

# Brief History of the Clark County Negro

transcribed by Harry G. Enoch

October 6, 2017

*This series of twenty articles appeared in the Winchester Sun in December 1919 and January 1920. The author, William Webb Banks (1862-1928), was the long-time editor of the Colored Column in the Winchester News and later in the Winchester Sun. He was a graduate of the State Colored Baptist University in Louisville (later known as Simmons College). He returned to Winchester where he taught school, wrote for the paper, and was active in the Baptist church.*

*(Banks' photograph taken from Golden Jubilee of the General Association of Colored Baptists in Kentucky, 1915.)*



## I

**December 22, 1919**

After the establishment of the colored Republic of Liberia by the American Colonization Society in 1822 for the colored people of the United States who may be emancipated from time to time, several white families in this county freed some of their more favored slaves and sent them to Liberia in Africa and gave them enough money to start in life, some of whom returned to their former owners while others stayed and rose to positions of prominence. During ante-bellum days a number of colored people were left their freedom and in good circumstances at the death of their owners and in one case in this county a white family is said to have left their colored servants 120 acres of some of the best land in the western part of the county.

In the city of Winchester colored people operated businesses and owned considerable property years before the Civil War. A colored man by the name of Jerry Johnson once owned the building north of the Winchester Bank and carried on a grocery in it a number of years before Emancipation. Mrs. Frankie Murry who now has a boarding house on West Broadway has the distinction of having the oldest business in the city of Winchester. For three generations her grandmother, her mother and herself have run the same business continuously on the same spot of ground for over 65 years.

## II

**December 23, 1919**

Oscar J. Dunn, Lieutenant Governor of the state of Louisiana during the reconstruction period after the Civil War, had relatives residing in this city. George Francis Ecton, a Clark county boy and a brother of Matt Ecton, once served as a member of the Illinois legislature from a Chicago district. John Banks Price, whose parents are old Clark county people, served as a member of the Michigan legislature from a Lansing district.

Sidney Woodford, a brother of Mrs. Ellen Kerrick of this city, died in Minnesota some years ago and left an estate valued at \$40,000. Willis F. Martin, a brother of Mrs. Polly Miller of this city, died in Indianapolis, Indiana, a few years ago and left an estate valued at from \$35,000 to \$40,000.

Mrs. Emma Banks died in this County a few years ago at the advanced age of 120 years and had been a member of the Baptist Church for 102 years, having joined at

Friedsburg [Fredericksburg?], Virginia, at the age of 18. She came to this county in early days with the Jones family whom she belonged to and at the time of her death the Associated Press declared her then to be the oldest Baptist in the world.

The late Jerry Stevenson once served on the Federal grand jury in the United States Court at Covington. Amanda Falkner was the first school teacher in Winchester and Polly Hickman second.

John Allen, father of W. H. Allen, and Mrs. Lucy Evans were the first to build and own a house in Poynterville. The Sons of Ham was the name of the first Lodge. They purchased the lot where the manual training building of the city school on West Broadway now stands. The present house, however, was built by the Federal government, but not until the lodge had deeded it to the colored people of Clark county for school purposes.

### III

#### December 24, 1919

Charles Wills was the first colored person to marry in Clark county after the Civil War. He was married by a white minister.

Allen Chapel CME Church is the oldest church organization of any denomination. The First Baptist Church is the oldest Baptist organization. Clark Chapel AME Church was formerly what was called Williams' factory and after the colored people bought it, converted it into a church of its present form. Elder Malcom Ayers of Lexington figured prominently in the organization of the Christian Church, while Elder Davis was their first pastor. The Broadway Baptist Church has the largest auditorium in the county.

George R. Gardner was the first colored man to be elected to the city council but never did qualify. Rev. H. D. Colerane was afterward elected a member of the city council and qualified and afterwards resigned.

Dr. J. H. Holmes is the pioneer colored doctor.

Rev. Reuben Strauss at one time owned stock in a certain bank in this city.

The late Rev. J. F. Hummons had the longest pastorage of any minister in Clark County, nearly fifteen years.

George Gray once made an unsuccessful race for Jailer of Clark County.

Amanda Faulconer owned the first piano.

Haggardville was named in honor of Dora Haggard, a very prominent colored man and the father of William Haggard.

Attorneys Benjamine, Smith and Alexander are the colored lawyers who have practiced before the Winchester Bar, the latter being a home product.

