

# Remnants and Light: The Stained Glass Windows of Vernon AME Church



Historical Context and Archival Findings Report  
Commissioned by the Oklahoma Society Daughters of the American Revolution

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## Table of Contents

Overview and Context	3
About this Report	3
Part I: Named Windows	4
In Memory of Mrs. Maggie Vaden	5
Mr. & Mrs. S. M. Jackson & JR	9
Mr. & Mrs. R. T. Bridgewater	12
Mr. & Mrs. J. T. Owens	14
Mr. & Mrs. J. I. Wallace	16
Mr. & Mrs. Barney Cleaver	18
Mr. & Mrs. S. E. Berry	22
Mr. & Mrs. John Haney	26
Mr. & Mrs. P. G. Glenn	30
Mr. & Mrs. James Jefferson	32
In Memory of my Mother Mrs. Amanda J. Counce by J. T. A. West	35
Bishop H. B. Parks, A. M. E. Sunday School, Mrs. Carrie Beck	40
Part II: Organizational Windows	45
Ladies Aid Society	46
Junior Choir	47
Senior Choir	49
Stewardesses No. 1	50
Stewardesses No. 2	51
W. H. & F. Missionary Society	52
Conclusions	53
Fundraising Recommendation	54
Select Bibliography	55

*“After every major tragedy in the Bible... God always finds a way of saving a remnant.”*  
— Rev. Dr. Robert Turner, 2020

## **Overview and Context**

In 1921, a white mob burned 35 square blocks of the thriving Greenwood District to the ground. This is a story about what rose from those ashes. Vernon AME Church continues to stand as a beacon of renewal, hope and light, speaking to persistence through the darkest of times. This report was commissioned by the Oklahoma Society Daughters of the American Revolution, and the research conducted by Public History students at Oklahoma State University under the direction of Dr. Laura J. Arata during the fall of 2020.

## **About This Report**

This is not a condition assessment, nor does it offer recommendations for how to interpret these research findings. It is a compilation of the information found in government documents, local, state and national archives, newspapers, and census materials. It is a preliminary effort to compile as much information as possible about the individuals and organizations that contributed their names to each window. This is by no means yet a complete history, but we hope it serves as a starting place and conveys a glimpse of the lives, energy, and hope that were captured in glass as this building was reconstructed. Vernon’s windows speak to the bravery, tenacity and courage of a congregation that refused to be extinguished in the literal flames that consumed Greenwood. These windows are memorials, but they are also testaments.

Where individuals are named on windows, we have sought to present a narrative of their lives. Where organizations are mentioned, we have provided context and as much information as it was possible to gather during the research for this report. Certainly much more remains to be uncovered regarding these organizations and the individual members who sustained them.

Many of the documents and sources compiled herein are publicly available; however, some materials, including photographs of Maggie Vaden and Eunice Jackson, come directly from Vernon AME Church Archives and should not be duplicated or used without express written consent.

As with any research involving significant genealogical components, there is a significant probability of mistakes. People’s lives were not always recorded in places such as census records with as much accuracy as modern researchers might like. This is a preliminary report, and thus is almost certain to contain errors. Where there are unknowns or inconsistencies in the available records, we have sought to observe them, and where information is compelling but incomplete, this has been noted. This report is not intended for publication, but should be used as a foundation from which to build—in the spirit of Vernon’s legacy, we hope that it is of service to others.

## **Part I: Named Windows**

Some of the windows at Vernon AME Church bear the names of individuals. Several of these represent memorials to family members. Others are inscribed with the names of couples or individual donors who contributed to rebuilding efforts. They represent the luminaries of Vernon AME. Several are widely discussed figures in the history of Greenwood, and some, such as R. T. Bridgewater figure prominently in published accounts. Several, including Barney Cleaver, S. M. Jackson, and J. T. A. West, were key witnesses to the 1921 Race Massacre. At least one, Bishop H. B. Parks, was nationally known. It is important to take notice of such individuals and consider how much it must have represented to the larger community to witness the faith they placed in rebuilding this church. No doubt it inspired others.

Most of those represented on Vernon's windows were ordinary citizens who led quiet lives. They are less prolifically documented, but no less significant to the building's history. In a way, their contributions to rebuilding are all the more extraordinary when considering the substantial part of their incomes such donations must have represented. These were men and women who donated money from their own paychecks, often \$0.25 or \$0.50 at a time, until the work was done. They represent a true cross-section of Tulsa—day laborers, janitors, secretaries, housewives. Windows often honor married couples, but it is important to remember that couples in turn represent mothers and fathers, daughters and sons. As was common at the time, in many cases, women's names were not individually recorded. It became a particular research goal of this report to identify these women as individuals, and recognize their identities distinctively from their husbands.

This report endeavors to give an individual name to each person represented on a window at Vernon. In some cases, much documentation was found and therefore more detail is available; in others, traces in the historical record are more obscure, and further research will be needed. We have attempted to lay a foundation for this process by searching for maiden names, places of birth, and key details of identification. The congregation of Vernon came from diverse backgrounds and experiences. Several were born in Indian Territory and traced their heritage to Native American tribes relocated from homelands in Southern states. Others were drawn to Oklahoma through the larger process of the Great Migration, which drew millions of African Americans out of the South in search of freedom and opportunity in the aftermath of the Civil War. These members represented a variety of states, including Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, and West Virginia.

Some were the children of freed people; others had experienced lives of relative abundance. Some worked for wages, while others ran their own successful businesses. All had experienced the harsh racial realities of the early twentieth century. And all understood, without question, what it meant to rebuild—and leave a legacy.

## In Memory of Mrs. Maggie Vaden



*Maggie and Edmond Vaden. 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Program, Vernon AME Church Archive.*

It is only fitting to begin with the story of Maggie Vaden. She represents, through the lens of a single individual's life, a snapshot of the larger history of Oklahoma in all its complexity, promise, and struggle against the confines of racism. While there are still many questions to be answered, the records that do exist offer a glimpse of a family shaped by the forces of race, the American Civil War and the emancipation of slaves, and the fervent expansion of the United States into the West.

Maggie Murrell was born in 1871, the daughter of Cherokee freedmen. This designation acknowledged the legacy of slavery that accompanied the Cherokee to Indian Territory. It seems probable that Maggie's parents (and possibly their parents) had been slaves within the Cherokee tribe, entitling Maggie and her siblings to status as enrolled Cherokee members. It is unclear when the family arrived in Indian Territory, but it may be significant that Maggie's mother, Sarah, was born in 1840, more than two decades before emancipation—it is very possible that Sarah was a slave prior to the Civil War.

On the 1920 federal census Maggie indicated that both of her parents had come from Mississippi. This would seem to indicate that they had been born in the United States (the international slave trade having technically ended by that time). It is unknown when or how they were acquired by Cherokee masters.<sup>1</sup> More research is needed to explore these connections in detail, but a broad view of the story tells us that at least one of Maggie's parents had been owned by members of the Cherokee tribe, and it is quite possible that an earlier generation—Maggie's grandparents—had been as well. Whatever the case, Sarah Murrell was in her twenties and fully aware of whatever her experience with emancipation at the end of the Civil War was like. The Murrell family lived through a moment when their heritage as African American people and members of the Cherokee tribe would have been acutely felt.<sup>2</sup>

Maggie, born in 1871, was of the first generation guaranteed freedom. Her birth was followed two years later by Susan, and then George. Her youngest sibling, a sister named Daisy, was born in around 1878. It seems that Maggie had several older half-siblings whose last name was Rogers, indicating that her mother may have had another partner before Maggie's father. His name has not yet been found. The Murrell and Rogers families were enumerated together on the census that counted Cherokee freedmen in 1890, and could still be found consecutively listed on documents at the end of the century.

The failure to find records of Maggie's father provides, in itself, another glimpse into the lives of freedmen, and the systems that sought to keep enslaved people nameless and difficult to identify as individuals. We can say that Sarah Murrell was joined with a man, probably of that last name, and they had children. Sarah and at least four of those children were living in Indian Territory by 1890, when the Wallace Roll of Cherokee Freedmen recorded them in the Saline District.<sup>3</sup> Maggie would have witnessed the changes shaping Indian Territory in the late 19th century, including the forced allotment of Cherokee lands as a result of the Dawes Severalty Act in 1887, and rush of white settlement that accompanied the Oklahoma land run of 1889. She saw firsthand the changes being wrought upon the land. By 1896, Maggie had experienced the loss of both her mother, Sarah, and youngest sister, Daisy, who died before reaching the age of 18.<sup>4</sup> There are no records indicating the presence of her father by this time, so we can speculate that Maggie was largely on her own by the age of 25.

In 1905, Maggie made a decision. The early twentieth century was marked by fervent discussions of race and its meaning, and while such had always been the case in American life,

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<sup>1</sup> There is also the possibility that Sarah Murrell had married a member of the tribe, or later married a partner who was a freedman, and through that union came to be in Indian Territory. The absence of marriage records—perhaps in and of itself an indication of slavery—make it impossible to say with certainty at this time. Deeper research into other archives may reveal more details of this story.

<sup>2</sup> For more information on Afro-Cherokee identity at this time, see Circe Sturm, *Blood Politics: Race, Culture and Identity in the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> Cherokee Freedman Payrolls, 1896-1897, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1793-1999, Record Group 75, Series Number: 7RA-51, National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter NARA).

<sup>4</sup> John H. Wallace, *U.S., Wallace Roll of Cherokee Freedmen, 1890-1893*, NARA.

this marked a juncture when a series of forces converged on the descendants of Cherokee freedmen. Under the excruciating pressures of assimilation directed at Native Americans, on the one hand, and faced with often virulent racism directed against them by white and Native people alike on the other, some multiracial freedmen and their descendants chose to embrace distinctly Black identities.<sup>5</sup>

The appeal of joining an AME congregation may have seemed obvious to Maggie. From its earliest iterations, the African Methodist Episcopal Church was “among the first denominations in the United States to be founded on racial rather than theological distinctions and has persistently advocated for the civil and human rights of African Americans through social improvement, religious autonomy, and political engagement.” Such sentiments that likely resonated deeply with Maggie and other descendants of Cherokee freedman living in Indian Territory as they witnessed the racially-charged battles over Oklahoma statehood.<sup>6</sup> Records indicate that this first church, which met “in a one-room house at 549 N. Detroit,” had eight charter members—six of them were women, and Maggie Vaden was one of these six original members.<sup>7</sup> The original congregation’s meeting place was just over half a mile from the church’s current location.

At some as of now unknown juncture, Maggie met Edmond W. Vaden, and the two married on January 20, 1906 in Sapulpa. Both were then 35 years old, and soon thereafter they made a home together at 224 North Frankfort Street. Both were living there in 1910, when the federal census enumerated them.<sup>8</sup> Interestingly, the 1910 federal census noted that Maggie Vaden had given birth to one child, and that this child was living. Other records indicate that this child was a son named Albert Nave, born in 1892. This would make Albert 18, and old enough to be living on his own by 1910. Like his mother, Albert was enumerated on the Rolls of Cherokee Freedmen, so it seems likely that Maggie had been married previously to meeting Edmond Vaden. A later census record from 1920 included eight children: a daughter, Alma, born in 1900, and seven sons, Byrl, Chester, Clyde, David, Marvin, Alonzo and Sylvester, with a child born regularly every two years until 1914.<sup>9</sup>

It is unclear how these census records reconcile. According to the 1920 records, Alma, Byrl and Chester would have been born before the Vaden’s formal marriage. It is possible they were Edmond’s children from a previous marriage, but it is unclear why none were living with their parents in 1910. None of the children living in the Vaden household were of an age to be

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<sup>5</sup> Circe Sturm, *Blood Politics: Race, Culture, and Identity in the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 169-70.

<sup>6</sup> “African Methodist Episcopal Church,” Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African\\_Methodist\\_Episcopal\\_Church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_Methodist_Episcopal_Church)

<sup>7</sup> Vernon A. M. E. Church 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Program, November 1980, Vernon AME Church Archive, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

<sup>8</sup> Edmond and Maggie (Murrell) Vaden Marriage License, January 20, 1906, Oklahoma Marriage Records, 1890-1995, NARA.

<sup>9</sup> Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, Tulsa, Oklahoma, NARA; Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, Tulsa Oklahoma, NARA.

working outside the home in 1910, and none of them have yet been identified in other records. There is a strong possibility that Maggie and Edmond took in or adopted at least some of the children who were living in their household by 1920. It is unclear what happened to Albert, who has not yet been definitively identified in census records beyond 1900. There was at least one other Vaden family, husband and wife Hosea and Stella, living in Greenwood at this time—they were almost certainly family of Edmond. Stella worked in Maggie’s Archer Street café.<sup>10</sup>

Edmond indicated that his parents came from Tennessee, and he likely had other family in the area as there are other Vaden’s identified on the 1910 and 1920 federal census for Tulsa, as well as in city directories from the time period.<sup>11</sup> Little else is known about Edmond’s background or when he came to Indian Territory, though the fact that he and Maggie were both enumerated as “mulatto” on the 1920 census may be an indication that he also shared a connection to the Cherokee or another Native American tribe.<sup>12</sup> Significantly, in 1920, both Maggie and Edmond were enumerated as “Black”—an indication of the malleability of racial categorization.<sup>13</sup>

Around 1912, the Maggie opened a café on Archer Street, which she ran until it was burned to the ground in the Tulsa Massacre.<sup>14</sup> All indications are that Maggie and Edmond were moving up—literally and figuratively—during this decade. Maggie began serving as President of the Ladies’ Home Missionary Society in 1914, and newspaper accounts indicate that she was energetically engaged in numerous other social activities in Greenwood.<sup>15</sup> She attended the Grand Lodge of the Daughters of Tabor, which met in Guthrie in August of 1920.<sup>16</sup> This fraternal order, formally named the International Order of Twelve Knights and Daughters of Tabor, significantly, began as an antislavery society and had been reorganized under the leadership of AME Clergyman Moses Dickson after the Civil War.<sup>17</sup>

Records of the remainder of Maggie Vaden’s life are sparse, but no doubt more remains to be discovered. There is a fleeting record of an Albert Nave, working as a “helper” in the Brady Hotel in 1912 and 1913. Nave was identified in Tulsa City directories as “colored,” a strong indication that this is Maggie’s son from her first marriage.<sup>18</sup> Following the Tulsa Massacre, Maggie moved to a home at 318 North Greenwood—directly across the street from the window of Vernon AME Church that bears her name.

