

African American Residents Buried In Woodland Cemetery



Marcella Patrick & USCT Monument (2012)

Cleveland has a long history of African American settlement beginning with the first black settler in 1809. By 1860 there were 799 blacks living in the growing community. Founded by New Englanders who favored reform, Cleveland was a center of abolitionism before the Civil War, and the city's white leadership remained sympathetic to civil rights during the decade following the end of the war. Many black leaders assisted escaped slaves, and by the end of the war a number of black Clevelanders had served in black military units in the Union Army.

After the war, mass migration from the South, especially from Georgia and Alabama, increased Cleveland's population considerably between 1890 and 1920. In 1900, about 6,000 African Americans lived in the city and by 1920 the number had grown to almost 35,000. Cleveland's African American population grew from 85,000 in 1940 to 251,000 in 1960 making up over 30% of the city's population. The population stabilized in the 1970s and 1980s.

Those buried within Woodland Cemetery's gates are our history. It is hoped that to walk and learn about the lives and accomplishments amongst the African Americans buried here will help to illustrate their historical contributions to Cleveland. You will meet some children, veterans, politicians, businessmen and writers – and all depicting an era of history for African Americans in Cleveland.

Woodland Cemetery is located at 6901 Woodland Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44104

United States Colored Troops in Civil War (USCT) There are nearly 80 USCT veterans buried in Woodland Cemetery. The Massachusetts 54th Volunteer Regiment was the first recruited in the North, and was depicted in the 1989 movie *GLORY*. By the end of 1863, following the Emancipation Proclamation in January, 50,000 African Americans had trained for service. Almost 20% of the 54th and 55th and the 5th Massachusetts Colored Calvary (the first USCT units) were comprised of Ohio volunteers. (Center of cemetery. Monument donated by Johns-Carabelli Monument Co.)

James Franklin Gayle (1920-1991), known fondly as *Jimmy*, spent 40 years as a photographer in Cleveland; 22 of those years he spent at The Cleveland Plain Dealer soon after he asked the photo editor, "When are you going to put a little color on your staff?" Gayle was described as "one of the first African American photographers to gain wide acceptance outside the African American community" in "Yet Still We Rise," a 1996 art exhibition that toured Ohio. His wife, Juanita shared that "He'd wake up singing and happy. He couldn't wait to get to work." He loved shooting photographs that much. (Sec 7 Grave 160) (HS)

Pvt. 1st Class Ronald Joaquin Hamilton (1948-1970) was assigned to B Co., 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry, 11th Infantry BDE, U. S. Army. At the age of 21, on the 22 of February 1970, Ronald was killed by hostile fire in Quang Ngai Province, South Vietnam. Ronald's place is on the Vietnam Wall Panel 13W Line 044. Ronald was raised by paternal

grandparents after his parents, Ralph and Izalee (Woods) Hamilton died in a tragic automobile accident on May 17, 1954. Ronald is buried with his parents. (Sec 8 Lot 89) (HS)

Herman White, Jr. (1950-1969) was born in Cleveland and died in the Republic of Vietnam in a non-hostile drowning incident at the age of 18 as a Pfc. with C Company, 60th Light Weapon Infantry. Herman is on the Vietnam Wall at Panel 20W Line 068. He was the only son of Herman and Willie Mae White. (Sec 8 Lot 190) (HS)

John Brown (1798-1869), born in Virginia to free parents, Brown arrived in Cleveland in 1828 and stayed to become one of the wealthiest African Americans in the city through his successful barbering businesses in downtown hotels. Brown was an abolitionist and active in freeing fugitive slaves, taking them into his barber shops for safety. He carefully invested his money in real estate and had accumulated \$35-40,000 at the time of his death. His two sons served in the Civil War as part of a black regiment from Massachusetts. (Sec 10 Lot 83) (Monument)

Grand United Order of Odd Fellows (GUOOF) When the American Revolution established the new nation, most Masonic Lodges and Grand Lodges excluded African Americans, however, the GUOOF found the English willing to charter black lodges. The appeal of fraternal orders was a type of social security and means for personal recognition and fellowship, while providing good works

to the community. The GUOOF purchased a section in Woodland Cemetery for the interment of its members which range from 1863-1918 and represent at least 50 persons. (Sec 14 Lots 50 & 51) (Some headstones)

Hiram Wilson (1803-1864) was an ardent abolitionist and distinguished minister who received his Theology Degree from Oberlin Theology Seminary in 1836. He was challenged to work with escaped and former slaves in southwestern Ontario, Canada and used his home in St. Catharine's as the final terminal in the Underground Railroad. His attempts to improve their living conditions by providing education and practical working skills, along with his work with Harriet Tubman are well-documented. (Sec 21 Lot 55) (HS)

