



DEBRA DEBERRY
CLERK OF SUPERIOR COURT
DEKALB COUNTY, GEORGIA



Celebrate Black History

"KNOWING YOUR GENERATIONAL STORY
FIRMS THE GROUND UPON
WHICH YOU STAND.
IT MAKES YOUR LIFE,
YOUR STRUGGLES
AND TRIUMPHS,
BIGGER THAN
YOUR LONE
EXISTENCE."

~ Cicely Tyson, *JUST AS I AM*

Cicely Tyson

December 19, 1924 - January 28, 2021

The Clerk's Black History Series



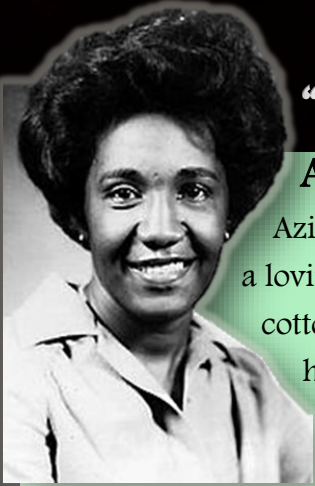
Debra DeBerry
Clerk of Superior Court
DeKalb County



Azie Taylor Morton

(February 1, 1936 – December 7, 2003)

“First (and only) African-American U.S. Treasurer”



Azie Taylor Morton was born February 1, 1936, in Dale, Texas to Fleta Hazel Taylor. Azie's mother was deaf and mute, and although she did not know her father, she was raised in a loving home with her maternal grandparents. After the school day was over, Azie worked in the cotton fields on their small farm. She attended Texas Deaf, Blind and Orphan School during her high school years because there was no high school for African Americans in Dale. She graduated with high grades at the age of sixteen in 1952.

That same year, Azie attended Huston-Tillotson College, an all-black college in Austin, Texas. In 1956, she graduated with a Bachelor of Science in commercial education cum laude. She applied to attend the University of Texas for graduate school, but her admission was denied on the grounds that she did not have enough undergraduate courses. Undeterred, Azie began teaching at a school for delinquent girls. A short time later, she returned to her alma mater to serve as assistant to the president of the college for a short time. In 1957 she worked for the new Texas AFLCIO, a major labor union and later went to work on President Kennedy's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity.

In 1977, President Jimmy Carter appointed Azie Taylor Morton to the office of Treasurer of the United States making her the first and only African American to hold that post. As the 36th Treasurer of the United States, she was responsible for the receipt and custody of government funds and served from September 12, 1977 to January 20, 1981. Along with the Secretary of the Treasury, the Treasurer must sign Federal Reserve notes before they can become legal tender. Azie Morton's signature was on U.S. currency for three years. In addition to Treasurer, she was a member of the American Delegation to Rome, Italy for the Enthronement of Pope John Paul II in 1978 and Chair of the People-to-People Mission to the Soviet Union and China in 1986.



After returning to Austin, Texas, Morton served on the Austin Housing Authority Board of Commissioners (HACA) from 1999 to 2001. In honor of her service, the HACA created the Azie Morton Scholarship Fund for low-income students attending her alma mater, Huston-Tillotson University.

Her husband died in January 2003 and on December 6, 2003,

Azie experienced a massive stroke at her home in Austin, Texas. She died the next day. Since most dollar bills only stay in circulation an average of 6 years, it may be difficult to find one with Azie's name today.



The Clerk's Black History Series

Debra DeBerry Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County



Ernest Frederick Morrison, Jr. (December 20, 1912 – July 24, 1989)

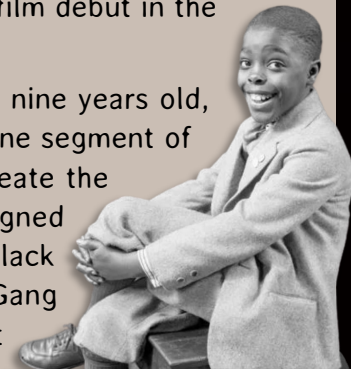
“First Black Actor to be Signed to a Long-Term Acting Contract”

Ernest Frederick “Sunshine Sammy” Morrison, Jr. was born in New Orleans, Louisiana on December 20, 1912, to father, Ernest Morrison, Sr. Not much is published about his mother. His father, who worked for a wealthy Los Angeles family with connections to the film industry, brought Ernest Jr. to Southern California shortly after he was born. One day a producer asked Ernest Sr. to bring Ernest Jr. in as a replacement for a child who wouldn't stop crying. Ernest Sr. brought his young son to the set, and the producer and crew were delighted with his pleasant disposition. The crew nicknamed him “Sunshine” and his father added the name “Sammy,” giving him the stage name of “Sunshine Sammy.” He made his film debut in the 1916's “The Soul of a Child” at the age of 3.

Sammy appeared in several Baby Marie Osbourne silent film features. By the time he was nine years old, a feature show called “The Sunshine Sammy Series” was created for him. Although only one segment of



the show was filmed, it inspired comedy producer, Hal Roach, to create the popular “Our Gang/Little Rascals” film/television show. Hal Roach signed Sammy to a contract in 1919, making Sammy the first Black actor to receive a long term acting contract. As the oldest Our Gang cast-member, Sammy earned \$10,000 a year, making him the highest



Ernest “Sunshine Sammy” Morrison poses for a newspaper photo in Chicago in

paid Black actor in Hollywood. Sammy appeared in 28 episodes between 1922 and 1924 as the character “Scruno,” before accepting an offer to perform full time in New York vaudeville shows. After performing for 16 years in New York, Sammy returned to Los Angeles where he was a regular on the television mystery show series, “Dead End Kids” and “East Side Kids.”



He was drafted into the army during World War II where he performed as a singer-dancer-comedian for troops stationed in the South Pacific. For several years after the war, Sammy turned down a series of offers to return to show business, saying that he had fond memories of the movies but no desire to be part of them again. He left show-business entirely and began working as a quality control inspector for an aerospace company in Compton, California. Sammy once noted that



he had put his stamp of approval on some of the parts used to get the country to the moon, referring to the moon landing in 1969. Sammy worked in the aircraft industry for 30 years, and was financially secure.

Later in life, Sammy was brought out of acting retirement by film buffs who rediscovered him after the revival of the Little Rascals in the 1970s. He made several guest appearances in a few tv shows, including “Good Times” in 1975 and later on “The Jeffersons.”



Good Times 1975.

In total, Sammy appeared in 145 motion pictures and was inducted into the Black Filmmakers Hall of Fame in 1987 along with Sammy Davis, Jr., Scatman Crothers and Jeni Le Gon.



Ernest “Sunshine Sammy” Morrison, Jr. died of cancer in Lynwood on July 24, 1989. He is interred at Inglewood Park Cemetery in Inglewood California. He was 76 years old.

The Clerk's Black History Series

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Dianne Patrice Durham

(June 17, 1968 – February 4, 2021)

“First Black U.S. National Gymnastics All-Around Champion”

Dianne Patrice Durham was born June 17, 1968, in Gary, Indiana, to Ural and Calvinita. Her father was a director at a steel mill and her mother was a schoolteacher. Dianne started gymnastics in 1971 at the age of three, training at Wanda Tomasi's gymnastics facility in Merrillville, Indiana. Dianne's talents were on full display when she won the Junior Elite All-Around title at the U.S. Championships in 1981. With the encouragement of coach Tomasi, who recognized her Olympic-caliber potential, Dianne traveled to Houston where she was chosen as one of six initial gymnasts selected for the Béla and Márta Károlyi training program. They were the coaching duo responsible for the success of 1978 Olympic champion, Nadia Comaneci.

Dianne's family soon relocated to Houston and Dianne began dominating every meet she attended. In 1982, she defended her Junior Nationals All-Around title and tied for first place in her first international event at the United States Gymnastics Federation international invitation.

In 1983, she won the senior All-Around title at the US National Championships, the first African American in women's gymnastics to take this title. She also won the individual titles for bars, floor, and vault, becoming the first American woman to execute a full-twisting layout Tsukahara on vault.

Dianne was proud of her accomplishments, but only as a step in the path to the Olympic Games. Unfortunately, Dianne suffered knee and ankle injuries that kept her from competing in the meets that were necessary for consideration into the Olympics. Prior to these injuries, Dianne was considered an obvious selection for

the 1984 Summer Olympics. Coach Károlyi argued feverishly on her behalf with the USA Gymnastics Federation, citing her national title and her record, but to no avail. Dianne had missed the opportunity to possibly become the first black woman to receive a medal in the Olympics. Years later, that honor would go to Betty Okino and Dominique Dawes as part of the bronze-medal winning U.S. team in 1992.

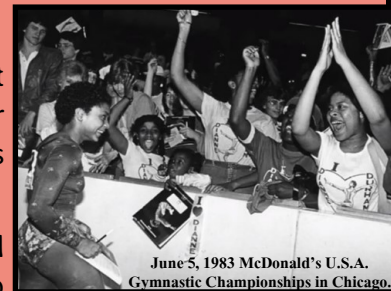
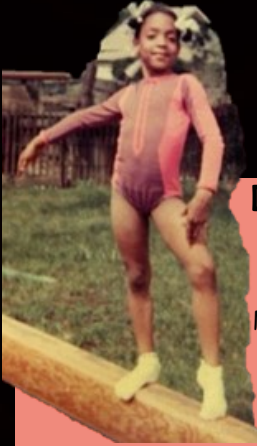
Dianne retired from competition in 1985, at the age of 19, and began teaching alongside Béla and Márta Károlyi in Houston and later at the University of Illinois at Chicago. She performed in professional shows and continued inspiring girls as a coach and motivational speaker.