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<sup>10</sup> 1912 Tulsa City Directory. Hosea was at this time working as a clerk in the Economy Drugstore.

<sup>11</sup> Oklahoma Marriage Records, 1890-1995, NARA.

<sup>12</sup> Racial categories are notoriously complex in census recording. There were no consistent guidelines for what qualified someone as “mulatto” or mixed race, and these definitions changed during the 19<sup>th</sup> century as United States expanded both geographically and through immigration. In 1920, “mulatto” could include individuals of Native American descent.

<sup>13</sup> For more on the fluidity of racial categories in the United States census, see Martha Sandweiss, *Passing Strange: A Gilded Age Tale of Love and Deception Beyond the Color Line* (New York: Penguin Books, 2010).

<sup>14</sup> In a clear testament to the realities of urban renewal destroying Greenwood further, 606 E Archer, where Maggie Vaden’s café was located, is now across the interstate from Vernon AME. Though it is only .2 miles away, it now requires a much more challenging walk. The site of the café is now a parking lot.

<sup>15</sup> Tulsa (Oklahoma) *Tulsa Star*, December 4, 1915, p. 8.

<sup>16</sup> *Tulsa Star*, August 28, 1920, p. 8.

<sup>17</sup> “International Order of Twelve Knights and Daughters of Tabor,” Wikipedia, last updated Oct. 15, 2020.

<sup>18</sup> 1912 Tulsa City Directory; 1913 Tulsa City Directory.

## Mr. & Mrs. S. M. Jackson & JR



*Samuel and Eunice Jackson. Eunice Cloman Jackson Obituary Service, Vernon AME Church Archive.*

The Jackson's thoroughly embodied the hope, energy, and ambitions of those who settled Greenwood. Samuel was a self-made man by the time he arrived in Tulsa; Eunice came from “a hardworking and progressive family” with parents who dearly valued educational opportunities.<sup>19</sup> Optimism carried both Samuel and Eunice, individually, to Oklahoma during the First World War.

Samuel Malone – better known simply as “S. M.” – Jackson had already lived in several different places before settling in Tulsa. He had earned a Bachelor of Science degree from a college in Mississippi and had hopes of attending medical school, “but I didn’t have enough money, and I couldn’t do it,” he later recalled. He made his way to Ohio and completed studies at the Cincinnati School of Embalming before moving on to Kokomo, Indiana. There—likely

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<sup>19</sup> Eunice Jackson Memorial Program, Vernon AME Church Archive.

unable to practice his profession—he worked in a Dry Goods Store and saved his wages. Arriving in Tulsa in 1917, he quickly started his own business, as a funeral home director. He was eventually forced to sell that business “for the fellow I was in business with didn’t do right,” but through it he learned the community and knew there was a demand for his services. The demise of this business is no doubt a fascinating and very human story—the business partner was likely someone with the last name of Brown, but there are few other readily apparent details. Jackson eventually sold his stake in the business because “I wanted to treat my people like I wanted to;” S. M. thus took an important stand for his own principles, but his erstwhile business partner maintained the rights to his name and the “Jackson Funeral Home,” forcing S. M. to start a new business called “Jack’s Memory Chapel.”<sup>20</sup> From interviews given by Jackson later in his life, it seems plausible that these changes occurred around the time of the massacre, but more research would be needed to search out details.

Jackson recalled that his original funeral home was “in the 600 block on East Archer,” and that “I had four dead bodies in my home when they set the building on fire. The White people burned them all up but one.” S. M. was a crucial witness to the fact that even the dead were victimized in the massacre. He saw to it that the remaining body was properly buried, despite the burning of Greenwood, and after the massacre helped to care for victims both dead and alive. Jackson recalled embalming more than twenty victims from the massacre, noting also that not all victims were embalmed—some because they were too badly burned, and others because the scale of the massacre was so immense that “they only embalmed the ones that were shipped, and that people wanted to take out-of-town.”<sup>21</sup>

In a bitter irony of the massacre, one of those S. M. Jackson embalmed was the prominent Doctor A. C. Jackson (no relation). S. M. Jackson had been denied a medical education, but he found himself responsible for embalming the only African American surgeon in Tulsa, who had been murdered while exiting his house, with his hands up, at the demand of the mob. According to some accounts, A. C. Jackson bled to death while being detained at the Tulsa Convention Center.<sup>22</sup> The lives of S. M. Jackson, A. C. Jackson, and Eunice Cloman directly intersected in this moment: A. C., as he lay dying; S. M., who embalmed his body; and Eunice, who with her mother had been detained.

“I knew the Dr. Jackson who was killed,” Eunice later recalled.

“Dr. Jackson got shot with buckshot,” S. M. confided to an interviewer, leaving his body “full of holes.”<sup>23</sup> By some accounts, A. C.’s murderer was a “teenaged white boy.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> S. M. Jackson Interview, Ruth Sigler Avery Collection, Oklahoma State University, Tulsa, Archives.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> *Benningfield Randle et al v. City of Tulsa et al*, September 1, 2020, viewable at <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/7199572-Tulsa-Massacre-Lawsuit.html>

<sup>23</sup> S. M. Jackson Interview; Eunice “Coleman” [sic] Jackson Interview. Note “Cloman” is often misspelled “Coleman,” but sources from the family indicate that “Cloman” is the correct spelling.

<sup>24</sup> Hannibal B. Johnson, *Images of America: Tulsa’s Historic Greenwood District* (Arcadia, 2014), 29.

Before the massacre, Eunice Cloman was excited about the immediate future. Her family was from Arkansas, where her father had been a teacher and her mother strongly valued formal education. The family moved to Tulsa just months before the massacre—probably at least in part for the better educational opportunities afforded by Booker T. Washington High School, which employed a number of well qualified teachers. Eunice was looking forward to her graduation, and her senior prom. She would have neither.

The night before the massacre, Eunice recalled, “we had planned to go down on Greenwood, and go to a show,” but her mother intervened; as the massacre intensified, the family—Eunice, her mother, her sister Bernice, and two step-brothers—fled their home. They were eventually forced to march to the Convention Center. As they walked, Eunice recalled, “they would shoot down at your feet and say ‘Walk faster! Walk faster!’” The family was detained until her mother’s white employer vouched for them, and grateful to discover that their house had been saved—according to Eunice, through the efforts of white neighbors, who put out fires “every time a burning crowd would come” throughout the night.<sup>25</sup>

Eunice and S. M. married in 1923, and their lives demonstrate the resilience and tenacity of Greenwood residents who chose to stay. Eunice did not get her senior prom, but she was surely proud to have her name on a window; this would have held special significance, as Vernon hosted receptions for graduating classes of Booker T. Washington school.<sup>26</sup> S. M. continued to operate a funeral home and served his community faithfully for many years. Eunice volunteered countless hours to the YWCA. Both were heavily involved in “all Masonic, most social, and many civic organizations.”<sup>27</sup>

Eunice and S. M. had one child, JR. Tragically, he died in infancy. He is memorialized on the window in Vernon AME Church that bears his parents’ names. “Grand Ma Jackson,” as Eunice came to be known, was finally honored with a high school graduation ceremony in 1993, when she was recognized as the oldest living graduate of Booker T. Washington High School.

She lived to be 100.

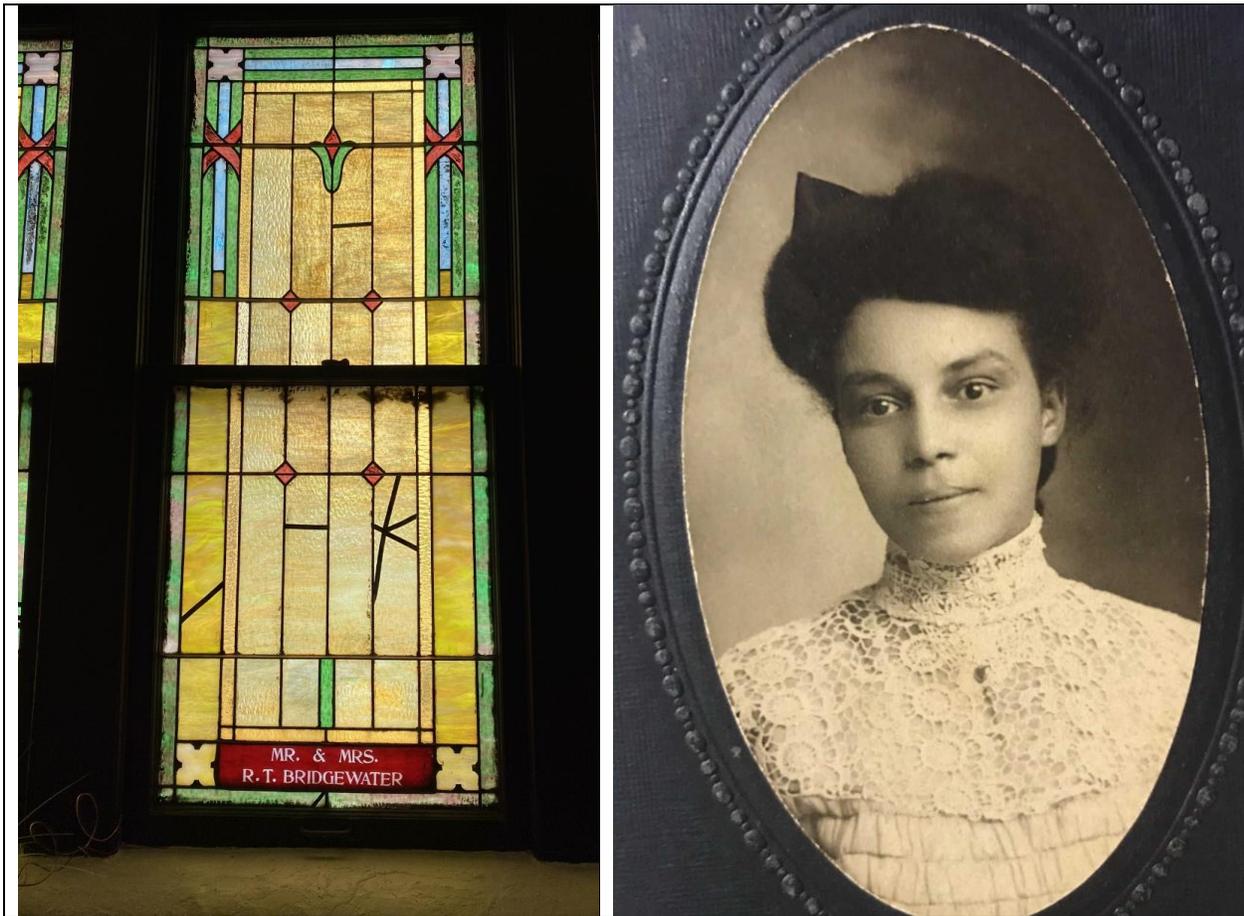
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<sup>25</sup> Eunice Jackson Interview.

<sup>26</sup> Carlos Moreno, “The Victory of Greenwood: Vernon AME Church,” viewable at <https://thevictoryofgreenwood.com/2020/09/22/history-of-vernon-ame-church/>

<sup>27</sup> Eunice Cloman Jackson Memorial Program.

## Mr. & Mrs. R. T. Bridgewater



*Mattie Bridgewater, date unknown. Member Archives, ancestry.com.*

Robert Tyler (“R. T.”) Bridgewater was a founding member of the Vernon AME congregation. In the early years of its development, he taught Sunday school. Though she is not mentioned in the earliest accounts of the congregation, it is likely that Mattie, his wife, was also present, as the couple had married in 1906. By 1920, Robert was recognized as a Trustee.

Born in Kentucky in 1879, Robert had migrated to Indian Territory by the time he married Mattie Halmer. She was from Missouri, where their marriage license was recorded.<sup>28</sup> A respected physician, he was eventually appointed assistant county physician, and kept an office on North Greenwood Avenue. According to some accounts, the front porch of his house faced that of white neighbors.

