

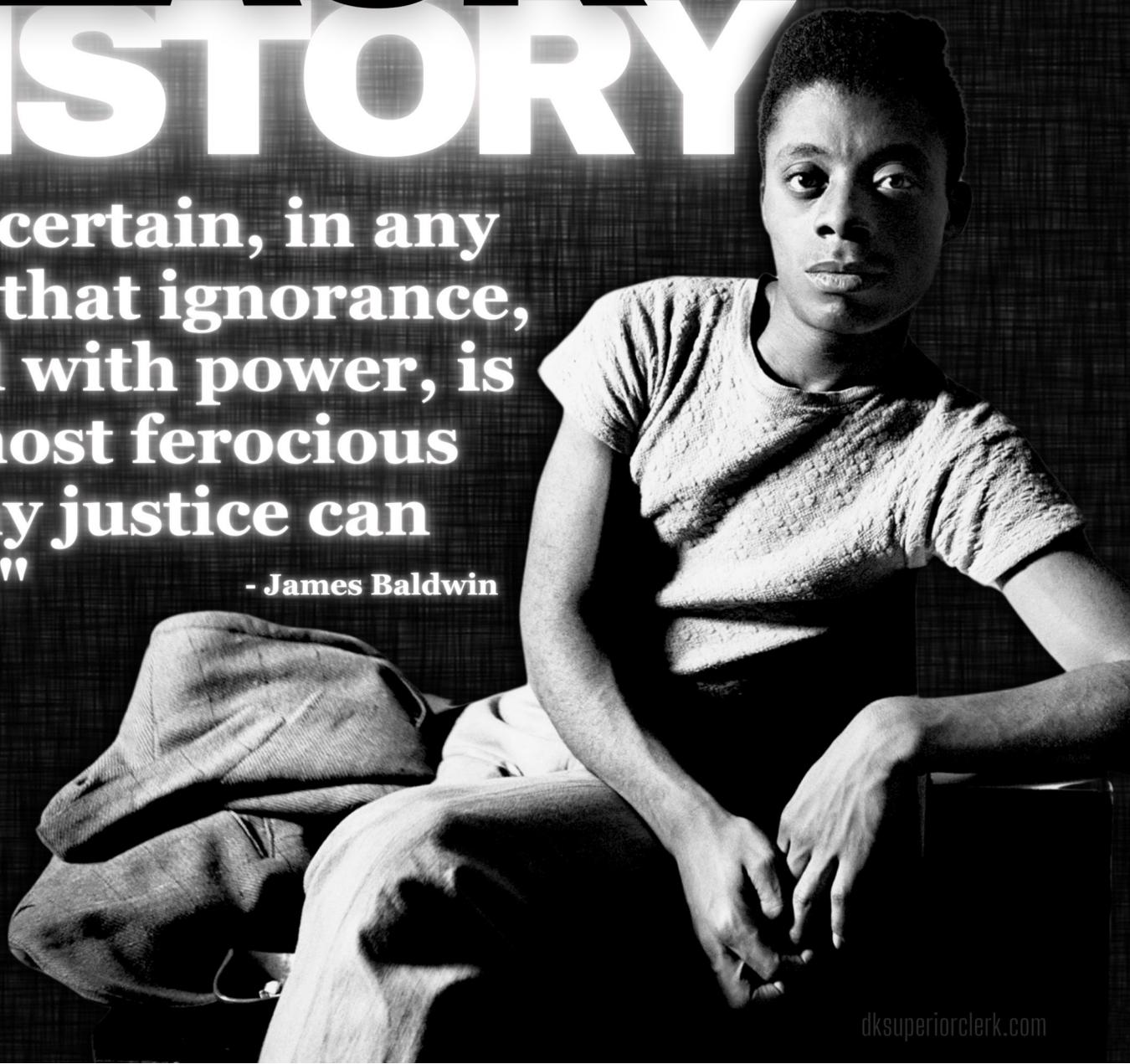


**Debra DeBerry**  
**Clerk of Superior Court**  
**DeKalb County, GA**

# **CELEBRATE BLACK HISTORY**

**"It is certain, in any case, that ignorance, allied with power, is the most ferocious enemy justice can have."**

**- James Baldwin**



# The Clerk's Black History Series

## Debra DeBerry Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County

### Ralph J. Bunche

(August 7, 1904 - December 9, 1971)

“First Black Nobel Peace Prize Winner”



**Ralph J. Bunche** was born in Detroit, Michigan on August 7, 1904, to Fred and Olive Bunche. He lived with his father, a barber that catered to a white-only clientele, and his musician mother. The family shared the home with his mixed-race, white passing, grandmother, who had been born into slavery.

When Ralph was ten years old, his family moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico, in hopes of the dry air helping his parent's declining health. After their death, Ralph and his two sisters went to live in Los Angeles, CA., with their grandmother. Ralph earned money by selling newspapers, helping on work sites, and, at one point, appearing as a house boy on a movie set.



In school, Ralph was a brilliant student, who excelled in all areas of study. He received awards and recognition in History, English, Debate class and was the valedictorian of his high school class. In addition to being a top student, Ralph was also a talented athlete who excelled in football, baseball, basketball, and track. His athletic prowess earned him an athletic scholarship to the University of California. He graduated as valedictorian, summa cum laude, with a degree in international relations, in 1927.



Ralph received a scholarship from Harvard and a gift of \$1000 raised by the black community in Los Angeles. He completed his masters in 1928 and worked for the next six years on his doctorate - all while teaching at Howard University in Washington DC. Ralph became the first African American to be awarded a PhD in Government and International Relations from Harvard.

Over the next ten years, Ralph traveled to Africa for research on his prize-winning dissertation: he received multiple awards and accolades. Ralph completed some post graduate work in anthropology at Northwestern and at the London School of Economics. He even studied at the University of Cape Town in apartheid South Africa. He served as an Expert on African affairs at the Dumbarton Oaks Conference in 1944 - which led to the formation of the United Nations. Subsequently, he participated in the historic San Francisco Conference in 1945, where the charter of the UN was drafted. In 1946, UN Secretary-General Trygve Lie asked Ralph to lead the UN's Department of Trusteeship, which took care of problems between nations that had not yet achieved self-government. He would be associated with the United Nations for the rest of his life. Between 1947 and 1949, Ralph worked on the most important assignment of his career - brokering a peace in Palestine. In June 1948, the UN appointed Count Folke Bernadotte as mediator and Ralph Bunche as his chief aide. On September 17, 1948, Count Bernadotte was assassinated, and Ralph was named acting UN mediator on Palestine. He spent the next 11 months tirelessly brokering a peace treaty, finally getting an armistice between Israel and Egypt, followed by one between Israel/Jordan, and Syria/Lebanon.

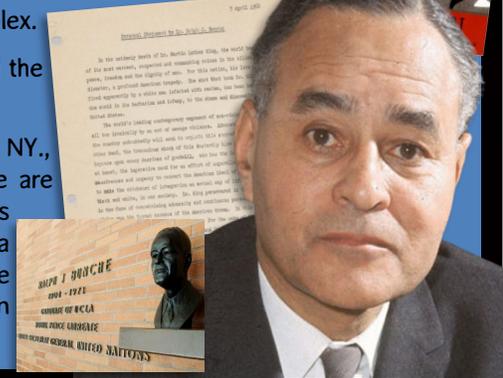
Ralph returned home a hero, with a ticker-tape parade and a day named in his honor. He was awarded the Spingarn Award by the NAACP in 1949 and received over 30 honorary degrees over the next 30 years. In 1950, Ralph Bunche was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. In 1956, he supervised the deployment of 6,000 United Nations peacekeeping troops around the Suez Canal to defuse the crisis initiated by the attack upon Egypt. In the 1960s, he led UN peacekeeping missions in the Congo and Cyprus. He became Under Secretary General of the United Nations in 1968.

Although he was able to negotiate international peace deals, Ralph was still fighting for his own basic civil rights back in the United States. Even with his impressive resume, and Nobel Peace Prize, Ralph could not get a first-class hotel room in Washington DC, or sit in the front of the bus in Mobile, Alabama. He was not welcome at a Woolworth's lunch counter and could not sit downstairs in a movie theater anywhere in the South. He would not have been able to enroll his children in a white school in many parts of the country. For all his importance at the UN, he couldn't rent in the East Side Manhattan neighborhoods surrounding the United Nations complex.



Ralph joined Martin Luther King's March on Washington in 1963 and the subsequent marches in Montgomery and Selma, Alabama.

Ralph used his Nobel Peace Prize money to buy a home in Jamaica, NY., where he lived until his death on December 9, 1971. Today, there are elementary and high schools across the country named after him. His alma mater, UCLA, named a building Bunche Hall, after him, with a statue at the entrance. The Library of the US Department of State, the oldest Federal government library (founded by Thomas Jefferson in 1789) was renamed in 1997. It is now the Ralph J. Bunche Library.



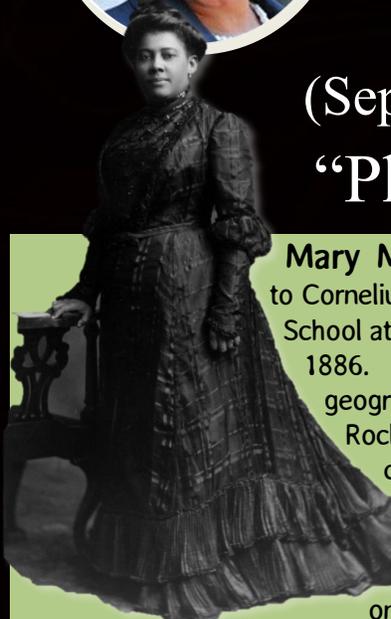
# The Clerk's Black History Series

## Debra DeBerry Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County

### Mary Burnett Talbert

(September 17, 1866 - October 15, 1923)

## “Phenomenal Civil Rights Leader”



**Mary Morris Burnett Talbert** was born in Oberlin, Ohio on September 17, 1866, to Cornelius and Caroline Nichols Burnett. A diligent learner, Mary graduated from High School at the age of 16 and completed her degree in Literature from Oberlin College in 1886. She accepted a position teaching history, mathematics, Latin, science and geography - the position took her over 800 miles away from her family, in Little Rock Arkansas, at Bethel University. Despite the Jim Crow segregated educational climate, Mary's professionalism and competence paved the way for her to be hired as the Assistant Principal at Bethel, the first woman to do so. The next year, she was named the Principal of Union High School - the first black woman to hold the position. She held the position for four years, until she married in 1891 and relocated to Buffalo, New York. She had one daughter, named Sarah May, in 1892.

