



DEBRA DEBERRY  
CLERK OF SUPERIOR COURT  
DEKALB COUNTY, GEORGIA



# Celebrate Black History

*"I am and  
always will  
be a catalyst  
for change."*

Shirley Anita St. Hill Chisholm  
1924-2005

First African-American woman in Congress (1968) and the first woman and African-American to seek the nomination for president of the United States from one of the two major political parties (1972).





# 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 plantation 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

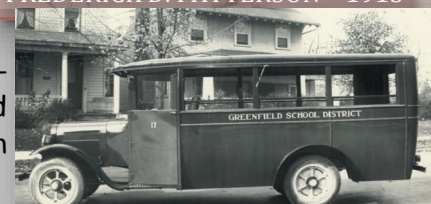
A value unequalled. Sold on \$1.00 Profit Margin. Write for prices and other styles. Send for catalog.

C.R. Patterson & Sons  
GREENFIELD, OHIO

Largest Negro carriage concern in the United States



FREDERICK D. PATTERSON ~1915



Bus built by the Patterson Company.



# The Clerk's Black History Series

## Debra DeBerry Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County

### Jackie Ormes

(August 1, 1911 – December 26, 1985)

“First African-American Woman Cartoonist”



**Jackie Ormes** was born Zelda Mavin Jackson on August 1, 1911, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to William Winfield Jackson and Mary Brown Jackson. Jackie's father, a printing company owner, died when Jackie was just six years old. Jackie's mother remarried and moved the family to Monongahela, PA. She began drawing and writing in high school and became the yearbook's arts editor, creating cartoons of caricatures of her fellow students and teachers. Her first real writing assignment, covering a local boxing match, came during her senior year when she wrote to the editor of an African-American newspaper, the Pittsburgh Courier.

After graduating high school in 1930, Jackie moved back to Pittsburgh and began her first job with the Pittsburgh Courier as a proofreader, and freelance writer of local special interest stories. She married Earl Ormes in 1931 and had one daughter that died at the age of two. In May of 1937, Jackie debuted her comic strip character called Torchy Brown in "Dixie to Harlem." Torchy Brown was a Mississippi teen who moved to New York City to make it as a lounge singer at the famed Cotton Club. Jackie became the first black woman cartoonist to be published in a newspaper. The comic strip ran in the Pittsburgh Courier for only one year, and by the time it ended, Jackie had already moved to Chicago with her husband. In 1942 Jackie began writing occasional articles and a society column for the Chicago Defender, one of the nation's leading black newspapers. At the end of the war, the Defender started running a single-panel cartoon she created called Candy, about an attractive and wisecracking housemaid. In 1945, Jackie's newest effort, Patty-Jo 'n' Ginger, featured a precocious, insightful and socially/politically-aware child as the only speaker, coupled with her beauty queen big sister. In 1947, Jackie contracted with the Terri Lee doll company to produce a play-doll. The Patty-Jo doll was on the shelves by Christmas, and was the first American black doll to have an extensive upscale wardrobe. As in the cartoon, the doll looked like a real child, in contrast to the mammy and Topsy-type dolls of the time.



In December 1949, Jackie's contract with the Terri Lee company was not renewed, and production ended. The comic appeared in the Pittsburgh Courier and ran until 1956. During that time, Jackie reinvented her character, Torchy, and she appeared in The Courier with "Torchy in Heartbeats." Torchy was now a beautiful independent woman seeking true love. It was the first time mainstream news readers saw the image of a black woman as confident, well-dressed, intelligent and brave. As a result, Torchy Togs, a paper-doll in the image of Torchy, was created and sold.



Jackie retired from cartooning in 1956. She continued creating art and volunteering in her South-side Chicago community. On December 26, 1985, Jackie Ormes passed away at the age of 74. In 2007, cartoonist and journalist Cheryl Lynn Eaton founded The Ormes Society, which promotes black female comics creators.



# The Clerk's Black History Series

## Debra DeBerry Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County Willie Eldon O'Ree



(October 15, 1935 –)

### “First Black National Hockey League Player”

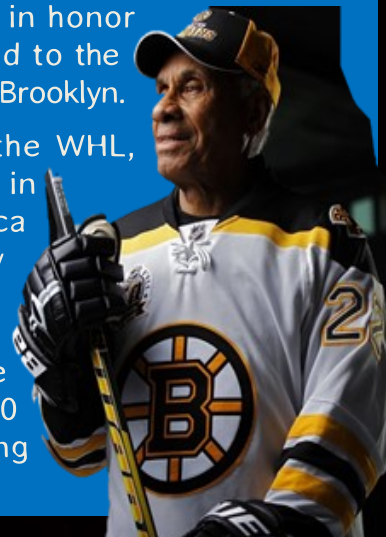
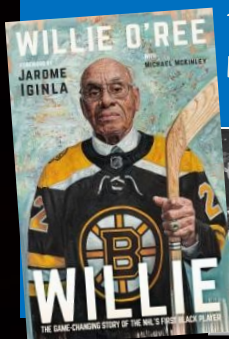
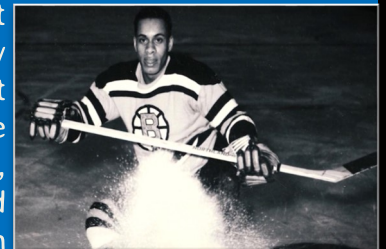
Willie Eldon O'Ree was born October 15, 1935 in Fredericton, the capital of the Canadian province of New Brunswick. His grandparents traveled to Canada from the American South, escaping slavery through the Underground Railroad. One of 13 children, Willie learned to skate on ice when he was just three years old. At the age of five, he began playing organized hockey but grew to excel at both baseball and hockey equally, throughout his middle school years. At the age of 14, Willie's baseball team travelled to New York for a championship celebration trip. There, he met Jackie Robinson, the Brooklyn Dodgers legend that broke the color barrier in Major League Baseball. Willie later told the story that Jackie Robinson said he didn't know any black kids that played hockey; Willie was the first.

Willie's talent for baseball was also recognized with an invitation to try out for the Milwaukee Braves, but hockey was his first love. He began playing for the Kitchener Canucks of the Ontario Hockey Association (OHA) in 1955. In his very first season, he suffered a devastating injury from a hockey puck, shattering his right eye, causing 97 percent loss of sight. He went home to Fredericton to recover, telling just his sister and just one close friend about the permanent vision damage.

Although most players in the hockey league knew about Willie's injury, they assumed he was completely recovered since he never spoke about his vision loss. The very next season, Willie was invited to try out and was picked up by a minor league team called the Quebec Aces. His contribution of 22 goals in the first year, helped Quebec win the league championship. Midway through his second year, Willie was called up again, but this time he would make history. On January 18, 1958, Willie Eldon O'Ree became the first person of color to play for the National Hockey League's (NHL) Boston Bruins. Albeit temporary, playing only two games, Willie made history.

Willie was called up to the Bruins again for one season in 1960-61. One year later, he returned to the minor league, playing for the Los Angeles Blades, of the Western Hockey League (WHL). That year, he and some team members were invited to an NAACP luncheon held in honor of Jackie Robinson. After speaking with the media, Robinson was introduced to the players and recognized Willie as the young black hockey player he met years ago in Brooklyn.

Willie O'Ree played professional hockey for 21 seasons, including 13 in the NHL, before retiring in 1979. He was named the NHL's first diversity ambassador in 1996 and since then, has traveled across North America promoting NHL, youth-level events, and encouraging diversity and inclusion in the sport of hockey. He was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame in November 2018. Overall he appeared in 45 games total, with 10 goals and 4 assists—all while being legally blind, in his right eye.