Robert and Mattie only narrowly avoided the fate that befell their neighbor, A. C. Jackson. As the white mob commenced burning Greenwood, Bridgewater received a call summoning him “to attend two wounded men.” It was a trick; the moment he opened his front door, bullets flew, one grazing Robert’s leg. The Bridgewaters fled, barely escaping to safety. Their home was looted,

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<sup>28</sup> Randy Krehbiel, *Tulsa 1921: Reporting a Massacre* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2019), 22.

but apparently not burned. Robert ultimately became involved in a dispute with the city of Tulsa over pressure to sell his property; he faced considerable hostility in obtaining a permit to rebuild on Greenwood.<sup>29</sup> In a testament to Robert's tenacity, he had managed to reopen his practice, and was again serving the community as a physician, by 1922.<sup>30</sup> By the time of the 1930 census, the home he owned was valued at some \$5000—a substantial sum in the early years of the Great Depression.<sup>31</sup>

Robert's story is recounted in numerous published accounts, but it is only fitting to note here that he continued to serve his community as a physician until his death in 1944. Robert lived to witness the revitalization of Greenwood that took place in the 1930s and 1940s, due to the persistence and determination of residents who invested their own savings into rebuilding. He was a cornerstone of that community, re-establishing a medical practice and vocally defending the rights of African American property owners who the city of Tulsa repeatedly attempted to dismiss. In 1942, when Vernon celebrated paying off the mortgage on the property where the church building still stands, it was R. T. Bridgewater “who officiated the ceremony.”<sup>32</sup>

Less is known about Mattie, but she outlived Robert by nearly two decades. She thus bore witness to the reverberations of destruction and decline that accompanied renewed efforts to gentrify Greenwood under the guise of “urban renewal”—the impacts of which are still felt today. It is a fitting testimony that the window bearing her name has survived to tell part of this important story.

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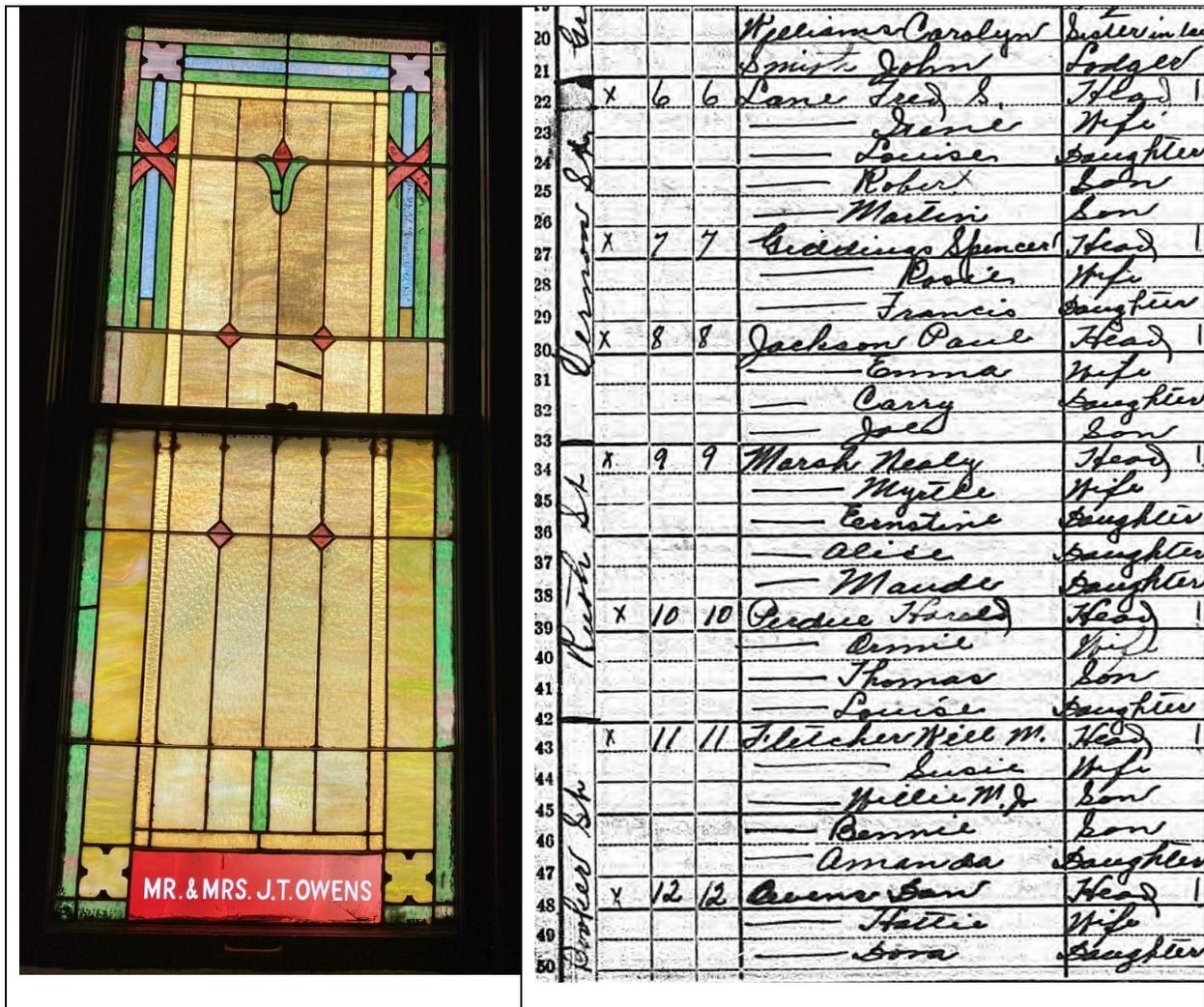
<sup>29</sup> Interestingly, one looter, C. D. Dodson, was actually charged with the crime of stealing clothing from Bridgewater's home—one of the few instances where a looter was actually charged in court with the crime. Krehbiel, *Tulsa 1921*, 108, 160, 198.

<sup>30</sup> 1922 Tulsa City Directory.

<sup>31</sup> Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, Tulsa, Oklahoma, Enumeration District 72-51, NARA.

<sup>32</sup> Moreno, “Vernon AME Church.”

Mr. & Mrs. J. T. Owens



1920 Census, Tulsa, Oklahoma – John Owens, Hattie, and Dora. NARA.

Hattie Brown and John Tandy Owens came from Greenfield, in Dade County, Missouri. They were married on November 25, 1902, and in 1907 Hattie gave birth to their first child, a daughter named Dora. The Owens family lived in Greenwood by 1910, and J. T. worked variously as a laborer in a Tulsa brickyard and a janitor in the Drew Building.

In 1920, the Owens' owned a home—free and clear—on Booker Street, and John may have been working for a wholesale grocer. For unknown reasons, his name was erroneously recorded as “Dan” on this census.

John seems to have worked for several decades as an elevator operator in the Drew Building. City Directories for Tulsa give his place of employment there beginning in 1924. By the time of the 1930 census, the Owens family lived on North Hartford Avenue—precisely a 1-mile journey from Vernon AME Church.

In 1940, the census taker enumerated John as a janitor in an office building; it seems likely, however, that he was still working as an elevator operator. He detailed this as his employment at the time of the draft for World War II in 1942. John was then 64 years old.

Dora appears to have married, had several children and lived until 1982. J. T. died January 4, 1962. There are currently no further known records of Hattie Owens.

**REGISTRATION CARD—(Men born on or after April 28, 1877 and on or before February 16, 1897)**

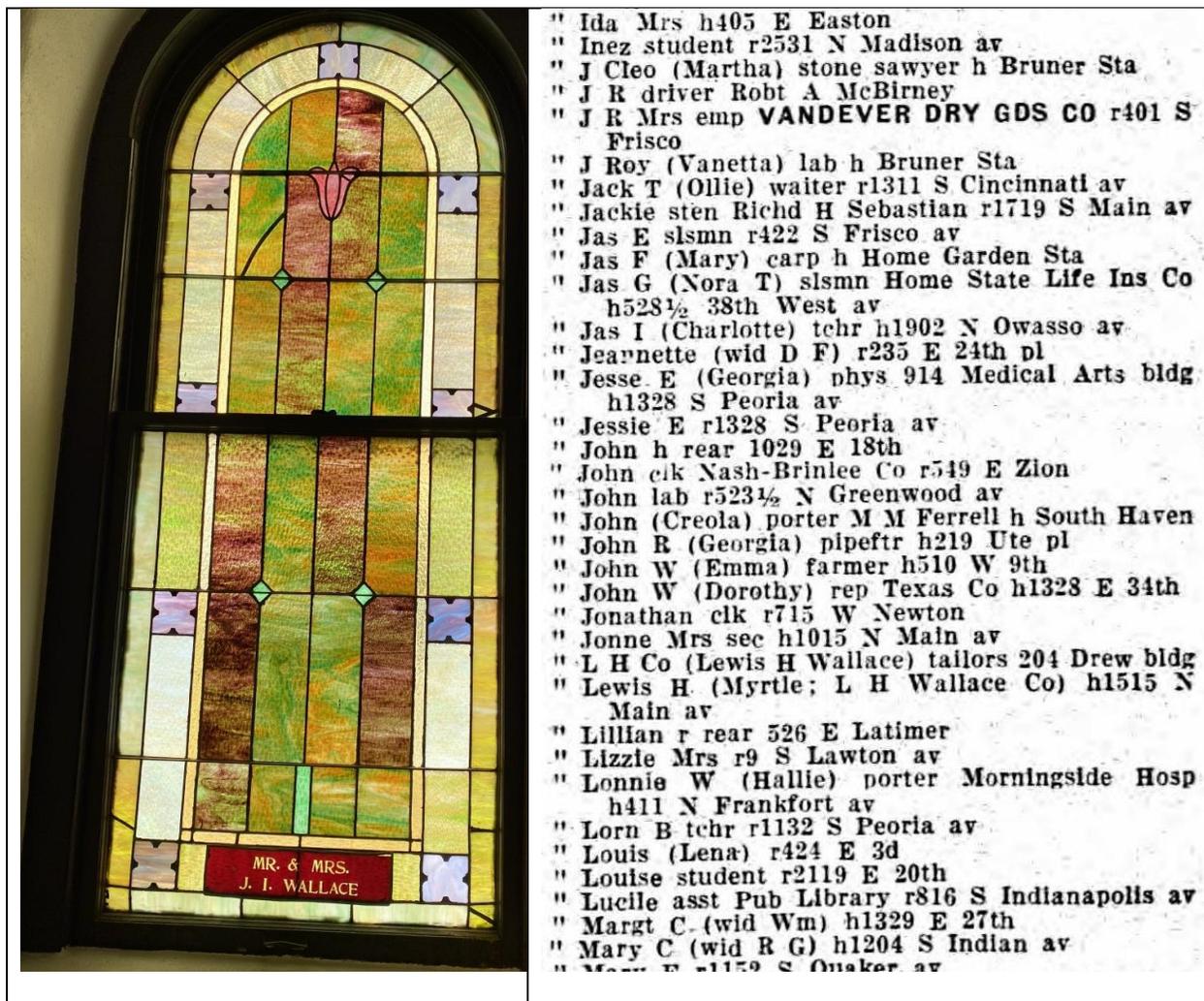
<b>SERIAL NUMBER</b>	<b>I. NAME (Print)</b>		<b>ORDER NUMBER</b>
U. 2235	JOHN	TANDY OWENS	
	(First)	(Middle) (Last)	
<b>2. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print)</b>			
519 E. Oklahoma Tulsa Tulsa Okla.			
(Number and street) (Town, township, village, or city) (County) (State)			
[THE PLACE OF RESIDENCE GIVEN ON THE LINE ABOVE WILL DETERMINE LOCAL BOARD JURISDICTION; LINE 2 OF REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE WILL BE IDENTICAL]			
<b>3. MAILING ADDRESS</b>			
Same			
(Mailing address if other than place indicated on line 2. If same insert word same)			
<b>4. TELEPHONE</b>	<b>5. AGE IN YEARS</b>	<b>6. PLACE OF BIRTH</b>	
22000	64	Hammansville	
(Exchange)	DATE OF BIRTH	(Town or county)	
	Jan 9 1878	Missouri	
(Number)	(Mo.) (Day) (Yr.)	(State or country)	
<b>7. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS</b>			
C. C. Hall, 518 (?) E. Oklahoma, Tulsa, Okla.			
<b>8. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS</b>			
J. Lee Chapman, Drew Bldg., Tulsa, Okla.			
<b>9. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS</b>			
Same as # 8.			
(Number and street or R. F. D. number) (Town) (County) (State)			
I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.			
<b>D. S. S. Form 1</b> (Revised 4-1-42)	(over)	16-21630-2	John T. Owens, (Registrant's signature)

John Tandy ("J. T.") Owens, World War II Draft Registration Card, 1942. NARA.

" Jno T (c; Hattie), elev opr Drew bldg, r 1331 N Hartford av

Entry for Jno [John] T. and Hattie Owens, Tulsa City Directory, 1924. The "c" indicated the couple were "colored." NARA.

Mr. & Mrs. J. I. Wallace



1931 Tulsa City Directory – Jas [James] Wallace and Charlotte. NARA.

James Isaiah Wallace and Charlotte Sarah Ware were married on September 11, 1924. The details of their respective lives before this time are few, but fascinating. Charlotte was likely James' second wife; he may have been her third husband.

In 1910 James was living in Timpson, Texas, with a wife named Elina and three children—son Booker T., daughter Elneta, and an infant son who was a month old and had not yet been named when the census was taken. (He seems to have ultimately been named Finas M.) It is likely that Elina died sometime between 1910 and 1920, as by the latter year, Elenita was living with an aunt and uncle, Phill and Valeda Whitaker, in Timpson, Texas, and James was apparently not with his daughter. All three children appear to have remained in Texas, and were living in or near Houston in the 1940s.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup> It appears that Booker T. became a civil engineer, and Elneta a teacher; Elneta was living with her brother at the time of the 1940 census, in Houston. Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, Timpson, Texas,

It seems likely that at this time, James headed to Tulsa. He may have been seeking space from his first wife's death, or simply better opportunities for himself and his family. He did not take his children with him, but we cannot know what his intentions were—he may, for instance, have planned to send for them later, but for reasons lost to us, did not.