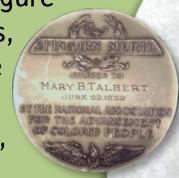
Mary began to establish her legacy as a public leader and a civil rights activist in Buffalo. She co-founded the Phyllis Wheatley Club of Colored Women - Buffalo's first affiliate of the National Association of Colored Women (NACW). In 1905, she opened her home to host a series of secret black political activists meetings with civil rights pioneers, including W.E.B. Dubois, John Hope, Monroe Trotter, Frederick McGhee, C. E. Bentley and others. This was the beginning of what would become the Niagara Movement - a precursor to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). At the turn of the 20th century, she protested the exclusion of African Americans from the 1901 Pan-American Exposition Planning Commissions to the all-white board of the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, calling for the appointment of an African American board member and an exhibit on the lives of African Americans. In 1905, Mary was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame. During her tenure as NACW President, Mary was instrumental in the preservation and restoration of the Frederick Douglass Home in Anacostia.



Phyllis Wheatley Club of Buffalo, 1905

In 1916, Mary was elected President of the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) and vice president of the NAACP. The next year, she became one of a handful of Black Red Cross nurses who served on the Western Front of Europe after the United States entered World War I. After World War I, Mary returned to Europe to lecture on the importance of women's rights and race relations. She often lectured across the U.S. and abroad on the oppression of Black Americans and became a major factor in bringing Black women into international women's organizations. As a suffragist, Mary advocated for women of all races to work together for the cause. She worked to raise awareness among prominent white feminists on the importance of supporting women who were marginalized and less privileged.

Mary became a dedicated advocate of the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill, introduced in 1919 by Missouri Congressman Leonidas Dyer. In 1921, she became chair of the NAACP's Anti-Lynching Committee. She was a national and international public figure who was a sought-after speaker for her lectures on race relations, anti-lynching and women's rights. The following year, Mary became the first Black Woman to receive the NAACP's Spingarn Award. Mary Burnett Talbert died in Buffalo, New York, on October 15, 1923, at the age of 57.



In 1998, a marker honoring Talbert, who served as the church's treasurer, was installed in front of the Michigan Avenue Baptist Church, by the New York State Governor's Commission Honoring the Achievements of Women. On August 24, 2024, a statue honoring Mary Burnett Talbert was unveiled in front of Old Erie County City Hall.

Mary Burnett Talbert, 1917. (Courtesy of The Crisis, Vol. 13, No. 4, February 1917)

# The Clerk's Black History Series

## Debra DeBerry

### Clerk of Superior Court

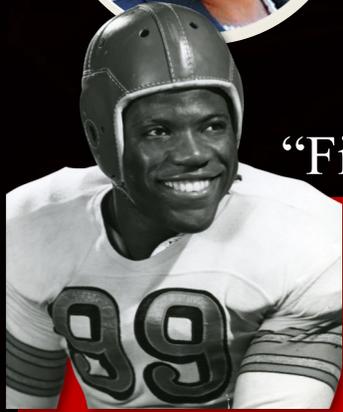
### DeKalb County



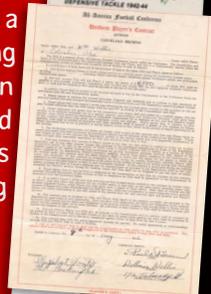
## William "Bill" Karnet Willis

(October 5, 1921 - November 27, 2007)

**"First Black Player to Reintegrate Professional Football"**

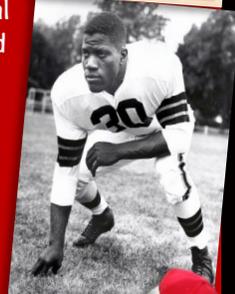


**William "Bill" Karnet Willis** was born in Columbus, Ohio on October 5, 1921, to Clement and Willana Willis. Bill's father died of pneumonia when he was just 18 months old and Bill was raised by his mother and grandfather. Bill attended East Side High School and excelled at football and track. Seeing his potential, the East High football coach reached out to Paul Brown, the Football Coach at Ohio State University (OSU), and encouraged him to recruit Bill. Although Bill was considered too small for a defensive lineman - at 6'2" and just over 200lbs, his quickness and determination was unmatched. Bill joined the Ohio State Football Team as a sophomore in 1942. At season's end, the 9-1 Buckeyes won the 1942 Western Conference (Big 10) championship and were voted the number one college team in the country by the Associated Press. In 1943 and 1944, Bill received All-American honors, making him the first Black All-American from Ohio State.



When Bill graduated from Ohio State in 1944, he accepted a coaching position at Kentucky State University, a black college, for a season. At that time, there were no black professional football players in the NFL - nor had there been in more than a decade. Although the National Football League (NFL) did not officially exclude Black players, there was a culture among team owners that effectively banned them from the game. Bill then verbally agreed to play football for a Canadian Football Team, the Montral Alouettes. Meanwhile, Paul Brown, Bill's former coach, had become the co-founder and head coach of a new NFL team, the Cleveland Browns (named after Paul Brown). Coach Brown asked Bill to attend the Browns training camp as a free agent prospect. He reported to Bowling Green and in a single practice session, earned the starting defensive tackle position - with a \$4,000 contract.

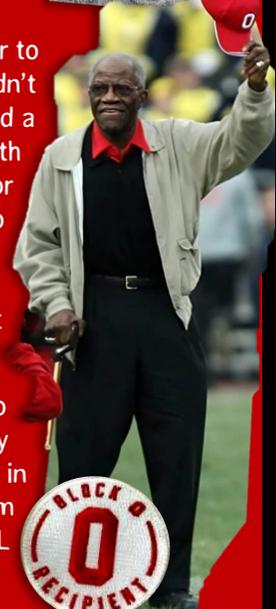
Bill's explosive speed up the middle of the defensive line would eventually change the way quarterbacks begin their stance under center. Originally, the QB's feet would be parallel to the line of scrimmage. But the Browns' starting signal caller was instructed by Coach Brown to place his right foot slightly behind the left foot so that he could push off and move away from the line easier. This staggered stance is now the norm with every quarterback at every level.



Bill Willis & Marion Motley

Shortly after, Coach Brown contacted Marion Motley, a black fullback that played for him earlier, and asked him to tryout. Bill and Marion re-integrated professional football. Three weeks later, two other black football players, Kenny Washington and Woody Strode, took the field for the NFL's Los Angeles Rams. Their entry in the NFL was the inspiration for Branch Rickey, a baseball manager and team owner, to bring Jackie Robinson, the first black professional baseball player, up from the minor league.

While Bill and Marion endured racism and discrimination from those outside of the team, Paul Brown made it clear to his team - if any player couldn't treat the two with respect, they would be removed from the team. But he couldn't control the outside world. In the last game of the 1946 season on the road against Miami, the State of Florida had a law that Whites, Hispanics, and Negroes could not compete on the same playing field during sporting events. Both Bill and Marion were left in Cleveland for that road game. In 1950, Bill was one of seven Browns players chosen for the first-ever Pro Bowl. Both Bill and Marion would end up with four AAFC Championships, one NFL title, named to the NFL 1940s All-Decade Team and became members of the Cleveland Browns Ring of Honor. Both Bill and Marion retired after the 1953 season. After retirement, Bill became the Assistant Commissioner of Recreation in Cleveland, working with youth. He returned to Columbus where he served for two decades in the Ohio Department of Youth Services, until his retirement as director in 1983.



In 1971, Bill was inducted into the College Hall of Fame and in 1977, he was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame. In 2020, Ohio State designated the #0 jersey (the Block O jersey) to be worn by a new player each season, in honor of Willis. Bill's official OSU uniform number, #99, was retired in 2007, just months before he died. On November 27, 2007, at the age of eighty-six, Bill Willis died from complications of a stroke. The book "The Forgotten First", chronicles the four black pioneering NFL players, Bill, Marion, Kenny, and Woody, who played a crucial role in re-integrating the NFL.



# The Clerk's Black History Series

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

**Annie Frances Lee**

(March 3, 1935 - November 24, 2014)

“Artist”



**Annie Frances Lee** was born in Gadsden, Alabama on March 3, 1935. When she was a child, she and her mother moved to Chicago, where Annie grew up. Annie's exceptional talent for painting became apparent when she won an art competition at the age of ten. After High School, she was offered a four-year scholarship to Northwestern University. She chose to marry and start a family, instead.

For the next 20 years, Annie lived through heavy losses and life challenges. She lost two husbands to cancer, all while raising three children. She later lost a son in a car accident. Annie worked as a clerk with Northwestern Railroad in the engineering department and continued painting as a hobby. In the evening, she took college courses at Loop Junior College and finally completed her undergraduate work at Mundelein College, in Chicago. After eight years of night classes, Annie earned her M.A. degree in Interdisciplinary Arts Education from Loyola University.

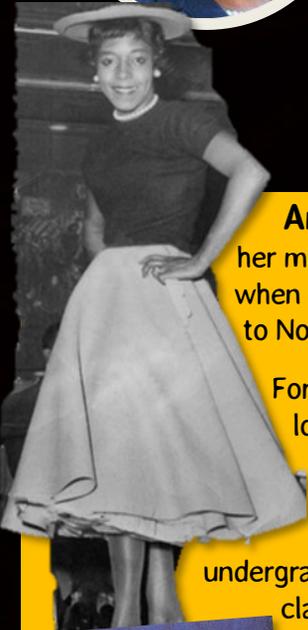
It was Annie's life experiences and challenging schedule with family, work, and school, that inspired her most recognizable painting called "Blue Monday". In the painting, a brown skinned woman, sits in her nightgown, with her head hung low, on the edge of her bed, feeling the weight of another Monday on her thin, weary shoulders. This piece gained notoriety when it was displayed on multiple episodes of "The Cosby Show". Another piece called "My Cup Runneth Over" appeared on the tv show "A Different World". Annie's painting style depicted everyday people, in common life situations and struggles. She omitted defined facial features, so that people could see themselves in her work. Her paintings also appeared in the movies, "Coming to America" and "Boomerang".

In 1985, at the age of fifty, Annie had her first gallery show which changed the direction of her life, forever. Every art piece sold within four hours, proving that her unique perspective on Black life had struck a powerful chord. She allowed prints to be made of her four original paintings so that more people could enjoy her work. Eventually, some of her art sold for nearly \$20,000. Annie then began exploring other mediums of art by developing figurines, dolls, decorative housewares, and kitchen tiles for sale.

After showing her work in other galleries for years, Annie opened the Annie Lee and Friends Gallery where she displayed her works as well as the works of other local artists. Although she regularly received requests for public appearances, she preferred to appear only at art gallery shows. She also enjoyed visiting local schools to encourage and inspire students.

The play "Six No Uptown" written by L.A. Walker, Terry Horton, and Cassandra Sanders was inspired by Annie's painting of the same name. The play opened in Las Vegas in 2014 and centers around a Bid Whist card game, Annie's favorite pastime game.