In 1996, Dianne opened her own gym, Skyline Gymnastics, in Chicago.

She continued teaching for another 25 years while also serving as a National Judge for USA Gymnastics.

In 2017, Dianne was inducted into the Hall of Fame for Region 5 Gymnastics - the area covering the mid-west.

On February 4, 2021, Dianne Patrice Durham died after a short battle with an illness, leaving behind Tom, her husband of 25 years. She was 52 years old.



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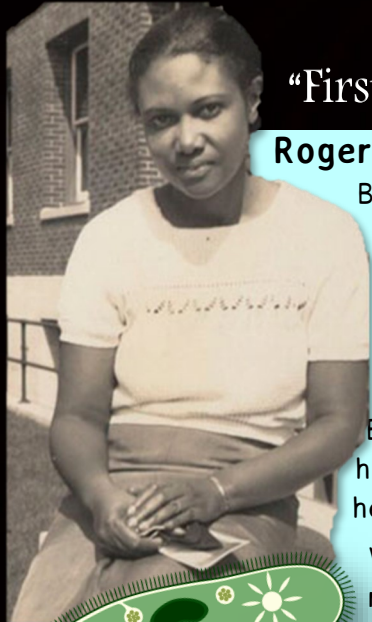
Roger Arliner Young

(1899 - November 9, 1964)

“First African-American Woman to Receive a Doctorate in Zoology”



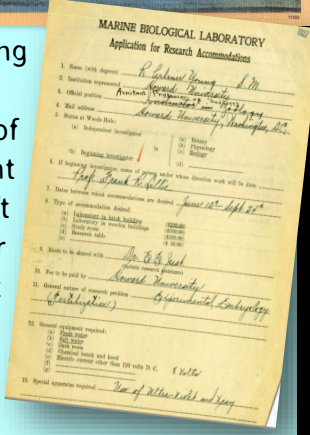
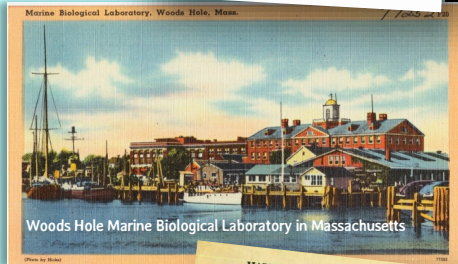
Roger Arliner Young was born in Clifton Forge, Virginia in 1889 and grew up in Burgettstown, Pennsylvania. Although her family was poor and she struggled to care for her disabled mother, Roger excelled in her studies. In 1916, Roger entered Howard College in Washington, D.C. to study music. Due to limited resources, she required a longer term to complete her studies. In 1921, the course of her studies would change when she took her first zoology class. In 1923, seven years after enrolling in Howard, Roger graduated with a B.S. in in Biology. The same year, Ernest Everett Just, a prominent Black biologist and head of the Howard Zoology Department, hired Roger as faculty member. He also helped her secure funding to attend graduate school at the University of Chicago in 1924.



While there, Roger excelled in her studies and began working as a research assistant studying the internal structures of the Paramecium that allow the creature to regulate salt concentrations. The same year she published her first scientific article,

“On the Excretory Apparatus in Paramecium” in the journal Science, also becoming the first Black woman to publish in this journal from her field. In 1926, Roger was invited to join Sigma Xi, an exclusive science research society with members that included Albert Einstein. After graduating with her Master’s degree, she joined her college mentor Dr. Just at the Woods Hole Marine Biological Laboratory in Massachusetts in 1927. There she taught classes and continued her own research focusing on fertilization in marine organisms; particularly, how ultraviolet radiation (i.e. the part of the light spectrum that produces high energy waves and is known to cause cancer and cataracts) affects sea urchin eggs. She stood in for Dr. Just as acting department head in early 1929 as Just traveled to Europe on a grant. In the Fall of 1929, Roger returned to the University of Chicago to pursue her doctorate in Zoology. Unfortunately, and likely due to radiation exposure during her experiments, Young permanently damaged her eyes and struggled through her Doctorate program.

Despite her health issues, the demands of caring for her disabled mother, the responsibility of being interim head of the Zoology Department at Howard University, and living in the height of the Jim Crow era, Roger had allies that rallied to help her succeed. She eventually left Howard and returned to the University of Pennsylvania in 1937 to try again for her doctorate. She completed her Ph.D. in 1940, and between 1940 and 1953 she taught at North Carolina College and Shaw University, where she served as the Biology Department Chair. In 1953, Roger’s mother died causing her to spiral into despair. She struggled with her physical and mental health and after working at various black colleges until the late 1950s, she voluntarily committed herself to the Mississippi State Mental Asylum. After her release in 1962, Roger took a temporary position lecturing at Southern University until she died on November 9, 1964 in New Orleans.



The Clerk's Black History Series

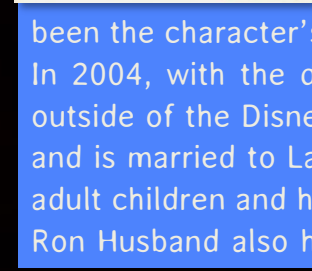
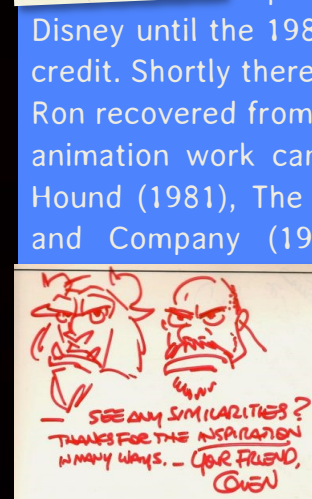
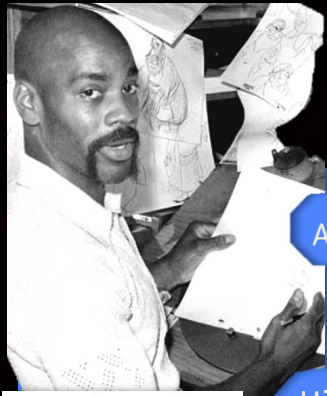
Debra DeBerry Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County



Ronald "Ron" Husband

(February 5, 1950 -)

"First African-American Animator for Walt Disney Studios"



Ronald "Ron" Husband was born on February 5, 1950, in Los Angeles, California. As a young kid, Ron loved to draw, and his High School art teacher encouraged him to start carrying a sketchbook to start drawing sketches of the world around him. He majored in art and won the Scholastic Arts national competition, as well as played varsity football for Monrovia High. He received his Associate's Degree in Art from Citrus College in Glendora, California and BA degree in 1973 from the University of Nevada. Ron went to work for the Honeywell company in West Covina, California, where he developed his drafting and technical illustrations skills. Around the same time, Ron attended classes at the Art Center in Los Angeles. While

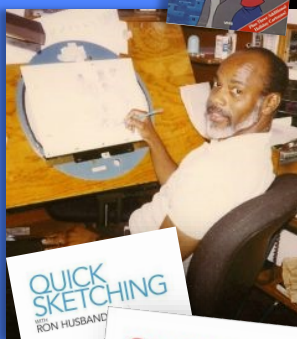


at the Art Center, Ron's professor encouraged him to send his portfolio to Disney Animation. Disney liked his work he began training with the Walt Disney studio on February 10, 1975. His first assignment with Walt Disney Feature Animation was to assist Frank Thomas on the movie, The Rescuers (1977). Ron was promoted to assistant animator on Pete's Dragon (1978). That same year, Ron was promoted to animator for the first time on the Disney short film, The Small One, making him the first African American animator and later the first African American Supervising Animator for The Walt Disney Studios. From the early days at



Disney until the 1980's, an artist had to produce 100 feet of animation to get a screen credit. Shortly thereafter, Ron underwent surgery to remove a brain tumor.

Ron recovered from his surgery in the early 1980's and continued working full time. His animation work can be seen in well-known Disney films such as; The Fox and the Hound (1981), The Black Cauldron (1985), The Great Mouse Detective (1986), Oliver and Company (1988), and The Little Mermaid (1989), Beauty and the Beast (1991), Aladdin (1992), The Lion King (1994), Pocahontas (1995), The Hunchback of Notre Dame (1996), Hercules (1997), and Fantasia 2000 (1999). For Beauty and the Beast, Ron worked on the character unit for Gaston while fellow Animator Glen Keane worked on Beast. Glen gave Ron a caricature of himself next to a drawing of Beast during production, indicating that Ron may have been the character's inspiration.



In 2004, with the decreasing use of hand drawn animations, Ron began working some outside of the Disney Studios. Ron Husband currently resides in San Dimas, California and is married to LaVonne, his high school sweetheart of 48 years. They have three adult children and he is fondly known as "Grumpy " to his three granddaughters. Ron Husband also has published books called "Quick Sketching with Ron Husband."