Prof. G. A. Benton was in the Internal Revenue Service when he died only a few years ago. Quite a few home people have held clerkships in the various government departments at Washington D.C.

### IV

#### December 26, 1919

Revs. John White, Joseph Banks and Elisha Fishback or Taylor were the pioneer preachers of Clark county, all of whom may have been dead many years.

"Aunt" Fannie Cole owned a house at the northeast corner of Broadway and Maple streets and sold ginger cakes and root beer 75 years ago.

French Bush and Al Lowe are said to have been the first colored persons in Clark county to vote the Democratic ticket.

The late Aaron Chambers was the largest colored land owner in the county at the time of his death, while the late Robert Bush was the most extensive colored farmer the county ever had.

Winchester has had two colored weekly newspapers, the first being "The National Chronical," W. W. Banks, editor, and the second being "The Gate City Journal, W. H. Allen, editor.

Clark county has had a number of colored fairs in former years. \$900 was made above expenses at their first fair. Jesse Ramsey was president. Prof. George Cary, secretary, and John Bell, treasurer.

Dr. Samuel H. Berry of Arkansas, a home boy, is one of the pioneer colored doctors of the South.

Colored mechanics work helped to build the court house when it was erected in the fifties.

The colored people of Clark county have always been loyal to furnish her full quota of soldiers for the Civil War, the Spanish-American War and our late World War.

## V

**December 27, 1919**

According to Collins' history of Kentucky, the first colored person in Clark county to figure in history was "Monk" who was at what was called Estill's defeat where Mt. Sterling now stands. He carried a wounded white soldier on his shoulder from the bloody Indian conflict to a place of safety, said soldier being related to one of the first white families of Clark county.

Dr. J. H. Tyler is the first colored doctor to start a private sanitarium in Winchester.

Prof. J. H. Garvin was principal of the Winchester colored school for twenty years. Prof. E. S. Taylor, a member of a pioneer Clark county family, is now its most efficient principal.

Mrs. W. W. Banks had general charge of war activities in Clark county during the recent war and was an officer of the Kentucky Council of Defense.

Dr. A. B. Deany is one of the secretaries of the colored Kentucky State Medical Association.

The late Mrs. Mary Wills possibly did the largest volume of business of any colored person in the history of the county, which amounted to as high as 2,000 and 3,000 per month. She was the mother of Mrs. C. Vivion and Miss Carrie N. Wills, mother-in-law of Mrs. Sallie B. Wills and the grandmother of Mrs. Anna Mae Summers, all of this city.

George Brown, a home product, was for over twenty years the leading colored business man in the city of Louisville.

## VI

**December 29, 1919**

Rev. John Brockman of this city is the grandson of an African prince who was stolen from his nativity and brought to this country and made a slave in the family of the Hon. James Clark, who was one of the governors of the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

As a demonstration of the loyalty and patriotism of the colored people of Clark county, they invested nearly \$20,000 in war activities in the great World War for Democracy, this money being invested in stamps, bonds of the various issues, etc. Dr. J.

H. Holmes served as a member of the Government Pension Examining Board for a number of years.

W. W. Banks is the author of a small book entitled "The Negro in a Nut Shell," and a racial chart entitled "The Negro in History."

The late William Bell, the shoemaker, was living in the South at the close of the Civil War and was always proud of the fact that he waited on Mrs. Jefferson Davis and Miss Winnie, her daughter who was called the "Daughter of the Confederacy," when they were leaving Richmond, Virginia, after its "fall" at the close of the war.

Mrs. Nettie George Speedy, a home girl, has the distinction of being one of the foremost female newspaper correspondents of the race. At present she works for "The Chicago Defender."

## VII

**December 30, 1919**

Paul Lawrence Dunbar, the greatest poet that the race has produced in modern time, is said to have been born at L&E Junction and that his father Rev. Harvey Dunbar moved to Ohio when his son was but a lad.

The colored people of Clark county own thirty-two automobiles.

The Ladies Hospital Club furnished the colored ward of the Clark County Hospital at a cost of \$300 where nearly 60 colored patients have been treated. Mrs. Booker T. Washington, wife of the great educator of Tuskegee once addressed this club at the Courthouse. While in the city she was the guest of Mrs. W. W. Banks.

Robert Taylor was the colored food administrator for Clark county during the world's great war.