Annie Frances Lee died on November 24, 2014, in her Henderson, Nevada home, surrounded by her family. In 2015, the Annie F. Lee Art Foundation was incorporated. Annie's grandson is the president and co-founder of the foundation.



# The Clerk's Black History Series

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DeKalb County



**Memphis Minnie**

(June 3, 1897 - August 6, 1973)

“Queen of the Country Blues”



**Memphis Minnie** was born Lizzie Douglas on June 3, 1887, in Algiers, Louisiana. The oldest of 13 brothers and sisters. Minnie started playing banjo at the age of seven and got her first guitar at the age of 10. Her parents, Abe and Gertrude, nicknamed her “Kid”. Around the same time, Minnie’s family moved to Walls, Mississippi, just twenty miles south of Memphis, Tennessee - the city that would become her new namesake a few years later. At the age of 13, Minnie ran away to live on Beale Street, where she played her guitar on the sidewalk for cash.

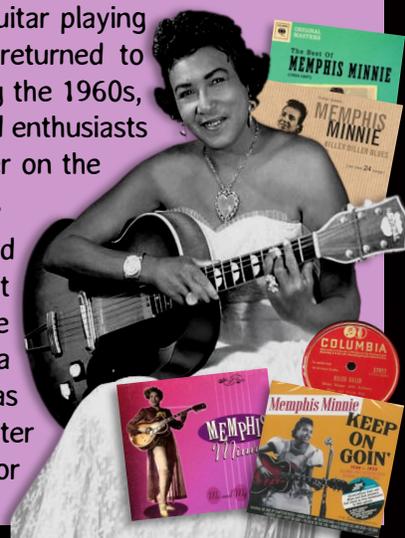
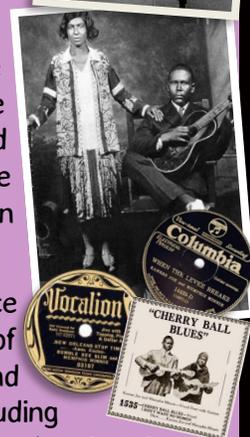
From 1916 to 1920, Minnie joined the Ringling Brothers circus, traveling as a musician, singer, and playing guitar at house parties and dances with bluesman Willie Brown, Willie Moore, and others around Lake Cormorant and Walls. In her early 20s, Minnie returned to Beale Street, performing in clubs. There she met and married another blues artist, Joe McCoy. Minnie’s powerful voice and unique guitar skills were unmatched at that time, and she was known to outshine most of the male artists around her.

In 1927, the Great Mississippi Flood killed hundreds of residents and flooded 26,000 square miles of the Mississippi Delta area. Minnie and Joe wrote and recorded “When The Levee Breaks” - a story about the fear of the devastation that followed the breaking levee. In 1930, Minnie and Joe moved to Chicago and were signed by the Columbia label. There she recorded one of her best-known songs, “Bumble Bee”. The couple became known as *Kansas Joe and Memphis Minnie*, which is how they performed until their divorce in 1935. Due to the Great Depression, the duo’s records sales were low and contributed to the split.

Although Minnie started her career playing an acoustic guitar, it was the electric guitar that sealed her place in history. Her powerful performances contributed to the transformation of the blues, to the Chicago style of blues, especially when she began playing in bands with other musicians. In the late 1930s, Minnie met and married another musician, Ernest “Little Joe Son” Lawlers. The couple made several popular songs, including “HooDoo Lady” and their song “Me and My Chauffeur Blues” - these showcased her transition to playing the electric guitar.

Minnie's public persona during this period marked a significant challenge to gender norms in blues performance. Her records covered many subjects including crime, voodoo, trains, health, and were openly sexual, delivering her signature confident, sassy voice. In all of her recordings, Minnie was musically in tuned with the lives of her fellow Black Americans. Her title of “Queen of the Country Blues” stems from her legacy of successfully recording music across four decades as well as being the lone female voice in a male-dominated country blues scene, paving the way for guitar playing women like Sister Rosetta Tharpe and Big Mama Thornton. Minnie retired in 1957 and returned to Memphis. She appeared on some radio shows and played a memorial concert in 1958. During the 1960s, Minnie saw her music revive with a renewed interest in blues, with the new wave of players and enthusiasts recognizing her role in laying crucial foundations of the genre. Throughout her 25-year career on the Vocalion, Decca, Bluebird, Okey, and Checker labels, Memphis Minnie recorded over 200 tracks.

In 1960, Minnie suffered a stroke which left her in a wheelchair. Her husband, Little Joe Son, died the next year. When she suffered a second stroke, magazines reported her plight and fans sent money to help. In 1971, the rock band, Led Zeppelin, reworked her song “When the Levee Breaks” into a bigger and bolder version - but the song was not released commercially as a single in the US or UK. Memphis Minnie died in a nursing home on August 6, 1973, and was buried with no marker in her hometown of Walls, Mississippi. In 1996, legendary singer-songwriter and Grammy Award winning Blues artist, Bonnie Raitt, paid for a memorial headstone for Minnie’s burial site at the New Hope Church Cemetery.





# The Clerk's Black History Series

## Debra DeBerry

### Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County

## Safe Bus Company

(1926 to 1972)



## “Historic Black-Owned Transportation Service”



**Safe Bus, INC.** began in 1926, in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. On April 24, 1926, Clarence T. Woodland, John M. Adams, Elliot A. Davis, George I. Dillahunt, Jefferson H. Hairston, Elijah T. Miller, Joseph Miller, Harvey F. Morgan, Ralph R. Morgan, Charlie R. Peebles, and George Ragsdale met to address the dire need for transportation services from the underserved and segregated black communities where public transportation did not reach. Because the city of Winston-Salem's trolley

service, Southern Public Utilities Company, did not service black neighborhoods, black workers struggled to make it to jobs in the city. Streetcar service went only into white neighborhoods.



At the time, the only real transportation available to black workers were jitneys - small, privately owned ride sharing mini-vans or busses - that serviced specific areas, for very low fares, usually a nickel. The problem with jitneys was that schedules were sometimes unreliable and the vehicles were often crowded. Jitney owners sometimes crossed into each other's "territory" creating tension and instability.



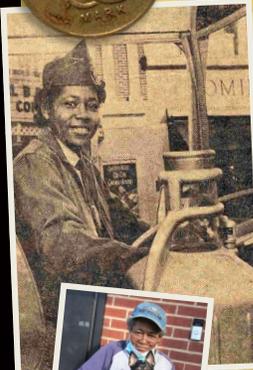
After the April 24th meeting, the Safe Bus Company was formed, offering transportation and economic opportunities for black people in Winston-Salem. The company name signified their promise to provide safe and professional transportation to the black community. Safe Bus Company stocks were sold and \$100,000 dollars was raised; fares were set at five cents a ride, and the service began one month later. On June 1, 1926, the Safe Bus Company picked up its first rider, beginning a successful black-owned business that would last for the next 46 years. Its first offices were located in the Atlantic Building at East Third and North Church Streets, and the first garage was opened at the corner of East Third Street and Patterson Avenue.

The company employed more than 80 drivers and served 8,000 passengers a day. Employees of the company also included schedulers, mechanics, and customer service agents. The company was so successful that it exceeded that of the white-only streetcar city system. In 1966, The Safe Bus Company hired Pricilla Stephens (pictured left), the first woman bus driver for the company. By 1968, the Safe Bus Company had become the sole provider of transportation for Winston-Salem's black community, making it the largest black-owned and operated transportation business in the world. Riders were able to enjoy clean, safe rides into the city. The drivers were friendly and professional and they could sit anywhere they wanted on this bus service.

Because black workers were using the Safe Bus Company for their transportation needs, the city's official bus carrier ended their service and left town. The city asked the Safe Bus Company to fill in the routes, providing transportation to all residents. Forced to cover the entire city, including non-productive routes and competing with automobile ownership, the Safe Bus Company struggled.

In 1972, the Winston-Salem Transit Authority purchased the assets of the Safe Bus Company, incorporating it into the city-run transportation system.

The Safe Bus Company historic marker is located at 100 W. Fifth Street.



# The Clerk's Black History Series

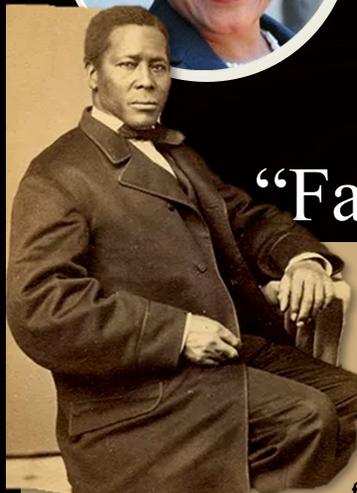
## Debra DeBerry Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County



### William Still

(October 7, 1821 - July 14, 1902)

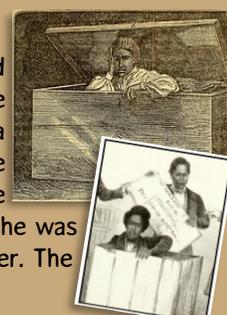
## “Father of the Underground Railroad”



**William Still** was born on October 7, 1821, in Shamong Township, Burlington County, New Jersey. His parents were from Caroline County, Maryland. His father, Levin, bought his freedom in 1798, but stayed in Maryland until 1805 to watch over his wife and children - who were not yet free. His mother, Sydney, attempted an escape with her four children, but was quickly captured. On her second attempt, only she and two daughters successfully made it to New Jersey, where they met Levin. Sydney changed her name to Charity and the family assumed the name of Still - to conceal their identity. The couple had 14 more children, the youngest being William Still. Although their children were born in the free state of New Jersey, under Maryland and federal slave law they were still legally slaves, as their mother was an escaped slave. However, in New Jersey, they were free. The couple's two oldest boys, who were left behind, were sold and sent further south to Alabama and Kentucky. Levin, Jr., was whipped to death, but his brother, Peter, along with his wife and children, escaped to Pennsylvania when he was nearly 50 years old.

In 1844, William moved to Pennsylvania and married Letitia George. In 1847, he began working as a clerk with the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, where he was asked to assist a new arrival by the name of Peter. William listened to Peter's story and after hearing details about his parents and their brave escape, he realized that this was his brother. William then reunited his mother with one of her two sons she was forced to leave behind, 42 years earlier.

William and his wife Letitia moved into a relatively new rowhouse on the east side of Ronaldson Street between South and Bainbridge Streets, which still stands today at 625 S. Delhi Street, and became a part of the Vigilance Committee. Their home became a safe haven stop in the Underground Railroad system. It was in this home that William and Letitia received a shipment of an old steamer chest, containing a woman, Lear Green, who had shipped herself to their location from Baltimore to escape slavery. Several others would escape in the same manner. In 1855, he and several other members of the committee were sued for giving refuge to Jane Johnson, a slave woman that sought help in gaining her freedom after she was brought to PA, a free state, by her owner. He was charged assault and kidnapping, by failing to return Jane to her enslaver. The case went to court and William and the others were acquitted. Jane received her freedom.