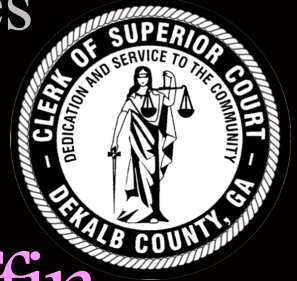




# The Clerk's Black History Series



**Debra DeBerry**  
Clerk of Superior Court  
DeKalb County



## Bessie Virginia Blount Griffin

(November 24, 1914 - December 30, 2009)

“Inventor, Expert Forensic Witness”

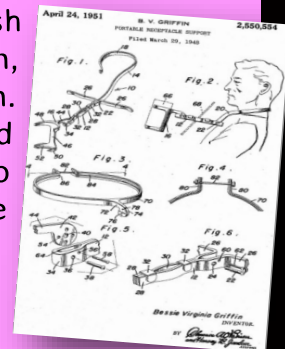
**Bessie Virginia Blount Griffin** was born November 24, 1914, in Hickory, Virginia, (now known as the city of Chesapeake). Bessie was a bright child that taught herself not only how to write with both hands, but also to write using her mouth and feet. Due to lack of educational resources for black children at the time, Bessie was forced to discontinue her education in the sixth grade. Her family relocated to New Jersey where she later earned her GED and entered the local Kennedy Memorial Hospital's nursing program in Newark. Upon graduation, she continued her education and became a physical therapist.

At the end of WWII, Bessie began working with injured and permanently disabled soldiers that were missing limbs and were unable to perform basic tasks, such as feeding themselves. Bessie witnessed how the loss of physical independence affected the soldiers emotionally and began developing a device to assist them with their physical limitations. She created an apparatus that would allow patients who didn't have use of their arms or hands, control the release of food through a tube into their mouth. She later perfected the device by adding a neck brace with a food dish holder.

In 1951, Bessie received a patent for her invention, Patent# 2,550,554, under her married name of Bessie Griffin. She later appeared on a Philadelphia television show called “The Big Idea” - the first woman and first black person to appear on the show - hoping to create national interest in the invention by the American Veteran's Association (AVA) - but they showed no interest in the product.

Even though the AVA passed on the invention, the French government showed immediate interest in the “portable receptacle support” brace and she eventually donated the rights for its use. By now, Bessie was well known in the inventors circles, working with the likes of Theodore M. Edison, son of the famed inventor, Thomas A. Edison. Bessie later invented a disposable cardboard emesis basin that is used in hospitals. Again, the AVA turned down the use of the invention but this time, Bessie sold the idea to the Belgium government. A variation of her design is still used in hospitals today.

From her extensive work with disabled patients, Bessie was able to recognize various writing characteristics of people with limited use of their arms and hands and published a technical paper on “Medical Graphology.” In 1969, Bessie started her second career as a Forensic Scientist and began conducting forensic research for police departments in New Jersey and Virginia. Advancing in her field quickly, she joined the Portsmouth, Virginia Police Department as Chief Examiner and in 1977, earned an invitation to train in the famous “Scotland Yard” in England. Later, when she was turned down for employment by the FBI, she opened her own business examining pre-civil war documents and historic slave papers. She operated her business until the age of 83. On December 30, 2009 in Newfield, New Jersey, Bessie Virginia Blount Griffin passed away at the age of 95.

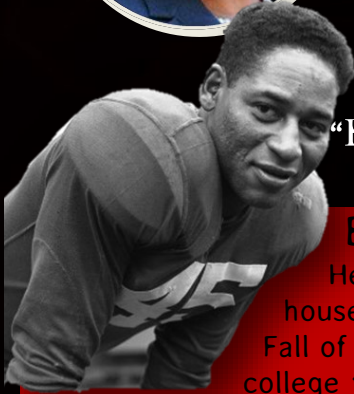


# The Clerk's Black History Series

## Debra DeBerry Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County Emlen Lewis Tunnell

(March 29, 1924 - July 23, 1975)

"First African-American Inducted into Pro Football Hall of Fame"  
"First African-American New York Giants Football Player"

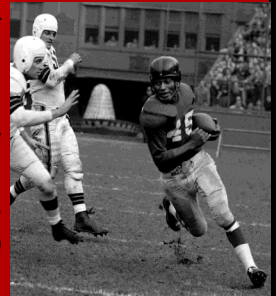


**Emlen Lewis Tunnell** was born March 29, 1924 in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania.

He was raised just north of Philadelphia, along with his three siblings, by his mother, a housekeeper. Emlen was the star half-back of the Radnor High School football team. In the Fall of 1942, Emlen enrolled in the University of Toledo and began playing college football. His college football career was quickly cut short when on October 23, 1942, he sustained a broken neck during a game. Not one to give up easily, Emlen recovered, switched sports, and went on to lead the university's basketball team to the finals just one year later. Soon thereafter, he left school to join the US Coast Guard just before the start of WWII.

Emlen served on the cargo ship USS Etamin stationed in the South West Pacific from August 1943 to July 1944. In April 1944, while unloading explosives and gasoline in Papua, New Guinea, the USS Etamin was struck by a torpedo dropped from a Japanese airplane. Emlen jumped into action and saved a fellow crew member who was set afire in the blast, beating out the flames and sustaining burns to his own hands. He carried the shipmate to safety. In the Fall of the same year he began playing for the San Francisco Coast Guard Pilots football team. In 1946, Emlen saved another shipmate who fell overboard; Emlen reportedly jumped into the 32-degree water and rescued the drowning man. Both actions earned Emlen the Silver Life Saving Medal and the Combat Action Ribbon.

In 1946, Emlen completed his tour with the Coast Guard and enrolled in the University of Iowa, playing football for two seasons. When he wasn't drafted to the NFL, Emlen hitchhiked to New York and approached the New York Giants for a tryout. On July 24, 1948, Emlen was given a \$5,000 contract with a \$1,000 bonus, making him the first African-American to play for the New York Giants. Emlen's career with the Giants lasted 11 years until 1958. During this time, he was selected as a first-team All-Pro six times, played in eight Pro Bowls, and set multiple franchise records. To this day, he remains the number two all-time recorder holder for 79 intercepted passes.



After the 1958 season, Vince Lombardi, the Giants' offensive coordinator, left New York to become head coach and General Manager of the Green Bay Packers. The next year the Packers bought out Emlen's contract from the NY Giants. Emlen played with Green Bay until his retirement in 1962. He finished with records of: 79 career interceptions; 1,282 interception return yards; 258 punts; 2,209 punt return yards; 3,421 return yards; and playing 158 consecutive games. He continued working with the Packers and Giants, first as a scout and then as Assistant Coach for the Giant's defensive backs. In February 1967 Emlen Lewis Tunnell was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame, making him the first African-American and the first defensive back to be inducted.

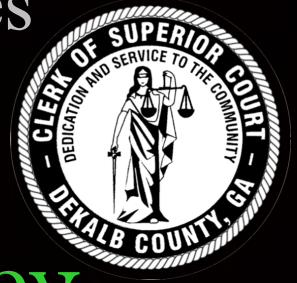
In 1974, Emlen suffered a minor heart attack and was reassigned to the Giant's as assistant personnel director. Less than one year later, on July 23, 1975, Emlen Tunnell suffered another, but this time fatal, heart attack during a Giant's practice session in Pleasantville, NY. He was just 51 years old.





# The Clerk's Black History Series

**Debra DeBerry**  
Clerk of Superior Court  
DeKalb County



**Constance Baker Motley**

(September 14, 1921 – September 28, 2005)

"First African – American Woman Appointed to Federal Judgeship"



**Constance Baker Motley** was born September 14, 1921 in New Haven, Connecticut. She was the ninth of twelve children born to immigrant parents from the small Caribbean island of Nevis. Her mother was a founder of the New Haven NAACP, which exposed Constance to social justice and activism at an early age. In high school, Constance was the president of the New Haven Negro Youth Council and was secretary of the New Haven Adult Community Council. She graduated High School with honors in 1939, and with no clear financial path to college, she began working for the National Youth Administration continuing her work in community service. It was during this time a local philanthropist heard her speak and offered to pay for her college education.