As historians have amply shown, migration was considered a valuable option by many African Americans seeking better opportunities than those available in the heavily segregated South (including, by these definitions, Texas).<sup>34</sup> James worked for some time as a teacher or librarian, and during his lifetime managed to acquire significant personal property: at the time of his death on August 4, 1949, his estate was valued at \$18,783.25 and included multiple properties, household goods, a 1939 Chevy, and jewelry worth some \$100.

James and Charlotte were married in Okmulgee. According to a birth certificate, Charlotte Sarah Ware was born in McCrory, Arkansas in 1894. Few other details have emerged about her life; however—curiously, but not definitively—two other marriage certificates for a Charlotte S. Ware appear to predate her 1924 marriage to James Wallace.<sup>35</sup>

During the 1930s, James and Charlotte lived at 1902 N. Owasso Avenue, approximately 2 miles from Vernon AME Church, but circumstances apparently changed.

Something upended the Wallace's lives before the United States entered the Second World War. When he registered for the draft in World War II, James noted that he was "unemployed." According to the 1940 census, Charlotte was at that time living in an Oklahoma City boarding house, and working as a nurse. The best coincidental evidence for this being the same Charlotte Wallace is an application for a birth certificate from the same time period, and issued to Charlotte Sarah Ware Wallace, of McCrory, Arkansas. The birth certificate was witnessed and signed in Oklahoma City—this is not definitive, but it is also probably not a coincidence given the sheer number of details that line up. There is no clear record in the census for James I. Wallace in 1940.

James died intestate (without a will) in 1949, and Charlotte immediately asserted her right to act as executrix of his estate. Over the course of the next year, she expended the considerable sum of \$500 in legal fees to secure James' property and settle his estate. After that records of her life are sparse. She died in 1988.

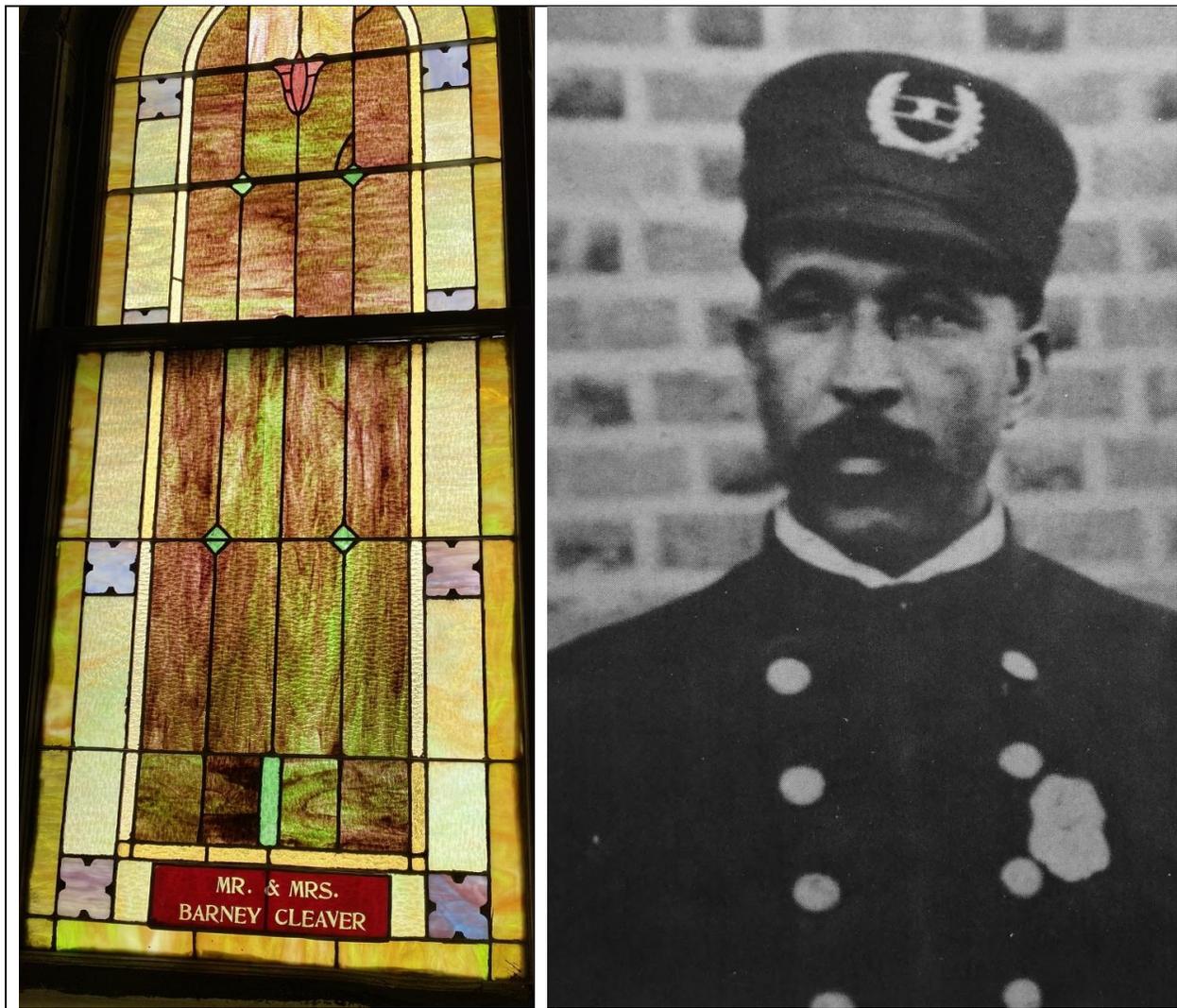
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NARA; Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, Houston, Texas, NARA. It is possible that James had left Texas by 1920, leaving his children behind; an 11-year-old Elneita Wallace appears to have been living with an aunt and uncle, Phill and Valeda Whitaker, in Timpson, Texas in 1920.

<sup>34</sup> See Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* (New York: Vintage Books, 2010)

<sup>35</sup> In 1914, a Charlotte S. Ware, who gave her age as 23, applied for a license to marry J. M. Delancy. In 1918, a Charlotte S. Ware, who gave her age as 24, applied for a license to marry L. C. Cotton. A James M. Delancy was living in Muskogee in 1920, and Tulsa in 1930—given that his occupation was listed as "undertaker" on both census records, this would appear to be the same person. Delancy was married to a woman named Frances by 1920, and widowed by 1930. No clear records have emerged for L. C. Cotton. All of this evidence is circumstantial, but the coincidences do seem to rack up—Charlotte S. Ware gave her place of birth as Little Rock, Arkansas, on both licenses; there are no clear records of the ends of these marriages, only proof that they did not extend beyond 1920. It is anyone's guess, at this moment, what the deeper story is, and clear only that there is one.

## Mr. & Mrs. Barney Cleaver



*Barney Cleaver, date unknown. Member Archives, ancestry.com.*

Barney Cleaver was a household name in Greenwood, before and after 1920. His life story is among the best-documented of the known members of the Vernon AME congregation, and has been noted in numerous major works about the massacre. Barney exemplified the drive and ambition of the residents who built Greenwood into a thriving, economically prosperous community; he had succeeded, at every level—professionally, financially, personally—and thus his losses were deeply felt at those levels, too.

The documentary record as it relates to Barney Cleaver is in many ways remarkable, though some details remain unclear. He was born in Virginia sometime between 1865 and 1867, though the exact date is not concretely established.<sup>36</sup> He later made his way to Charleston, then

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<sup>36</sup> Records give all three dates. The 1870 census, the first on which Barney would have appeared, gives his age as 5, which would place his birth in 1865; that is consistent with a newspaper account from 1914 which gave his

Cincinnati, and finally to Indian Territory, where he was working as a coal miner on lands held by the Choctaw Nation by 1900, when the federal census recorded him living with his first wife, Estella, and her eleven-year-old daughter, Dora, who was recorded as being Barney's step-daughter.<sup>37</sup>

The limited records available seem to indicate that Barney and Estella married on October 28, 1891, in Oskaloosa, Iowa.<sup>38</sup> This matches with the 1900 census, which noted that Barney and Estella had been married for approximately 8 years. It is unclear how this marriage ended, and further research will be needed to investigate this story. It seems likely that Estella returned to Iowa, taking Dora with her.<sup>39</sup> By 1910, Barney was living as a single man in a boarding house owned by a widowed woman from Alabama—Vernon Harrison, who coincidentally shared her first name with the congregation of which she was a longtime member.

At the time of their marriage, Vernon was 29, and Barney was 44. Few details have survived regarding Vernon's first marriage, or when she may have left Alabama. She had a one-year-old daughter named Chloe by the time she married Barney.

Vernon, who sometimes also went by "Verna," or simply "Vern," no doubt played an instrumental role in supporting Barney as he moved up the ranks of Tulsa society during the 1910s. Barney was by all accounts successful working in Coalgate, serving as "everything in the mines from a trapper boy to a manager," and this success may have encouraged his move to Tulsa in 1907. Before that time, significantly, Barney worked as an "immigrant agent" for the Oklahoma and Gulf Coal Company, recruiting others to work in coal mines on the Choctaw Nation. He opened the Grayson Coal and Mineral Company, and by some accounts, helped draw thousands into the region.<sup>40</sup> His move to Tulsa, notably, occurred right at the moment of Oklahoma statehood, and at the time when Greenwood was beginning its ascendance as "the Leading City" for African Americans.<sup>41</sup> As is well known, Barney quickly secured his own place within this rising society, becoming a Deputy U. S. Marshall, working in the Secret Service, and then becoming an officer on the Tulsa police force.<sup>42</sup>

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birthdate as January 2, 1865. Presumably he was consulted for that report, which appeared in the *Tulsa Star* on August 19, 1914. Cleaver's headstone, however, places his date of birth as 1867, as does the 1900 census.

<sup>37</sup> Census of the Choctaw Nation, 1900 Coalgate, Indian Territory, Enumeration District 104, Sheet 25.

<sup>38</sup> Marriage Certificate of Barney Cleaver and Stella Bedford, Oskaloosa, Mahoska County, Iowa, October 28, 1891, Iowa Marriage Records, NARA.

<sup>39</sup> Much more research is needed, but there are interesting, if inconclusive clues which suggest that Estella may have returned to Iowa and indicated that she was "widowed" from Barney Cleaver for the next several decades. Des Moines City Directories list an Estella Cleaver, widow of Barney, as late as 1943, and this Estella Cleaver seems to have died in Des Moines in 1945. No records have yet been found indicating that Barney secured a divorce; in other words, he may have been relying on the relative anonymity of Indian Territory and the transition to Oklahoma statehood to obscure details of his first marriage. A curious—but very human—choice for a lawman and investigator of Cleaver's aptitude.

<sup>40</sup> *Tulsa Star*, August 19, 1914.

<sup>41</sup> *Tulsa Star*, "Tulsa is the Leading City," August 19, 1914.

<sup>42</sup> Krehbiel, *Tulsa 1921*, 21.

Barney took to his position with obvious aptitude and relish. By all accounts, he was a formidable enforcer. He “had the reputation of being a very shrewd officer, absolutely fearless in the performance of his duty,” the *Tulsa Star* noted in 1914; this was likely related to his apparent skill as a private detective. His reputation was not limited to Black Tulsans; in July of 1915, the *Tulsa Daily World* described him as “the informal court of Little Africa,” noting his “lifetime experience” serving federal, state, and local law enforcement.<sup>43</sup> Significantly, Cleaver was fired from the Tulsa police force in March of 1921, ostensibly for operating a private detective agency; a number of contemporaries believed his firing was political, and stemmed from his refusal to look the other way in an investigation of Chief of Police John Gustafson’s relationship to an informant.<sup>44</sup> This interpretation of events is almost certainly true.

It was not coincidence that in 1914, when Booker T. Washington visited Oklahoma on a much publicized tour, and the *Tulsa Star* chose select members of the African American community to highlight as exemplars of Black accomplishments, Barney and Vernon Cleaver were prominently featured along with a photograph of their home. While the individuals in the photograph were not named in the news article, which focused on Barney and his role as a police officer, by 1920 the Cleavers had taken in at least five boarders. Significantly, four of these boarders were women—Carrie Davis (age 22), Marie Booth (age 21), and sisters Susie and Ora Yates (ages 26 and 23, respectively). All four women were school teachers. The Cleavers’ male boarder, Harrauld Yates (age 22, and presumably related to Susie and Ora) worked as a janitor. The Cleavers were thus supporting the uplift of the community in multiple ways—through maintaining the law, economic success, and providing a safe living arrangement for respectable female school teachers.<sup>45</sup>

Barney Cleaver was present and deeply affected by the massacre. That story has been documented in numerous published works. It is reported that, despite being dismissed by the police force mere weeks before, Barney tried multiple times to dissuade violence and disperse the crowds. He also reportedly helped to rescue Dick Rowland, which seems entirely plausible given his stature in the community. When trials began, Cleaver was one of the few Blacks called to bear witness to the events.<sup>46</sup>

Barney and Vernon Cleaver’s home was burned to the ground. They lost most of their possessions, and Barney lost other properties in the destruction. But they exemplified the spirit of those determined to rise from these ashes. Barney reestablished himself as a law enforcer, became a deputy sheriff, and continued to work as an investigator. The Cleavers rebuilt. Their new home, completed by 1925, was located at 303 North Greenwood Avenue—85 feet from Vernon AME Church. Barney continued to serve as a deputy sheriff as late as 1930.