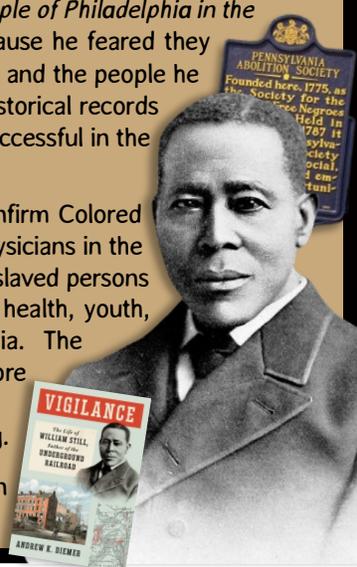
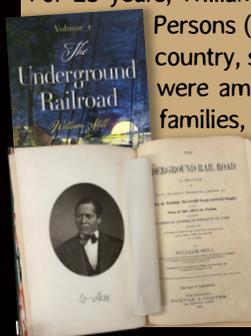


William and Letitia worked tirelessly to assist travelers through the Underground Railroad system, helping more than 800 men, women, and children escape to freedom. They worked closely with Harriet Tubman as well as John Brown, sheltering many travelers fleeing the 1859 raid of Harpers Ferry. With each person they assisted, William kept detailed records documenting their experiences, noting names, plantation locations, family members, children and intended final destinations. He knew that one day, those who were freed, would desperately search for their separated family members and that were sold and sent away - so they could be joyfully reunited as his mother was with her son Peter.

In 1961, William founded the Social, Civic, and Statistical Association of the Colored People of Pennsylvania to document the conditions, achievements, and statistics of Black residents. During the Civil War, William operated a store at Camp William Penn, the training camp for the U.S. Colored Troops. In 1862, he published his first book, *A Brief Narrative of the Struggle for the Rights of Colored People of Philadelphia in the City Railway Cars*. Before the Civil War, William had destroyed many of his records about aiding fugitives, because he feared they would be used to prosecute escapees. After the war, his children persuaded him to write the story of his exploits and the people he helped. His 1872 book, *The Underground Railroad: A Record of Facts*, is considered one of the most important historical records written as it documents the history of those courageous individuals who fought for their freedom. He was very successful in the coal business and continued his social activism and philanthropy.

For 25 years, William served as board member, vice president, and president of the Home for the Aged and Infirm Colored Persons (est. 1864), where his daughter, Dr. Caroline Still Anderson, one of the first Black women physicians in the country, served as a physician. The Home's founders and organizers believed that elderly formerly enslaved persons were among the most vulnerable victims of the institution of slavery, having been robbed of their health, youth, families, and left without support. William also helped establish the first black YMCA in Philadelphia. The other Still children were also very successful. William Jr. completed a master's degree before entering into business. Frances also attended Oberlin before becoming a kindergarten teacher and Robert attended Lincoln University before his careers in journalism and printing.

William Still died on July 14, 1902, at the age of 88. He was buried in Eden Cemetery in Collingdale, PA, the country's oldest Black-Owned cemetery. Letitia died four years later.



# The Clerk's Black History Series

## Debra DeBerry Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County

### Dr. Valerie Thomas

February 8, 1943 -

## Scientist and Inventor

### Invented Technology That Led to the Creation of 3-D Imaging



**Valerie Thomas** was born on February 8, 1943, in Baltimore, Maryland. As a child, she became interested in science when she observed her father repairing a television set. She was curious about how the components worked together to make a picture appear on the screen. When a library opened in her neighborhood, she checked out a book called *The Boys' First Book on Radio and Electronics*. Even though her father did not encourage her interest electronics, the seed was planted. Valerie looked for classes in junior high or high school to learn more about the subject but was offered home economics instead. In high school, she took a physics class before graduating in 1961. The same year she entered Morgan State University where she was finally able to pursue her interest in science as one of only two women majoring in physics. She advocated for her education by asking questions, until she understood the subjects completely. In 1964, she graduated with a degree in physics - with high honors.

After graduation, Valerie postponed graduate school and went to work for National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) as a mathematician data analyst. There she was tasked with writing computer programs, although she had never used a computer before. She accepted the challenge and learned all she could from those more experienced co-workers. Although she excelled, she was often overlooked for promotions. She coordinated a group that brought high-level managers to meet with the black workers that were being overlooked. She also encouraged the underserved employees, minorities, disabled, etc., to make presentations on their work to establish the importance of diversity in the workplace. Valerie also encouraged young people to take advanced mathematics courses in high school, by speaking at schools and signing up to mentor the interns. She later became president of the National Technical Association, which focused on helping African Americans progress in the science and technology fields.

While managing a project for NASA's image processing systems, Valerie's team spearheaded the development of "Landsat", which allowed satellites to send images from space. Her participation in this program expanded on the works of other NASA scientists wanting to photograph Earth from space. In 1974, Valerie headed a team of 50 people for the Large Area Crop Inventory Experiment (LACIE), a joint effort with NASA's Johnson Space Center, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In 1976, Valerie attended a demonstration in which a light bulb seemed to stay lit even after being removed from a lamp. The illusion was created by means of a concave mirror reflecting a second light bulb. In 1977, Valerie began researching how light and concave mirrors could be used in her work at NASA. She created an experiment observing how the position of a concave mirror would affect the real object that is reflected. Using this technology, she would invent the illusion transmitter. On December 28, 1978, she applied for a patent for her invention.

On October 21, 1980, Valerie was issued the patent for the illusion transmitter, U.S. patent 4229761A, which NASA uses today. Her achievements helped her become the associate chief of NASA's Space Science Data Operations Office. In 1985, she earned a master's degree in engineering administration from George Washington University. She was the NASA Space Science Data Coordinated Archive (NSSDC) Computer Facility manager responsible for consolidating and reconfiguring two previously independent computer facilities and infusing them with new technology. She then served as the Space Physics Analysis Network (SPAN) project manager from 1986 to 1990, when SPAN underwent a significant reconfiguration. She expanded the scientific network with about 100 computer nodes to one directly connecting about 2,700 computer nodes worldwide. In 1990, SPAN became a significant part of NASA's science networking and today's Internet.

In 1995, Valerie retired from NASA but continued to hold positions of associate chief of NASA's Space Science Data Operations Office, NASA Automated Systems Incident Response Capability manager, and the Space Science Data Operations Office Education Committee chair. She continued speaking to students from elementary through college and supported organizations that encouraged minority and female students to pursue science and technology careers. She authored many scientific papers and received numerous awards for her achievements. Valerie Thomas lives in Prince George's County, Maryland. She is 82 years old.



Illusion Transmitter





# The Clerk's Black History Series

## Debra DeBerry

### Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County



## Freedom House Ambulance Service (1967 - 1975)

### “Pioneering All Black EMS Service”



**Freedom House Ambulance Service**, was an all-black emergency medical service (EMS), founded in 1967, in Pittsburgh, PA. It provided medical services to the predominantly black American Hill District of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

During the 1960s, medical emergency transportation services were often provided by the police or the local funeral home. The same vehicle that picked up dead bodies would also be the one to respond to an emergency medical transportation call. The wait times for services were excessive but especially long in the segregated Hill District of Pittsburgh - if they arrived at all. Also, the service was transportation only, with little to no medical care, being performed until you reached the hospital. While there were private ambulances, they didn't respond to the segregated areas of the city, and they cost more than most people could afford. The need for better emergency services was only highlighted when in 1966, former mayor David L. Lawrence collapsed and suffered irreparable brain damage due to the delay in transportation and immediate medical care. Being deprived of life-saving oxygen for too long, the mayor died 17 days later, having never regained consciousness. His death was ascribed to the limited access of resuscitation tools.

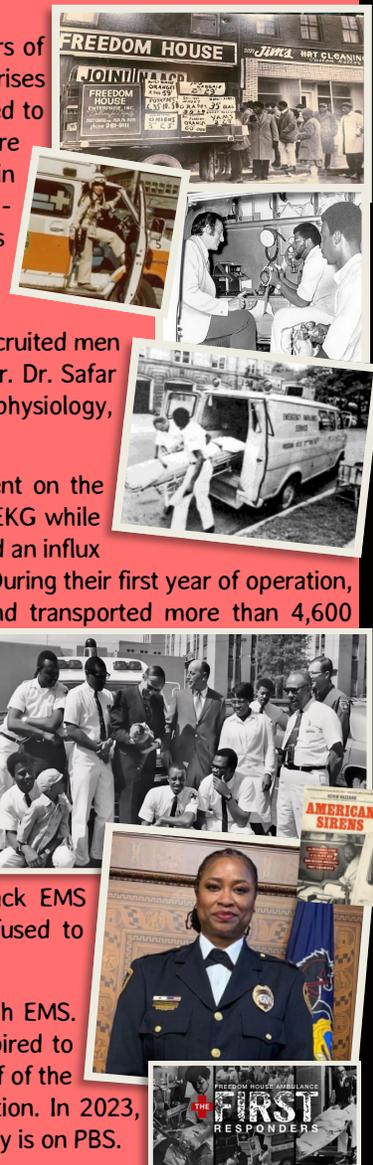
Seeing a desperate need for not only emergency transportation but also preliminary medical care, the founders of the Freedom House Enterprises (James "Jim" McCoy and Phil Hallen) devised a plan. The Freedom House Enterprises was a new economic force that offered support to the local community. Freedom House was initially conceived to respond to the needs of Pittsburgh's black community who often times, couldn't rely on police and fire departments during an emergency. Their ground-breaking work became the basis for all paramedics training in the country. During the same time, Dr. Peter Safar - the father of CPR - and a University of Pittsburgh physician - was pioneering the use of cardiopulmonary resuscitation, emphasizing the importance of treating patients enroute to the hospital - and not just transporting them there. Dr. Safar wanted to teach laypeople to deliver care in emergency rooms on wheels.

In 1966, unemployment in the Hill District was 14% and hope was bleak. James "Jim" McCoy and Phil Hallen recruited men from the Hill District - some unemployed, some with troubled pasts, and some veterans from the Vietnam War. Dr. Safar and Jim McCoy designed the paramedics training, which included a 32-week 300-hour course on anatomy, physiology, CPR, advanced first aid, nursing, and defensive driving.

Freedom House paramedics were the first in the country to intubate a patient on the street, deliver an electric shock to a patient's heart in the field, and read an EKG while enroute to the hospital. They opened the training course up to all races and had an influx of white students learning side-by-side with the students from the Hill District. During their first year of operation, the Freedom House Ambulance Service responded to nearly 5,800 calls and transported more than 4,600 patients, primarily in African American neighborhoods in Pittsburgh.

