks were passing to whites; Tindall, *The Emergence of the New South*, 161-62.

45. No occupational census data were found for Daytona Beach for 1930, so Volusia County data were consulted. Daytona Beach's black population of 5,426 in 1930 represented 43.3 percent of the county's 12,537 African American residents. These data suggest great economic disparity between blacks and whites in the county, including Daytona Beach; 1930 U.S. Census, 434.

46. Harvard Sitkoff, *A New Deal for Blacks: The Emergence of Civil Rights as a National Issue—The Depression Decade* (New York, 1978) 35-37. A report issued by the Red Cross in September 1932 revealed that in Daytona Beach forty-one white families received \$176 weekly or \$4.29 per household, while ninety-three black families received \$288, or \$3.10 per household.; *Daytona Beach News-Journal*, 1 November 1932. Daytona was not unique among southern cities in providing smaller relief checks for blacks than for whites during the Depression. In Atlanta, blacks received monthly relief payments of \$19.29 in May of 1935, while whites received \$32.66; and in Houston, blacks received \$12.67 compared to \$16.86 for whites. In Jacksonville, black families receiving relief outnumbered whites three to one, yet blacks only received 45 percent of the funds distributed; Tindall, *The Emergence of the New South*, 547; Randy J. Sparks, "'Heavenly Houston' or 'Hellish Houston'? Black Unemployment and Relief Efforts, 1929-1936," *Southern Studies* 25 (winter 1986): 355. For additional discussion of relief benefits in select southern cities, see Biles, "Urban South in the Great Depression," 85-86.

some observers speculated that the culprits may have intended to discourage blacks from voting. Mayor Armstrong, fearing additional violence, requested that the National Guard be activated. Governor Dave Sholtz, a Daytona native, agreed only to place the Guard on alert. A nervous calm prevailed during the primary election, even though about 10 percent of African Americans who attempted to vote were refused because of improper registration or failure to pay the poll tax. Long lines formed at black polling stations as election officials carefully checked prospective voters.⁴⁷

African Americans encountered even greater difficulties when attempting to vote during the general election on December 5. At some black polling stations as many as four hundred stood in line waiting to cast ballots, and "some negroes who were at the end of the line at 9 a.m. finally got in to vote at 6 o'clock at night. Many went away without voting."⁴⁸ Election boards, "warned of illegal voting in the primary, conceived of a list of 26 questions to ask each negro who appeared as a voter." A black meat inspector for the city later recalled how "the official killed time for us by asking a lot of nonsensical questions, so much so that the polls were closed before even half of us had voted."⁴⁹ Alarmed that hundreds of the mayor's black supporters were being prevented from voting, the Armstrong administration reacted. Sheriff S. E. Stone, an Armstrong ally, served arrest warrants on an election board member and two poll watchers, and along with the mayor convinced Governor Sholtz to mobilize the National Guard. Under the gaze of National Guard troops with fixed bayonets, the polls remained open until 9:30 p.m., enabling about 550 blacks to vote after the original 6:00 p.m. closing time.⁵⁰ Armstrong and running mates Ralph Richards and Harry Wilcox won commanding victories, bringing to an end Daytona Beach's "military election" of 1933.⁵¹

The mayor's support of blacks during the 1933 election endeared him to many in the African American community. A black supporter later reminisced: "To show you how regular he was, the night that the militia was called out to keep us free from harm to

47. *Daytona Beach News-Journal*, 24 November 1933.

48. *Ibid.*, 6 December 1933.

49. Former meat inspector of Daytona Beach, interview with Wilhelmina Jackson, in Bunche, *The Political Status of the Negro*, 482.

50. *Daytona Beach News-Journal*, 6 December 1933; interview with meat inspector.

51. *Daytona Beach News-Journal*, 7 December, 10 December 1933; City Commission Minutes, 12 December 1933.

vote, Armstrong had three white policemen burning fires in guarding my house." In other ways, Armstrong further ingratiated himself to the black working class. Yvonne Scarlett-Golden, currently one of Daytona Beach's two black commissioners, credits Armstrong with building the playground and swimming pool that she fondly recalls enjoying as a child during the 1930s, and she attributes his popularity among blacks to his sincere personal concern, such as paying funeral expenses for indigents.⁵²