The Clerk's Black History Series

Debra DeBerry Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County Jan Ernst Matzeliger



(September 15, 1852 - August 24, 1889)

“Inventor / Patent Owner Shoe-Lasting Machine”

Jan Ernst Matzeliger was born on September 15, 1852, in Paramaribo, Dutch Guiana (now Suriname) to a Dutch engineer father and a native black Surinamese mother. Jan did not attend school but was educated by his father and mother. At the age of ten, he worked in the machine shop that his father supervised. When he was 19, he left Suriname to sail the world on an East Indian merchant ship. When the ship docked in Philadelphia in 1874, Jan ended his sea adventure to start anew. In 1877, Jan moved to Lynn, Massachusetts after he heard about the town's rapidly growing shoe industry. He learned to speak English more fluently and began looking for a job.

That same year, Jan became an apprentice in a shoe factory. Observing the struggles of hand lasters at the factory, he resolved to find a solution to the difficult and slow process of shoe bottoming. At that time, shoes were made mostly by hand. For a proper fit, wood or stone molds of customers' feet, called “lasts,” were made to size and shape the shoe. This was a difficult and tedious process and workers could not assemble a shoe as quickly as a machine could produce its other parts, thus creating a bottleneck in production.

With reference books and a secondhand set of drafting instruments, Jan worked late into the evenings, after long days at the factory. He built his first model lasting machine out of wooden cigar boxes, elastic, and wire. After two years, his prototype was complete. It took him several more years to construct a working model from assorted castings and iron parts. In 1883, he applied for a patent for his new machine. Because of the intricate movements required to stretch shoe leather around a last, the drawings he submitted were very complex. So much so, that the patent office in Washington dispatched a special representative to Jan's shop to observe the machine in operation before approving his patent. On March 20, 1883, Jan received a patent, US Patent No. 274,207, for a lasting machine. His laster machine held a shoe on a last, gripped and pulled the leather down around the heel, set and drove in the nails, and then discharged the completed shoe. His machine turned out between 150 to 700 pairs of shoes per day, compared to 50 from a typical skilled hand laster. The price of shoes dropped by nearly half, making quality shoes affordable, for the first time, to a large number of people.

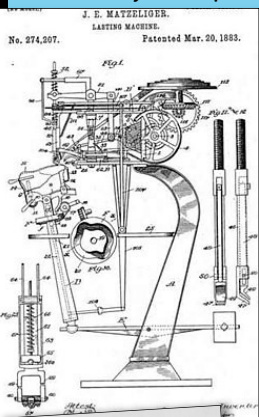
The laster machine caught on very quickly. By 1889, demand for the shoe lasting machine was overwhelming. The Consolidated Lasting Machine Company was formed to manufacture the devices, and Jan Matzeliger was given a large amount of stock in the business. Jan received a total of five patents for his shoe lasting machine and its components.

On August 24, 1889, just three weeks shy of his 37th birthday, Jan Ernst Matzeliger succumbed to tuberculosis. With no family, Jan left his stock holdings to his friends and to the First Church of Christ in Lynn, Massachusetts. The United Shoe Machinery Company acquired his patents and company stock. The companies descended from the one he started are now worth more than a billion dollars.

On September 15, 1991, a Black Heritage postage stamp was issued in Jan Matzeliger's honor. He was inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame in 2006.



A pair of wooden lasts.



The Clerk's Black History Series

Debra DeBerry Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County

Prathia Laura Ann Hall

(January 1, 1940 – August 12, 2002)

“Civil Rights Activist – Inspiration for The Term “I Have a Dream”



Prathia Laura Ann Hall Wynn was born on January 1, 1940 to Reverend Berkeley L. Hall and Ruby Hall. She grew up in Philadelphia, but her family's Southern roots were deep. Her father was a Baptist preacher who founded the Mount Sharon Baptist Church in Philadelphia in 1938. He was a passionate advocate for racial justice and was a great influence on his daughter. Prathia was raised in what she would later describe as "Freedom Faith," the belief that she was God's child and was therefore loved and important. Prathia had her first encounter with racism at the age five when she took a train from Philadelphia to Virginia to visit her grandparents. As the train traveled south, Prathia and her sister, Teresa, and her mother were forced to be reseated in a segregated car when the train crossed the Mason-Dixon line (the Pennsylvania-Maryland border). Prathia recalled the incident as her first encounter with the dehumanizing effects of racism. By age 15, Prathia expressed interest in joining the Civil Rights Movement.

Prathia graduated from Philadelphia High School for Girls in 1958. After graduation she enrolled in Temple University and graduated from that institution in 1962 with a BA in Political Science. After graduation, Prathia joined the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and became the first woman field organizer for SNCC in Southwest Georgia which included Terrell County, Georgia. Terrell County was nicknamed "Terrible Terrell" because of the violence that civil rights activists faced in the county. On August 14th of that year, the Shady Grove Baptist Church in Leesburg, Ga., was burned after it and other churches in the state served as a base for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, whose goal was to bring equality to the South. On September 6, of the same year, white segregationists' nightriders fired into the house where Prathia was staying with two other civil rights activists, Jack Chatfield and Christopher Allen. All three suffered injuries from the attack. Just three days later on September 9, 1962, two southwest Georgia churches, Mount Olive Baptist Church near Sasser, and Mount Mary Baptist Church near Chickasawatchee, were burned by the Ku Klux Klan. The next day, a community prayer vigil took place where Mount Olive Baptist Church once stood.



Shady Grove Baptist Church



SENIOR RELEASED
STUDENT NON-VIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE
1000 UNIVERSITY AVENUE
ATLANTA, GEORGIA
JANUARY 23, 1964

DEBRA DEBERRY IS ASSISTANT
CLERK OF SUPERIOR COURT
DEKALB COUNTY, GEORGIA

ATLANTA, Ga. — The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee has announced the appointment of a SNCC "Minister of Atlanta Activities" and the arrival of comedian Dick Gregory here Saturday, January 23.

Gregory — who has drawn "hundreds" from desegregation demonstrators here — will arrive in Atlanta Saturday to "help conduct further protests," according to SNCC spokesman.

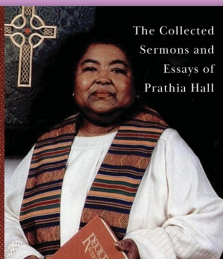
Miss Prathia Hall, 23, from Philadelphia, Pa., will direct SNCC efforts in Atlanta. Miss Hall has worked for SNCC for over a year, and has been active in voter registration work and direct action in Albany, Ga., and surrounding counties, Texas, Ala., and Mississippi, Miss.

She is a 1962 graduate of Temple University and studied political science and religion.

For further information, call:
Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
1000 UNIVERSITY AVENUE
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30303

The service was attended by Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and James Bevel. Prathia, drawing on her Baptist roots, led the group in an impassioned prayer repeating the phrase, "I Have A Dream." According to Bevel, Prathia's "I have a Dream" phrase inspired Reverend King to start using it in his sermons. Prathia later acknowledged that Reverend King asked her permission to use the phrase in his sermons leading up to his famous "I Have a Dream Speech" at the March on Washington one year later.

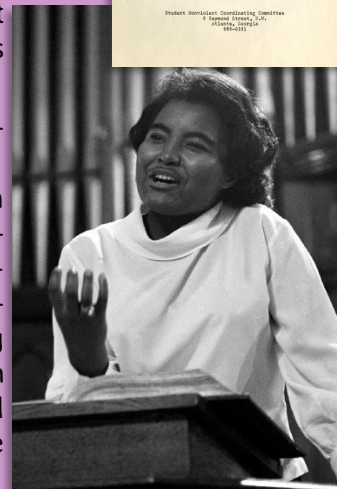
In 1978, Hall began serving as pastor at Mt. Sharon Baptist Church in Philadelphia which her father founded forty years earlier. Prathia later moved to Roosevelt, New York with her husband, Ralph Wynn, whom she married sometime in the mid-1960's. She earned a Master of Divinity in 1982, Master of Theology in 1984, and Ph.D. from Princeton Theological Seminary in 1997. In 2000, she joined the faculty at Boston University School of Theology where she held the Martin Luther King Chair in Social Ethics. In 1997, Ebony magazine named Hall number one on their list of Top 15 Greatest Black Women Preachers. Rev. Prathia Hall Wynn died of cancer on August 12, 2002 in Boston, Massachusetts at the age of 62.



The Collected Sermons and Essays of Prathia Hall

Beyond Eden

EDITED BY COURTNEY PACE



The Clerk's Black History Series

Debra DeBerry Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County

Gladys Alberta Bentley

(August 12, 1907 – January 18, 1960)

“Harlem Renaissance Blues Singer and Performer”



Gladys Alberta Bentley AKA Barbara "Bobbie" Minton was born on August 12, 1907 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to George L. Bentley from the U.S. and Mary (Mote) Bentley from Trinidad. Gladys' mother was reported to be disappointed that she gave birth to a girl and rejected Gladys after her birth. The family struggled financially and Gladys was often teased for preferring to wear her brother's hand-me-down clothes instead of dresses. She was also taunted for being a tomboy, having a deeper voice, and, for being considered overweight. Gladys' boyish behavior concerned her parents and they took her to various doctors so she could be "fixed." Their inability to accept Gladys' dress and mannerisms caused great disruption in the family. Gladys left home at the age of 16, moving to Harlem. In New York, she found acceptance, and a vibrant artistic and intellectual community.