However, despite its success - racism and power dynamics in Pittsburgh shut down the Freedom House Ambulance Co. in 1975. The new city mayor, Pete Flaherty, was angry that the poor people of the Hill District were getting better emergency care than those of the wealthier white neighborhoods. Flaherty started placing excessive scheduling demands on the Freedom House company and eventually cancelled their city contract. He then formed The City of Pittsburgh EMS with one of the white students from the Freedom House training program, Glynn Cannon, heading the new service. The Freedom House Ambulance Service took its last call on October 15, 1975. Most of the original black EMS paramedics were systematically removed and multiple lawsuits followed, alleging the new EMS service refused to transport black patients or respond to calls in black neighborhoods.

John Moon, an original Freedom House Paramedic, later became the Assistant Chief of the City of Pittsburgh EMS. While he was in charge of recruiting, he hired and mentored Amara Gilchrist, a young black woman who aspired to work for the city as an EMS. In 2019, John proudly stood nearby as Amara Gilchrist was sworn in as Deputy Chief of the Pittsburgh Bureau of Emergency Medical Services - the First black person and first woman to hold that position. In 2023, Amara was promoted to Chief of Pittsburgh EMS. The Freedom House Ambulance: First Responders documentary is on PBS.





# The Clerk's Black History Series

## Debra DeBerry

### Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County



## Dr. Samuel Milton Nabrit

(February 21, 1905 - December 30, 2003)

“Marine Biologist/ First African American  
on the Atomic Energy Commission”



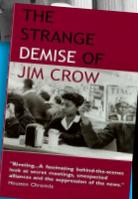
S. Milton Nabrit 1928-31, 1934, 1936

**Samuel Milton Nabrit** was born in Macon, Georgia, on February 21, 1905. Samuel's father was a Baptist Minister, and his mother was a school teacher. He was valedictorian of his high school class and after graduating from Morehouse College with a bachelor's degree in Science in 1925, he began teaching at Morehouse. He married in 1927. While teaching, Samuel continued his education, earning a master's degree from the University of Chicago. Morehouse College president John Hope, a Brown alumnus, encouraged Samuel to apply to Brown's doctoral program in biology. Samuel's application was initially denied due to concerns about racial tensions. President Hope made a call to Brown President William Faunce on Samuel's behalf and he was admitted. Samuel completed his PhD from Brown University - the first black person to earn a PhD in Biology. He was a member of Sigma Pi Phi fraternity.



Samuel was vital to the establishment of the National Institute of Science (NIS), a non-profit professional organization supporting science education and research at historically Black colleges and universities, in 1943. Samuel continued teaching at Morehouse and later at Atlanta University as head of the Biology department and dean of the graduate school from 1932 to 1947. He was appointed dean of the graduate school of arts and sciences of Atlanta University in 1947, where he served as dean for eight years. Samuel traveled to the Marine Biological Laboratory in Woods Hole, Massachusetts, conducting research and studying the regeneration of fish tail fins. In 1950, Dr. Nabrit was a research fellow at the University of Brussels in Belgium. The scientific papers Nabrit published during this period, remained influential in the field for decades.

In 1955, Samuel became president of Texas Southern University (TSU). Under his eleven-year leadership, TSU more than tripled the number of doctor of philosophy degree holders on the faculty, increased the university's enrollment by 50 percent, increased graduation rates, and balanced the budget. While there, he acted on behalf of his students, supporting their protests and negotiating with public officials during the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement. Samuel ensured that no TSU student would be expelled from school for participating in protests or demonstrations. Samuel's brother, James Nabrit, was a civil rights attorney and was one of the three lawyers who successfully argued the Brown v. Board of Education case before the Supreme Court in 1954. Samuel Nabrit's role in the desegregation of Houston was later portrayed in the 1998 documentary film "The Strange Demise of Jim Crow: How Houston Desegregated Its Public Accommodations, 1959-1963" by Thomas Cole.



Around the same time, Samuel served on the National Science Board, appointed by President Eisenhower. He was later appointed as special ambassador to Niger, by President John. F. Kennedy. In 1966, Samuel Milton Nabrit became the first black person appointed to the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC). Shortly after leaving TSU, Samuel became the first black member of the board of trustees of Brown University in 1967.

Samuel served as executive director of the Southern Fellowship Fund in Atlanta from 1967 until his retirement in 1981. He held numerous professional memberships, including the American Society of Zoologists, National Association for Research in Science Teaching, Phi Beta Kappa, and the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences. Texas Southern University named their science center in his honor. Brown University established the Nabrit Fellowship for minority graduate students in his honor in 1985. Samuel's wife, Constance Croker, preceded him in death and the couple had no children. Dr. Samuel Milton Nabrit died on December 30, 2003, in Atlanta. He was 98 years old. He is buried in Westview Cemetery in Atlanta.



# The Clerk's Black History Series

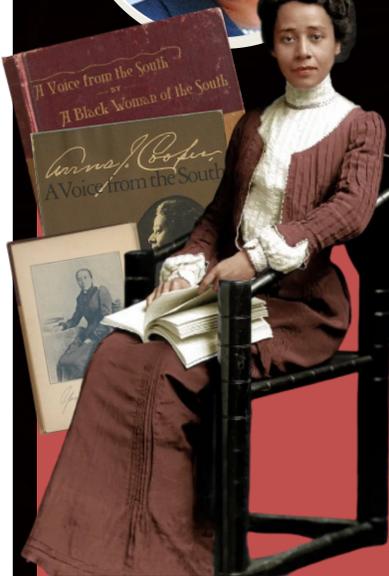
## Debra DeBerry

### Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County

## Anna Julia Haywood Cooper

(August 10, 1858 – February 27, 1964)

### “The Mother of Black Feminism”



**Anna Julia Haywood Cooper** was born on August 10, 1858, in Raleigh, NC, to her enslaved mother, Hannah Stanley Haywood, and a white father. After emancipation, when Anna was 9 years old, she attended Saint Augustine's Normal School and Collegiate Institute, on scholarship. She spent 14 years there, excelling in languages (Latin, French, Greek), English literature, and analytical disciplines such as mathematics and science. Although the school had a special track reserved for women, Anna insisted on her right to take higher-level courses typically reserved for men. After completing her studies, she remained at the institution as an instructor. She married George C. Cooper, who she met at the school. Just two years later, George died and Anna left to pursue higher education at Oberlin College in Ohio. Due to her accomplished education, she entered college as a sophomore and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in 1884 and a master's degree in mathematics in 1887.

Later that same year, Anna started as a teacher at the M Street Washington High School in Washington, D.C. - the only Black college-preparatory high school. The school was later renamed for the poet Paul Laurence Dunbar. While in D.C., Anna became more involved with racial politics and social activism.

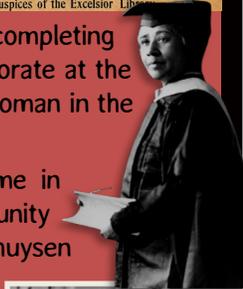
In 1892, Anna published her first book, “A Voice from the South by a Black Woman of the South”. The book was a series of essays, calling for equal education for women and asserted that educating black women was necessary for uplifting the entire black race. The same year, Anna established and co-founded several organizations to promote black civil rights causes. She helped found the Colored Women’s League in 1892. Her book gained national attention, and Anna traveled the country lecturing and speaking to equal rights advocates. She traveled to Nassau and throughout Europe and spoke at the Pan-African Conference in London in 1900, where she was a member of the Executive Committee. A year later, she co-founded the Colored Settlement House in D.C., the first social service agency for African Americans in the city. Anna returned to M Street School as the principal. She advocated for Black students to have opportunities for college education as M Street offered a curriculum with academic, scientific, technical, and business tracks. The school board disagreed with her assertion and Anna was forced to resign her position in 1906, despite community support for her to stay. Anna moved to teach at the Jefferson Institute in Missouri for a brief period while pursuing legal action for a return to her position at M Street and back pay. Her commitment to equal education litigation predated Brown v. Board of Education.



In 1912, Anna went to Paris to finish her translation of the French text, *Le Pèlerinage de Charlemagne*. After completing preliminary work for her thesis at Columbia in the summers from 1915-1917, Anna left again to complete her Doctorate at the Sorbonne in Paris. In the spring of 1925, she successfully defended her doctoral thesis, becoming the fourth Black woman in the United States to earn a PhD.

Anna served as president of Frelinghuysen University, a school for black adults, in her own home in Washington, D.C., in 1929. She named a school within the University, the “Hannah Stanley Opportunity School,” after her mother. She served as the school’s registrar after it was reorganized into the Frelinghuysen Group of Schools for Colored People. Anna remained president until it closed in 1950. Dr. Anna Cooper died on February 27, 1964, in Washington, D.C. She was 105 years old. She is buried beside her husband in Raleigh, North Carolina.

In 2007, the U.S. Passport was redesigned to include new images and quotes as part of the “American Icon” series. A quote from Anna Julia Cooper, “The cause of freedom is not the cause of a race or a sect, a party or a class – it is the cause of humankind, the very birthright of humanity”, is included on the back cover. In 2009, the US Postal Service issued a Black Heritage stamp in her honor. The same year, the private tuition-free Anna Julia Cooper Episcopal School was founded in historic Church Hill area in Richmond, VA.



The cause of freedom is not the cause of a race or a sect, a party or a class – it is the cause of humankind, the very birthright of humanity.  
~Anna Julia Cooper

The Anna Julia Cooper Center at Wake Forest University is an interdisciplinary center established to advance research, teaching, and public engagement on issues of gender, race, and politics in the South.



# The Clerk's Black History Series

## Debra DeBerry

### Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County



## Benjamin Banneker

(November 9, 1731 - October 9, 1806)

“Farmer, Statistician, Astronomer, Surveyor,  
Mathematician, and Author of Banneker’s Almanac”

Benjamin Banneker was born on November 9, 1731, to Robert and Mary Banneky, a mulatto mother and a formerly enslaved father, near the Patapsco River southeast of Baltimore, Maryland, where his father owned a small farm. As a child, Benjamin worked as an indentured servant on the Prince George’s County plantation of Mary Welsh.

Benjamin had better educational opportunities than that of an enslaved child of the time. While attending school with the local Quakers, he showed an exceptional interest in mathematics and construction. When he was 22 years old, Benjamin built a model of the first striking clock carved largely out of wood. He studied the gears of a pocket watch and used that to model the wood box clock. The clock was the first of its kind and brought Benjamin some notoriety.