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<sup>43</sup> *Tulsa Daily World*, “Barney Cleaver is Court,” July 4, 1915.

<sup>44</sup> Krehbiel, *Tulsa 1921*, 8; Oklahoma City (Oklahoma), *The Black Dispatch*, “Barney Cleaver Dismissed from Tulsa Police Force,” April 1, 1921.

<sup>45</sup> 1920 Census, Tulsa, Oklahoma, Enumeration District 255, Sheet 10A.

<sup>46</sup> Krehbiel, *Tulsa 1921*, 38-39, 74, 77-78.

Barney's health deteriorated in late 1931. In November of that year, Vernon successfully appealed to have him declared insane and admitted to the State Mental Hospital, where doctors suspected senility and noted "peculiar actions" that were increasingly irregular. He was released in February of 1932, but died not long after.<sup>47</sup> After this time, there are few easily recognizable traces of Vernon Cleaver remaining in the archival record—but it seems likely that she lived until at least 1944, and thus saw Greenwood rise again.



*The Barney Cleaver Family, 1914. Though the newspaper did not record individual names, it seems certain that this image features the Cleavers and several of their boarders. Barney and Vernon are seated in the front row, Chloe standing between them. Tulsa Star, August 19, 1914.*

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<sup>47</sup> Barney Cleaver Probate Packet, Oklahoma Wills and Probate Records, 1931, NARA.

**Mr. & Mrs. S. E. Berry**



*S. E. Berry and Airplane, date unknown. Simon E. Berry, thevictoryofgreenwood.com*

Simon E. Berry married Alma Pitman on December 19, 1915. They married in Vernon AME Church. Reverend Charles R. Tucker officiated the ceremony, and announcements for the wedding appeared even in the *Tulsa World*, indicating that the event was of importance far beyond the confines of Greenwood. Their stories are intertwined in the history of the church.

S. E. Berry's story is one of triumph—before and after the massacre—and has been well-documented in other places, including the works of historian Hannibal Johnson, who aptly captured Berry's business acumen in the following description:

Savvy entrepreneurs like Simon Berry developed their businesses around the needs of the community, niche marketing by today's standards. Berry created a nickel-a-ride jitney service with his topless Model-T Ford. He successfully operated a bus line that he ultimately sold to the City of Tulsa. He owned the Royal Hotel. He shuttled wealthy oil barons on a charter airline service he operated with his partner, James Lee Northington, Sr., a successful black building contractor. Simon Berry earned as much as \$500 a day in the early 1920s.<sup>48</sup>

That prosperity is demonstrated on the 1920 census, which shows Simon and Alma Berry living on Bulletin Street in Tulsa, with two roomers boarding at their home: 16-year-old Perry Campbell, Berry's nephew; and 19-year-old Commodore Knox, who was also from Mississippi and thus possibly also had a familial or social tie to Berry. Both teenagers were employed—no doubt gainfully—in Berry's taxi service.<sup>49</sup>

Commodore Knox died as a result of the massacre.<sup>50</sup>

After beginning life in Mississippi, Simon may have come to Oklahoma at the behest of Edwin McCabe, the well-known founder of Langston.<sup>51</sup> Berry was a skilled mechanic, capable of working on numerous kinds of automotive machinery—a growing, but still new industry at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Berry had at least one rather dramatic brush with the law in 1915, when an altercation left another man dead; the reasons for the fight are unknown, and were no doubt hazy at the time, as Berry does not appear to have served significant jail time. He and Alma married later that year.<sup>52</sup>

During the massacre, jitneys owned by Berry rescued and saved countless residents of Greenwood, literally carrying them away from the flames. After the massacre, Berry rebuilt his business empire, eventually incorporating a bus line (that was later purchased by the City of Tulsa) and operating a successful automotive garage that trained other mechanics. It is estimated that “between Berry's jitneys, buses, the air charter service, the auto garage, and the mechanic school, he employed more Black people than any other entrepreneur in Tulsa. Collectively, Berry's entrepreneurial empire earned him approximately \$500 per day, the equivalent of about \$6,750 in today's dollars.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> <https://www.hannibalbjohnson.com/the-ghosts-of-greenwood-past-a-walk-down-black-wall-street/>

<sup>49</sup> 1920 Census, Tulsa, Oklahoma, page 14A.

<sup>50</sup> Kreihbel, *Tulsa 1921*, 161.

<sup>51</sup> Carlos Moreno, “The Victory of Greenwood: Simon Berry,” viewable at <https://thevictoryofgreenwood.com/2020/08/23/the-victory-of-greenwood-simon-berry/>

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

It appears that Alma had a sister, Altus. Both Alma and Altus were recorded as being 40 years of age in 1930, and being from Kentucky. According to this census, their father's birthplace was Tennessee, their mother's Virginia. This census may have been overlooked in other accounts of the Berry story, as the census enumerator's handwriting can be read in two ways: "Berry" or "Bevry"—but it is no doubt S. E. and Alma Berry. Interestingly, while Alma had no occupation listed on this census, Altus Berry is named Vice President of the Bus Line Simon is credited with owning.<sup>54</sup> Altus Smith is enumerated as being widowed, and a Sister-in-Law of the head of household (Simon), which would seem to indicate that she was Alma's biological sister—perhaps even a twin, given their exact same age and parental heritage. Interestingly, "Altus" was more commonly a boy's name, and no marriage records for "Altus Pitman" or "Altus Smith" have yet been found, leaving open intriguing possibilities that will require further exploration.

Mystery surrounds what happened to Simon, Alma, and their son, all of whom virtually disappear from public records in the 1940s. There is some suggestion that Alma lived until 1972, and other indications that she may have moved to California at some point before 1950, but this is difficult to verify from currently discovered records. This is a story worthy of much deeper investigation.

Berry	Simmons	Head	3,500	70	m	neg	41	m
—	Alma	Wife		V	7	neg	40	m
Smith	Altus	Sister-in-law		V	7	neg	40	wd

1930 Census, Tulsa Oklahoma – Simmon [Simon] E. and Alma Berry and Altus Smith. Note that due to the handwriting of the census taker, the record is often misrecognized as "Bevry," and the extra "m" in Simon's name makes it appear to read "Simmon."

yes	Manager	Bus line	728V	E	yes	no
yes	none					
Yes	Vice President	Bus line	738V	E	yes	

The remainder of the entry, however, makes clear that this is S. E. Berry: note that he is listed as the "manager" of a Bus Line, and Altus as "Vice President." NARA.

<sup>54</sup> 1930 Census, Tulsa, Oklahoma, page 3B.

# MARRIAGE RECORD

5390.

## APPLICATION FOR MARRIAGE LICENSE

STATE OF OKLAHOMA, TULSA COUNTY.

IN COUNTY COURT

I, Simon Berry the undersigned, hereby apply for a Marriage License to be issued to  
 Mr. Simon Berry aged 24 years, whose residence  
 is Tulsa, State of Oklahoma, and  
 Miss Alma Pitman aged 22 years, whose residence  
 is Tulsa, State of Oklahoma, and  
 for the purpose of procuring the same, do solemnly swear that I have personal knowledge of the facts herein stated; that the names, ages  
 and places of residence of said parties are truly and correctly set out above; that neither of said parties are disqualified or incapable  
 under the law of entering into the marriage relation, nor are they related to each other within the degrees prohibited by law. That I am  
24 years of age, and legally competent to make and take an oath, and that I reside at Tulsa, County of  
Tulsa, State of Oklahoma.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 16th day of December, 1915  
 FRANK INGRAHAM, Court Clerk.  
 By Marion Banister Deputy.

STATE OF OKLAHOMA, TULSA COUNTY, ss:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, being first duly sworn, depose and say that I am the \_\_\_\_\_  
 of \_\_\_\_\_, named in the above application as being of the age of \_\_\_\_\_ years; that I do  
 hereby consent to \_\_\_\_\_ marriage to \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
 Subscribed and sworn to before me this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 191\_\_\_\_  
 FRANK INGRAHAM, Court Clerk.  
 By \_\_\_\_\_ Deputy.

## MARRIAGE LICENSE

STATE OF OKLAHOMA, CITY AND COUNTY OF TULSA.

IN COUNTY COURT

To Any Person Authorized to Perform the Marriage Ceremony, Greeting:

You are hereby authorized to join in marriage Mr. Simon Berry  
 of Tulsa, County of Tulsa, State of Oklahoma, aged 24 years,  
 and Miss Alma Pitman  
 of Tulsa, County of Tulsa, State of Oklahoma, aged 22 years,

And of this License you will make due return to my office within thirty days from this date.  
 WITNESS my hand and seal of said court this 16th day of December, A. D. 1915  
 Recorded this 23rd day of December, 1915.

FRANK INGRAHAM, Court Clerk.  
 By Marion Banister Deputy.

## CERTIFICATE OF MARRIAGE

STATE OF OKLAHOMA, TULSA COUNTY, ss:

I, Rev. Charles Rossman Tucker African Methodist Episcopal  
 Name Official Designation Court or Congregation Church  
 of Tulsa in Tulsa County, State of Oklahoma, do hereby certify that I joined in mar-  
 riage the persons named in and authorized by this License to be married, on the 19th day of December, A. D. 1915;  
 at Tulsa in Tulsa County, State of Oklahoma, in the presence of H. W. Sata  
 of Tulsa, Oklahoma and W. B. Ball of Tulsa, Oklahoma,  
Rev. Chas. R. Tucker  
 Official Designation,

Returned and recorded this 23rd day of December, 1915.  
 FRANK INGRAHAM, Court Clerk.  
 By Marion B. Banister Deputy.

Marriage license of Simon E. Berry and Alma Pitman, December 19, 1915, Oklahoma Marriage Records, NARA.

Mr. & Mrs. John Haney



John and Emma Haney Marriage Record, October 30, 1923. Tulsa Marriage Records, NARA.

In 1920, a single man named John Haney lived as a roomer in the home of Simon and Mary Parrish on Elgin Avenue. The census recorded his age as 34 (putting his birth date at around 1886) and noted that he worked as a hod carrier—an occupation in which he would have carried bricks in support of bricklayers erecting new buildings (a “hod” is a 3-sided box for carrying building materials; typically, 2 bricklayers worked with each hod carrier on a jobsite).<sup>55</sup> This is likely the John Haney whose name is etched on a window at Vernon, but the census enumerator had miscalculated his age...by nearly two decades. John Haney is thus an instructive example of the ways in which historical research can be complicated by errant details from the past.

In 1923, 55-year-old John Haney (born nearer to 1868), applied for a marriage license to then-45-year-old Emma Fairchild. The most likely indication that this is “Mrs. and Mrs. John Haney” on the window comes from the fact that the ceremony was performed by “Dr. Lyles Pastor of

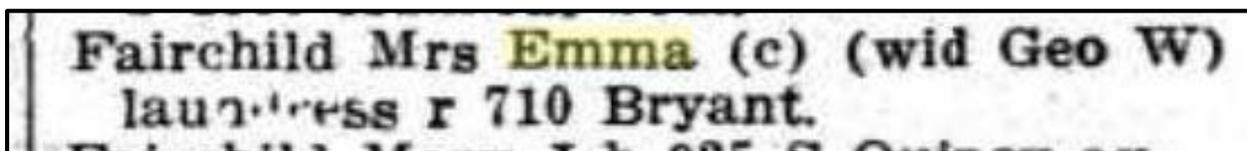
<sup>55</sup> “Brick Hod,” Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brick\\_hod](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brick_hod)

Vernon AME Church.”<sup>56</sup> More research will be needed to shed further light on this story, but in all likelihood these records do refer to the same person, despite their discrepancies. The numbers in 1868 and 1886 may have been transposed, for instance, or the census taker may have relied on information from others rather than actually speaking with each individual living at the boarding house. If the census taker called while John Haney was at work, for instance, his information may have been relayed by someone else. Such mistakes are common in the historical record, and may reflect any number of human errors.

