

The Clerk's Black History Series



Debra DeBerry
Clerk of Superior Court
DeKalb County



Benjamin Oliver Davis, Sr.

(7/1/1877- 11/26/70)

FIRST AFRICAN-AMERICAN GENERAL IN THE U. S. ARMY

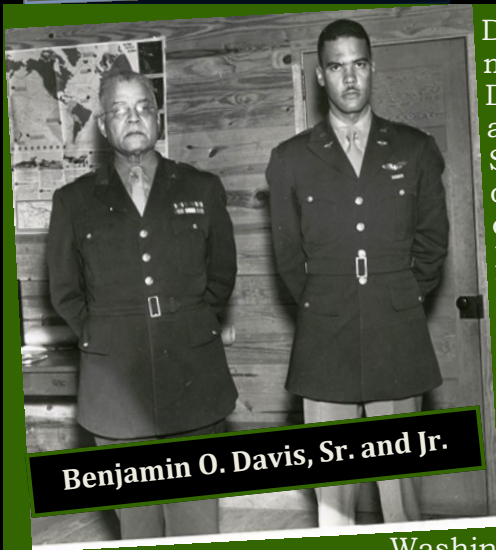
Benjamin Oliver Davis, Sr., was born in Washington, D.C., July 1, 1877, the grandson of a slave. In high school, Davis participated in the cadet program and during his senior year, attended classes at Howard University.



Davis enlisted in the military on July 13, 1898 during the Spanish-American War as a temporary First Lieutenant in the 8th United States Volunteer Infantry, an all-black unit. The unit was disbanded in March 1899 and in June of 1899, Davis enlisted in the Regular Army and was assigned to a cavalry unit, first as the troop's clerk and then as squadron sergeant major. In the years that followed, Davis had a full and admirable record of service to the United States including tours of duty in the Philippine-American War, WWI & WWII. His service also included multiple teaching terms as a Professor of Military Science and Tactic at Wilberforce University in Ohio (1905 through 1937) as well as multiple terms at Tuskegee University in Alabama (1920 through 1933).



In 1997, the U. S. Postal Service issued a 32-cent stamp honoring Benjamin O. Davis, Sr.



Benjamin O. Davis, Sr. and Jr.

During the summer months of 1930 to 1933, Davis escorted pilgrimages of World War I Gold Star Mothers and Widows to the burial places of their loved ones in Europe. During World War II Davis became the Commanding General of 4th Brigade, 2nd Cavalry Division at Fort Riley Kansas in January 1941. About six months later, he was assigned to

Washington, D.C. as an assistant in the Office of the Inspector General. While serving in the Office of the Inspector General, Davis also served on the Advisory Committee on Negro Troop Policies.

Promoted to Brigadier General on October 25, 1940, the first African-American general in the US Army, General Davis retired on July 31, 1941 and was recalled to active duty the next day. Decorated with a Bronze Star and the Distinguished Service Medal, BG Davis' 50 years of service came to an end on July 14, 1948 when he officially retired.

His son, Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. became the first African-American General in the Air Force.