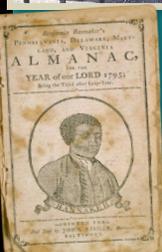
In 1772, the Ellicott brothers, Quakers from Bucks County, PA, purchased land along the Patapsco River, near the Falls and, near Benjamin’s farm. The Ellicott’s were Quakers who held the same views on racial equality as did many of their faith. Together they built gristmills along the river - facilities powered by water wheels or turbines, that grinds cereal grain into flour, meal, or feed. Benjamin studied the mills and became well acquainted with the owners. They gave Benjamin access to the family library collection, and he was able to study astronomy and surveying. The next year, Benjamin used his math skills, combined with his astronomy studies, to calculate the path of a solar eclipse. In 1790, Benjamin prepared an ephemeris for 1791 - a table or data providing the computed positions, velocities, and trajectories of celestial bodies (planets, the sun, moon, stars, or satellites) at specific, regular time intervals. He hoped the ephemeris would be placed within a published almanac. However, he was unable to find a printer that was willing to publish his work.

In February 1791, Thomas Jefferson, then the U.S. Secretary of State, requested Major Andrew Ellicott, a land surveyor, to survey an area for a new federal district. Andrew contacted Benjamin and hired him to assist with the job, advancing him \$60 for travel expenses (equivalent of approximately \$3,000 in today’s money). Benjamin assisted in the land surveying process that eventually became the original District of Columbia, by making astronomical observations and calculations to establish base points, including one at Jones Point in Alexandria, Virginia, where the survey started and where the south corner stone was to be located. The area they mapped out was a square, measuring 10 miles on each side, totaling 100 square miles. Ellicott’s team placed boundary marker stones at or near every mile point along the borders of the new capital territory. Those markers still exist today (see photo, left). Benjamin left the survey project in April of 1791, to continue his work calculating the ephemeris for 1792 and to tend to his farm for the Spring planting. Andrew Ellicott’s other brothers joined him to complete the survey of the federal district.

Benjamin’s work on the 1792 ephemeris predicted eclipses and planetary conjunctions for inclusion in an almanac. After returning from the surveying of D.C., Andrew Ellicott, a published author himself, submitted Benjamin’s work to an abolitionist who sent it on to a prominent Philadelphia mathematician to review for accuracy. With the support of many scholars, Benjamin’s work was sent to William Goddard, a Baltimore printer who had published “The Pennsylvania”, Delaware, Maryland and Virginia’s Almanacks, and Ephemeris, for every year since 1782. Goddard then agreed to print and distribute Benjamin’s work within an almanac and ephemeris for the year of 1792 - the first in a six-years series of almanacs and ephemerides that were published and sold.

The title pages of two Baltimore editions of Benjamin’s 1795 almanac had woodcut portraits of him as he may have appeared. After his work at Jones Point, Benjamin went back home to work on his farmer’s almanac. He had retired from farming and planned to spend the remainder of his life focused on his studies. Benjamin Banneker died on October 9, 1806. He was 74 years old. Shortly after his death, a fire destroyed most of his possessions, which contributed to the many contradictory stories related to his life. He never married and has no known heirs.

There are numerous commemorations of Benjamin Banneker including a high school in College Park, GA, community centers, memorials, and parks dedicated to him in Maryland and Virginia, including Benjamin Banneker Park in Arlington, which contains one of the boundary stones. A statue of Benjamin Banneker is in the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C.



# The Clerk's Black History Series

## Debra DeBerry

### Clerk of Superior Court

### DeKalb County

## Trudy Haynes



November 23, 1926 - June 7, 2022

## First Black Woman TV Weather & News Reporter



**Trudy Haynes** was born Gertrude Daniels on November 23, 1926, in New York City, NY. She was an only child who benefitted from her parent's desire to provide her a solid education. She graduated from Forest Hills High School where she was the only black cheerleader on her team. In 1943, she entered Howard University to study sociology and psychology. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in 1947.

Given her natural beauty and poise, Trudy was picked up by the Phelia DeVore Charm and Modeling Agency in the early 1950s. The agency was known for marketing to ethnic consumers during the age of segregation. While she was with the DeVore agency, she was chosen to be the model for the advertisement for Lucky Strike cigarettes - the first Black women to be featured for the brand. Trudy appeared in multiple ads making her a veteran model for the agency. She later mentored actress/singer Diahann Carroll and actress Beah Richards, from the movie "A Raisin in the Sun" (1961) and "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner" (1968).



Trudy entered broadcasting in 1956 as women's editor at the black-owned WCHB Radio station in Inkster, Michigan. She was initially hired as a receptionist, but due to her charming and outgoing personality, she was asked to host a 90-minute daily program for women. The program gave Trudy exposure and contacts in the journalism field. In 1963, Trudy accepted a position at ABC Network affiliate WXYZ-TV in Southfield, Michigan. There she became the first black weather person for the station. Two years later, in 1965, Trudy went to work for KYW-TV, in Philadelphia, PA, making her the first black news reporter on television. Trudy would remain with the station for another thirty-four years.



Since Trudy was the only Black reporter in the station's all-white newsroom, she noticed that there was very little coverage of Philadelphia's Black community, aside from accidents and murders. Trudy made it her mission to include Black people in her reports, demanding that they be included when her editors tried to cut them out of the final film. For many years, she worked as KYW-TV's "entertainment reporter. She also hosted programs such as "The Trudy Haynes Show", "Sunday Side Up", "Sunday Magazine", and the celebrity gossip segment "Trudy's Grapevine".



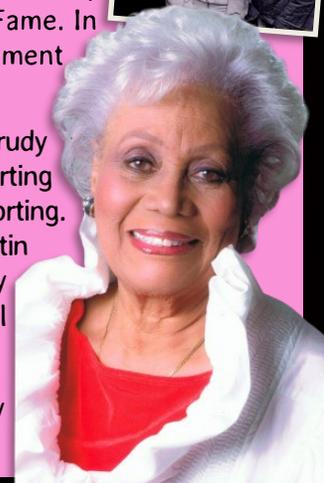
In the 1970s, Trudy broke another color barrier by becoming the first black judge for the Miss America Contest. As a judge, she continually challenged the standards of beauty that often alienated black women. After her retirement in 1999, Trudy continued to freelance and make guest appearances and promoting the careers of younger, upcoming journalists. She established her own production company, First Run Film/Video and became an activist for public access cable channels. In 1990, Trudy established a scholarship fund for Philadelphia-area students. In 1995, she won an Emmy award and was later inducted into the Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia Hall of Fame. In 1999, Trudy won the National Coalition Of 100 Black Women For Life Time Achievement As A Broadcast Journalist. She received numerous awards throughout her life.



Until the coronavirus pandemic, Trudy hosted a weekly public access talk show on PhillyCAM, The Trudy Haynes Show. In 2020, Ms. Haynes partnered with PhillyCAM to develop the Trudy Haynes Reporting Fellowship, which provides resources and coaching for radio and television reporting. Across her 30-plus-year career, Trudy interviewed such notable figures as Martin Luther King Jr., Muhammad Ali, President Lyndon Johnson, former First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, former Teamster Union leader Jimmy Hoffa, Denzel Washington, and Tupac Shakur.



On June 7, 2022, Trudy Haynes passed peacefully at her home, surrounded by loved ones. She was 95 years old.



# The Clerk's Black History Series

## Debra DeBerry Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County

### Harriet E. Wilson

(March 15, 1825 – June 28, 1900)

## First Black Published Author in North America



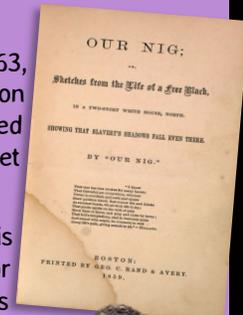
**Harriet E. "Hattie" Wilson** was born on March 15, 1825, in Milford, New Hampshire. She was born free to an Irish mother and a black /Indian father. Her father died when she was a child, forcing her mother to leave Harriet with the white, Haywood family who owned a large farm nearby. When her mother failed to return for her, Harriet was made a ward of the courts and was designated an indentured servant to the Haywood family. This was common practice that ensured orphaned children received room and board and a basic education. Although she was not considered a slave, she was not treated as a member of the family and was often mistreated. After she turned 18, Harriet, or "Hattie" as she was known, left the farm and began working as a seamstress and house servant in southern New Hampshire. From 1847-1850 she is listed as a town pauper, boarding with local families. The abuse Harriet suffered with the Haywood family would influence Harriet's work later in life.

In 1851, Harriet married Thomas Wilson, a conman who portrayed himself as an escaped slave, traveling the New England area, speaking of the horrors he suffered. Thomas told stories to garner the sympathy and financial support of abolitionists. Shortly after Harriet became pregnant, Thomas abandoned her, forcing her to live at the Hillsborough County, New Hampshire Poor Farm. He reappeared after the birth of their son George and moved the family to a new home. Thomas died while working on a ship, leaving Harriet destitute. She was forced to leave George at the Poor Farm when she left for Boston to earn money.

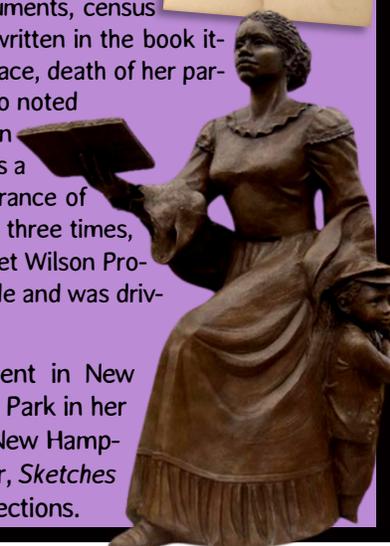
While she worked as a seamstress, Harriet developed a hair product business - "Mrs. H.E. Wilson's Hair Dressing". The business was successful and the bottles that carried her products also had her name embossed on the side. During this time, she was also writing the story of her life. In 1859, Harriet submitted her book, "*Our Nig, Sketches from the Life of a Free Black, in a Two-story White House, North*", for publication. On August 14, 1859, she officially registered the book and gave a copy to the U.S. District Court in Massachusetts. On September 5, 1859, the book was published - without her name - by an abolitionist printer in Boston. The book was considered unsettling because the powerful narrative wasn't a "feel-good" story about over-coming adversity, but instead, a story of struggle, physical abuse and racism, in the North. She noted that "slavery's shadow falls even here in the North". The book's main character, Frado, is tortured by the family matriarch, beaten and forced to sleep in a frigid crawl space. The book's short title, *Our Nig*, is a derivative of a racist nickname given to Frado, a little girl of mixed race, who grows up as an indentured servant to a white family. Since it was published anonymously, many thought the story was fictional, which led to a lack of sales. There were rumors that the author was white, which also affected the credibility of the publication.



