



The Clerk's Black History Series

Debra DeBerry Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County



Charles Richard Patterson

(April 1833 - 1910)

"First African-American Carriagemaker Company Owner"

Charles Richard Patterson was born a slave in Virginia, April of 1833, where he spent most of his time assisting the planation blacksmith. Around 1861, just prior to the Civil War, Patterson escaped, crossing the Allegheny Mountains, hiking through West Virginia, and crossing the Ohio River to reach Greenfield, Ohio - a town with strong abolitionist sympathies and a station along the Underground Railroad.

Patterson began working for the Dines and Simpson Carriage and Coach Makers Company as a Blacksmith. In 1865, he married a mulatto woman, Josephine Utz, and the couple had five children. He later went to work as a foreman for another local carriage maker, J. P. Lowe & Company, a white-owned Greenfield-based carriage manufacturer.

In 1873, Patterson went into partnership with J.P. Lowe, and over the next twenty years,

they formed a highly successful carriage-building business. Patterson was awarded multiple patents for his devices including: a trill coupling (#364,849) in 1887; a furniture caster (#452,940) in 1891; and a vehicle dash (#803,356) later in 1905.

In 1893, Patterson bought Lowe's shares of the business and renamed the business C.R. Patterson & Sons Company to reflect the partnership with his younger son, Samuel C. Patterson. By the 1890s, C.R. Patterson & Sons became a very prosperous business with approximately 10-15 employees, designing and building 28 different styles of carriages at \$120 to \$150 each. The most popular carriage being a doctor's buggy that was distributed throughout the South and Midwest. In 1897, Patterson's son Samuel became ill, prompting his older brother Frederick, who was teaching in Kentucky at the time, to return home and help with the family business. In 1899 Samuel C. Patterson died at the age of 26 and when Charles Patterson died in 1910, Frederick D. Patterson (1871-1932) took over the family business.

During this time, horse-drawn carriages were being replaced with automobiles and the company, in an effort to gain hands-on knowledge about the horseless carriages, began offering repair services. On September 23, 1915, the first Patterson-Greenwood Automobile rolled off the assembly line. The awkward-looking two-door coupe with a 30hp Continental 4-cylinder engine, a full floating rear axle, electric start ignition with a split windshield for ventilation, cost \$850. In total they sold around 30 vehicles, but the small company could not compete with the much larger Ford Manufacturing company. In 1920, the Patterson-Greenfield Automobile Company reorganized to become the Greenfield Bus Body Company, manufacturing truck, bus, and other utility vehicle bodies for the larger automakers.

Frederick D. Patterson died in 1932 and the Great Depression forced his son, Postell Patterson (1906-1981), to close the business permanently in 1939. Although no Patterson Automobiles are known to exist today, the Greenfield Historical Society holds a C. R. Patterson buggy in its collection.



No. 4 Special Buggy

\$65.00

A value unequalled. Sold on \$1.00 Profit Margin. Write for prices and other styles. Send for catalog.

C. R. Patterson & Sons
GREENFIELD, OHIO

Largest Negro carriage concern in the United States



FREDERICK D. PATTERSON ~1915



Bus built by the Patterson Company.