Constance entered HBCU Fisk University but later transferred to New York University to complete her Bachelors Degree in Economics in 1943. In 1944 she



became the first black woman to be accepted into Columbia Law School. While attending Columbia Law School, she worked as a law clerk for Thurgood Marshall for the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund. After graduation in 1946 she began working as Associate Counsel - the first female attorney to hold the position. She married the same year.



In her 20 years as associate counsel, she represented Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the Freedom Riders and the Birmingham Children Marchers. She visited Martin Luther King, Jr., in jail and stayed with Medgar Evers while under armed guard. In 1954, Constance wrote the first legal brief in the *Brown v. Board of Education* case. She was the first African-American woman ever to argue a civil rights case before the U.S. Supreme Court, winning nine of the ten cases. The tenth decision, regarding jury composition, was eventually overturned in her favor. She was a key legal strategist in the civil rights movement, helping to desegregate Southern schools, buses, and lunch counters. She was also the lead council in the case to allow James Meredith to gain admission to the University of Mississippi in 1962.



In 1964, Constance was elected to the New York State Senate and became the first black woman ever elected to the New York State Senate. She devoted much of her time advocating for housing equality for a majority of Black and Latinx low-income tenants. In 1965, she was the first black woman elected as the President of Manhattan Borough. In 1966, President Lyndon B. Johnson appointed her as a Federal Judge - the first black woman to hold the position. Although opposed by southern conservatives in the Senate, she was eventually confirmed and later became Chief Judge in 1982 and Senior Judge in 1986, serving in the latter post until her death. On September 14, 2005, Constance Baker Motley died in New York City, New York. She was 84 years old.





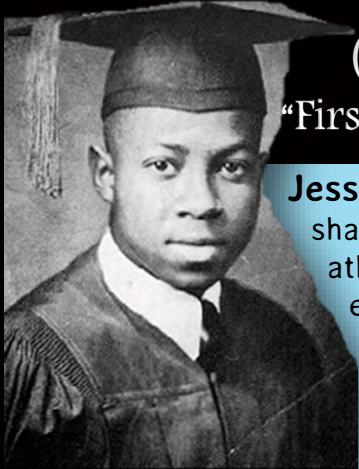
# The Clerk's Black History Series

## Debra DeBerry Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County

### Jesse L. Brown

(October 13, 1926 – December 4, 1950)

“First African-American Aviator of U.S. Navy's Basic Flight Training”



**Jesse LeRoy Brown** was born October 13, 1926 in Hattiesburg, Mississippi to a sharecropper father and a schoolteacher mother. Excelling in academics and athletics, Jesse graduated salutatorian from the segregated Eureka High School and enrolled in The Ohio State University in 1944. For three years, Jesse worked two jobs from 3:30PM to midnight, while maintaining straight-As as an engineering major. However, his real passion was the university's aviation program. Despite his top grades, the university rejected his application multiple times because of his race. Jesse later learned of an aviation program through the Naval Reserve Officer

Training Corps (NROTC) program at Ohio State and joined the Naval Reserves on July 8, 1946. Although the white Navy recruiter attempted to discourage him from enlisting, Jesse passed all exams and aced the physical test, earning his place in the US Navy. In 1947, Jesse L. Brown became the first black man accepted into US Navy flight school. Even though marriage during aviation training was strictly prohibited, Jesse snuck away one evening and married his sweetheart, Daisy Nix.

On October 21, 1948, at the age of 22, Jesse became one of six trainees, out of 100 men who had started in the program, to earn “Wings of Gold.” On April 15, 1949, Jesse was commissioned as an ensign in the United States Navy. In October of 1950, Jesse, now married with a small daughter, was sent to join the United Nations force in Korea. As a pilot with the 32nd Fighter Squadron, he flew F4U -4 Corsair fighters from the aircraft carrier USS Leyte. Jesse quickly rose to the position of Section Leader and was an irreplaceable asset in the Korean conflict, winning an Air Medal and a Korean Service Medal for his 20 air combat missions.



On Dec. 4, 1950, Jesse's squadron headed for another daring mission near the Chosin Reservoir to support embattled U.N. troops. As they neared the target area, Jesse's plane was hit by ground fire, causing it to crash into a bowl-shaped valley near the top of a mountain and trapping Jesse under parts of the burning plane. When his wingman, Lieutenant Junior Thomas Hudner, realized that Jesse was trapped, he purposely crash landed his own plane in the same area to aid Jesse and calling for a helicopter rescue. Hudner worked frantically for 45 minutes trying to free Jesse from the burning plane, but a fire erupted and was inching closer to the plane's internal fuel tanks. Despite his actions, Jesse could not be freed from the crash. Fearing an ambush by the approaching enemy troops, Hudner and the rescue helicopter left Jesse behind. Not wanting the plane or Jesse's body to fall into enemy hands, they bombed the crash sight with napalm, with the pilots reciting the Lord's Prayer over the radio. Jesse's last reported words to Hudner were simply to tell his wife Daisy, that he loved her.

Ensign Jesse Brown was the first African-American to die in the Korean conflict. He was awarded numerous medals including the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Purple Heart, Naval Aviator Badge, Korean Service Medal, United Nations Korea Medal, and the Air Medal. On February 17, 1973, the US. Navy commissioned the Knox-class frigate USS Jesse L Brown in Jesse's honor.





# The Clerk's Black History Series



**Debra DeBerry**  
Clerk of Superior Court  
DeKalb County



**Alice Coachman Davis**

(November 9, 1923 – July 14, 2014)

**“First African-American Woman to Win an Olympic Gold Medal”**

**Alice Coachman** was born November 9, 1923 in Albany, Georgia. The fifth of ten children, Alice discovered her love of running and jumping at an early age. Living in the heart of the segregated South made it almost impossible for Alice to utilize local athletic training facilities, in addition to being female during a time of widespread opposition to women in sports. Alice ran on the dirt roads near her house and used whatever she could find, old equipment and homemade hurdles, to practice jumping. Her parents were not initially supportive of her athletic activities. That changed in 1939 while still in High School, Alice broke the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) high school and college women's high-jump records, all while barefoot. From there, she continued to dominate the AAU outdoor high jump championship from 1939 through 1948, winning ten national championships in a row. During the same period, Alice also won three conference championships playing as a guard on the Tuskegee women's basketball team. Although she was in her prime athletically, she was not able to compete in the 1940 and 1944 Olympic Games due to World War II.



However, in 1948, the little girl that used to run barefoot on dirt roads, added her name to the history books when she participated in the London Olympic Games representing the United States. Initially she qualified for the US Olympic team with a high jump of 5 feet 4 inches, breaking the previous 16-year-old record by  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch. But on the last day of the women's track and field event, on a rainy London track and in front of nearly 83,000 spectators, Alice cleared the bar at an unprecedented 5 feet, 6  $\frac{1}{8}$  inches. Although her competitor cleared the same height after several tries, Alice cleared the height with her first jump, and was declared the winner. Her gold medal was not just the first to be won by a black woman – she was also the only American woman to win a gold medal at the 1948 Games. She received her medal from King George VI, returning home to the city of Albany a hero. The town held “Alice Coachman Day” with a 175-mile motorcade where she was cheered by black and white supporters alike. After the fanfare settled down, Alice finished her degree at Albany State and later became a teacher. In 1952, the Coca-Cola Company offered her an endorsement deal, making her the first African-American spokesperson for the company.



## Alice Coachman Hangs Up Spikes

MACON, Ga., Oct. 26 (AP)—Alice Coachman has decided to hang up her track shoes after 10 years of campaigning and trophy gathering.

Miss Coachman, one of the nation's greatest Negro athletes, she intended to spend the rest of her life “teaching others

of trophies to including medals won she now is education Ballard-Hud-Negroes.