Harriet's seven-year-old son died of yellow fever on February 15, 1860, just five months after the book's publication. In 1863, she appeared on a report for the poor and disappeared from public records until 1867, when she was mentioned in a Boston Newspaper for Spiritualists. Harriet later became known as "the colored medium", a Spiritualist nurse and healer, who helped organize and run "Children's Progressive Lyceums" - Sunday Schools for children of Spiritualists. On June 28, 1900, Harriet Wilson died at age 75 in Quincy, Massachusetts and was buried in that town's Mount Wollaston Cemetery.



In the early 1980s, Harvard University Professor, historian and leading scholar of African American studies, Dr. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., discovered an original copy of "*Our Nig*" in a rare antique bookstore. His curiosity about the "anonymous" author led to a collaboration with other historians to discover her true identity. The group dove into historical documents, census records, marriage and death certificates, along with other historical archives. But it was Frado's own words, written in the book itself, that helped researchers match the specifics to Harriet's own life story - down to the details of her mixed-race, death of her parents, childhood of indentured servitude in the Milford area, and the 7-year-old son that she lost. Historians also noted the book starts out written in first person before changing to third person, indicating it may have started as an autobiography. The author describes her physical appearance: "Frado, as they called one of Mag's children, was a beautiful mulatto, with long, curly black hair, and handsome, roguish eyes, sparkling with an exuberance of spirit almost beyond restraint". Since Gates' rediscovery of *Our Nig*, the book has been republished three times, each edition containing new details uncovered by historians. JerriAnne Boggis, director of The Harriet Wilson Project, was instrumental in locating the Milford farmhouse where Harriet spent her indentured servitude and was driving force behind the establishment of a Harriet Wilson monument.



In 2006, a sculpture of Harriet by Fern Cunningham, the first monument in New Hampshire to honor a person of color, was erected in Milford's Bicentennial Park in her honor. In 2023 the Harriet E. Wilson marker on the Black Heritage Trail of New Hampshire was unveiled. Only 42 copies of the original 1859 edition of *Our Nig; Or, Sketches from the Life of a Free Black* are known to exist in libraries and or private collections.



# The Clerk's Black History Series

## Debra DeBerry

### Clerk of Superior Court

### DeKalb County

## Lena Paul Richards



(September 9, 1892 - November 27, 1950)

First Black Woman to Have Her Own TV Cooking Show”

**Lena Paul Richards** was born on September 9, 1892, in New Roads, Louisiana, to Françoise Laurent and Jean-Pierre Paul. When she was a child, her family moved to New Orleans, where her mother and aunt worked as domestic servants to a wealthy couple, Alice and Nugent Varin. After school, Lena helped in the kitchen, where she learned cooking skills and recipes. She also prepared lunches and assisted with larger family gatherings. After graduation, she was hired full-time by the family. Alice recognized Lena's natural talents and in 1918, she paid for Lena to attend the Fannie Farmer School of Cookery in Boston, Massachusetts. She was the only woman of color in the program. Lena reported that there wasn't much she could be taught by the school, but she appreciated the experience. After completing culinary school, Lena returned to New Orleans and launched her own catering business from her home and opened a sweet shop, serving local workers sandwiches, red beans, and fresh fruit. Lena was also in high demand for social events, weddings, and debutante balls. Some of her specialties included turtle soup, potato pancakes, crawfish bisque, stewed eggs, oysters, a 16lb fruitcake, and lamb chops with pineapple. At one point, she worked in the Orleans Club - an elite club for white socialites.

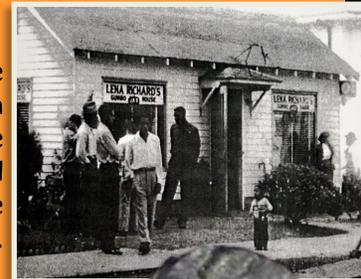
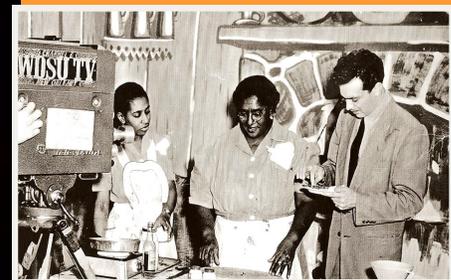
Lena married Percival Richards in the early 1920s, and the couple had one daughter. Lena's success in the racially segregated south compelled her to open her own cooking school in 1937, along with her daughter Marie. She wanted to teach men and women the art of food preparation and serving food for any occasion so they could earn higher wages in the Jim Crow South. Because her personal cooking services were in high demand, Lena began freezing her gourmet meals to sell locally.

Between culinary classes and catering events, Lena compiled her more than 300 recipes and published her own cookbook, titled "Lena Richard's Cookbook" in 1939. This was the first New Orleans Creole cuisine cookbook written by an African American. Although her cooking skills came naturally, Lena wanted to dispel the stereotype of the mammy, with innate cooking skills though some magical lineage of service. She emphasized the skill, labor, time, and training that went into food preparation. She also copyrighted her work, to protect her recipes that had been copied and printed by white cookbook authors. Within one week of the books release, Lena received 200 letters requesting copies of the book. Lena and Marie headed up North to promote her cookbook and give demonstrations to the northerners that were hungry for a taste of Southern cuisine. Uncertain about the availability of the proper ingredients, Lena packed a suitcase of dried shrimp, pure cane sugar, Louisiana pecans, and old-fashioned brown sugar. While in New York, Lena connected with Houghton Mifflin Company representatives who expressed interest in publishing her cookbook nationally. Soon after, the company printed Lena's work under a new title, "New Orleans Cook Book" (1940).

After a successful book tour and head-chef stints in New York and Virginia, Lena returned to New Orleans. In 1941, she opened her first restaurant on La Salle Street in New Orleans called "Lena's Eatery". By 1946, she started her own frozen-food business, where she sold fully cooked packaged dinners that were shipped across the country. Eight years later in 1949, she opened her second restaurant called "Lena Richard's Gumbo House". That same year, she made history again as the first Black woman to host a televised cooking show in the U.S.

The show, titled "Lena Richard's New Orleans Cook Book", became so popular that WDSU-TV began airing the 30 minute show twice a week on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Lena tore down racial barriers with an audience of mostly white, middle- and upper-class women, longing for her culinary expertise for all things Creole. The show aired from October 1949 until her passing in November 1950.

On the morning of November 26, 1950, Lena attended church before going to her restaurant to meet a guest who traveled to try everything on her menu. After cooking all day, she felt ill and went home early. Lena Richard died the next day, November 27, 1950, of a heart attack. She was 58 years old. Lena's family kept the Gumbo House open until 1958. Her recipes are still being prepared today.



# The Clerk's Black History Series

## Debra DeBerry

### Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County



## William "Bill" D. Pinkney III

(September 15, 1935 – August 31, 2023)

First Black Man to Sail Solo Around the World via the Five Southernmost Capes

William "Bill" D. Pinkney was born September 15, 1935, in the Bronzeville neighborhood, just a mile from Lake Michigan on the Southside of Chicago, Illinois. His parents divorced when he was a child and he was raised by his single mother and his maternal grandmother. In school, he wasn't the best student but he had a curious mind and loved to read. After reading the book *Call It Courage*, a story about a Polynesian boy named Mafatu who overcomes his deep-seated fear of the sea to prove his bravery, Bill began to dream of sailing the seas. In the summer, he would go down to the lake and watch the boats pass by.

In 1956, Bill joined the Navy, where he was stationed in Puerto Rico and served as a hospital corpsman. While there, he loaded small cargo boats and worked on island-built boats. Bill would often stay on board the boats while they traveled to St. Thomas and British Virgin Islands, just to enjoy the free ride there and back. After leaving the Navy in 1964, Bill had a long career working in various fields, including as an x-ray technician, a limbo dancer, a makeup artist for film and television, and a marketing manager for Revlon. Later, he became a public information officer for the City of Chicago. After his return, he took classes at Steve Colgate's Offshore Sailing School. He began sailing with a mentor and participated in the Chicago-Mackinaw Race every year. Bill bought his first sailboat, a Pearson Triton, and often sailed alone, because he couldn't afford a crew.

While Bill continued sailing as a hobby, his dream was to sail around the world and be an inspiration for his grandchildren. In 1985, at the age of 50, Bill began planning his adventure after being laid off from his job at the Department of Human Services. He fundraised throughout the late 1980s. He added an educational curriculum for school kids in Chicago and Boston, which caught the eye of some wealthy sponsors. With the added financial backing, Bill traveled to England to train with Robin Knox-Johnston, the first man to sail around the world without stopping. Robin encouraged Bill to learn from Teddy Seymour, the first black man to sail solo around the world in 1986-87, and to aspire for more. For Teddy's momentous accomplishment, he received only a plaque. Robin encouraged Bill to leave a larger mark on sailing.

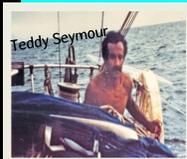
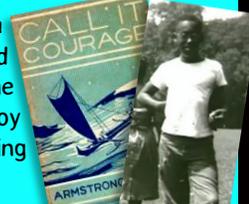
On August 5, 1990, 55-year-old Bill Pinkney set sail on "Commitment" from Boston, headed south. He brought his video equipment to document his journey. After sailing just 600 miles, "Commitment" made her first stop in Bermuda to repair an oil leak from the auxiliary engine and an untuned radio. He resumed sailing, passing the British Virgin Islands and Brazil. Bill's most memorable leg of the trip came when after crossing the Atlantic Ocean, he arrived to Cape Town, South Africa. Nelson Mandela had been released from prison just two weeks before his arrival. Bill sailed past Robben Island, where Mandela was imprisoned for 27 years. In all, his scheduled stops included a difficult route around the southern capes of, Salvador, Brazil, Cape Town in South Africa, Hobart, Tasmania, and Punta del Este in Uruguay. At each stop, Bill would make satellite calls to Globe TV, his wife, and school children in Boston and Chicago that followed his journey. On his journey, Bill encountered two hurricanes, two total knockdowns of his boat, blown out sails, and a near miss with a large shipping vessel. On February 14, 1992, he successfully rounded Cape Horn and headed back toward Boston.

On June 9, 1992, Bill docked "Commitment" at the Charlestown Navy Yard in Boston, right behind the USS Constitution. Bill Pinkney finished his 22-month, 27,000 nautical mile journey, arriving at the Boston Harbor to cheers from supporters including officers from the Navy and the Coast Guard, the Navy band playing, a cannon salute, and almost 1000 cheering school students, waving "Welcome Home" flags. Bill became the first Black sailor to successfully circumnavigate the globe by way of Cape Horn, and only the fourth out of five Americans to successfully complete the dangerous journey.