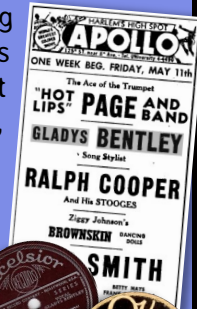
Gladys had a voice for signing the Blues, a talent for playing the piano and a confident stage presence. Her masculine appearance helped her secure a job at Harry Hansberry's Clam House on 133rd Street, one of the city's most notorious gay speakeasies. Although the ad called for a male pianist, Gladys auditioned wearing tuxedo and top hat. She was an instant hit. Her salary started at \$35 per week plus tips and went to up \$125 per week, (almost \$2,500.00 today). The club was eventually renamed Barbara's Exclusive Club, after her stage name at the time, Barbara "Bobbie" Minton. Her success provided her a Park Avenue apartment with servants and other trappings of wealth.

Gladys didn't hide her sexuality and openly flirted with the women in the audience. Her deep voice and risqué performances appealed to straight, gay, black, and white audiences. She sang ribald songs - taking popular songs of the day and changing the lyrics to shock the audience. She performed in speakeasies and night clubs in Jungle Alley, the center of Harlem's sporting life. Okeh Race Records released eight singles of her music between 1928 and 1929. She also had her own weekly radio program. By 1933, Gladys headlined in popular nightclubs and theatres such as The Cotton Club and The Apollo, wearing her signature tuxedo with matching top hat and walking cane. From 1934-1937, she created her own musical revue with a chorus of eight male dancers in drag, at the well-known Ubangi Club.

Gladys lived with numerous female partners and even claimed marriage to one, but after the repeal of Prohibition, her popularity and public tolerance of openly gay persons waned. The decade of the Great Depression severely impacted Harlem nightlife and performers were forced to find other means of income.

In 1937, Gladys moved to Los Angeles to live with her mother. Her success picked up again during World War II with the expansion of gay bars on the West Coast. She also recorded more records in the Excelsior label in 1945. The conservative views of the 1950's had a significant impact on Gladys' career. Her androgenous appearance, once celebrated, now limited her ability to work. In 1952, she appeared in the August issue of Ebony Magazine wearing a dress and claiming she was a "woman again." She posed for photos, cooking dinner and cleaning house. That same year, 45 year old Gladys married Charles Roberts, a 28 year old cook. She also became involved in the church and became an ordained minister. She and Charles later divorced. In 1958, Gladys appeared on the game show "You Bet Your Life," playing piano and singing. She performed regularly at the Rose Room in Hollywood.

On January 18, 1960, Gladys Alberta Bentley, died in her Los Angeles home after a short bout with Pneumonia. She was 52 years old. She remains a pioneer in pushing the boundaries of gender, sexuality, class, and race.



Relating between shows with long-time friend Willie Bryant, now Harlem's "sultan." Gladys Bentley displays mannish street garb which became associated with her during '30's.

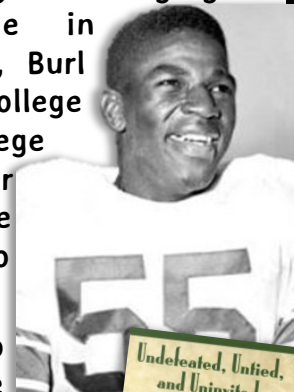
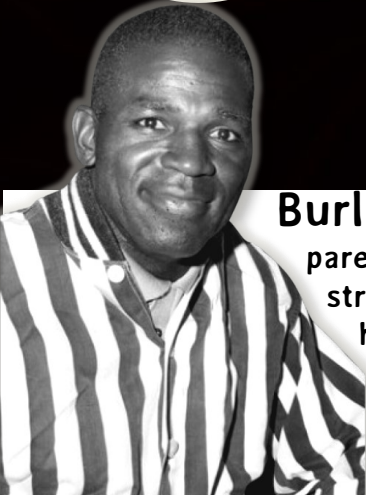
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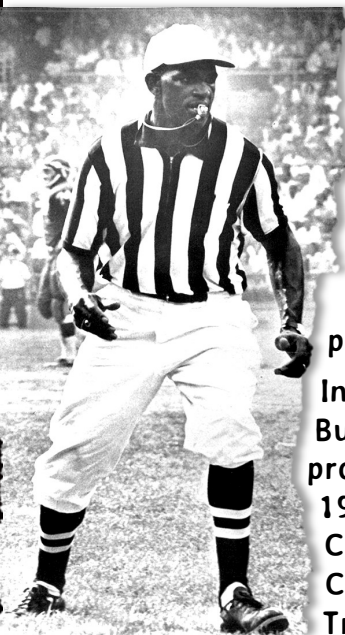
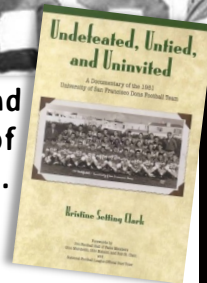


Burl Abron Toler, Sr.
(May 9, 1928 – August 16, 2009)
"First Black NFL Official"

Burl Abron Toler, Sr. was born on May 9, 1928 in Memphis, Tennessee to parents, A.W. Toler, a Pullman porter and Annie King Toler, an educator. His parents stressed education throughout his childhood and upon graduating from a segregated high school, Burl enrolled in Lemoyne College in Memphis, Tennessee. At the encouragement of his uncle, Burl moved to San Francisco, California and enrolled in the City College of San Francisco (CCSF) in 1948. There he played on the college football team and was named All-American player in the Junior College division. The 1948 CCSF team finished 12-0, winning a national junior college title. This honor afforded Burl the opportunity to receive a full four-year scholarship to play football at the University of San Francisco.

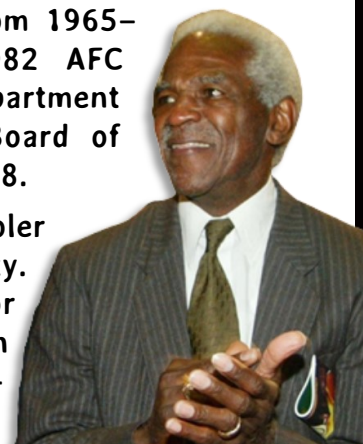


At the University of San Francisco, Burl played for the legendary 1951 San Francisco Dons football team. After a perfect 9-0 season, the team was ensured a trip to the Orange Bowl; however, their invitation inferred that the two black players, (Burl Toler and Ollie Matson), would have to sit the game out. Burl's team members, including future hall of famers Gino Marchetti and Bob St. Clair, unanimously refused the invitation, without regret. Their story is recounted in the book, *Undefeated, Untied and Uninvited*.



Burl graduated with a degree in Education, and in 1952, and was drafted into the National Football League (NFL) by the Cleveland Browns (later traded to the Chicago Cardinals). Unfortunately, a permanent knee injury during an all-star game ended his opportunity to play professional football. He married his wife, Melvia Woolfolk in 1953. Shortly thereafter, he began teaching, coaching, and counseling at Benjamin Franklin Middle School in San Francisco. There, he became the first black junior high school vice-principal and some years later, was promoted to principal. He also officiated college games in the San Francisco area.

In 1965, with the encouragement of NFL commissioner Pete Rozelle, the NFL hired Burl A. Toler as a head linesman — making him the first black official in any major professional sports league. Burl officiated for 25 years, from 1965–1989, including Super Bowl XIV in 1980 and the 1982 AFC Championship game. Burl served as San Francisco Police Department Commissioner from 1978 to 1986 and served on the Board of Trustees at the University of San Francisco from 1987 to 1998.



In 2006, Benjamin Franklin Middle School was renamed the Burl A. Toler Campus in honor of his service and contributions to the San Francisco community. Burl's son and grandson, Burl Jr and Burl III respectively, both shared his love for football. Burl Jr. played college ball and Burl III, played in the NFL. Burl Abron Toler, Sr., died of a sudden illness on August 16, 2009, in his Castro Valley, California home. He was 81 years old.



The Clerk's Black History Series

Debra DeBerry Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County



Grace Towns Hamilton

(February 10, 1907 – June 17, 1992)

“First African-American Woman Elected to the Georgia General Assembly”
“First Woman Appointed to Hold a Post in the National Urban League”

Grace Towns Hamilton was born on February 10, 1907, in Atlanta, GA to George Alexander Towns Sr., a professor of English and pedagogy at Atlanta University, and Nellie McNair Towns, an educator, community activist and the first black woman to serve on the board of Atlanta's YWCA. Grace was educated from grade school to college on the Atlanta University campus. There she received an undergraduate degree in 1927. She left Atlanta to attend The Ohio State University where she received a master's degree in psychology in 1929. After graduation, she returned to Atlanta and took a position as an assistant professor at Clark College (now Clark-Atlanta University) where she taught psychology. There she met and married Henry Cooke Hamilton and had one daughter, Eleanor, in 1931. They soon moved to Memphis, TN and returned to Atlanta in 1941.