Mrs. Laura Pearson, a home girl, the daughter of Mrs. Mary Hannah Price, is associated with her husband in a large business at Birmingham, Alabama.

William (Bill) Monroe was what was called the first rich Negro in Winchester.

## VIII

**December 31, 1919**

The most valuable horse ever owned by a Clark county colored man was "Fannie," which was owned by Henry Walker in the early seventies, which horse he refused two thousand dollars for. Henry Walker also owned and operated the old Arcade Livery Stable which runs from Cleveland avenue to Broadway.

This historical Howard's Creek church, built in 1800 and the oldest church edifice standing west of the Allegheny mountains, is now owned by the colored Baptists.

Jerry Stevenson once refused to give \$300 for the site where the Roller Mill now stands at Broadway and Main street.

John Williams served as valet for his master, Gen. John S. Williams, in the Confederate army from whence he obtained his name, "Rebel John."

Winchester has had two colored brass bands.

Gordon Hood is the name of the pioneer colored barber. "Gip" Capps, Harvey Combs, John Armstrong, Dick Keith and William Jackson are among the pioneer colored shoemakers.

Thomas M. Berry assisted in taking the National Census of Clark county in 1910.

"Uncle" Billie Webb was the pioneer white-washer and left all of his children homes on N. Highland street.

## IX

**January 1, 1920**

The late Jack Taul was an authorized Pension Attorney. He was also the first colored Notary in Clark county, and Thomas M. Berry the second.

In the early seventies Poynterville had a gang of boys who called themselves the "Moonlight Clippers," and they did not allow the town boys to cross the C&O railroad after dark.

Dick Rupard, William Sanders and Shelby Curtis [Custard] were the first to erect houses in what was called Brunerville, which is west of the old Paris road [now Elm Street].

The late Patrick Banks was a prominent and influential church layman, having served as a deacon for nearly fifty years. He and his wife, Katherine Banks, gave \$500 toward the erection of the Broadway Baptist Church. Allen Chapel CME Church was named in honor of the late John Allen, one of the most devout local Methodist laymen who ever lived in Winchester. Rev. Henry W. White and Dr. Daniel Jones were the ablest pastors ever assigned to Clark Chapel, both of whom have long since passed to their reward.

James Austin was the last to run an old fashioned dray in Winchester.

## X

**January 2, 1920**

Adam Webster lighted the first street lights in the city, which were coal oil lamps on posts. It is said of him that on starting from a given point, when he finished lighting the last lamp that he would immediately blow it out and retrace his route and do all the others likewise.

It is impossible to write the history of the First Baptist Church without mentioning the names of Rev. Jacob Bush and Rev. Lee Rogers.

The Odd Fellows Hall on N. Highland street is said to have been originally called the "Bat House" on account of so many brick bats being used in its construction.

Ezekiel Winn, Ben Simpson and George Baker with among the pioneer carpenters, and the name of Robert Harris will go down as one of the early plasterers after the Emancipation.

Alfred Thomas, Isaac Strode and Charles Fishback assisted in organizing many of the early churches of Clark county.

The first colored skating rink in Winchester was on Broadway near Maple street, and was operated by Lucien Johnson.

The late Dick Vivion owned the most and more valuable city property of any colored person.

## XI

**January 3, 1920**

The county of Clark and the city of Winchester have not the colored population that they once had and will never have as large again at one time.

Some years ago the colored people of Winchester owned thirteen more homes than the white people, which were by no means as political but they were "home" just the same.

Clark county has twenty of her colored citizens in the four branches of the Standing Army, as follows, 9th and 10th Cavalry and the 24th and 25th Infantry.

Daniel R. Taylor operated the first colored department store in Winchester as he handled groceries, dry goods, notions, fish, fresh and cured meats, boots and shoes and coal.

The pioneer blacksmiths are Jack Taylor, \_\_\_ Hicks, James Brooks, John Rockhill, John Moss, Jack Bell, Thomas Phelps, Henry Jacobs, Monk Hopewell, Henry Daniel and Joe Jones.

The Williams family is the largest colored family in Clark county. Other large families are the Bush, Haggard, Perkins, Gentry, Berryman, Moore and Taylor.

Mrs. Nannie Gordon's family has served longer in one family than any colored family in the county. For three generations and for 65 years they have served continuously in the Goff family.