In 1975, Alice Coachman was inducted into the National Track & Field Hall of Fame and was honored as one of the 100 greatest Olympians in history at the 1996 Summer Olympic Games in Atlanta. She was inducted into a total of nine different halls of fame, including the U.S. Olympic Hall of Fame. In 1999 Alice Coachman Elementary School opened its doors in her home town of Albany, Georgia.

Alice Coachman died on July 14, 2014 in Georgia after suffering a stroke. She was 90 years old.



# The Clerk's Black History Series

## Debra DeBerry Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County

## Walter Francis White

(July 1, 1893, - March 21, 1955)

"Civil Rights Activist"



**Walter Francis White**, was born July 1, 1893 in Atlanta, Georgia to George and Madeline White. His mother and father, were graduates of Atlanta University (now Clark Atlanta University). At the age of twelve, Walter witnessed a murderous riot where local whites attacked and killed two dozen black Atlantans and injured hundreds more in 1906. Walter graduated from high school in 1912 and completed Atlanta University in 1916. The influence and strength of his educational resources led Walter to begin

working in the field of social justice activism. In 1918, Walter moved to New York City and began working at the national headquarters of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), at the request of James Weldon Johnson.

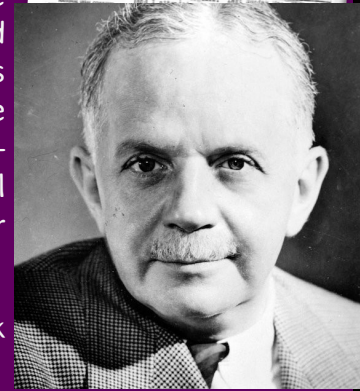
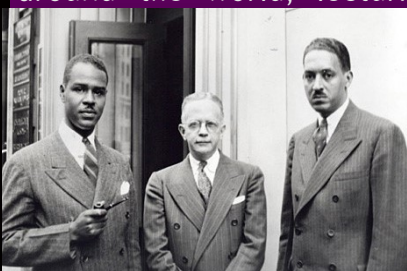
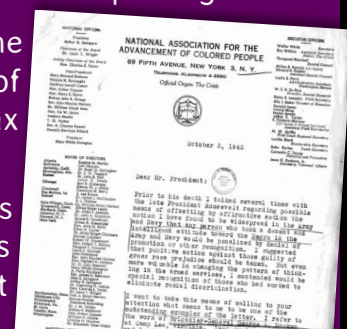
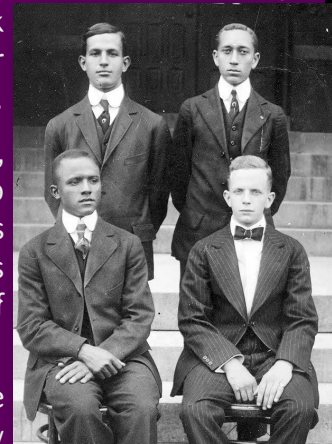
Walter's parents, grandparents and great-grandparents were of mixed race, equally, black and white, giving Walter blonde hair, blue eyes and light skin, which he used to his advantage. "Passing" for white allowed Walter to infiltrate "Whites Only" groups and meetings that an obvious black appearance would have prohibited. His education and background coupled with his appearance gave him a unique way of serving through part of his career with the NAACP.

Walter's first job with the NAACP was as a secretary's assistant. But a short time later, he began working as an undercover agent, traveling thousands of miles every year between 1918 and 1927, investigating lynchings in the South. His appearance provided safety as he traversed through the hostile Southern states, interviewing local whites about reported lynchings and attacks. Most white people were oblivious to Walter's true racial identity and they spoke freely, sharing gut-wrenching details of their lynchings and assaults on local black communities. Walter took notes. In total, he reported first-hand on forty-one lynchings, eight race riots and two major cases of peonage.

In 1931 Walter succeeded James Weldon Johnson as the national secretary of the NAACP. His deep south investigative work helped change the trajectory of public opinion that would eventually secure future federal anti-lynching, anti-poll-tax and anti-segregations laws.

During World War II, Walter traveled the European, North African and Pacific theaters of war, reporting on the experiences of black servicemen on American military bases for the New York Post and other periodicals. In 1945, he sent a letter to President Truman detailing discrimination in the US Armed Forces and requesting the President hold accountable those who would withhold military promotions based on race. In his lifetime, Walter F. White traveled extensively, including two trips around the world, lecturing and investigating racial discrimination. He made thousands of public speeches, wrote five books - including two novels, one hundred articles for national magazines, while writing two weekly columns year after year - appearing in both black and white publications.

Walter Francis White died March 21, 1955, in New York City. He was 61 years old.





# The Clerk's Black History Series

## Debra DeBerry Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County Linda Martell

(June 4, 1941 -)

### "First Black Woman to Appear on the Grand Ole Opry"

**Linda Martell**, a.k.a. Thelma Bynem, was born June 4, 1941 in Leesville, South Carolina. One of five children, she began singing at the age of five and learned to cook for her family by the age of seven. She sang with a gospel church group with three of her brothers and later formed a trio called The Anglos with one of her sisters and a cousin; they performed at local clubs in the late 1950's. She married in 1960 and the couple had three children. She changed her name at the suggestion of a local DJ who said she needed a better stage name. The DJ suggested she looked like a "Linda" - and Linda Martell and the Anglos were born. They released their first single in 1962, "A Little Tear (Was Falling From My Eyes)" on the Fire record label based in New York. Unfortunately, the single was never promoted and didn't sell. They also recorded two more singles with no real financial return for their effort.

Around 1966, Linda and her husband attended an Otis Redding concert in South Carolina. At one point during the evening, Otis, who had been paying particular attention to Linda, shocked the crowd (and her husband) by kissing Linda during the performance. Otis later asked Linda to go on the road with him, but her husband opined against it, fearing he would lose his wife to the popular singer. As fate would have it, Otis Redding died one year later in a plane crash while traveling on tour.

In 1969 during a performance at Charleston Air Force Base, the crowd encouraged (maybe demanded) that Linda sing country music songs in place of her usual R&B lineup. As she sang a couple of familiar tunes, the crowd cheered with approval sparking the attention of Manager Duke Rayner. Convinced she could be a country singing star, Duke flew Linda to Nashville where she recorded a country version of the upbeat, funky song "Color Him Father" by The Winestons.

The year 1969 was a whirlwind for Linda; she was signed by Shelby Singleton to Plantation Records and her song became a national hit, making the Top 25 charts. That same year Linda made her first appearance on the stage of the Grand Ole Opry in August 1969, receiving two standing ovations and making her the first black woman to appear on the Grand Ole Opry's stage and radio program. Two years earlier, Charlie Pride made his first appearance on the Grand Ole Opry stage, making *him* the first black male artist to do so. In 1970, Linda's debut album "Color Me Country," was released. In total, Linda appeared 11 times on the Grand Ole Opry international radio program. She appeared on the American television variety show, Hee Haw and The Bill Anderson Show the same year.

Linda decided to leave Plantation Records when Singleton began promoting another white country artist, leaving Linda without gigs or income. Because she was still under contract, he threatened to sue anyone that tried to record her music - ostracizing her and bringing her music career to a screeching halt. In 1974, she returned home to raise her three children, and sang occasionally in small, local clubs.

In the 1980's, Linda moved to Florida to sing lead in a band covering Gladys Knight's hits with her brother Lee, a keyboardist. But when her father died in 1991, she returned home to South Carolina, in part, to be closer to her children. She took a job driving a bus for the Batesburg-Leesville school district, and eventually worked in a classroom with special needs children. She currently lives in South Carolina with her daughter and periodically entertains music history enthusiasts that stop by for front porch interviews.