Both John and Emma came from Arkansas, and it was likely the second marriage for each of them, as a later census noted that John had first been married at age 38, and Emma at age 24. There were two stepchildren, Phillip and Ruth Fairchild, ages 17 and 15, respectively, living in the Haney home in 1930, most certainly born during Emma’s first marriage. Phillip had been born in Arkansas, so it is likely that his mother’s marriage took place there; Ruth appears to have been born in Oklahoma. This would seem to indicate that Emma Fairchild and her first husband migrated from Arkansas to Oklahoma sometime between 1913 and 1915.<sup>57</sup> This husband appears to have been named either George, and he died sometime before 1917—a Tulsa City directory for that year lists Mrs. Emma Fairchild as a widow.<sup>58</sup>

Haney John H	Head	0 500 ✓		no	m	neg	56	m	28	no	yes	Arkansas
— Emma R	Wife-H			✓	m <sup>F</sup>	neg	51	m	24	no	yes	Arkansas
Fairchild Phillip	Stepson			✓	m	neg	17	S		yes	yes	Arkansas
— Ruth T	Step daughter			✓	f	neg	15	S		yes	yes	Oklahoma

1930 Census, Tulsa, Oklahoma, John H. and Emma R. Haney, Phillip and Ruth T. G. Fairchild.



1917 Tulsa City Directory, Mrs. Emma Fairchild, c[olored], Widow of George W. NARA.

Uncertainties in the historical record make it necessary to qualify what we may know of Emma Fairchild Haney. The only “Emma Fairchild” recorded on the 1920 Tulsa Census was a servant in a private household on Denver Golden Street. At 41 years of age and from Arkansas, she is of the right background to be the Emma Fairchild who became Mrs. John Haney. She is widowed, and there are no children with her. This could mean that following her marriage to John Haney in 1923, a deliberate effort was made to reunify her family. In an important caveat, however, it must be noted that this Emma Fairchild was enumerated as “white.” This can mean one of three things, all plausible explanations: first, this record may simply be a different Emma Fairchild. Second, it may be that the census enumerator did not speak directly to Emma—perhaps they gathered information from someone else in the household, and her race was either implied or

<sup>56</sup> Marriage License of John Haney and Emma Fairchild, Oklahoma Marriage Records, NARA.

<sup>57</sup> 1930 Census, Tulsa, Oklahoma, Enumeration District 12-47, Sheet 4B.

<sup>58</sup> 1917 Tulsa City Directory. Emma is also listed as a widow of “George” in 1919; in 1922, curiously, she is listed as a widow of “John.”

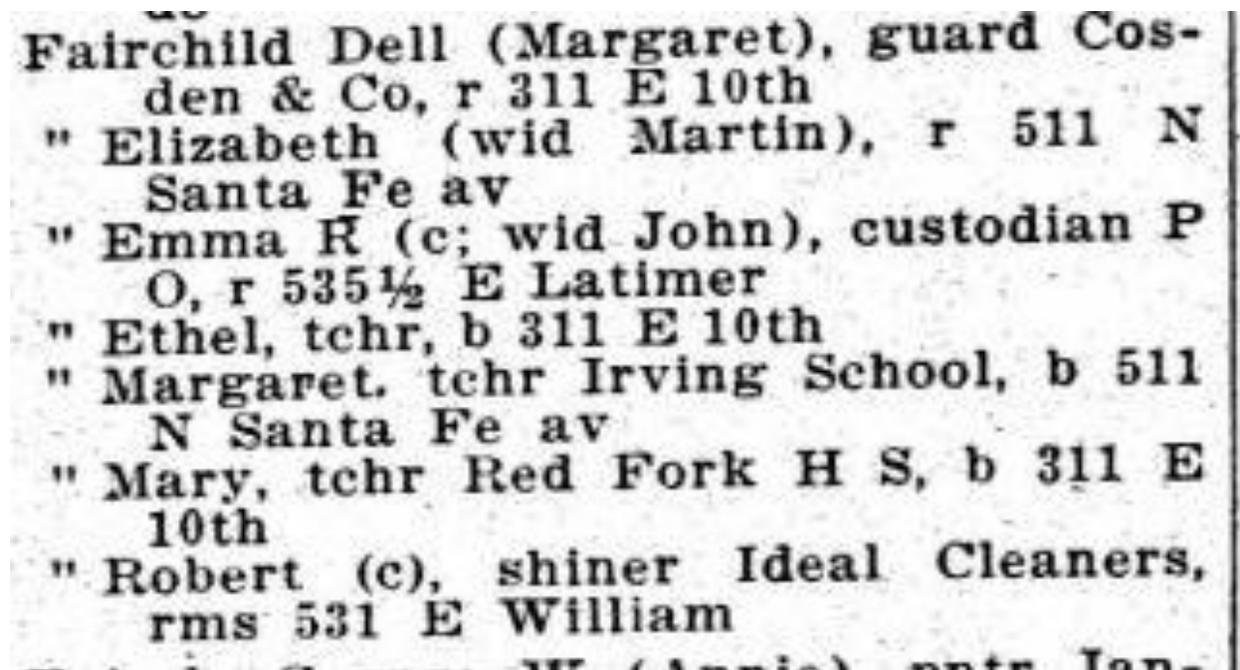


in John and Emma's case, this potential uncertainty in this part of their story illuminates some of the many ways that race and identity were (and remain) deeply complex. A couple like the Haney's had to face structural inequalities that held power to shape their experiences.

With his expertise in building, John Haney played a crucial, and hands-on role in rebuilding Greenwood. It is very likely that he carried bricks that were used in rebuilding Vernon AME after the massacre—his hands probably quite literally carried the bricks that kept this window secure.

By 1930, John and Emma had rebuilt their lives in Greenwood. They owned a home worth \$500 on North Lansing Street, and John was working as a building contractor (yet another indication that the 1920 census may be incorrect as to his age, but correct on other details). Emma was working as a laundress for a private family.

It seems likely that the family was separated during the 1930s, possibly due to John's failing health. In 1932, a Tulsa City Directory recorded John as living at 311 North Greenwood—at Vernon AME Church itself. He had helped to rebuild it, and it had taken him in. A John Haney who is of the correct age and was born in Arkansas is enumerated on the 1940 census as an inmate at the State Hospital for the Negro Insane.<sup>61</sup> As there are no further records, presumably he died there. In that year, Emma was living with her daughter, Ruth, who had become a school teacher, on Haskell Place. Emma was working as a "Janitoress" at the city Post Office. The census showed that Emma had worked 52 weeks of the year in 1939. She earned \$720.

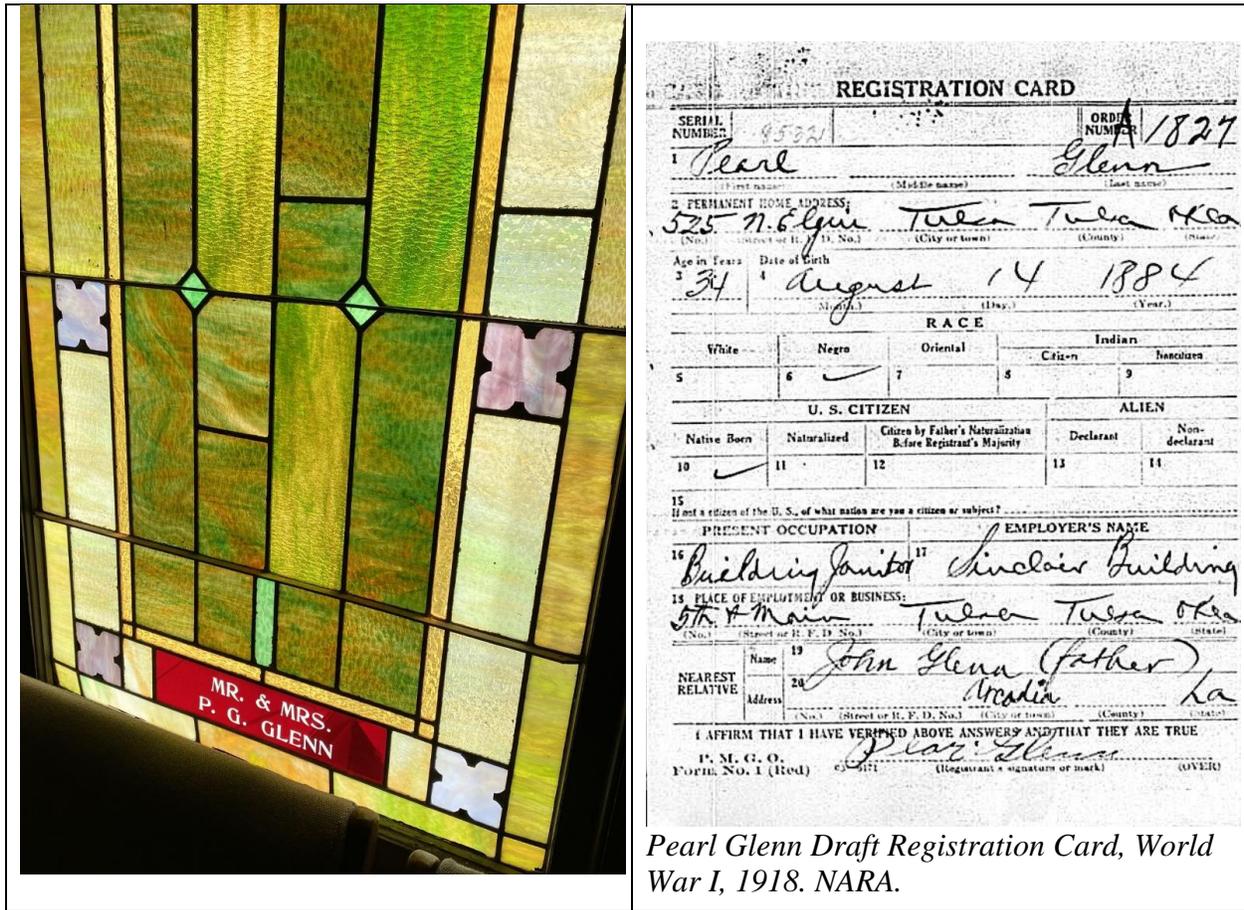


*1923 Tulsa City Directory, Emma R. Fairchild is identified as a widow of John Fairchild, and a custodian of the Post Office.*

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<sup>61</sup> 1940 Census, Muskogee, Enumeration District 58-8, page 4A.

Mr. & Mrs. P. G. Glenn



Pearl Glenn Draft Registration Card, World War I, 1918. NARA.

Pearl G. and Lillian Glenn were 34 and 26 years old, respectively, in 1920. He was from Louisiana, and working as a janitor in an office building—perhaps the Sinclair—at the time of the massacre. She was from Texas, and worked as a laundress and a maid.

There are some interesting discrepancies in the archival record: Pearl Glenn may not have known his exact birthdate. A draft registration card from the First World War places it on August 14, 1884; a draft registration from the Second World War advances it to July 10, 1889. While discrepancies in year are not uncommon, the discrepancy in day is somewhat anomalous.

Pearl’s work records show him moving frequently, perhaps in search of better remuneration. Between 1919 and 1935, he worked variously as a janitor and a porter in the Sinclair Building, the National Exchange Company, the Security National Bank, the Drew Building, and at least one private individual as a butler. By 1930, he and Lillian once again owned a home worth some \$3000, and a radio. They still owned their home in 1940, but its value had dropped to \$1200.

Without more information, it is difficult to say more about Pearl and Lillian—in this way, they exemplify the ordinary but no less important lives of Greenwood residents who quietly rebuilt

their lives, found meaning in their congregation, and left a small but indelible imprint on history about which there is undoubtedly more to be say—if only the sources can be found.

**REGISTRATION CARD—(Men born on or after April 28, 1877 and on or before February 16, 1897)**

SERIAL NUMBER U 1169	NAME (Print) PEARL (none) GLENN		ORDER NUMBER
PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print) 1436 N. Owasso St Tulsa OKla			
[THE PLACE OF RESIDENCE GIVEN ON THE LINE ABOVE WILL DETERMINE LOCAL BOARD JURISDICTION; LINE 2 OF REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE WILL BE IDENTICAL]			
3. MAILING ADDRESS Same			
4. TELEPHONE 46501	5. AGE IN YEARS 52	6. PLACE OF BIRTH Arcadia	
DATE OF BIRTH July 10 1889		(Town or county) La	
7. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS Will Glenn 536 E. Marshall St Tulsa			
8. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS J. F. Chapman at New Bldg 3 + Boston St Tulsa			
9. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS Same			
I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.			
D. S. S. Form 1 (Revised 4-1-42)	(over)	16-21630-2	Pearl Glenn (Registrant's signature)

Pearl Glenn, Draft Registration Card, World War II, 1942. NARA.



1920: daughters Sally and Eliza, ages 12 and 9 respectively, and son John, age 7. James was 42 years old in 1920; Anne was 29. James worked as a general laborer.<sup>62</sup>

Jefferson Jas	Head	M	42	W		Oklahoma
— Anne	Wife	F	29	W		Mississippi
— Sally	Daughter	F	12	J		Oklahoma
— Eliza	Daughter	F	9	J		Oklahoma
— John	Son	M	7	J		Oklahoma

1920 Census, Tulsa, Oklahoma – Jas [James] Jefferson, wife Anne [Anna], and children Sally, Eliza, and John.

Anne Jefferson's maiden name has not yet been identified, and marriage records for the Jefferson's have not yet been found. The only other clear record of the Jefferson's at this time are Tulsa City Directories, which note that James worked as a laborer (1923), a houseman (1929), and a butler (1930). In the 1930 listing, the Jefferson's were both working in the same household on East 21<sup>st</sup> street. Further research could certainly reveal who they worked for at this time, and therefore perhaps other details about their lives.

Jefferson Anna B Mrs maid 204 E 21st  
 " Grant (Etta) porter Motor Inn h1233 N Iroquois  
 av  
 " Hotel John P Jones mgr 318½ S Boulder av  
 " Jas (Anna B) butler 204 E 21st

1930 Tulsa City Directory – Jas [James] Jefferson appears to have been working as a butler, and wife Anna as a maid at the same address: 204 East 21<sup>st</sup> Street in Tulsa.