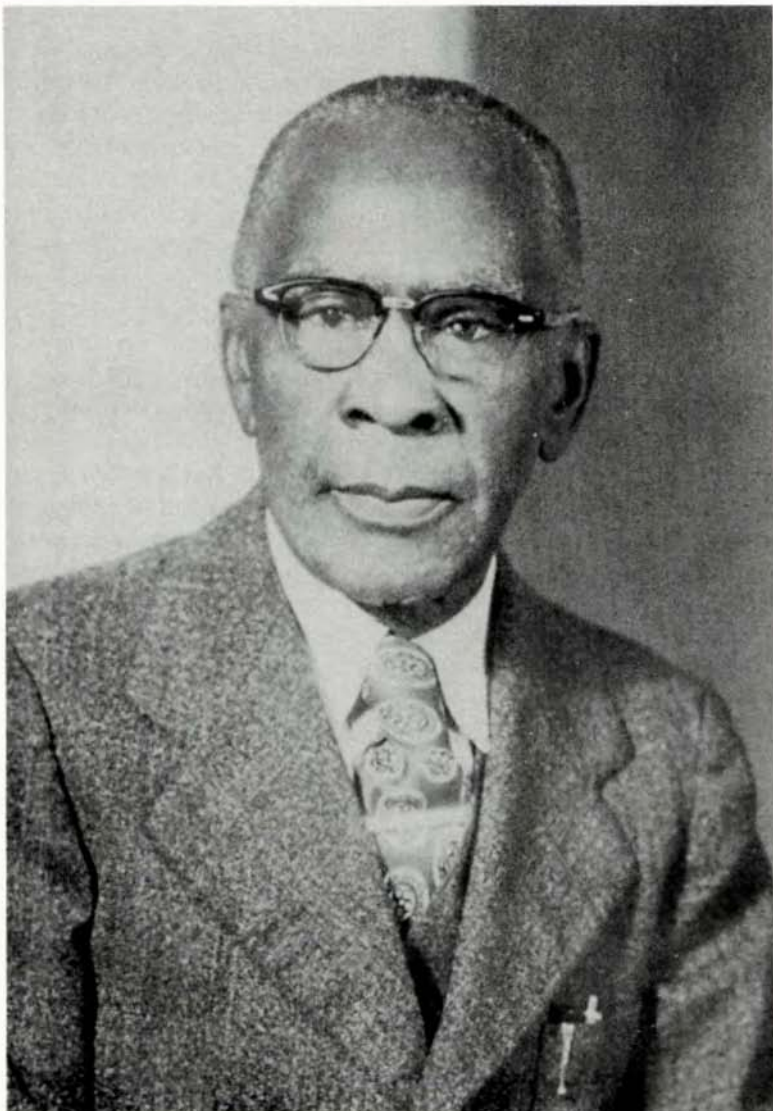
Armstrong provided his African American supporters with invaluable political experience and organizational training. Joe Harris, a small businessman known as the mayor's "right hand man," became the most influential of several black politicians who directed Armstrong's campaign in the black community.⁵³ But many of the most energetic and innovative Armstrong campaigners were women, including Minnie Littleton, Mary Wells Jones, the Cuthbid sisters, and the Brewer sisters. These ward heelers and their legions worked the black neighborhoods passing out literature, organizing fish fries, blaring campaign slogans from automobile loudspeakers, and arranging rides to the polls.⁵⁴

Armstrong's popularity among blacks in large part stemmed from patronage, much of it parceled out by Harris. Yvonne Scarlett-Golden's father, as a consequence of his friendship with Harris and support of the mayor, became Armstrong's chauffeur. Most jobs distributed to Armstrong's African American political helpers were menial, but not all. After campaigning for Armstrong, Eldred Will-

52. Interview with meat inspector; Yvonne Scarlett-Golden, interview with author, 8 July 1997, Daytona Beach, Fla.; City Commission Minutes, 22 November 1928, 19 June 1929.

53. George Engram, interview with author, 7 June 1988, Daytona Beach, Fla.; *Daytona Beach City Directory and Guide, 1933-34* (Tampa, Fla., 1934), 239. Joe Harris and his wife Dufferin later played a role in the integration of modern professional baseball by sharing their home with Jackie and Rachel Robinson in the spring of 1946. Residential segregation in Daytona prohibited the Robinsons from staying near the white members of the team. Robinson's spring training stint in Daytona Beach with the Montreal Royals of the International League was an important step in the integration of professional baseball. Branch Rickey, owner of the Dodgers, chose Daytona Beach for his "great experiment" because of its reputation of racial moderation. As a consequence, the first racially integrated modern professional baseball game was played there on March 17, 1946; see Jules Tygiel, *Baseball's Great Experiment: Jackie Robinson and His Legacy* (New York, 1983).