Eliza Simmons Bryant (1827-1907) was born to a free black woman, Polly Simmons, who brought her family and their wealth from owning property in North Carolina, to Cleveland in 1858. Eliza and her mother provided aid to people of her race coming through Cleveland as fugitives or migrators. Eliza married, and became a widow seven years later. She organized women of the community to establish a Home for Aged Colored People in 1893 to provide shelter for those who had become indigent through no fault of their own. In 1960, that home was re-

named as the Eliza Bryant Village and still exists today. (Sec 40 Lot 40) (Monument)

Carrie Williams Clifford (1862-1934) used her writing skills to express her opinions on many issues related to race and gender, was widely published and was instrumental in forming many clubs for the advancement of women in education and politics. Carrie married William H. Clifford in 1886 and they had two sons. Due to her husband's move to become an auditor in the War Department in Washington D. C., she took the opportunity to become founder of the Washington D. C. chapter of the NAACP. Additional accomplishments were many including writing for journals, publishing volumes of poetry, and creating educational games for children. (Sec 43 Lot 174) (HS)

William H. Clifford (1862-1929) worked at a Cleveland auto dealership before he began his rise in the political arena which culminated in his appointment to Washington, D. C., when he accepted a position in the auditor's office of the War Department in 1908, a position he held until his death. He had represented Cleveland as a two-term legislator in the Ohio House of Representatives 1894-1899; worked in the county clerk's office, and graduated from Cleveland Law School in 1902. (Sec 43 Lot 174) (HS)

John Patterson Green (1845-1940) is known as the "Father of Labor Day" due to legislation he proposed in 1890 as an Ohio state legislator to recognize Labor Day as a state holiday. After graduating from Central High School, the first public high school in Cleveland, he married, then went on to Law School and became the first black elected to political office in Cleveland as the justice of the peace. In 1881 he won a seat in the Ohio House of Representatives, and in 1892 became the Ohio senate's first black member and the only black legislator in the North until the 20th century. In 1933, he was honored by the Cleveland Bar Association for his illustrious career. He died at the age of 95 from injuries sustained when he was hit by a car. (Sec 49 Lot 74) (HS donated by R & C Monument Co.)

Woodland Cemetery Foundation
PO Box 1966
Cleveland, OH 44106
216.319.2091
www.wcfcle.org



Samuel Clayton Green (1872-1915) was called "the most successful legitimate businessman" of his era as he attempted to make the most of the growing segregation in the city. He chose to work hard to become a success and became involved in a lumber business, patented a sofa bed, bought and sold real estate, constructed homes and buildings. He continued to invest in his community with a laundry, a restaurant, grocery store and drug store. In 1907, he married, and then remodeled a building to create a skating rink and dance hall. Due to insufficient patronage by black clientele, Green instituted "white nights" twice a week for white customers. Later he purchased a motion-picture and vaudeville theatre. Sadly, most of these businesses lasted less than 5 years due to lack of support from black patrons who valued white-owned companies. (Sec 64 Lot 124) (HS)

Robert O. Lipscomb (1898-1915) was only 17 when he died after sustaining a skull fracture in an accident. His parents chose the Boy Scout Emblem for his tombstone because he was so proud of being part of the newly formed national youth organization, Boy Scouts of America, which had incorporated in 1910. Young Lipscomb probably took the Scout Oath in an integrated troop, since most of the all-black troops were in the racially-segregated South at that time. (Sec B-2 Tier 1 Grave 4) (HS)

Robbie Brown (1885-1887) The first headline regarding "Robbie Brown" was printed in the Cleveland Plain Dealer on April 26,

1887. *TWO YEAR OLD CHILD MURDERED BY TWO DEPRAVED GIRLS LEFT IN CHARGE OF THE LITTLE ORPHAN DURING THE ABSENCE OF ITS FOSTER MOTHER.* There had been no witnesses to his murder but the coroner testified there were numerous marks of violence to the poorly nourished infant who died not from disease but through violence. The girls were convicted of manslaughter and each was sentenced to ten years. (Sec C-3 Tier 1 Grave 99) (HS donated by Kotecki Monuments)

Sara "Lucy" Bagby Johnson (abt 1843-1906) was a fugitive slave whose court case was the last to be tried in the North under the Fugitive Slave Act (enacted 1850) before the start of the Civil War. Lucy escaped from her owner via the Underground Railroad, finally arriving in Cleveland, where she found employment as a maid. Her owner arrived in Cleveland in Jan 1861 to reclaim his slave under the FSA. Lucy was arrested and put on trial where it was determined she be returned her to her owner. The Civil War began in April of 1861 and a Union Army officer rescued Lucy in 1863. After making her way north, Lucy married George Johnson in Pennsylvania. They moved to Cleveland, where, in 1904, Lucy was honored by the Early Settlers Association of the Western Reserve. (Sec D-3 Tier 1 Grave 25) (HS donated by Northcoast Memorials)