## XII

**January 5, 1920**

The colored people of the county of Clark and the city of Winchester have 25 lodges and auxiliaries, as follows: Mosaic Lodge No. 25, Free and Accepted Masons and Ladies Department, [Order of] the Eastern Star; The Gate City Lodge No. 23, Knights of Pythias; The Eureka Lodge No. 60, United Brothers of Friendship, Ladies Department and Juvenile; Resolute Lodge No. 10, Good Samaritans and Daughters of Samaria and Juvenile; Shackelford Lodge No. 66, Independent Benevolent Protective Order of Elks of the World and Daughter Elks; Rahab Lodge No. 9, Good Samaritans and Daughters of Samaria at Becknerville; Rose of Sharon Lodge No. 24, Good Samaritans and Daughters of Samaria; Winchester Diamond Lodge No. 2077, Grand United Order of Odd Fellows and Ladies Department (Household of Ruth) and Juvenile; Union Benevolent Society No. 1 (Male and Female); Union Benevolent Society No. 45 at Dodge; Rock View Lodge No. 60, U.B.F. and S.M.T. [United Brothers of Friendship and Sisters of the Mysterious Ten] on Howard's Creek; Union Benevolent Society No. 1, Pine Grove (Male and Female); Champion of the East Lodge No. 27, U. B. F. and S. M. T. at Winetown; Pride of the West Lodge No. 18, U. B. F. and S. M. T. at Dodge; Goose Creek Lodge No. 49, Union Benevolent Society at Goose Creek. All of these have for their object to care for the sick and to bury their dead.

## XIII

**January 6, 1920 issue of the *Sun* is missing**

## XIV

**January 7, 1920**

Slavery is said to have been very mild in Clark county as compared with other counties. A very small percent of the colored population was ever sold South, and when a colored person was hired out, the contract always read that said person must be treated with humanity.

After the death of Rev. Alfred Thomas, the organizer of the Howard's Creek Church and a member of other churches out of the county, the Rev. Charles Fishback published his biography in book form. Also Rev. Zacharick, Winchester pioneer pastor of Clark Chapel CME Church, published a book some years ago on Religious Department.

John Duncan and Riley Gay were the early horse trainers of the county.

The white cemetery contains a number of unknown and unmarked colored graves, as the colored people buried their dead there for years. Later they purchased a cemetery of

their own on the Muddy Creek pike. The following colored families have lots in the white cemetery: Allen, Stevenson, Gardner, Banks, Vivion, Davis and Taylor.

Thomas Faulkner and Mary Ball owned the largest tract of land ever owned by any colored person in the city limits of Winchester.

## XV

**January 8, 1920**

The late John I. Bruner was bookkeeper for a large business firm in this city for over twenty years.

Winchester has had two colored Building and Loan Associations. The first paid out and paid in gold. The second went into the hands of the Receiver.

Sam Brown was the popular harness and saddle maker here 45 and 50 years ago.

Rev. H. Strauss once conducted a barber shop in a little one story brick house where the M and N Hat store is now located.

The Editor of this column has been commissioned four times by the Kentucky Governors, as follows: appointed by Gov. James B. McCreary as Commissioner from Kentucky to represent the State at the Emancipation Exposition at New York City; appointed by Acting Gov. Edward J. McDermott as a Commissioner to represent the State at the Negro Exposition at Chicago; appointed by Gov. A. O. Stanley as a State Commissioner for the Kentucky Negro Exposition, which was to have been held at Louisville last year to commemorate the 30 years of the colored people in American, but on account of the war, said Exposition has been postponed; appointed by Gov. A. O. Stanley as an official delegate to the Council of Defense which was held at Louisville.

Clark Chapel was the first to have individual communion set.

## XVI

**January 9, 1920**

Clark county has 22 colored churches, as follows: Baptist 12, Methodist 7, Christian 1, C. B. F. or High Power 2.

The old time fiddlers were Charles Bean, Dan Chiles, Charles Patton and Wash Turner.

Jeter J. Bright is said to be the only colored shorthorn cattle herdsman.

The Editor of this column served as Secretary of the Consolidated Baptist Association for five years and as President of the Consolidated Sunday School Convention for two years.

Colored people once owned from where J. D. Haggard's furniture store now is on Main street to Church alley on Broadway and considerable property on the south side of Broadway from Main to Buckner street.