54. George Engram interview; Scarlett-Golden interview; Rogers P. Fair, interview with author, 1 June 1988, Daytona Beach, Fla.; Jimmy Huger, interview with author, 2 June 1988, Daytona Beach, Fla.



Joe Harris, circa 1950s. Harris was one of Daytona Beach's leading black businessmen and community leaders from the 1920s through the 1950s, and Mayor Armstrong's "right hand man" in the African American community. *Courtesy of Daytona Beach Community College, Daytona Beach, Fla.*

iams was appointed food inspector for the city, although in keeping with racial etiquette he was allowed to inspect only African American restaurants. Another black Armstrong supporter, a meat inspector for the city, observed with some exaggeration that during the Armstrong years "all janitors were Negro; all construction work was done by Negroes; there was one Negro man in the water department; there were Negro sanitary inspectors."⁵⁵

The rising tide of black political activism and the racial tensions generated by the 1933 election were clearly on the minds of city officials as the 1935 election approached. In October, blaming the turmoil of the 1933 election on "white and colored electors voting at the same polling places," the city commission unanimously passed an "emergency" ordinance establishing two new black-only precincts. The commission claimed that segregated precincts were "for the good government of the city, public safety and welfare, the protection of property and preservation of peace and good order."⁵⁶ City commissioners may have sincerely believed that Jim Crow precincts would reduce the risk of violence, but it is more likely that politics motivated their decision. Armstrong backers probably reasoned that the creation of polling places in black neighborhoods would enhance voter turnout among African Americans, who were the mayor's most faithful supporters. Segregated polls also allowed Armstrong to claim that he strongly supported the city's color line even as he solicited African American votes. Convinced that black voter fraud ran rampant, Armstrong's opponents may have concluded that concentrating blacks into just two precincts would simplify the monitoring of election irregularities.

Whatever motivations prompted the creation of the new black precincts, the election of 1935, though it lacked the sensationalism of the 1933 campaign, contained an unprecedented level of racial animosity. Through the 1935 primary, the campaign followed a pattern that had typified every municipal election since 1927. As usual, the *News-Journal* campaigned against Armstrong's re-election bid, urging readers to support the "clean government" candidate,

55. Scarlett-Golden interview; Eldred Williams, interview with author, 2 July 1994, Daytona Beach, Fla.; interview with meat inspector.

56. "Ordinance No. 662 Establishing . . . Voting Precincts Number 26 and Number 27, of the City of Daytona Beach," in City Commission Minutes, 17 October 1935.

W. Maxwell Hankins. Frustrated by their poor showing in the primary, the Hankins campaign embarked upon a virulently racist crusade to unite the city's white majority behind their candidate. The day after the primary they promised to "carry the fight through to the finish with the main appeal addressed to those white voters who are in opposition to negro elected domination and exploitation in this city." Hankins's campaign manager, after ejecting several black workers from campaign headquarters, told *News-Journal* reporters that "We'll give Armstrong his beloved negro vote, and we'll win or lose on the white vote. I think the white vote will rally to our support." Maintaining its support for Hankins, the *News-Journal* warned of "negro domination" unless "the white voters of Daytona Beach wake up."⁵⁷ Hankins's racist campaign failed miserably. The mayor won a resounding victory, receiving 63.2 percent of the 7,607 votes cast. A whopping 91.1 percent of the nearly two thousand black voters supported Armstrong, and he received a surprisingly high 53.6 percent of the city's white vote. Armstrong's candidates for the city commission—Ralph Richards and George Robinson—won handily as well.⁵⁸

Armstrong's landslide victory in 1935 did not insulate him from controversy. A \$200,000 budget deficit for that year triggered an investigation by a special state's attorney. The mayor seemingly violated a 1933 city charter amendment that provided for the removal by the governor of officials responsible for exceeding the budget. Anticipating such consequences, Armstrong and commissioners R.W. Carswell and George T. Robinson resigned on December 10, 1936, but not before they hand-picked their successors. Armstrong and Robinson were replaced immediately by their wives, while Carswell's seat was filled by the city's bookkeeper, Lyle C. Ramsey. Reasoning that their resignations would thwart the governor's intentions, Armstrong and his allies planned to safely return to office after the governor-elect, Fred Cone, took office on January 5.⁵⁹

All did not go as the Armstrong machine imagined. On December 30, Governor Sholtz ordered Mayor Irene Armstrong, three city commissioners, the city clerk, and the city manager re-

57. *Daytona Beach News-Journal*, 21, 24, and 25 November, 2 December 1935.