Grace was appointed executive director of the Atlanta Urban League (AUL) in 1943, becoming the first woman to hold such a post in the National Urban League organization. In 1946, Grace, along with AUL housing secretary Robert A. Thompson, organized a voter registration drive that registered 24,137 new black voters in Atlanta. She was also instrumental in the construction of the Hughes Spalding Pavilion at Grady Memorial Hospital in 1952. In 1954, she assumed the role as Assistant Director of Program Planning for the Southern Regional Council and became active in NAACP and other organizations.

The passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965, combined with a reapportionment of Georgia's General Assembly and 10 U.S. Congressional districts, as well as increased efforts with black voter registration, resulted in eleven African-Americans being elected to the Georgia House of Representatives in 1965 and 1966.



In 1965, Grace Towns Hamilton became the first black woman in the Deep South to be elected to a state legislature. Since the first election was a special election, she was forced to run again in 1966. She did, and won again. Over the years, her district bore three different numbers over the span of her service due to redistricting; she was originally elected to District 137 but in 1969, that area became District 112. In 1973, it was changed to District 31.



Re-elect
GRACE T. HAMILTON
Representative District 31
PUNCH 42 PAGE 3
VOTE — AUGUST 14, 1984

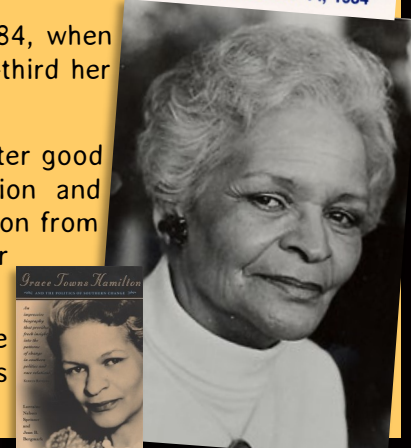
That same year, Grace was a principal architect of the 1973 Atlanta City Charter, which replaced a century-old predecessor and brought African-Americans onto the Atlanta City Council for the first time, proportionate to the black population. Andrew Young - former Mayor of Atlanta, former U.S. Congressman from Georgia, and Civil Rights icon - credits Grace with making his election possible as the first African-American to represent Atlanta's Fifth District in Congress. Her work leading a congressional reapportionment battle, placed most of Atlanta blacks in the Fifth Congressional district.



Grace served in the Georgia Legislature for 19 years, until 1984, when she lost her bid for reelection to Mable Thomas, a woman one-third her age. Grace was 77 years old.

Undeterred, Grace remained committed to working for the greater good of the Atlanta community and continued to enjoy recognition and awards. She served as advisor to the U.S. Civil Rights Commission from January 1985 to January 1987. Her resignation coincided with her husband's death on January 2, 1987.

Grace Towns Hamilton, the woman known as the “most effective female legislator in Georgia,” died on June 17, 1992, and was buried at South-View Cemetery in Atlanta. She was 85 years old.



The Clerk's Black History Series

Debra DeBerry
Clerk of Superior Court
DeKalb County



Robert "Lee" Elder

(July 14, 1934 – November 28, 2021)

"First African-American to Play In The Masters Tournament"

Robert Lee Elder was born on July 14, 1934, in Dallas, Texas to Charles and Almeta Elder. One of ten children, Lee was nine years old when his father was killed in Germany in WWII. His mother died just three months later. The loss of his parents created an uncertain environment with Lee's older sister struggling to manage the household in their absence. To earn money to help the family, Lee frequently cut classes to work as a caddy at the nearby all-white Tenneson Park Golf Club in Dallas.

One of the pro golfers at the club befriended Lee and allowed him to hit the ball after hours, and on the back six holes, which were hidden away from public view. Lee quickly honed his skills as a golfer and

eventually attracted the attention of a local hustler nicknamed "Titanic" Thompson. Using Thompson's financial backing, Lee began playing in small tournaments while developing the ability to win under pressure.

In 1959, Lee was drafted into the Army. Upon his discharge in 1961, he joined the all-black United Golfers Association (UGA), winning four Negro National Open Championships. In 1966 Elder won an astonishing 18 of the 22 tournaments he played in. This success enabled Lee to earn the required \$6,500 he needed to enter the 1967 qualifying school for the PGA Tour.

In November 1967, Lee joined the PGA tour following the footsteps of Charlie Sifford, the first black golfer to earn a PGA Tour card and Pete Brown, the first black golfer to win a PGA Tour event. The following year, Lee's exceptional skill was on display when he tied Frank Beard and Jack Nicklaus for the lead in the American Golf Classic. Frank Beard was out after bogeying the first extra hole, but Lee dueled Jack Nicklaus for the next four holes. Jack Nicklaus won with a birdie on the fifth after Lee missed a long birdie putt. His impressive show at the Classic catapulted Lee into the spotlight; however, the Masters Tournament was still off limits to black players. In 1973, a group of 18 congressional representatives petitioned the Masters Tournament to include at least one black player in the tournament. The Masters responded by establishing a stringent requirement: all Masters participants must have a victory at a PGA Tour event.

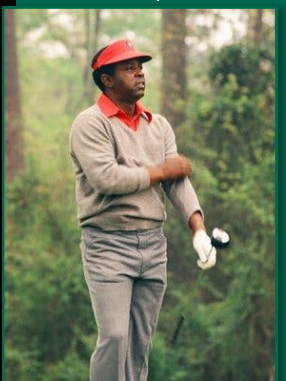
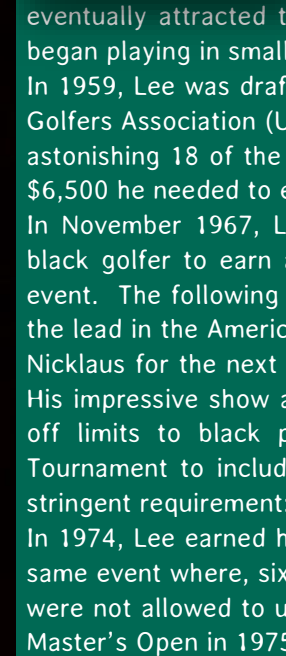
In 1974, Lee earned his first PGA victory at the 1974 Monsanto/Pensacola Open Golf Tournament (PGA) — at the same event where, six years earlier, he had been forced to change clothes in the parking lot because black people were not allowed to use the country club locker room. After his qualifying win, Lee was invited to compete at the Master's Open in 1975 - making him the first black golfer ever invited to the Masters Tournament.

On April 10, 1975, Robert Lee Elder stood at the first tee, at the Augusta National Golf Club, on a former indigo plantation in Augusta, Georgia. When Lee smashed his tee shot straight down the fairway, he not only made history at the Masters, he opened the doors for those who would follow. Lee won the Houston Open in 1976 and played in the 1977 Masters. In 1979, he became the first black golfer to play for the Ryder Cup team. On April 17, 1997, Lee returned to Augusta National to watch Tiger Woods win the Masters by a record-setting 12 strokes - becoming the first black golfer to win the Masters Tournament.

Lee Elder played in five more Masters and won four PGA tournaments. Lee Elder had a combined 12 tournament victories on the PGA and Senior Tours, earning more than \$1 million on each tour.

On April 8, 2021, Honorary starter Lee Elder, joined fellow honorary starters Gary Player and Jack Nicklaus during introductions for the ceremonial tee shots to begin the Masters golf tournament at Augusta National Golf Club in Augusta, GA.

Robert Lee Elder passed away on November 28th, 2021 in Escondido, California. He was 87.





The Clerk's Black History Series

Debra DeBerry Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County



Mary Jane Patterson

(September 12, 1840 – September 24, 1894)

“First African American Woman to Receive a Recorded B.A. Degree”



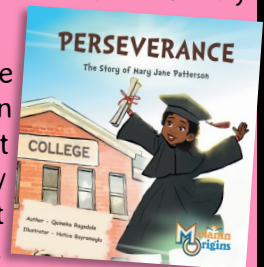
Mary Jane Patterson was born on September 12, 1840, in Raleigh, North Carolina to Henry Irving Patterson and Emmeline Taylor Patterson. Mary Jane was the oldest of seven children. Her father was reportedly a boyhood friend of Andrew Johnson (who would go on to become the 17th President after the assassination of Abraham Lincoln). Both men were born in Raleigh, NC, just two years apart. It is believed that the Pattersons were part of a very small community of freed slaves in the area.

When the Fugitive Slave Act was passed in 1850, essentially allowing the kidnapping and selling of free blacks back into slavery, the Patterson family moved north and settled in Oberlin, Ohio.

Mary Jane's father prospered as a mason and was able to provide very well for his family. Oberlin was home to a growing population of free black families, many of whom hoped to send their children to college. Oberlin College admitted its first black student in 1835 and became the nation's first coeducational institution of higher education in 1837. The Patterson family opened their home to board black students that attended the college.

Mary Jane's brother followed in the footsteps of their father and became a brick mason. Mary Jane and her three younger siblings attended Oberlin college. By 1857, Mary Jane had completed a one-year preparatory course at Oberlin College. Traditionally, women would transition into Oberlin's two-year diploma program for women after completing the prep classes. Mary Jane, however, enrolled in the school's "gentlemen's course," a four-year program of classical studies including the subjects of Latin, Greek and mathematics - courses not pursued by women at that time. In 1862, Mary Jane graduated with high honors and became the first African American woman in the country to receive a recorded Bachelor of Arts degree.