# The Clerk's Black History Series

## Debra DeBerry Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County



## Maxie "Max" Cleveland Robinson, Jr.

(May 1, 1939– December 20, 1988)

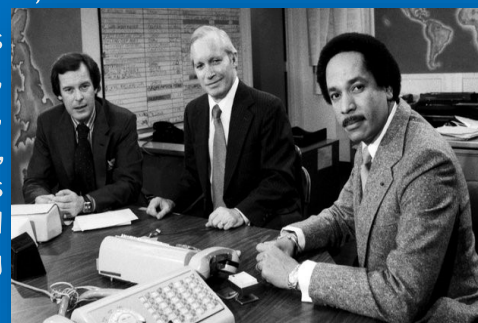
"America's First African-American National Nightly News Anchor"

**Maxie "Max" C. Robinson, Jr.** was born May 1, 1939 in Richmond, Virginia. Growing up, he attended segregated schools and spent only one year at Oberlin College, in Ohio, where he served as freshman class president. He joined the United States Air Force and left shortly thereafter with a medical discharge. Later he began working with a radio station in Petersburg, VA where he was known as "Max The Player."

Max began his career in television in 1959 when he applied for a previously "whites only" position for a local news station in Portsmouth, VA. He was hired and became the first black man to work at the station, but his employment came with one restriction; while he read the news on air, his face would be concealed behind the station's logo. Frustrated with the policy, Max ordered the logo removed one night during the evening news, revealing his true identity. He was fired the next day.

Discrimination continued to pervade Max's career when in his next job as a cameraman/reporter trainee at a news station in Washington, DC, he was paid \$25 a week less than his white counterparts. Undeterred, Max continued working for three years, earning a promotion to full-time reporter. During this time he won six journalism awards covering civil-rights events, such as the 1968 assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and two Emmy Awards for a documentary on black life in the Anacostia area of DC. In 1975, Max, along with 43 other black journalists, founded The National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ), an organization of African American journalists, students, and media professionals, in Washington, D.C.

In 1978, Max Robinson was hired as one of three prime-time news broadcasters, alongside Peter Jennings and Frank Reynolds, anchoring and reporting for ABC's World News Tonight. On July 10, 1978 Max Robinson made history when he reported live from Chicago, making him the first black man to anchor a national nightly news broadcast. His on-camera presence was confident, unforced, and authoritative. He was a natural communicator and had a promising career ahead.



Max's new celebrity status gave him a platform to speak out against racial injustices often creating conflict in his work environment. In 1981, he spoke to a Smith College audience about racial prejudice at his workplace. Two years later, he left the ABC network after being demoted. His next job at Chicago's WMAQ lasted only two years before he left to be a free-lance writer, disappearing from public view.

Throughout his life, Max Robinson faced constant obstruction and prejudice which reportedly led to erratic behavior; missed assignments, alcoholism and three failed marriages. Even though he made a historic mark on our National Nightly News broadcasting, he left the world in quiet solitude carrying a secret that he would reveal only after his death.

On December 20, 1988, Maxie "Max" Robinson, Jr. succumbed to AIDS. Max requested that his family reveal his cause of death, only after he died, so that others in the black community would be alerted to the dangers of the disease and the need for prevention, treatment, and education.





# The Clerk's Black History Series

## Debra DeBerry Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County



## James "Jack" Wormley Jones

(September 22, 1884 – December 11, 1958)

### "First African-American FBI Special Agent"

**James "Jack" Wormley Jones** was born September 22, 1884 on Fort Monroe military base in Hampton, Virginia. His father, John Bradford Jones, a former slave, was the lighthouse keeper for Old Point Comfort Light lighthouse located on the base. His mother, Sally Jones, was also a freed slave. In the mid 1890's, his family moved from Virginia to Cambridge, Massachusetts where he spent his teenage years. He returned to Virginia in 1902 to attend Norfolk Mission College in Norfolk, Virginia. He also attended Virginia Union University but did not complete a degree according to his FBI application. After school he started working for the Washington Metropolitan Police Department of Washington D.C., rising through the ranks from patrolman, horseman, and motorcycle policeman, before becoming a detective. During this time, he married his wife, Ethel, and they had three children.



James W. Jones childhood home in Hampton, VA

When the United States entered World War I in 1917, James joined the US Army. After training in the segregated Officers Training School at Fort Des Moines, he was commissioned as captain and was assigned to Company F in the 368th Infantry Regiment, 92nd "Buffalo Soldiers" Infantry Division. The 92nd Infantry Division was the only African American infantry division to see combat in Europe during World War II. James was sent to France where he saw combat action close to the Belgium and German borders. His leadership and fearlessness during battle was praised by his division commander and led him to become an instructor of the 92nd Division School of Specialists where he was promoted to senior instructor. After World War I ended in 1919, James returned to his job as a police officer in Washington, D.C.



Application for Appointment to Position of Special Agent of the Department of Justice.  
Washington, D. C.  
November 19, 1919  
The Attorney General, Washington, D. C.  
I have the honor to make application for appointment to the position of Special Agent of the Department of Justice, and for your use in this connection the following information is respectfully submitted:  
1. Name in full: James Wormley Jones  
2. Legal residence: 4612 Danvers St. N.W. Wash. D.C.  
3. Mail and telegraphic address: Same  
4. Age on last birthday: 35 yrs Weight: 175 lbs Height: 5 ft 2 1/2  
5. Place of birth: Fairfax, Missouri, Va  
6. Were you ever in the service of the United States? Yes  
7. If so, in what department of the service were you employed? Captain of Infantry from 10th of Oct. 1912 to 25 Oct. 1919  
8. Are you married? Yes  
9. Are you physically capable of discharging the duties of the position sought? (Any physical defects should be fully described.) Yes  
10. Do you use intoxicating liquors or narcotics? If so, to what extent? No  
11. General educational training: (Under this head the applicant's entire educational training should be given in chronological order, stating the period spent in each institution, degrees taken, etc. Knowledge of any languages other than English should be indicated.)  
Public schools Cambridge, Mass. one year  
Norfolk Mission College three years Virginia  
Virginia Union University. Did not take any degree

On November 19, 1919, James applied for a position as a Special Agent with the Department of Justice. He was hired by then director A. Bruce Bieluski, but soon after the start of his employment, the agency changed their name to Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and was headed by the newly the appointed director, J. Edgar Hoover.

James "Agent 800" Wormley Jones was the first black man to be hired as an FBI Special Agent and his assignments were all undercover, working and infiltrating "radical" black organizations. His first assignment came in 1921 when he infiltrated the African Blood Brotherhood - a black liberation group out of New York. During this same time he was assigned to infiltrate Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). There, he became a secretary with some role in keeping the books in Garvey's organization. His investigative

efforts led to the January 1922 arrest of Marcus Garvey for mail fraud. In April 1923 James Wormley Jones abruptly resigned from the FBI at the age of 39. He went to work at the Pittsburgh Police Department as a detective until his retirement in 1958. On December 11, 1958 James "Jack" Wormley Jones died in Dormont, Pennsylvania at the age of 74. He left behind his wife, children, grandchildren, and one great-grandchild. According to the FBI, there are no known photos of James available to the public although a photo of a different James W. Jones is being circulated on the internet.

JONES — Of 1106 Peermont Ave., Dormont, on Thursday, Dec. 11, 1958, at 6:15 p. m. James W. beloved husband of Ethel Peters Jones, in his 75th year; father of Mrs. Mildred Flanagan, John B. and Amor W. Jones; also 4 grandchildren and 1 great-grandchild survive. Friends received at the E. B. Laughlin Funeral Home, 3310 W. Liberty Ave., So. Hills, where services will be held on Monday, Dec. 15 at 2 p. m. Visitations 2-4 and 7-9 p. m.