58. *Ibid.*, 23 November, 4 December 1935.

59. *Daytona Beach Evening News*, 1 January 1937; *Daytona Beach Morning Journal*, 10 December, 11 December 1936.

moved from office, holding them responsible for the budget deficit and for exercising poor judgment in administering city affairs. In particular, the governor justified his removal of Irene Armstrong because "she had continued the policies of her husband." He ordered two hundred National Guardsmen to Daytona Beach to enforce the officials' removal and the installation of their replacements: Harry Wilcox as mayor and Albartus C. Hankins, Henry Pollitz, and Harry Drake as the new commissioners.⁶⁰

Although Wilcox, a former city commissioner, had supported Edward Armstrong in the past, he took advantage of the political upheaval. On January 1, 1937, he demanded entry into city hall. Irene Armstrong, insisting that she was still mayor, refused to unlock the door. Meanwhile, on orders from her husband, approximately one hundred policemen and other heavily armed city employees entered the building to defend Mayor Armstrong. With four detachments of guardsmen closing in on the armed Armstrong partisans holed up in city hall, and with a crowd of more than two thousand milling around outside the building, violence seemed imminent. Fortunately, conflict was averted when Circuit Court Judge Herbert B. Frederick issued a temporary restraining order preventing Wilcox and the other newly appointed officers from entering city hall. On January 4, the Florida Supreme Court refused to remove the injunction, the guardsmen retreated, and the crowds went home. Soon afterward, the Florida Supreme Court ruled against Governor Sholtz's order to remove Daytona Beach's elected officials, claiming that the law under which the governor acted contained a defective title. This ruling and the inauguration of Governor Cone paved the way for Edward Armstrong's reinstatement as mayor on March 4. The Armstrongs and their supporters had won what the *News-Journal* called "The Battle of Daytona Beach."⁶¹

Emerging from the crisis politically stronger than ever, Armstrong won a fifth term in December 1937 by an astounding five-to-one margin. The campaign lacked the divisiveness encountered in the past. The mayor's hapless opponent, Millard Conklin, received

60. *Daytona Beach Evening News*, 1 January 1937; *Daytona Beach Morning Journal*, 2 January 1937.

61. *Daytona Beach Morning Journal*, 2 January 1937; *Daytona Beach Evening News*, 4 January 1937; *Daytona Beach Sunday New-Journal*, 2 January 1938; City Commission Minutes, 4 March 1937; Leonard Lempel, "Mayors Edward and Irene Armstrong and the Battle of Daytona Beach," *Halifax Herald* 18 (June 2000): 6-9.

only 1,210 of the 7,395 votes cast. Armstrong received an overwhelming 97 percent of the black vote as well as 77.8 percent of the white vote. Three of Armstrong's candidates for city commission seats won handily, too. In Zone Four, Ralph Richards defeated his opponent by more than five to one; and in Zone Three, Roderick Ross received more than three times as many votes as his adversary. Both commissioners received more than 93 percent of the black vote.⁶²

Edward Armstrong savored his victory only briefly. On the morning of January 2, 1938, just one day before his scheduled inauguration for a fifth term, he died from liver failure. An estimated seven thousand Daytonans attended the mayor's funeral three days later. In the hours preceding the funeral service, his body lay in state while hundreds of mourners "white and colored alike" slowly filed past to pay final respects.⁶³

Armstrong left behind a powerful legacy. Under his leadership Daytona Beach successfully competed for New Deal monies and early fought its way out of the Depression. A boardwalk, public docks, and an airport were built with Works Progress Administration funds, while the Public Works Administration provided \$300,000 for a city waterworks. In addition, recreational facilities and a bus system expanded during the Armstrong years. At the time of his death, the mayor was seeking \$700,000 from the federal government for a new entertainment hall.⁶⁴ By 1935, most white Daytonans credited Armstrong with restoring prosperity and improving services; in return they were willing to ignore or at least pardon his corrupt practices and solicitation of black votes.