In 2000, Bill became a trustee of the Mystic Seaport Museum and oversaw the building of a replica of the "Amistad" - the Spanish schooner whose crew was killed in a revolt by enslaved Africans in 1839. As captain of the replica, he developed the *Middle Passage Project*. He offered voyages to schoolteachers to and from Africa on a route tracing the Middle Passage by which enslaved Africans were taken from Senegal to the Americas. Bill noted the historic accomplishment that although his ancestors left this shore, on the bottom of slave ships, taken from the door of no return, he was returning to the shore of Senegal, as the master of his own sailing vessel.

Bill was inducted into the Sailing Hall of Fame in 2021 and wrote the children's book, *Sailing Commitment Around the World*, detailing his historic voyage, the same year. He was in high demand for public appearances and continued visiting schools to speak to children. His historic voyage film footage was made into a documentary called *The Incredible Voyage of Bill Pinkney*. The film won the George Foster Peabody Award for excellence in children's television programming and has aired on the Disney Channel, National Geographic, and PBS stations.

In August of 2023, Bill was in Atlanta, serving as a technical advisor for an upcoming research project. In an unfortunate accident, Bill suffered a fatal fall and died on August 31, 2023. He was 87 years old.



# The Clerk's Black History Series

## Debra DeBerry

### Clerk of Superior Court

### DeKalb County



Cecil J. Williams  
(November 26, 1937 - )

Civil Rights Photographer, Author, Inventor and Historian



Cecil J. Williams was born on November 26, 1937, in Orangeburg, South Carolina. His parents, Ethel and Cecil L. Williams, were of mixed heritage - white, black and native-American. His mother was an educator who taught elementary through college. His father was a tailor that catered to wealthy white clients at high-end department stores. Young Cecil helped his father deliver clothes to stores and collect payments from customers.

When he was nine years old, Cecil received a Kodak Baby Brownie camera from his older brother. His brother relinquished the camera when he became more interested in playing the saxophone. Cecil learned to use the camera and learned how to process film negatives in a makeshift darkroom he created in a spare bedroom in their home.

Cecil started his historic photography career by photographing the men and women he saw dressed in their Sunday best after church. Soon after, people began paying Cecil to take their photograph. At age 11, Cecil photographed his first wedding. Around the age of 12, Cecil was asked to photograph the local black churches to document the style and culture of the black church. He later began freelancing, photographing local events, and offering his images to local papers willing to do business with a young black boy.

Cecil's photos caught the eyes of civil rights organizers who wanted Cecil's photos to help document the collective efforts of the civil rights movement. At the age of 14, he was one of 25 photographers freelancing for Jet Magazine. His photos documented pivotal events in South Carolina's civil rights history, including the historic Briggs v. Elliott, one of the cases that formed the basis of the landmark 1954 Supreme Court decision Brown v. Board of Education, which ended legal segregation in public schools. Cecil captured a remarkable photo of the Attorney Thurgood Marshall arriving in Charleston prepared to argue the case.

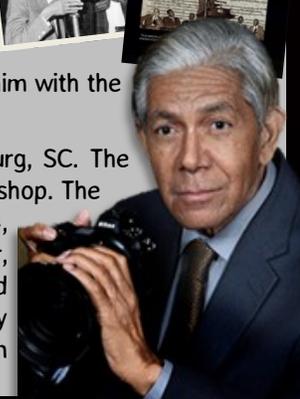
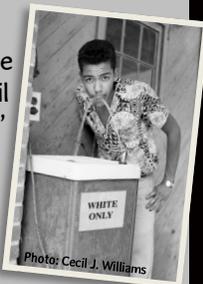
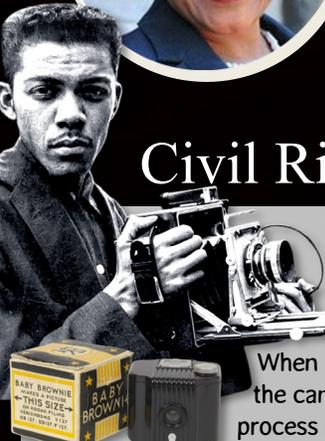
In 1956, 19-year-old Cecil stopped at a gas station in South Carolina and quietly made photographic history. At the height of segregation, signs reading "White Only" were everywhere — cruel symbols of a divided America. But that day, Cecil became the subject of his own camera. With his friend Rendall Harper snapping the shot, Cecil took a sip from the "Whites Only" water fountain, in bold defiance to amoral Jim Crow laws.

On July 4, 1960, Cecil attended the Roosevelt Hotel in hopes of capturing photos of then Senator John F. Kennedy. As luck would have it, Cecil arrived late and security asked him to leave. Before he could be removed, the future president saw 23-year-old Cecil and invited him to sit in the front row, alongside Chet Huntley and David Brinkley, top journalists at the time. The other photographers had to stand at the back of the room. Kennedy gave Cecil the business card of his private address in Hyannis Port, Mass., and the two became close associates. Cecil traveled with Kennedy from South Carolina to Atlanta during his campaign for president.

In 1960, Cecil graduated with a degree in art from Claflin University. Although he showed an exceptional talent for drawing, design and architecture, he was barred from attending Clemson University to continue his studies in architecture due to his race. However, on January 28, 1963, Harvey Gantt, a young black man from Charleston, would be the first black student to integrate Clemson and Cecil was there to document the event. Cecil was also present to document the Orangeburg Massacre, on the campus of South Carolina State College in 1968, when law enforcement officers opened fire on students protesting segregation at a local bowling alley. Three students were killed and 28 were wounded. Cecil also attended the Charleston Hospital Workers Strike and his photo of Mrs. Coretta Scott King speaking at the event, was used for the May 22, 1969, cover of Jet Magazine.

Over the next 20 years, Cecil worked as the official photographer for the South Carolina branch of the NAACP, the South Carolina State University, Claflin University, and National Conference of Black Mayors, Inc. He received numerous awards and recognitions, to include the 1994 Freedom Fighter Award by the Orangeburg branch of the NAACP and the Presidential Citation from Henry N. Tisdale, president of Claflin University. The South Carolina African American Heritage Commission honored him with the 2006 "Preserving Our Place in History" Award and the "DeCosta Jr. Trailblazer Award" in 2016.

In 2019, Cecil opened the self-funded Cecil Williams South Carolina Civil Rights Museum in Orangeburg, SC. The museum contains more than 1000 photographs, 300 artifacts, an 800-name recognition wall, and a gift shop. The museum is currently located in a building that Cecil designed as his home back in 1986. In June 2024, there was a groundbreaking ceremony for a new 11,000 sq. ft. museum in Orangeburg's Railroad Corner, across from two HBCUs, SC State University and Claflin University. In September 2025, Cecil appeared during New York Fashion Week wearing his iconic water fountain photo on a hoodie from the Actively Black brand. He currently lives with his wife Barbara, his college sweetheart, in Orangeburg, SC. You can watch *The World of Cecil* documentary at <https://www.sctv.org/watch/theworldofcecil>





# The Clerk's Black History Series

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### Clerk of Superior Court

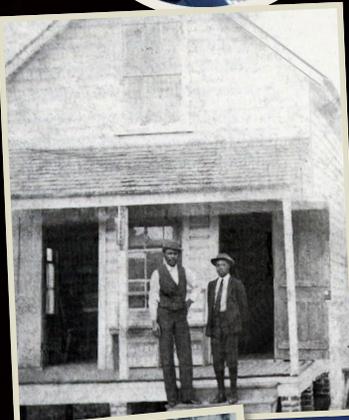
### DeKalb County

### Eatonville, Florida

(Est. August 15, 1887)



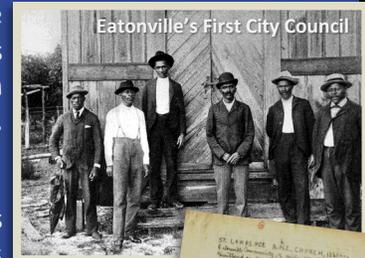
## Second Oldest All-Black Municipality in the U.S.



**Eatonville, Florida** was founded on August 15, 1887, by Joseph C. Clarke, (pictured left) along with northern philanthropist Lewis Lawrence. Together, the men purchased over 100-acres of land just six miles north of Orlando from Josiah Eaton, one of the few white men that would sell land to newly freed black people. They immediately sold 1-2 acre lots to black families from the surrounding areas of Central Florida. At the time, owning land was the key to receiving an education, voting, and running for public office. On August 15, 1887, the town was officially incorporated when twenty-seven registered black voters indicated their intention to create a municipality called Eatonville. People came from distances as far as Tennessee, Virginia, and Alabama to live in the all-black town of Eatonville. The town's citizens elected Columbus H. Boger as its first mayor to head the entirely black staffed government. Josiah Eaton, the man who sold the Eatonville land, was later elected the mayor of nearby Maitland. Founder Joseph Clarke became the postmaster and opened a general store.



Eatonville was built on the foundations of family, church, and school. The town's first church, The St. Lawrence African Methodist Episcopal Church (A.M.E.) was located in a house. It was originally founded in 1881 and named after Lewis Lawrence who donated the property. It was the first religious institution in the city. The St. Lawrence A.M.E. has been rebuilt or renovated at least three times and continues to serve the Eatonville community to this day.



In 1889, the town established its first primary school, the Hungerford Normal and Industrial School. The school was situated on land was donated by Dr. Robert Hungerford, a white doctor who cared for black patients in the area. The school operated on the principles of providing vocational learning, literacy, and life skills to newly freed blacks in Central Florida. In 1950, the Hungerford School became a public school administered by the Orange County School Board.



In an 1889 article on the front page of *The Eatonville Speaker*, the headline read "Colored people of the United States: solve the great race problem by securing a home in Eatonville, Florida, a Negro city governed by Negroes". Eatonville was considered a black utopia. It was a vibrant opportunity for change for freedmen living in more oppressive white communities throughout the South; where wildlife was plentiful, and where frost was not a threat to crops. It was a place where settler lots, usually two lots purchased together for a home, and farms were sold for thirty-five dollars.

John Hurston, Eatonville's mayor in 1897, was the father of Zora Neale Hurston (Harlem Renaissance writer) and the city's most famous resident. Zora's experience growing up in an all-black community shaped her writing to reflect the town of her childhood. Eatonville was featured in many of her books, including: her 1928 essay, *How it Feels to be Colored Me* and in her 1937 novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. In 1990, the town established the Zora Neale Hurston Museum of Fine Arts. Today, Eatonville holds an annual "Zora Festival", a nearly month-long celebration of the arts and humanities in January. More at <https://zorafestival.org/>



Between 1865 and 1900, there were approximately 400 black towns, settlements, and enclaves in the U.S. However, fewer than 150 became legally-recognized municipalities. Eatonville remains a predominantly African American community and was added to the National Register of Historic Places on February 3, 1998. Eatonville is known as "The town that freedom built."