# The Clerk's Black History Series

**Debra DeBerry**  
Clerk of Superior Court  
DeKalb County



**Alice Augusta Ball**

(July 24, 1892 – December 31, 1916)

“Chemist Who Discovered First Successful Treatment of Leprosy”



**Alice Augusta Ball** was born on July 24, 1892 in Seattle, Washington. When she was a child, her family moved to Honolulu in hopes that the warm weather would ease her grandfather's arthritis. When he died shortly after their arrival, the family quickly returned to Seattle. Alice graduated from Seattle High School in 1910, where she received high grades in the sciences. She attended the University of Washington where she earned a bachelor's degree in pharmaceutical chemistry. Two years later she received a second degree in pharmacy. She co-authored and published a 10-page article in the prestigious Journal of the American Chemical Society titled

"Benzoylations in Ether Solution" which was a rare accomplishment for an African American woman - or any woman - at the time.

After graduation, Alice attended the University (College) of Hawaii on scholarship to pursue her Master's Degree. Her Master's thesis, "The Chemical Constituents of Piper Methysticum," involved studying the chemical properties of the Kava plant species. Because of her research and keen understanding of the chemical makeup of plants, she was later approached by Dr. Harry T. Hollmann, the assistant surgeon at Kalihi Hospital, to study chaulmoogra oil and its chemical properties. Chaulmoogra oil was being tested to help with treatment of Hansen's Disease, also known as Leprosy, but with mixed results. The oil in its original form was too sticky for topical use and even worse as an injection because the oil would clump under the skin. And ingesting the oil was not practical because it had a putrid taste that made the patients vomit. In 1915, Alice developed a method that isolated the ethyl ester compounds from the fatty acids of the chaulmoogra oil, making it water-soluble and easier to dissolve in the bloodstream - allowing for the possibility of a safe, injectable leprosy treatment. She shared her findings with Dr. Hollmann and they soon began the process of testing. That same year Alice was awarded her Master's Degree in Chemistry from the University of Hawaii, making her the first black woman to do so. Unfortunately, before she could officially publish her research on "The Ball Method" of isolating the chaulmoogra oil, Alice fell ill after accidentally inhaling chlorine gas during a lab accident. She had previously reported the substandard ventilation system in the lab to the Dean of the college, with no response. Alice Ball was sent home to recover for six months before she died on December 31, 1916 at the age of 24.

The University's president, Dr. Arthur Dean, also a chemist, continued Alice's work using all of her previous notes, experiments, and research without giving Alice any credit. He began mass producing an injectable treatment for leprosy calling it "The Dean Method." By 1921, he was shipping it around the world. He continued to reap the rewards of Alice's work until 1922, when Dr. Harry T. Hollmann, who originally encouraged Alice's work with chaulmoogra oil, published a paper giving Alice Ball the proper credit she deserved. "The Ball Method," as it is now rightfully called, was life-saving to leprosy patients who were often exiled to the Hawaiian island of Molokai' I to be separated from healthy residents. "The Ball Method" continued to be used until sulfonamide drugs were developed in the 1940s.

In 2000, the University of Hawaii-Mānoa placed a bronze plaque in front of a large chaulmoogra tree on campus to honor Alice and February 29 was declared "Alice Ball Day." In 2007, the University of Hawaii posthumously awarded her with the Regents' Medal of Distinction. In March 2016 Hawaii Magazine placed Alice on its list of the most influential women in Hawaiian history. In June of 2019, Seattle Washington opened the Alice Ball Park and in February 2020, a short film, "The Ball Method" premiered at the Pan African Film Festival and is now available to view on Prime Video. On November 6, 2020, a satellite named after her (ÑuSat 9 or "Alice", COSPAR 2020-079A) was launched into space.







# The Clerk's Black History Series

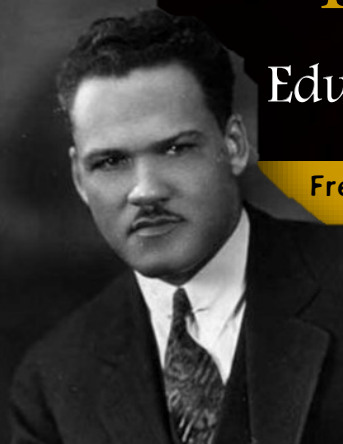
**Debra DeBerry**  
Clerk of Superior Court  
DeKalb County



## Frederick Douglass Patterson

(October 10, 1901 – April 26, 1988)

Educator, Founder of the United Negro College Fund  
and Presidential Medal of Freedom Recipient



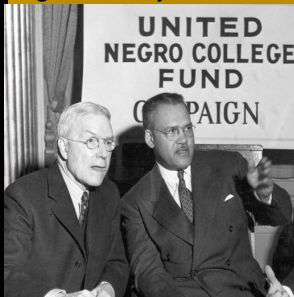
Frederick Douglass Patterson was born on October 10, 1901 in Washington, D.C. to Mamie Lucille and William Ross Patterson. He was named after the great orator, author and activist Frederick Douglass. In 1903, both of Frederick's parents succumb to tuberculosis leaving various family members of his family in Texas to care for him. Eventually his older sister Wilhemina took him in and enrolled him into private school - paying nearly half of her \$20 a month salary. Frederick thrived through Prairie View Normal and Industrial Institute (now Prairie View A&M University) and flourished in college, earning three advanced degrees, both a doctorate in veterinary medicine in 1923 as well as a Master of

Science in 1927. In 1928, he lead the Tuskegee veterinary division while working on his doctorate of philosophy. In 1932, he received his second doctorate from Cornell University and became the Director of the School of Agriculture. In early 1935, at the age of 33, Frederick became the third President of Tuskegee (Institute) University, following in the footsteps of the university's first president, Booker T. Washington. He married Catherine Elizabeth Moton, the daughter of Tuskegee University's second president, Dr. Robert R. Moton.

In 1944, Dr. Frederick D. Patterson founded the School of Veterinary Medicine at Tuskegee. Under his tenure, the veterinary program was so highly regarded that the state of Alabama granted funds for white students to study veterinary science there; this was a very unique occurrence in the segregated South. His efforts at Tuskegee transformed the university with such prestigious graduate programs that is still flourishes today. Tuskegee continues to graduate nearly 75 percent of African-American veterinarians.



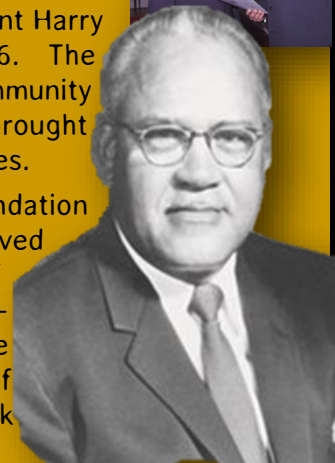
Dr. Patterson also spearheaded the university's engineering program, allowing skilled African-Americans access to high level technical jobs across the nation. His interest in flying and subsequent flying lessons led him to train African - American youth to fly military airplanes in the late 1930's. His action not only encouraged the government to establish a training site but also a full air base in Tuskegee. History would recognize that nearly 1000 African-American's would complete their first training at Tuskegee Army Air Field. Half of the students of the Air training program served overseas during World War II as combat pilots. Known as the Tuskegee Airmen the pilots boasted a spotless record as not one bomber was lost to enemy planes in 1,500 missions. This feat contributed significantly to the eventual desegregation of the American armed forces.



On April 25, 1944, Dr. Patterson, recognizing the need for advancing education to lessen the poverty gap and to strengthen the financial stability of private black colleges, established the United Negro College Fund (UNCF). As a result of his work, Dr. Patterson received an invitation to sit on President Harry S. Truman's "President's Committee on Civil Rights" in 1946. The committee's efforts led to some historic developments such as Community College and Title III of the Higher Education Act of 1965, which brought direct institutional support to America's smaller colleges and universities.



Dr. Patterson was later appointed as director at the Phelps-Stokes Fund, a philanthropic foundation primarily concerned with the education of African Americans from 1953 to 1958. He then served as president of the fund from 1958 to 1969. While there, he advocated for the education of African-Americans, Native Americans, Africans, and disadvantaged white youth. From 1964 - 1966, he served as president and CEO of the UNCF organization. On June 23, 1987, he received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Ronald Reagan in recognition of his lifetime of leadership and success in the educational field. On April 26, 1988, Dr. Frederick Douglass Patterson died of a heart attack at the age of 86 in New Rochelle, New York.