Whereas Armstrong's support among whites increased over time, African Americans overwhelmingly voted for him in every election. In an era when the political voices of southern blacks were silenced, Armstrong reached out across the racial divide and sought their participation. As a consequence of their involvement, Daytona Beach's blacks acquired a degree of empowerment and self respect rarely experienced by African American communities in the South before World War II. Black Daytonans believed that

62. *Daytona Beach Sunday News-Journal*, 5 December 1937; *Daytona Beach Evening News*, 7 December 1937.

63. *Daytona Beach Evening News*, 7 December 1937; *Daytona Beach Morning Journal*, 4 January 1938; *Daytona Beach Evening News*, 5 January 1938; *Daytona Beach Morning Journal*, 6 January 1938.

64. *Daytona Beach Sunday News-Journal*, 2 January 1938.

their voices counted, their interests were protected, and their concerns mattered. As one black resident stated, "When Mayor Armstrong was coming up, he asked what we wanted . . . and was told: policemen, freedom on the beach to a reasonable extent, and so on. We got them." The arrest of Albert Bethune further demonstrated the influence of Armstrong's black supporters. Mary McLeod Bethune sought help from the mayor's leading political operative, Joe Harris, in securing her son's release from jail. Yvonne Scarlett-Golden recalled that "very few blacks feared whites in Daytona Beach. There used to be a saying among people: 'We don't want to deal with those blacks in Daytona. They have too much power.'"⁶⁵

Writing to the mayor "on behalf of the Colored citizens of Daytona Beach" in late 1929, Bethune heaped effusive praise on Armstrong. She congratulated the mayor on his "progressive, courageous administration" and expressed "gratitude for all that [he] had done," telling him that "the children of tomorrow will rise up and call you blessed." Alluding to the patronage awarded to his black supporters, Bethune praised the mayor's "fine spirit in the distribution of the city's work among all of the citizens."⁶⁶

New Deal programs complemented Armstrong's efforts to assist Daytona Beach's black citizens. Many black Daytonans found employment in PWA and WPA projects and took advantage of the educational and employment opportunities offered by the WPA's subsidiary, the National Youth Administration. Daytona Beach's blacks fared particularly well in these agencies. Every PWA contract contained a nondiscriminatory clause, and a job quota system was implemented to enforce it.⁶⁷ Mary McLeod Bethune headed the Negro Affairs Division of the NYA, with Bethune-Cookman College serving as a conduit for NYA training and funds. In 1940, African Americans accounted for 62.4 percent of the 436 Daytonans work-

65. George Ingram interview; interview with meat inspector; Scarlett-Golden interview.

66. Mary McLeod Bethune to E. H. Armstrong, 31 December 1929, privately owned, copy of letter in author's possession.

67. Sitkoff, *A New Deal for Blacks*, 68-73; John B. Kirby, *Black Americans in the Roosevelt Era: Liberalism and Race* (Knoxville, Tenn., 1980), 22; Paul Moreno, "Racial Proportionality and the Origins of Employment Discrimination Policy, 1933-1950," *Journal of Policy History* 8 (1996): 426-28; Harvard Sitkoff, "The Impact of the New Deal on Black Southerners," in Cobb and Namorato, eds., *The New Deal and the South*, 126; Nancy J. Weiss, *Farewell to the Party of Lincoln: Black Politics in the Age of FDR* (Princeton, N.J., 1983), 236.

ing for the WPA, NYA, and other federal programs. No other Florida city with a similar population had as high a percentage.⁶⁸ African Americans in Daytona Beach enjoyed a local government that both attracted substantial New Deal monies and hired blacks to work on New Deal projects.

Furthermore, black Daytonans during the 1930s apparently fared better in obtaining white collar employment than blacks in most other mid-sized Florida cities. Blacks in these cities on average held only 7.4 percent of the professional or skilled jobs in 1940, as compared to Daytona Beach where 11 percent of blacks were so employed. In only two of the municipalities, Key West (12.1 percent) and Tallahassee (12.6 percent), were blacks more likely to have professional or skilled jobs.⁶⁹ Of course, employment prospects for blacks remained dismal in comparison to whites. Authorities relegated African Americans to a separate and less lucrative labor market. In contrast to the 11 percent of Daytona's black workers who were either skilled or professionals in 1940, 41.2 percent of the city's white workers held the same occupational status. Low wages for black males meant that black women had to work so their families could make ends meet. About 53 percent of black women in Daytona Beach worked outside the home in 1940, compared to 25 percent of white women. Of those African American women employed, fully two-thirds served as domestics.⁷⁰