Jefferson Anna (wid Jas) h508 N Greenwood av

1935 Tulsa City Directory – Anna Jefferson is listed as the widow of Jas [James] and was living on Greenwood Avenue.

The case of the Jefferson window is a striking indication of how additional research may shed light on this already fascinating story. What would have been quite obvious to congregation members at the time of the Jefferson's donations to the rebuilding of Vernon is now something we must try to reconstruct. The details which will fill gaps in this story have surely survived in some form. The window bearing their name could not be a more fitting testament and tribute: whatever the details, the Jefferson's story is one of endurance—a legacy that survived against all odds.

<sup>62</sup> 1920 Census, Tulsa, Oklahoma, Enumeration District 255, Page 6B.

Jefferson Bryan W (Fay M), lab Home  
 Motor Co, r 307 N Grant, Sand  
 Spgs  
 " Edna D (c; wid Elward), dom, r  
 1207 N Kenosha av  
 " Ennis (c; Lelia), lab, r 1225 N Nor-  
 fork av  
 " Gertrude (c), nurse, rms 351 N  
 Hartford av  
 " Hotel, Mrs Lucille Carpenter mgr,  
 316 S Boulder av  
 " James (c; Anna), lab, r 514 Elgin pl  
 " Lee (c; Anna), dom 1211 Baltimore  
 av, r rear do  
 " Lizzie, b 1335 N Denver av  
 " School, 800 S Wheeling av

*1923 Tulsa City Directory – James Jefferson is recorded as a “lab[or]er” living with wife Anna on Elgin Place.*

## In Memory of my Mother Mrs. Amanda J. Counce by J. T. A. West



This window tells a generational story of hope and resilience. It also speaks profoundly to the challenges inherent in reconstructing stories that written historical records tended to obscure; Amanda J. Counce was a woman of mixed race, who married more than once. Her last name was one which census enumerators sometimes took great liberties with spelling. It is fortunate for us that her son, James Thomas A. West, became an educator, and made sure that her name was inscribed on a window. We thus have a frame through which to rediscover both of their stories.

James Thomas A. West was born in Waynesboro, Tennessee, on April 11, 1886. He was a graduate of public schools there—a beneficiary of the window during which Reconstruction policies following the Civil War created educational opportunities for Black students. West certainly took them. He was employed as a teacher at Booker T. Washington School at the time of the massacre. His is a widely discussed account; he recalled the first sounds of gunfire, the airplanes that flew overhead and dropped bombs on Greenwood, and the vicious, raging mob

outside. West was cornered in his home and ordered at gunpoint to join a group of men marched to the Convention Hall; likely, then, he was with or near S. M. Jackson during the events. Ever aware of his respectability, West later recalled asking, and being denied, a simple request to get his hat and shoes.

In a memory eerily similar to that of Eunice Cloman Jackson, West recalled that “While we were running,” he later stated in an interview, “some of the ruffians would shoot at our heels and swore at those who had difficulty keeping up.”<sup>63</sup>

West was a Convention Member at the State Farmers’ and Educational Congress, which assembled at Flipper-Key-Davis University in Tullahassee, Oklahoma in May of 1917. The purpose of the Convention was to urge Black Americans to be ready for service to the nation in the First World War. The statement of the Convention is, in retrospect, both inspiring and chilling. “No Negro has ever run from service, none have harbored treason in their hearts, and although our enemies would seem to suspect that we feel we have just reason for disloyalty, we recognize no condition in loyalty at this supreme hour of need,” members wrote. The concluding sentences of the statement capture, with deep-seated hope and realism, the conditions African Americans understood themselves to be facing as the nation went to war, weakening itself by segregating its troops, and the fervent belief that change *could be* on the horizon: “Co-operation means service in season and out of season, long hours and short pay, with often nothing in sight but the ‘well done’ of the appreciative few who have prophetic vision enough to look into the future and see the benefits accrue to those who shall yet rise up and call us blessed for the supreme sacrifices we have made.”<sup>64</sup>

J. T. A. West and other members of the Convention were not demanding special treatment; they were pleading for a chance to serve, and be recognized. Many African Americans were intentionally kept out of service; those who did serve were most often confined to menial positions, underpaid and overlooked. It is no wonder that so many returned home filled with the resolve to be treated with the respect deserved by veterans of what was then still to be the “War to End All Wars.” In hindsight, it was a fleeting dream that would not be realized; in 1917, there was still hope on the horizon. West and others optimistically and intentionally tried to advance that hope through education and uplift. In the bitter irony of history, they succeeded—and incurred the resentments of white neighbors who had fallen behind in the process.

J. T. A. West was an early member of the Vernon AME congregation. At the time of Booker T. Washington’s famed visit to Oklahoma in 1914, West was featured alongside other luminaries in local newspaper publications attesting to his standing in the state. At that time, he was serving as Principal of the “Colored schools at Claremore, Okla.”—a standing of special significance, as West was only 28 at the time, and had graduated from Walden University in Nashville just four years previously. The same article noted that in addition to his excellence in teaching science and

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<sup>63</sup> Quoted in Krehbiel, *Tulsa 1921*, 74.

<sup>64</sup> Muskogee (Oklahoma) *Muskogee Cimeter*, June 23, 1917.

serving as an instructor for normal examinations, he was “an excellent vocalist”—a tenor.<sup>65</sup> Though there is no clear record of it, with his vocal talents he may have been a member of the Senior Choir. In 1917, he delivered an address during Vernon’s Easter Service entitled “What Easter Should mean to Us.” He was joined in that service by R. T. Bridgewater and the Junior Choir—a clear snapshot of the congregation going about its services before 1921.<sup>66</sup>

The small glimpses of Amanda Counce’s life that we have through census records and her son’s dedication are illuminating. She was born in Tennessee, probably in February of 1851. It is unclear when she married for the first time, but West was certainly her husband’s last name. They had perhaps a dozen children together, but other details of their marriage remain elusive. He presumably he died before 1900, as when the federal census enumerated Amanda and her family in that year, she was married to an ore miner named Ciscero Counce, with whom she had a ten-year-old son named Harvey. Amanda indicated at that time that she had given birth to 13 children—10 of them were living, meaning she had lost three children. Four of her living children—almost certainly the youngest—were living with her and Ciscero. The oldest, a son named John West, was 21, followed by George and James—J. T. A. West—who was then 17. Interestingly, while J. T. A.’s older brother John was employed as school teacher in 1900, James was working as a day laborer, and he was not attending school, possibly indicating that the family was at the time actively engaged in saving the money to send him to Walden University.<sup>67</sup>

Wayne (or Waynesboro), Tennessee, is in the Western part of the state, near the southern border, not far from Alabama. While the Civil War divided Tennessee, the western half of the state leaned heavily in support of maintaining slavery. It is unknown if Amanda or Ciscero had been enslaved, but certainly this is possible. Amanda would have been a teenager when the war ended, and thus acutely aware of the changes it wrought for African Americans. She must surely also have witnessed its hardships and deprivations.

According to the census in 1900, Ciscero worked as an ore miner, while Amanda was not employed. Both could read; but, as noted on the census, Amanda could not write. It seems only likely that she thus strongly encouraged her children toward education, as so many parents who had witnessed slavery and understood the crucial value of education, did.

By 1910, it seems that Amanda and Ciscero had moved to Danville, Illinois. Ciscero worked as a laborer in a brick yard, but had improved the family’s circumstances; they owned their home, and Harvey worked alongside his father in the brick yard. By this point, Amanda had taken in at least one grandchild—a 7-year-old granddaughter, interestingly named Charlie West—who had been born in Illinois. This may indicate that the family had moved to be near another of Amanda’s children. While some other details appear to be slightly at odds on this census enumeration (Amanda’s age is given as 57, which would put her birth in 1853, rather than 1851) these are typical variations. One detail, however, seems starkly telling: in 1910, Amanda Counce

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<sup>65</sup> *Tulsa Star*, August 19, 1914.

<sup>66</sup> *Tulsa Star*, April 7, 1917.

<sup>67</sup> 1900 Census, Wayne, Tennessee, Enumeration District 0101, page 14.

reiterated to the census enumerator that she had given birth to 13 children, but by that date, only 9 of them were living. This almost certainly accounts for Charlie's presence in the home.<sup>68</sup>

Amanda and Ciscero probably remained in Danville, Illinois in 1920. The census that year recorded the couple living in a house on Western Avenue there, and noted Amanda as being 64 years old—almost certainly an underestimate. Her place of birth in this year was recorded as Kentucky, perhaps revealing an extra layer to the story of her heritage. Both of these variances are common in census records of this time period. (Ciscero's name was misspelled "Sissero," quite possibly just indicating a rather lazy census enumerator for Danville that year). An 11-year-old "daughter," Veler, lived with the Counce's at this time, but this is almost certainly a granddaughter or even a great-granddaughter—perhaps even one of Harvey's children.<sup>69</sup>

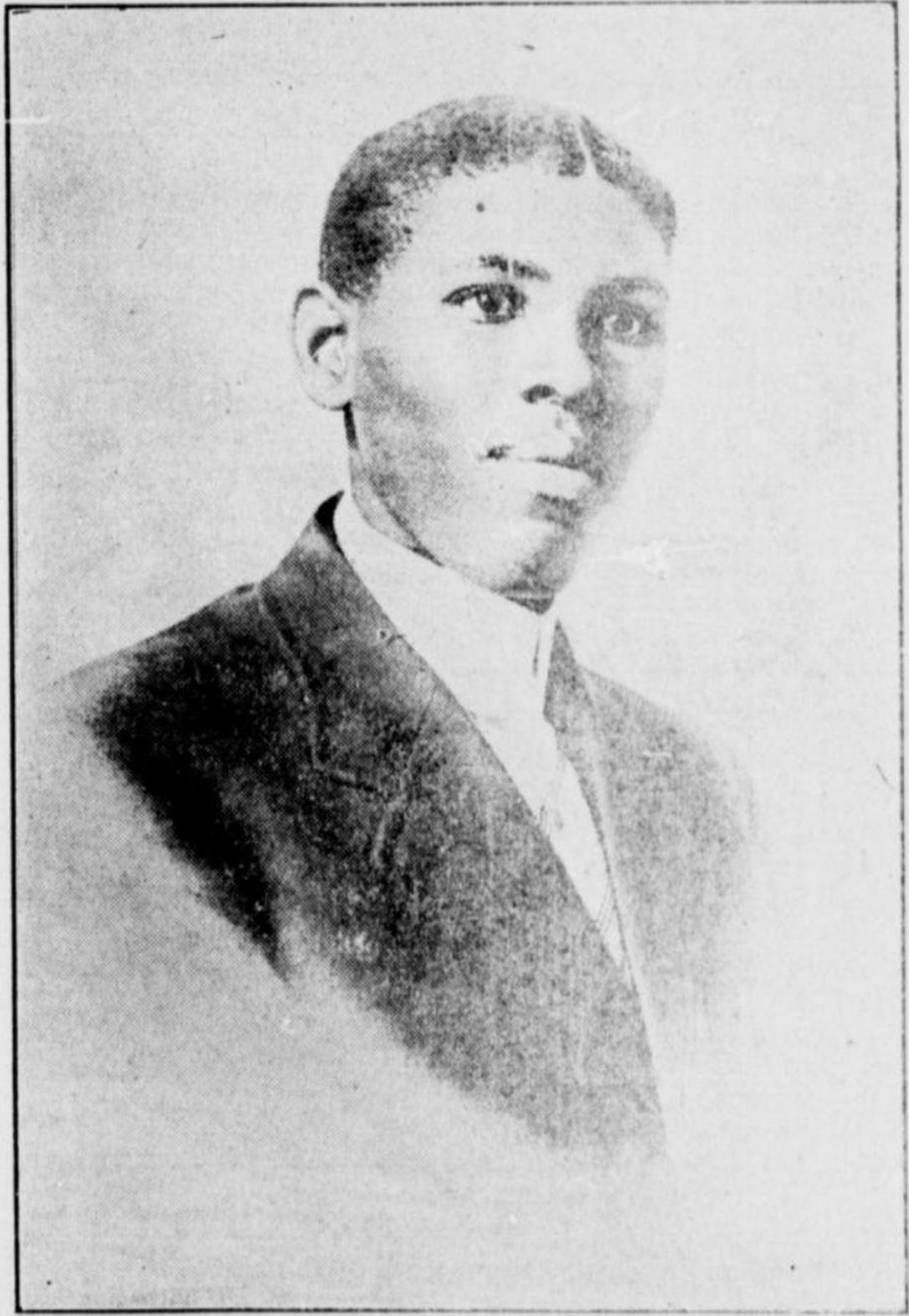
Race, as has been discussed, was a markedly plastic category where census taking was concerned in this time period, but it may be notable that the enumerator initially recorded the race of all three Counce family members as "Black"—before scribbling this out and clarifying that Veler was to be counted as "mulatto." Despite their ages, both Amanda and Ciscero were apparently working in the brick yard by this time (perhaps tellingly, the enumerator also recorded 11-year-old Veler as a "laborer"). They still owned their home, and in this were an anomaly in their neighborhood of renters.

In what must have been a triumph, in 1910 Amanda also reported to the census taker that she could read *and* write—we have no reason to doubt, with at least two sons who became teachers, that this was true.