# The Clerk's Black History Series

## Debra DeBerry Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County



## Ida Gray Nelson Rollins

(March 4, 1867 – May 3, 1953)

### “First African-American Woman Dentist”

Ida Gray Nelson Rollins was born on March 4, 1867 in Clarksville, Tennessee. Ida's mother died when she was just a teenager and her father, a white man, was not in her life. After her mother died, Ida went to live with a relative, Caroline, who was 35 years old and a mother of three. Around 1869, Caroline moved Ida along with her children to Cincinnati, Ohio. During high school, Ida worked part-time as a seamstress and dressmaker. She also worked as an office assistant in a dental office owned by brothers Jonathan and William Taft. Jonathan Taft was the cofounder and an early president of the American Dental Association. He was also a strong advocate of allowing women into the dental field. He had previously mentored Lucy Hobbs Taylor, a white woman, in the skills of dentistry and she became the first woman to earn a dental degree in the country in 1870. In 1875 Jonathan Taft became the first dean of the Dental College of the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. Ida worked for the dental office until she graduated from high school at the age of 20. Jonathan Taft encouraged Ida to continue her education in dentistry and her three years of experience in the dental office helped her pass the mandatory entrance exam to the University of Michigan dental school. In October of 1887, Ida entered the University of Michigan dental school. In June 1890, Ida Gray received her doctor of dental school making her the first African-American woman to earn a dental degree in the United States.

Ida returned to Cincinnati and opened a private practice on Ninth Street, where she stayed until 1895. In March of 1895, Ida married James Sanford Nelson, a Spanish-American War veteran. James Nelson lived in Chicago where he served as the captain and quartermaster for the National Guard Eighth Regiment.

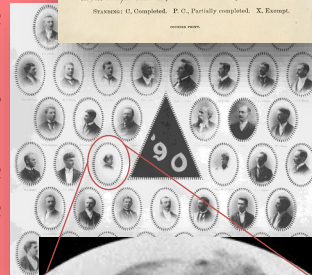
Ida moved to Chicago with James in 1895 where she set up a private practice and he worked as an accountant and later earned a law degree from the Chicago College of Law. She was the first female African-American dentist to practice in the city of Chicago and had a very diverse clientele, serving men and women of all races and ages. She was especially liked by children and served as a role model for many of her young patients. Ida mentored one young patient, Olive M. Henderson, to become the second female African-American dentist in Chicago. Ida was also active in many women's organizations in Chicago and served as the vice president of the Professional Women's Club of Chicago.



### NEWS FROM CHICAGO

Dr. Ida Gray Nelson, Dentist and Miss Blanche Wright, Court Reporter and stenographer have just returned from Waukesha, where they have been enjoying their vacation.

James Nelson died on March 11, 1926. Three years later Ida married William A. Rollins, a waiter. Ida retired from dentistry in the 1930s and continued to live in Chicago, although she also maintained a summer home in Idlewild, Michigan, which was a popular resort area for black professionals. William Rollins died on June 20, 1944, in a car accident. Ida remained widowed for the rest of her life and never had any children. Ida Gray Nelson Rollins died on May 3, 1953 in Chicago. She was 86 years old.







# The Clerk's Black History Series

## Debra DeBerry Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County



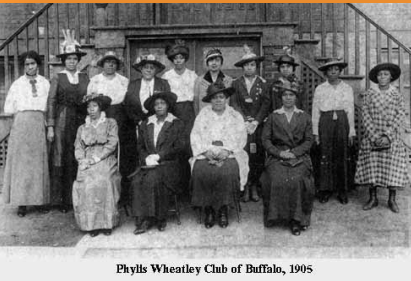
## Phyllis Wheatley Women's Clubs

(Est. 1895)

Women's Clubs created by and for African-American Women



**Phyllis Wheatley Women's Clubs** were named for poet Phyllis Wheatley, who lived from 1753 to 1784. The first Phyllis Wheatley club was established in Nashville, Tennessee in 1895. In 1896, the National Federation of Afro-American Women and the National League of Colored Women of Washington, DC, merged to form the National Association of Colored Women's (NACW) Clubs. Although the club's focus varied from area to area, the founders goal was to improve the status of African-American women by promoting personal and community improvement. Services provided by the clubs included lodging for women, homes for the elderly and infirmed, educational resources and recreational programs for youth, as well as a forum for discussing political issues. Many clubs opened across the nation and key locations to social reform including voting rights and desegregation.



Phyllis Wheatley Club of Buffalo, 1905

The Phyllis Wheatley Club of Buffalo, New York club focused on improving the public library by donating books by African-American authors. The Buffalo club also raised money to provide a monthly pension for Harriet Tubman until her death. They celebrated the 30th anniversary of the ending of slavery with a play which they sponsored for the community. The Phyllis Wheatley club of New Orleans opened a kindergarten and day care for working women and the club was involved in black women's suffrage. They also founded the only training hospital for Black doctors and nurses in 1896. The Chicago club created a home for young women who moved from the South to the North, looking for work, providing services to help women find permanent housing and work.

The original club in Nashville, Tennessee purchased a home for older widowed or single African-American women in 1925. The Billings, Montana club was instrumental in helping desegregate the city and also sponsored scholarships for young women. The Pennsylvania club opened a night school in the late 1920s and emphasized continued learning. The Tampa Bay Phyllis Wheatley Club sponsored an annual "Defense Dance" which raised money for other non-profit groups, such as the NAACP. In 1932, the Passaic, New Jersey, club worked to raise \$5,000 for the creation of a black community center.

The Charleston, North Carolina club hosted events featuring prominent activists, entertainers, playwrights and educators in the Black community such as Marian Anderson, Mary McCleod Bethune, Countee Cullen, W.E.B. DuBois, and Langston Hughes. In 2015, the El Paso, Texas Phyllis Wheatley Club celebrated its 100th anniversary.



Courtesy, Club of Phyllis Wheatley Y. W. C. A., Washington, D.C.

After 1900, the clubs divided into two separate models: independent clubs and colored branches of the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA). Those that were affiliated with the YWCA received significant financial support but were usually supervised by an all white board that controlled the club. In 1931, the NACW formed its own Phyllis Wheatley Home Department, providing the same services as YWCA-affiliated clubs. They were purposely located in areas without YWCA's. In 1946, the YWCA began the process of desegregation, but maintained Phyllis Wheatley's name on many branches. Some carry the name still today.



Phyllis Wheatley YWCA Girls Reserve, Seattle, ca. 1940  
Courtesy Black Heritage Society of Washington



The Atlanta Phyllis Wheatley YWCA building, located on Martin Luther King, Jr Drive, SW, adjacent to the Morris Brown Campus, still bears her name.



Y. W. C. A. BUILDING  
Phyllis Wheatley Branch  
Tenth Street, Atlanta, Georgia  
A modern structure having a beautiful Gymnasium and other modern facilities.

Y. W. C. A. Building, Atlanta, Ga.



# The Clerk's Black History Series



**Debra DeBerry**  
Clerk of Superior Court  
DeKalb County



**Sylvia Elizabeth Mathis**

(July 7, 1949 – October 22, 1983)

**“First African-American Woman FBI Agent”**

**Sylvia Elizabeth Mathis** was born July 7, 1949 and was raised in North Carolina and Florida. She graduated from Bishop Kenny High School in Jacksonville, Florida. She earned a bachelor's degree in political science from New York University in 1972 and a Juris Doctor from the University of North Carolina School of Law in 1975. She passed the North Carolina Bar. On the suggestion of her law school dean, a former FBI Agent, she applied and was accepted to the FBI training program.