Yet, the economic and political gains of black Daytonans, however limited, came with a price. Armstrong's African American supporters, eager for the mayor's patronage, alienated themselves from the reformers who wanted to eliminate fraud, corruption, and political favoritism in the city's government. From the perspective of these Progressives, the Armstrong machine was synonymous with corruption. They accused Armstrong of buying votes, squandering and misappropriating money, "terroriz[ing] businessmen," and using "the spoils system to the limit."⁷¹ Blacks' overwhelming

68. *Sixteenth Census of the U.S.: 1940, Population, Vol. II, "Characteristics of the Population, Part II: Florida-Iowa"* (Washington, D.C., 1943), 129, 131; Sitkoff, *A New Deal for Blacks*, 80.

69. *Ibid.*, 129, 131.

70. The plight of black women in Daytona Beach was repeated elsewhere in Florida; see Maxine D. Jones, "No Longer Denied: Black Women in Florida, 1920-1950," in Colburn and Landers, eds., *The African American Heritage of Florida*, 241-74.

71. Booth, "Early Days in Daytona Beach," 4; Robert Hunter, interview with author, 15 July 1997, Daytona Beach, Fla.

support of the Armstrong machine only reinforced reformers' views that the black masses were inherently corrupt and easily duped by unscrupulous politicians. Ollie Lancaster, a reform leader who briefly served as mayor of Daytona Beach in 1950, expressed the views of many when he publicly opposed the city-wide election of commissioners "as long as Negro votes could be bought."⁷²

The biracial alliance that Armstrong forged did not perish with his death, and machine politics continued to dominate Daytona through the 1940s. Joe Harris, the Cuthbid sisters, and others continued delivering black votes to machine candidates in exchange for patronage and other favors. But by the end of the decade, a younger, more progressive group of black Daytonans felt constrained by the limited opportunities afforded them under machine rule. In the wake of World War II, the machine's insistence on rigid segregation and the exclusion of blacks from public office and other positions of leadership no longer seemed acceptable to these young insurgents. When one of them, George Engram, dared to run for city commissioner in 1948, he incurred the wrath of the machine and was soundly defeated.⁷³

However, when reform commissioners finally defeated Daytona Beach's political machine in 1950, blacks had little cause to rejoice. These "reformers" did nothing to relieve the city's oppressive racial segregation. Instead, they modified the voter registration procedure, causing a drop of more than 24 percent in black registration for the municipal elections of 1952. Furthermore, the reformers did not redress the gerrymandered city commission zones (no single zone contained a black majority), making it virtually impossible for an African American to be elected to office. Under these circumstances most blacks rejected reform candidates, and, when the machine regained control of the city commission in 1954, 70 percent of black registered voters helped them do it.⁷⁴

72. *Daytona Beach Evening News*, 12 November 1950.

73. Forty years later, Engram was still upset about the election which he believed Daytona's corrupt political machine had stolen from him; Leonard Lempel, "George W. Engram: Daytona Beach's Black Political Pioneer," *Halifax Herald* 16 (December 1998): 12. Engram ran again unsuccessfully for city commissioner in 1960. Jimmy Huger, Daytona Beach's first black commissioner, was elected in 1965.

74. *Daytona Beach Morning Journal*, 20 May, 21 May, 7 November 1952, 1 December 1954.

During the Armstrong years, black Daytonans achieved a measure of political and economic empowerment found in few southern communities, and held hopes of more benefits to come in the future. One long-term black community leader and veteran of Daytona's civil rights struggle suggested as much: "When the black revolution in the South started during the late 1950s, blacks in Daytona Beach thought they were ahead of the game, [and believed] that our fight would not be as difficult."⁷⁵ But the machine had no desire to share power equally with blacks nor was it committed to any form of racial equality. As a consequence, black Daytonans' long affiliation with machine politicians provided little momentum toward continued gains during the Civil Rights era. As in most other southern communities, the struggle for black civil rights during the 1950s and 1960s met stubborn resistance in Daytona Beach. Not until after the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act could African Americans stay in the famed resort hotels lining the "World's Most Famous Beach" and step unmolested onto its hard-packed sands.

75. Fair interview.