After graduation, Mary Jane began teaching in the southern Ohio town of Chillicothe. In 1865, she moved to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania where she became an assistant to Fanny Jackson Coppin in the Female Department at the Institute for Colored Youth, later Cheyney University (the first HBCU). In 1869 Mary Jane moved to Washington, D.C. to teach at the newly founded Preparatory High School for Colored Youth (now Paul Laurence Dunbar High School). This school was the first U.S. public high school for African Americans, and the first public high school in Washington, D.C. In 1871 Mary Jane became principal of the school.



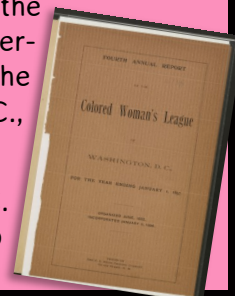
When the school's enrollment increased under her leadership, the administrators elected to hire Richard Theodore Greener, the first black graduate of Harvard University, to replace her as principal. When Greener quit just one year later, Mary Jane was asked to return as principal. In 1877. The school had its first high school commencement ceremony under her leadership. In 1884, Mary Jane retired from being an educator. She remained in Washington D.C.

In addition to educational responsibilities, Mary Jane immersed herself within the women's rights movements. She, along with Josephine Beall Bruce, Anna Julia Cooper, Charlotte Forten Grimke, and Mary Church Terrell, founded the Colored Women's League of Washington, D.C., in 1892. The League, a predecessor of the National Association of Colored Women, focused on training for kindergarten teachers and homemaking skills for working-class women. She also devoted time and money to Black institutions in Washington, D. C., as well as to the Home for Aged and Infirm Colored People.

Mary Jane Patterson died September 24, 1894, in Washington, D. C. She was 54 years old. She never married, instead, dedicated her life to educating the descendants of ex-slaves.



THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COLORED WOMEN WAS FOUNDED IN WASHINGTON, DC, ON THIS DATE IN 1896. DR. MARY CHURCH TERRELL WAS ELECTED AS ITS FIRST PRESIDENT.



The Clerk's Black History Series

Debra DeBerry Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County



Ernest "Ernie" Eugene Barnes, Jr. (July 15, 1938 – April 27, 2009) "Iconic Artist"



Ernest "Earnie" Eugene Barnes, Jr. was born July 15, 1938 in Durham, North Carolina, to Ernest E. Barnes, Sr. and Fannie Mae Geer. Ernie grew up in an area called "The Bottom" - a community near the Hayti District of the city.

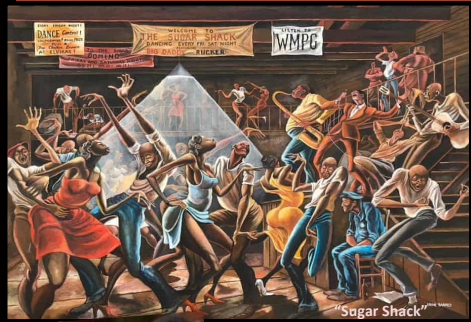
As a child, he would accompany his mother to work, at the home of a prominent white Durham attorney. His mother encouraged Ernie to study the attorney's art books and listen to classical music, while she worked. By the time he entered first grade, he recognized the works of art masters like Toulouse-Lautrec, Delacroix, and Michelangelo.

His stocky build often made him the target of bullies in school in school, so Ernie kept to himself and his sketchbooks. A chance meeting with a gym teacher inspired Ernie to also focus on his physical health by weightlifting. By his senior year at Hillside High School, Ernie became captain of the football team and state champion in the shot put. He graduated high school in 1956 with 26 athletic scholarship offers.

Ernie attended North Carolina College at Durham (now North Carolina Central University, HBCU), located directly across the street from his high school. There, he majored in art on a full athletic scholarship. Ernie played tackle and center at NCC. In December 1959 Ernie was drafted in the 10th round by the then-World Champion Baltimore Colts. Ernie would go on to play for the New York Titans, San Diego Chargers and the Denver Broncos. While playing with Denver, Ernie was often fined for stopping to sketch during team meetings and during breaks in the Broncos games. Ernie was keenly aware of the players around him - the exaggerated shapes and posture of the players in movement. His artistic eye captured the black athletes in a unique, larger than life, way. His Denver teammates called him "Big Rembrandt." Coincidentally, Ernie and the famous Dutch artist share the same birthday. One of the sketches that Ernest was fined \$100 for, sold for \$1,000.00 years later.



In 1965, after a football career-ending injury, Ernie was invited to the NFL owners meeting in Houston where his artwork caught the eye of NY Jets owner, Sonny Werblin. Sonny later paid for Ernie to bring his paintings to New York, where he had three art critics evaluate his work. The art critics were blown away by the larger than life paintings that Ernie created. In 1966, Ernie had his very first (and solo) art exhibition at the Grand Central Art Galleries in New York City. In a way to honor his father who had recently passed, Ernie framed his work in distressed wood frames. All of his painting's sold.



In the early 1970's, Ernie painted one of his most iconic paintings to date - "Sugar Shack." The painting was a direct interpretation from a childhood memory in Durham, NC. It was most notably featured on the television show Good Times in the fourth season. Ernie made an appearance on the show as well in 1975-76.

Most of the character JJ's paintings, were, in fact, Ernie's artwork.

In 1976, "Sugar Shack" with minor changes (adding names of singles on the album to the hanging banners), also became the album cover for Marvin Gaye's, I Want You album. The original artwork is reportedly owned by Eddie Murphey. Ernie Barnes and his artwork has been featured in numerous art exhibits, album covers, and television shows and to this day,



adorns the halls of colleges, chapels, renowned art galleries and museums.

In October 2007, Ernie's final public art exhibition - The National Football League and Time Warner sponsored "A Tribute to Artist and NFL Alumni Ernie Barnes" - showed in the place his art career began, New York City.



On April 27, 2019, Ernie Barnes died after battling myeloid leukemia. His ashes were scattered in his hometown of Durham, near the site of his childhood home and some spread near the ocean in California.



In the 2016, the "Sugar Shack" appeared in Southside With You, a movie detailing the life of Barack and Michelle Obama.





The Clerk's Black History Series

Debra DeBerry Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County John Baxter Taylor, Jr.



(November 3, 1882 – December 2, 1908)

“First African American to Win an Olympic Gold Medal”

“First African American to Represent the U.S. in an International Sporting Competition”



John Baxter Taylor, Jr. was born on November 3, 1882, in Washington D.C. Sometime during John's childhood, the family relocated to Philadelphia. John attended the prestigious Central High School in Philadelphia and joined the championship track and field program in his junior year. He would later be chosen as track team captain. He was also named interscholastic quarter-mile champion for two-years running. Following his graduation from Central in 1902, John spent one year at Brown Prep, also located in Philadelphia. In the fall of 1903, John enrolled in the Wharton School of Finance at the University of Pennsylvania and he joined the varsity track team in the spring of 1904. In May 1904, at the Intercollegiate Association of Amateur Athletes of America (IC4A) championship, John won the 440-yard run, breaking the intercollegiate record. In 1905, John withdrew from school, returning in the fall to the School of Veterinary Medicine.

John returned to track in 1906, training under Mike Murphy, one of the best track coaches in the world. In 1907, John won the 440-yard race with a record of 48-4/5 seconds at the IC4A championship. In September, he won at the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) championship in Norfolk, VA, setting an indoor record of 48.35 seconds for the quarter mile. After this win, the mostly white audience who witnessed John be deliberately fouled by another white runner, erupted in cheer. Hundreds of Southern white men rushed to congratulate John, shaking his hand - an almost unheard-of thing for a black man in the South.

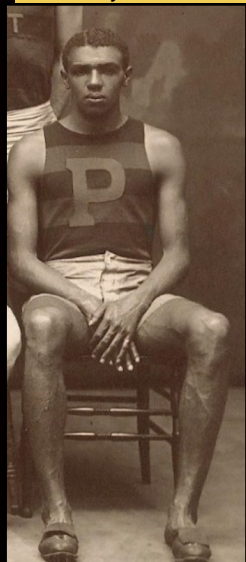
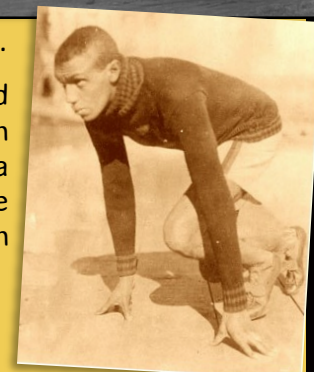
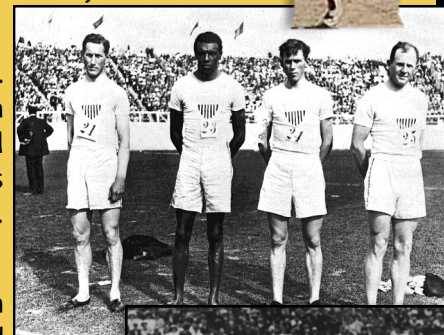
The following spring, despite suffering with a hernia, John won his third quarter mile championship and anchored the one-mile relay. In June 1908, he graduated from the University of Pennsylvania with a degree from the School of Veterinary Medicine.