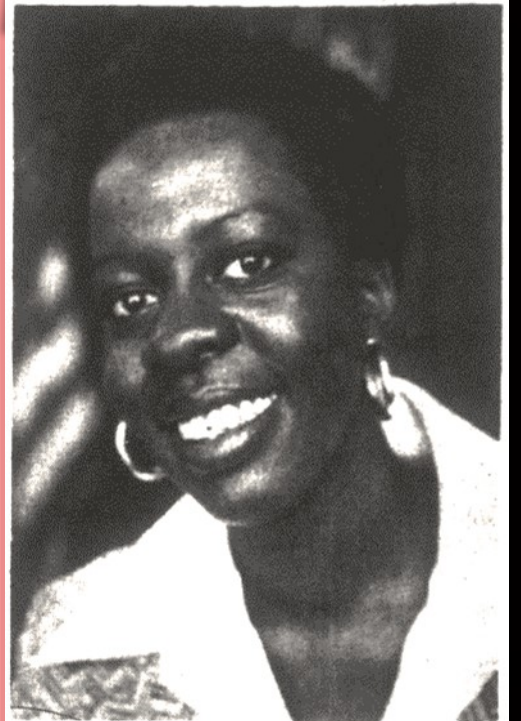


On February 17, 1976, at the age of 26, Sylvia arrived at the FBI Training Headquarters in Quantico, Virginia to begin the four month grueling training program. She was motivated to become not only an FBI agent, but also the first female African-American agent. Her historic appointment for the FBI training program made the front page news of her hometown newspaper, The Carolina Times – February 21, 1976 issue. At the time, only 41 agents out of a total of 8,500 in the country were women - and none were African-American. Before Sylvia, two other African-American women attempted the training, but were unsuccessful. Although Sylvia struggled through the physical fitness test and had challenges on the gun range, she did not quit.

On June 2, 1976, Special Agent #2658, Sylvia Mathis, made history when she received her FBI badge & credentials, a leather attaché case, a plain black purse, and a Smith & Wesson revolver with a snub-nosed barrel short enough to fit inside the purse. Her first assignment in the New York Field Office was working with the organized crime squad, investigating illegal gambling and extortion cases. She worked a variety of other matters, including handling short-term undercover duties and interviewing survivors of the 1978 massacre in Jonestown, Guyana.

Three years later, Sylvia left the FBI and began working as an attorney in New York, as an advisor to the Office of Legal Counsel from 1979-80. She then returned to Jacksonville, Florida to care for her parents in 1982. Back in Florida, she was named director of the city's Downtown Ecumenical Services Council, which provided emergency support to homeless and unemployed residents of the city.

Tragically, Sylvia Elizabeth Mathis's life was cut short when she was killed in a car accident on October 22, 1983. She was 34 years old.



Miss Sylvia E. Mathis, a graduate of the University of North Carolina Law School, became the first black female to be recruited as a special agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. She began fourteen weeks of training February 14 at Quantico, Va. She is a native of Durham. She was presented her letter of appointment by Louis A. Giovanetti, special agent in charge of the FBI office in Charlotte. UPI



# The Clerk's Black History Series

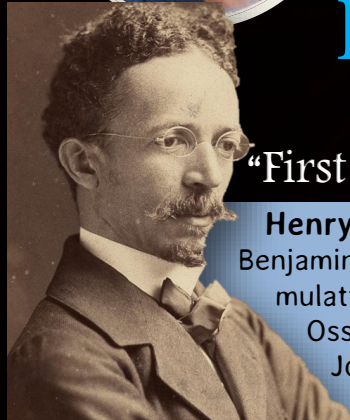
**Debra DeBerry**  
Clerk of Superior Court  
DeKalb County



## Henry Ossawa Tanner

(June 21, 1859 – May 25, 1937)

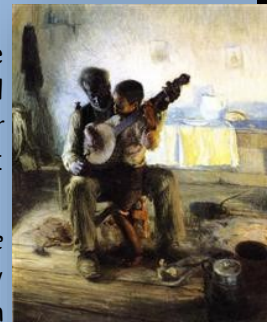
“First African-American Artist in the White House Art Collection”



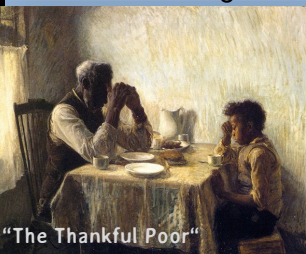
**Henry Ossawa Tanner** was born in Pennsylvania on June 21, 1859. His parents were, Reverend Benjamin Tucker Tanner, a bishop in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and Sarah Tanner, a mulatto woman who escaped her enslavers via the Underground Railroad. His middle name, Ossawa, was derived from the name of the town Osawatomie, Kansas, where the abolitionist John Brown initiated his antislavery campaign. His father often consulted with Frederick

Douglas. At the age of 21, Henry entered the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts studying under renowned artist, Thomas Eakins. As the only African-American student, he suffered discrimination at the hands of some of his fellow students, being physically assaulted and having his painting supplies damaged. Despite the efforts to limit his talent, Henry was able to exhibit some of his work at the Academy and at the Philadelphia Society of Artists. Henry left the Pennsylvania Academy prior to graduating to pursue the idea of combining business with art. In the fall of 1888, he moved to Atlanta, Georgia, opened a photography studio, and began teaching art classes at Clark (University) College.

In 1891, Henry traveled to Paris with the American Art Students' Club and enrolled in the Académie Julian. His early art showcased his social awareness and talent for painting dignified and sympathetic portrayals of Black people, such as *The Banjo Lesson* (1893) and *The Thankful Poor* (1894). In 1893 he returned to Chicago to deliver a paper entitled “The American Negro in Art” at the World's Congress on Africa. The visit, however, dimmed his hope for success in America.



“The Banjo Lesson”



“The Thankful Poor”

After returning to Paris in 1894, one of Henry's paintings, *Daniel in the Lion's Den* (1895), was accepted for exhibition at that year's Salon. Henry soon abandoned his works focusing on African-Americans and began painting the biblical scenes for which he became best known. Two years later he completed a painting which so impressed Rodman Wanamaker, a Philadelphia merchant in Paris, that he decided to finance the first of Henry's several trips to the Holy Land. Before leaving, Henry sent



“The Resurrection of Lazarus”

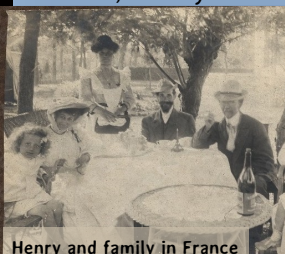
the painting, *Resurrection of Lazarus* (1896), to the Paris Salon. Here it was awarded a third class medal and purchased by the French government for exhibition at the Luxembourg Gallery and eventually entered into the collection of the Louvre. It also won a silver medal at the Universal Exposition and a silver medal at the Pan American exhibition in Buffalo, NY.

In 1899 Booker T. Washington visited Henry in Paris and Henry painted his portrait. That same year Henry married Jessie Olssen, an American woman of Scandinavian descent, whom he had met in Paris. The couple's only child, Jesse Ossawa, was born in New York in 1903. Acceptance of their interracial family influenced Henry's decision to settle permanently in France. Although he was considered an expatriate, Henry maintained close ties to the United States and remained active in the fight for racial equality. He was a regular contributor to the NAACP and his work and success inspired African-American leaders and young black artists, many of whom visited him in Paris.



“Sand Dunes at Sunset”

In 1909, Henry was made an associate member of the National Academy of Design and was elected to full membership in 1927. He achieved one of his greatest distinctions in 1923 when the French government named him chevalier of the Legion of Honor. His painting, *Sand Dunes at Sunset* (1885), is part of the official [White House Collection](#), making him the first African-American Artist to be showcased in the White House (1995). On May 25, 1937, Henry Ossawa Tanner died at his home in Paris, surrounded by his family.



Henry and family in France

“Booker T. Washington”