Among the great sermons that have been preached are as follows: Rev. Dr. J. K. Polk at the First Baptist Church, Bishop H. M. Miles at Allen Chapel, Dr. E. W. S. Hammonds at Clark Chapel, Rev. Peter Vinegar on Howard's Creek, Elder Preston Taylor at the Christian Church, Dr. S. P. Young at the Broadway \_\_ Church, and Rev. G. M. More at the Washington Street Church.

The Bell brothers, George, Garfield and James, are the first to have a carriage shop and garage.

## XVII

**January 10, 1920**

Rev. H. A. Stewart, an old resident of this city, a veteran of the Civil War, a superannuated Methodist minister of the highest standing, has been preaching for over fifty years and served as secretary of the Kentucky and Ohio Annual Conference longer than anyone in the history of the Conference.

Samuel Black, son of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Black of this city, attained the highest military rank of any colored person of Clark county, that of Lieutenant. He now resides in Chicago.

The Bates and Gatz families have furnished six Baptist Deacons, three each, as follows: Marsh, Jerry and Orin Bates, Dan, Will and Ed Gatz.

The following have been our highest ranking officers in the State and National lodge circles: Rev. H. D. Colerane in the Odd Fellows, B. F. Johnson and W. R. January in the Masons, H. J. Brent and Rev. H. C. Baker in the United Brothers of Friendship, W. H. Allen in the Elks, Prof. J. H. Garvin in the Knights of Pythias, and E. T. Poynter in the Good Samaritans and Daughters of Samaria.

Robert Taylor has the title of messenger at the Winchester Bank.

Gilbert Emery's and the old Vanmeter house were the first to be erected in Kohlhasville. Later Auston Dawson, Frazier, Borchers and others built houses.

## XVIII

### January 12, 1920

The late George Gary was the first colored person in Clark county to renounce the Republican party and join the Prohibition party.

Mrs. Amanda Codwell has served in the Winchester Laundry for over 30 years, being the oldest laundress in the city in point of service.

The Union Benevolent Society has owned the building at the northeast corner of Main street and Broadway for forty years.

John Bell was the first real money loaner among the colored people of this city.

The Odd Fellows met at the corner of Lexington avenue and Maple street years ago and continued until the house that they occupied was destroyed by fire.

The colored Masons met in the Courthouse some years ago.

Rev. Felix Ross of Clark Chapel and Rev. Peter Waites of the First Baptist Church were the most unique or quaint characters who ever pastored in Winchester.

Rev. H. C. Baker and Rev. J. S. Henderson will go down in the history of the Broadway Baptist Church as its most successful pastors.

## XIX

### January 13, 1920

Edward Massie, father of John Massie, janitor at the Post Office, was the first colored man to carry the rural mail in Clark county, which was years before the present R.F.D. System came about.

Prof. E. S. Taylor and Prof. H. C. Buckner, both of the city school, have the honor of holding State Teachers' Certificates.

Mrs. Bettie Hood was the first colored patient to be treated and undergo an operation at the Clark County Hospital.

Among the colored inventors that the county of Clark has produced are Dr. J. H. Tyler who invented a burglar-proof and putty-less window sash on which he obtained a patent from the U.S. Patent Office at Washington, but for some reason failed to place his device on the market. Mack Fields invented an improved Hemp Break but never applied for a patent right. The Bell brothers invented a practicable self-detachable harness for safety in runaway and unmanageable horses. Said device worked automatically, while the driver sat in the vehicle.

In the first colored fair, in addition to cash premiums, \$500 worth of silverware was bought for premium purposes.

Principal among pioneer school teachers not previously mentioned are Prof. Hansborough, Maggie Highton, George Cary, J. C. Hubbard and Peter Simpson.

Clark county lost only two boys overseas during the world's great war.

## XX

**January 14, 1920**

History is a record of past events. The Editor of this Column has in a very brief way endeavored to give to the public the doings of the colored people of this city and county from its earliest history in the Eighteenth century when Monk, according to Collins, figured prominently in the history of the county and from the time that a number of our people were emancipated by their owners and sent to Liberia after its founding by the American Colonization Society in 1822 to the present. We do not claim that all the doing of our people have been chronicled in these twenty chapters, but we do claim an accuracy so far as we have gone, which is a great satisfaction to know. Accounts of many events and persons which have been given but a passing notice possibly should have been elaborated on more, so this column is now open to anyone who will kindly contribute to the above subject which we assure can be extended to the pleasure of the 1,000 colored readers of the Sun every night.

The End