In July 1908, qualified athletes gathered in London, UK for the Fourth Olympiad. John Taylor was the first African American to represent the United States in an international sports competition. Early on, John competed in a controversial 400-meter relay final. British officials called the race before the four competitors crossed the finish line asserting that one of the Americans fouled the British runner. The Americans refused to run the race again and the British runner took gold.

On July 25, 1908, John ran the third leg of the 4X4 1600-meter medley relay with William Hamilton, Nathaniel Cartmell (a fellow Penn alum), and Melvin Sheppard. At that time, the 1,600-meter race consisted of two runners for 200 meters, one for 400 meters (John), and one runner for 800 meters. In heat three of the first round, the American team defeated Great Britain and Canada. In the final round, they defeated Germany and Hungary. The American team won first place and John Baxter Taylor, Jr. became the first African American to win a gold medal at the Olympic Games.

Shortly after returning home to Philadelphia, John developed typhoid pneumonia. On Dec. 2, 1908, just four months after his gold medal win, John Baxter Taylor, Jr. died. He was 26 years old. John was given a grand send-off by his fellow Philadelphians as four clergymen officiated the memorial and fifty-carriages followed his hearse to its final resting place – an honor never before given to an African American in that city.

John earned forty-five cups and seventy medals during his track career. For perspective, Jesse Owens was born five years after John Taylor's death.



The Clerk's Black History Series

Debra DeBerry Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County

Elizabeth "Bessie" Coleman
(January 26, 1892 – April 30, 1926)

"First African-American Woman to Hold a Pilot License"



Elizabeth "Bessie" Coleman was born on January 26, 1892, in Atlanta, Texas. Her mother, Susan Coleman, worked as a maid, and her father George Coleman was a sharecropper. Her parents moved to Waxahachie, Texas, when Bessie was two years old where they lived as sharecroppers. Bessie walked 4 miles to school each day and thrived in the subjects of reading and mathematics. In 1901, her father to move to Oklahoma to try to escape discrimination. Bessie's mother stayed in Waxahachie with the children. Bessie grew up helping her mother pick cotton and washing laundry to earn extra money. By the age of eighteen, she saved enough money to attend the Colored Agricultural and Normal University (now Langston University) in Langston, Oklahoma - for only one semester.

At age 23, Bessie went to live with her brothers in Chicago where she attended the Burnham School of Beauty Culture and worked as a manicurist. Her brothers served in the military during World War I and shared stories with Bessie of the French women who could fly airplanes. This sparked Bessie's interest in becoming a pilot. She applied to many flight schools across the U.S., but no school would admit her because she was both black and a woman. Robert Abbott, the owner of the Chicago Defender and one of the first black millionaires, encouraged Bessie to move to France where she could learn how to fly. She began taking French classes at night because her application to flight schools needed to be written in French. Finally, Bessie was accepted to the Caudron Brothers' School of Aviation in Le Crotoy, France. She withdrew the savings she had accumulated from her work as a manicurist and, with the additional financial support of Abbott, set off for Paris from New York on November 20, 1920. She received her international pilot's license on June 15, 1921 from the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale.

On September 3, 1922, Bessie performed the first public flight by an black woman. She was famous for doing "loop-the-loops" and making the shape of an "8" in an airplane. People were fascinated by her performances. Bessie's dream was to own her own plane and to open a flight school. She gave speeches and showed films of her air tricks in churches, theaters, and schools to earn money. She refused to speak anywhere that was segregated. Bessie encouraged black people to learn to fly planes, saying "you've never lived till you've flown."



During a flight in February 1923, her plane's engine suddenly stopped and she crashed. She suffered a broken leg, a few cracked ribs, and cuts on her face. She returned to performing her daring air tricks in 1925.

On April 30, 1926, Bessie took a test flight with a mechanic named William Wills. William was piloting the plane as Bessie sat in the passenger seat. At about 3,000 feet in the air, a loose wrench got stuck in the engine of the aircraft. Neither William or Bessie could control the aircraft and the plane flipped over. Unfortunately, Bessie was not wearing a seatbelt and since at the time planes did not have any overhead protection, she fell out the plane, to the ground. The plane crashed with Wills inside, just a few feet away from Bessie's body. Both Bessie and William died.

Famous activist Ida B. Wells-Barnett performed the funeral service, as more than 10,000 mourners paid their last respects to Bessie Coleman on Chicago's South Side. In 1931, the Challenger Pilots' Association of Chicago started a tradition of flying over Bessie Coleman's grave every year.

By 1977, African American women pilots formed the Bessie Coleman Aviators Club. In 1992 a Chicago City Council resolution requested that the U.S. Postal Service issue a Bessie Coleman stamp. The "Bessie Coleman Stamp" was issued to the public in 1995.

In September 1992, Mae Jemison, the first black woman in space, carried a photo of Bessie Coleman with her on her first mission aboard the Space Shuttle Endeavor.



The Clerk's Black History Series

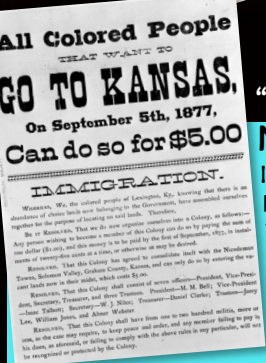
Debra DeBerry Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County Nicodemus, Kansas (1877 -)



“Oldest Western Community Founded by African Americans after the Civil War”

Nicodemus, Kansas sits in the northwest corner of the state, along the Solomon River in Kansas. Instead of following the historically popular freedom route north, some newly freed black people went west. Nicodemus symbolizes the pioneering spirit of ex-slaves who fled the war-torn South in search of “real” freedom.

The passage of the 13th Amendment and abolition of slavery in 1865, failed to bring about true freedom, equality, and prosperity to blacks in the South. Instead, they remained racially oppressed, poverty-stricken, and struggling for survival. When Union soldiers finally withdrew from the south, blacks were left unprotected from Southerners who had violently opposed emancipation. Land prices were inflated to limit property ownership by blacks and Jim Crow made life unbearable. In 1876, word spread through the south about a developing all-black community in the Midwest, north



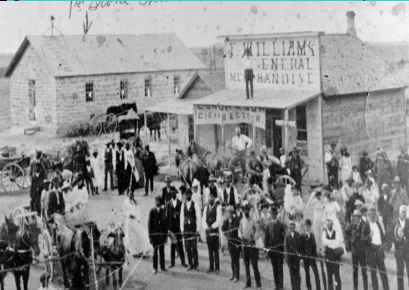
of Topeka, KS. A haven called Nicodemus. And while the new colony was ostensibly named for the biblical figure Nicodemus, the new black settlers claimed their own story of the eponymous black folk legend who came to America as a slave and later purchased his own freedom - Nicodemus.

W.R. Hill, a white land speculator and his partner, black Tennessean homesteader W.H. Smith, traveled to black churches in the backwoods of Kentucky and Tennessee to share the news of Nicodemus. They told of a sparsely settled territory with abundant wild game, wild horses that could be tamed and the opportunity to own land through the homesteading process. The earliest promotional handbill proclaimed it would be “The Largest Colored Colony in America,” portraying it as an oasis for blacks to establish a community of self-government. The ad drew the attention of hundreds of hopeful families looking for a new start.

In late August, 1877, 350 black men, women and children, nicknamed “Exodusters,” along with their livestock and supplies, left Lexington, Kentucky on a train, headed to Nicodemus, Kansas. The group arrived in Ellis, Kansas and it was there, they learned they would have to travel the remaining 35 miles to Nicodemus, by foot.

The Exodusters finally arrived in Nicodemus on September 17, 1877. The vast, barren, flat landscape shocked the new arrivals. Due to the lack of building materials and tools, many families already there, lived in “dugouts” or sod homes (simple dwellings dug into a dirt bank and with a sod roof). The dugout homes were generally small and functional during dry hot weather, but often flooded during rainy periods. For some settlers, however, the rugged living conditions proved to be unlivable and several dozen families immediately returned to the green rolling hills of Kentucky. Those who stayed vowed they would not return to the Jim Crow South and oppressive remnants of slavery. They worked hard to develop the land and build with primitive hand tools. They cooked and heated their dugouts with dried cow and buffalo chips, corn cobs or wood salvaged from the nearby Solomon River. They built a town out of sheer determination.

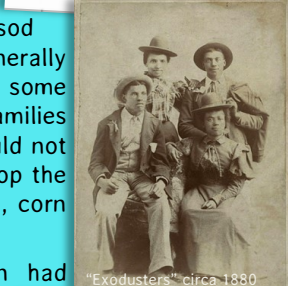
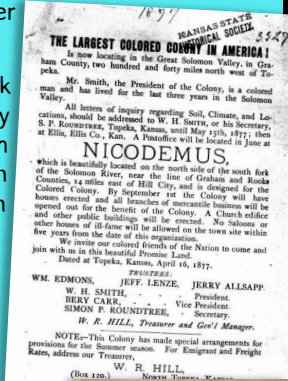
By 1886 Nicodemus had become a prosperous community surrounded by black-owned farms. The town had two newspapers, a drugstore, a bank, schoolhouse, three churches, and a general store. In March of 1887, the voters of the Township approved the issuance of \$16,000 in bonds in hopes to attract the Union Pacific Railroad extension from Stockton, KS to Nicodemus - some 19 miles away. Unfortunately, the town and the railroad could not agree on financial compensation, and the railroad withdrew its offer. The railroad established the extension six miles away south of the Solomon River, leaving Nicodemus an isolated village. Businesses began to relocate to the other side of the river to the Union Pacific Railroad camp that later became known as the town of Bogue. Nicodemus began a long gradual decline and the 1929 depression brought disaster, as farm prices fell. Young couples moved away.



Further devastation occurred when the area faced severe droughts in 1932, 1933, and 1934, followed by Kansas's infamous dust bowl days in the late winter and early spring of 1935. Entire families then left what had become a desolate region. By 1950 Nicodemus was reduced to 16 inhabitants, and the necessities of life had to be purchased in nearby Bogue. The post office closed in 1953.

In 1976, Nicodemus - Kansas's first black settlement, was designated as a National Historic Landmark. Twenty years later, on November 12, 1996, Nicodemus was designated as a National Historic site. This designation directs the National Park Service to assist the community in preserving historic structures and preserving the history for the benefit of present and future generations.

Today, Nicodemus is home to approximately 20 people. The only remaining business is the Nicodemus Historical Society Museum. Emancipation Day is celebrated every year, on the last weekend in July. The descendants of the Nicodemus settlers travel back home to honor their ancestors with a parade, food, and stories of heritage, determination, and family.



A group of descendants of the original settlers on the porch of one of the remaining historic buildings in Nicodemus.

The Clerk's Black History Series

Debra DeBerry Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County



Gerald "Jerry" Anderson Lawson (December 1, 1940 – April 9, 2011) "Father of the Videogame Cartridge"

Gerald "Jerry" Anderson Lawson was born on December 1, 1940, in Brooklyn, in New York City. His father was a longshoreman and voracious reader of science books. His mother worked for the city of New York and was PTA president at Jerry's elementary school.

As a boy, Jerry admired the works of inventor George Washington Carver, and was interested in science and chemistry. At the age of 13, he repaired ham radios and televisions. He later obtained an amateur ham radio license and built his own station at home, with his own money. During the 1960s Jerry attended both Queens College and the City College of New York, but never finished. In the late 1960s, he moved to California.

In 1970, Jerry began working for Fairchild Semiconductor International, Inc., as an applications engineering sales consultant. He also joined the Silicon Valley's Homebrew Computer Club, where he was one of only two black members. In 1975, Jerry invented a coin-operated arcade game prototype, Demolition Derby, in his garage. When Fairchild's executives heard of Jerry's creation, they were upset at first, but later asked if he would develop the technology for the company. Using Fairchild's new F8 microprocessors, Demolition Derby was one of the first microprocessor-driven arcade video games.

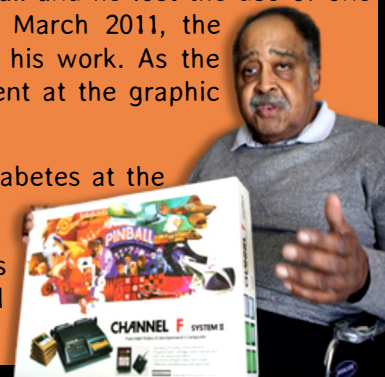
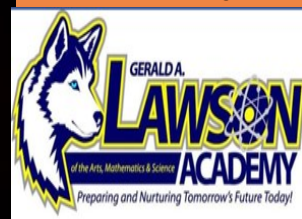
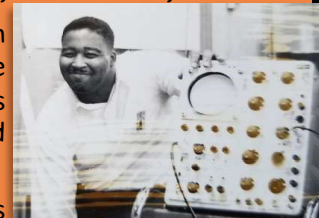
Jerry was immediately promoted to Chief Hardware Engineer and Director of Engineering and Marketing for Fairchild's video game division. In that role, he led the development team of the Fairchild Channel F console, released in 1976. The console was specifically designed to use swappable game cartridges based on technology licensed from Alpex. Most game systems at that time had their games built into the hardware and were not interchangeable. Jerry and his team refined and improved the technology developed at Alpex that allowed games to be stored as software on removable ROM cartridges. These cartridges could be inserted and removed repeatedly from the console and provided a new means of revenue for game manufacturing companies. The Channel F console featured a variety of controls, including an 8-way joystick designed by Jerry and a "pause" button, which was a first for home video game consoles. The first Channel F cartridge based console, released in 1976, cost \$149.99 and was sold in various department stores. Game cartridges sold for \$19.99 each. Fairchild Inc., sold about 350,000 units before selling its gaming technology to the Zircon corporation in 1979.

In 1980, Jerry left Fairchild to start his own video game development company, Videosoft. Videosoft produced games for manufacturers that made software for the Atari 2600 video game system. Zircon canceled the Channel F system a few years later. The Atari 2600 went on to sell more than 30 million units in its lifetime. Jerry's business closed after five years. After that, Jerry began consulting for other gaming and tech companies, as well as mentoring engineering students at nearby Stanford University. He collected notes to begin writing his autobiography to inspire more black engineering students. The book was never completed.

In 2003, Jerry's health began to suffer due to complications of diabetes. His sight began to fail and he lost the use of one leg. His illness left him bound to a wheelchair, but his desire to invent, never waned. In March 2011, the International Game Developers Association (IGDA) honored Jerry as an industry pioneer for his work. As the processing power of video game consoles continued to evolve, Jerry expressed disappointment at the graphic violence that began to replace the innocent, unpretentious games of his era.

On April 9, 2011, Gerald "Jerry" Lawson died of complications from diabetes at the age of 70. He left behind his wife and two grown children.

In 2012, the Los Angeles Unified School District honored Jerry's contribution to science and innovation by naming Elementary School #11, the Gerald A. Lawson Academy of the Arts, Mathematics and Science.



The Clerk's Black History Series

Debra DeBerry Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County



Mary Beatrice Davidson Kenner

(May 17, 1912 – January 13, 2006)

“Inventor of the Adjustable Sanitary Belt for Women”

Mary Beatrice Davidson Kenner was born on May 17, 1912, in Charlotte, North Carolina. She grew up in a family of inventors. Her father, Sidney Nathaniel Davidson, sister, Mildred Davidson Austin Smith and even her grandparents, were inventors. As a child, Mary shared her first invention idea at the age of six. Although the self oiling door hinge never made it into production, Mary continued thinking of creative solutions to everyday problems. At the age of 12, her family moved from North Carolina to Washington, D.C.

In 1931, Mary graduated from Paul Lawrence Dunbar High School (formerly Preparatory High School for Colored Youth) and attended Howard University. Due to financial strains, Mary was not able to complete her degree and began working odd jobs. She took a job as a federal employee at the start of WWII and eventually became a professional florist. In her spare time, Mary continued developing ideas for her inventions. Mary married James “Jabbo” Kenner, a famous heavyweight boxer, in 1951. The couple fostered 5 children and adopted a son, Woodrow.

By December 1957, Mary saved enough money to file a patent application for an invention that would change the lives of women for years to come. At that time, women had limited access to sanitary products and often made their own. Mary’s invention, the “sanitary belt” aimed to prevent the leakage of menstrual blood on clothing, and to securely hold a sanitary “napkin” in place. Unsecured sanitary napkins created embarrassing accidents for women and limited their ability to venture into public spaces. Mary’s “sanitary belt” attached to a long plastic and cloth “pocket” at each end, and fastened around a woman’s waist. Women would place cotton “napkins” or rags into the pocket and the belt would effectively hold the pocket in place. It was the pocket for padding and the moisture proof seal that made it revolutionary.

On April 14, 1959, Mary received US Patent 2,881,761 for the “Sanitary Belt with Moisture Proof Napkin Pocket.” Mary Beatrice Davidson Kenner invented the first generation of what would eventually be called the sanitary pad for women.

After the patent was filed, Mary received many letters from companies that were interested in her new invention. The Sonn-Nap-Pack Company scheduled an in-person meeting with Mary to discuss the company’s interest in marketing and manufacturing her new sanitary belt. A company representative drove from New York to Washington, D.C. to meet with Mary at her home. Mary was excited to think that her sanitary belt invention may finally bring financial success. She began dreaming of buying a new home and car with the profits. However, when the representative returned to New York, Mary was informed that the company was no longer interested in working with her product. Approximately 10 years later, beltless (stick-on) pads were invented and as tampons, once considered scandalous to use, became more popular. Women stopped using sanitary belts altogether.

During her life, Mary owned four floral shops around the D.C. area. She continued inventing in spite of the lack of financial success or recognition for her inventions. In 1976, after her sister Mildred was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, Mary patented a walker with an attachable tray and pocket for carrying items. In the 1980s, she invented a toilet paper dispenser and a shower wall mounted back washer. Mary didn’t receive any awards or formal recognition for her work. Her five US patents and many inventions, however, helped pave the way for products that we use today. She still holds the record for the greatest number of patents awarded to a Black woman by the U.S. government.

Mary Beatrice Davidson Kenner died on January 13, 2006, in Washington D.C., at the age of 93.