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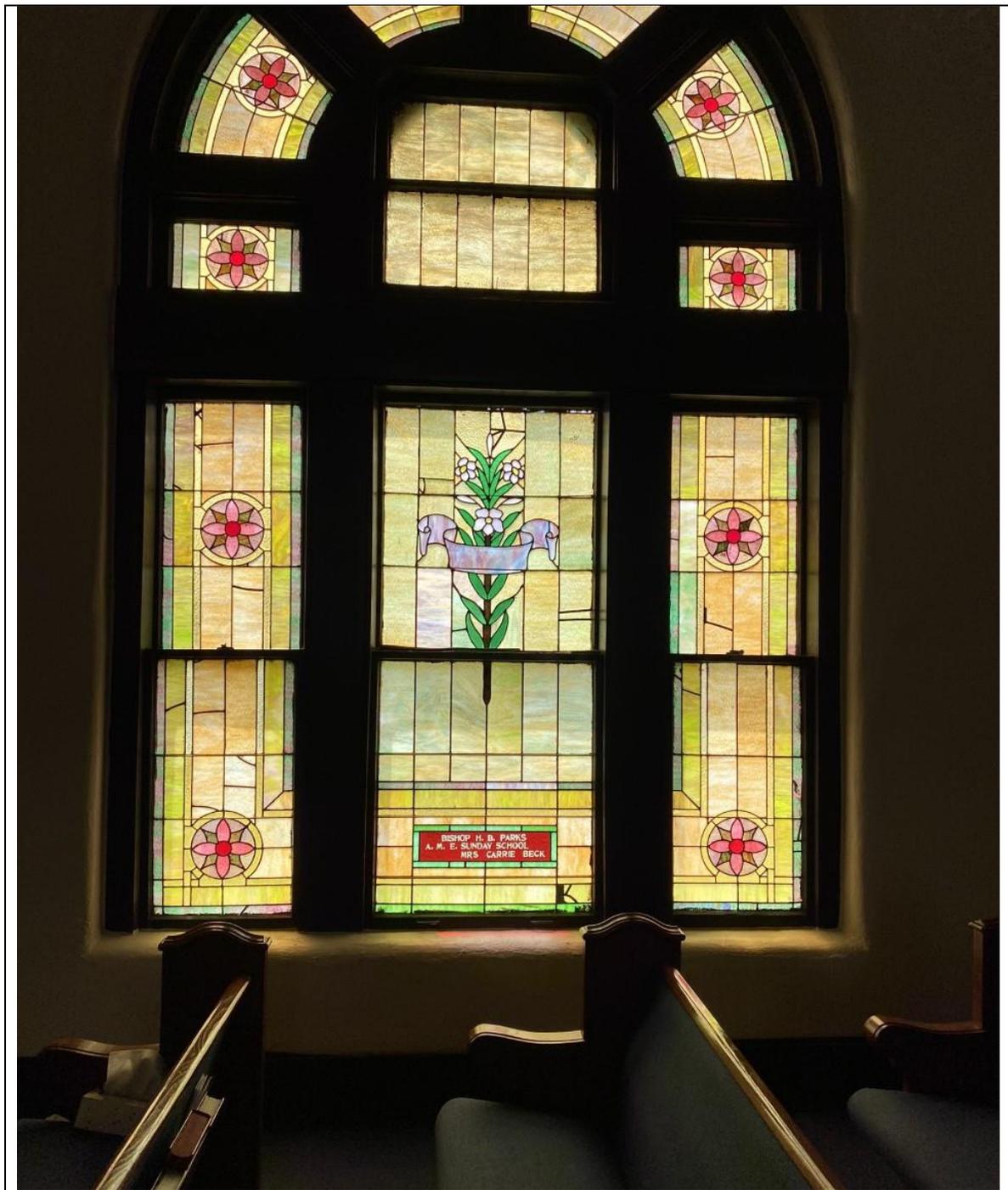
<sup>68</sup> 1910 Census, Danville, Vermillion County, Illinois, Enumeration District 0133, page 15 A.

<sup>69</sup> 1920 Census, Danville, Vermillion County, Illinois, Enumeration District 146, page 6 A.



*J. T. A. West, c. 1914, Tulsa Star, August 19, 1914.*

**Bishop H. B. Parks, A. M. E. Sunday School, Mrs. Carrie Beck**



This window represents the very foundations of the congregation. Bishop Henry Blanton Parks served the twelfth Episcopal district of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Mrs. Carrie Beck was a founding member and taught Vernon's very first Sunday School when the church still met in a 1-room house on North Detroit Avenue. Carrie saw the congregation through its beginnings, and its rising from literal ashes.

Henry Blanton Parks was born in 1856—by some accounts, fittingly on July 4<sup>th</sup>—in Georgia. “His father was a man remarkable for strong mental power and fervent piety” who read prolifically and taught himself Latin, and after emancipation became a pastor in the AME Church. He planned to send both of his sons to college. Tragically, Parks’ father died, and his brother drowned, leaving Henry as his mother’s only source of support. Despite these incredible odds, he managed to attain an education and become a teacher by the age of 18. After entering the ministry, he spent time in places as varied as New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Vicksburg, and Omaha, becoming Secretary of the Board of Home and Foreign Missions, a trustee of Wilberforce University, Chairman of the African Council, and author of two books on foreign missions.

In his role as Bishop of the twelfth Episcopal district, which included Oklahoma and Arkansas, H. B. Parks was tenacious and steady, providing needed leadership and perspective in times of profound discord in the United States and abroad. He was already nationally known by the time the Vernon congregation formed. He was elected a Bishop in 1908, and an account of his life, *The life and times of Rt. Rev. H.B. Parks, presiding bishop of the twelfth Episcopal district of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, appeared in print for the first time in 1909.<sup>70</sup> He is “regarded as one of the greatest orators and preachers of Methodism, regardless of race.”<sup>71</sup>

Bishop Parks was, by all accounts, exactly where he was needed in 1921. He was already known as a prolific fundraiser with an almost uncanny ability to eliminate debts. In the 1880s, he famously took the congregation of St. John’s Church in Topeka, Kansas, from owing \$5000 in debt to prosperity and a new church building estimated to cost some \$18,000.<sup>72</sup> This, of course, gains extra meaning in connection with the efforts to rebuild Vernon AME Church after the massacre—no doubt Parks played a significant role in advising the congregation and ensuring that they had the knowledge and understanding necessary to meet the demands of erecting a building that would continue to serve the community and stand the tests of time. That it and the window bearing his name have is, thus, a fitting tribute.

Bishop Parks was a man of action, becoming an organizer of the Bishop Henry McNeil Turner Crusaders of the 20th Century—a group of African American churchmen pledged to the support of missions in Africa through hands-on missions (rather than by subscriptions alone). The titles of his known written works reflect clearly this sense of mission: *Africa: The Problem of the New Century—the part the African Methodist Episcopal Church is to Have in its Solution* and *Bishop Abraham Grant's Trip to the West Coast of Africa: Reported to the Bishop's Council at Tawawa Chimney Corner, Wilberforce, Ohio, June 16th, 1899*. Parks was a knowledgeable advocate for

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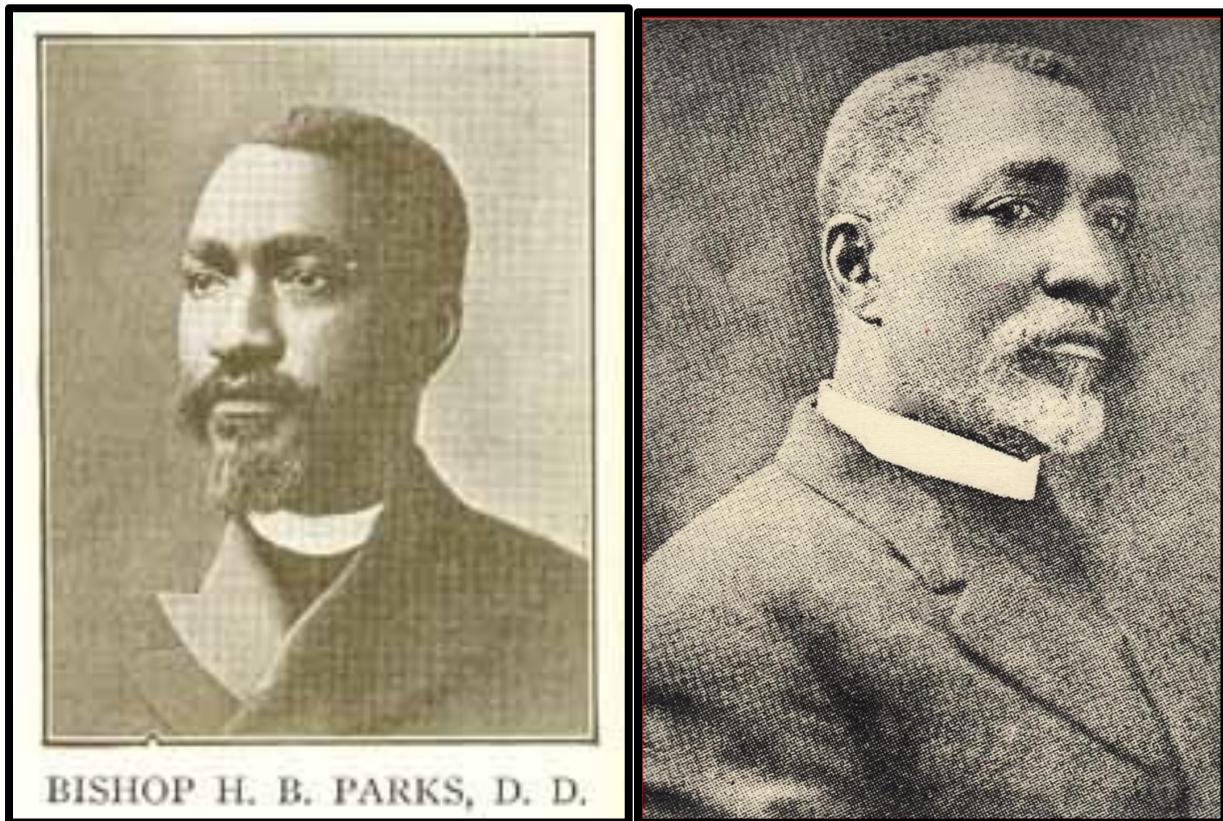
<sup>70</sup> T. W. Haigler, *The life and times of Rt. Rev. H.B. Parks, presiding bishop of the twelfth Episcopal district of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* (Nashville: A. M. E. Sunday School Union, 1909).

<sup>71</sup> Richard P. Wright, *Centennial Encyclopaedia of the African Methodist Episcopal MFC Church*, 1916, viewable at <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/152661580/henry-blanton-parks#view-photo=219152184>

<sup>72</sup> Rev. Horace Talbert, *The Sons of Allen: Together with a Sketch of the Rise and Progress of Wilberforce University, Wilberforce, Ohio*, 1906, viewable at <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/152661580/henry-blanton-parks#view-photo=219152188>

mission work and education in Liberia and Sierra Leone, and a vocal advocate of cooperation—as he worded it, of “Two races hand in hand for mutual good.”<sup>73</sup>

During his life, then, Bishop H. B. Parks witnessed directly the hope for racial equality and uplift that occurred in the wake of the Civil War; the failures of Reconstruction; the development of new territories, and then states, in the West; the deep-seated disillusionment that led some African Americans to call for migration to Africa and the establishment of independent states there; and the renewed hopes that continued to burn even in the wake of the First World War. He ultimately returned to Georgia, where he died in 1936.<sup>74</sup>



*Bishop Henry Blanton Parks, c. 1906, from Sara J. Duncan, Progressive Missions in the South and Addresses with Illustrations and Sketches of Missionary Workers and Ministers and Bishops' Wives. Atlanta, Ga.: The Franklin Printing and Publishing Company, 1906. Public Domain.*

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<sup>73</sup> Rev. H. B. Parks, D. D., *Africa: The Problem of the New Century—the part the African Methodist Episcopal Church is to Have in its Solution* (New York: Board of Home and Foreign Missionary Department of the A.M.E. Church, 1890), viewable at <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100629176>; Rev. H. B. Parks, *Bishop Abraham Grant's Trip to the West Coast of Africa: Reported to the Bishop's Council at Tawawa Chimney Corner, Wilberforce, Ohio, June 16th, 1899* (New York: Board of Home and Foreign Missionary Department of the A.M.E. Church, 1899), viewable at <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100655057>. Both of these works are currently held by Emory University collections, and can be viewed in their digital collections.

<sup>74</sup> A concise biography of Parks can be found online at <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/152661580/henry-blanton-parks>

Carrie Beck's life is less prolifically documented, but her contributions to the history of Vernon no less profound. Carrie seems to have been born in 1879 or 1880, near Coo Wee Scoo Wee, part of the Cherokee Nation in Indian Territory. Details of her early life are sparse, but we can surmise that she had at least one Cherokee grandparent, as a Cherokee Census in 1896—one of the clearest documents regarding her life—recorded that she was one-quarter Cherokee by blood.<sup>75</sup> Little else is known of Carrie's parentage, but the information that is available suggests that her ancestry traces to slaves held by Cherokee people at the time of removal to Indian Territory. Further research may reveal additional information, including whether or not the family received allotments during the parceling out of Indian Territory under the Dawes Act.

Carrie appears to have been married by the age of 16, which would have been relatively common for that place and time. She wed her husband, Charles Beck, who was also of Afro-Cherokee heritage, sometime in 1895. The couple seem to have had three children by 1900, the eldest of whom, Belle, was likely born within the first year of the marriage.<sup>76</sup> That she became a mother so young might explain Carrie's fondness for teaching Sunday School.

Much more research will be needed to further trace the details of Carrie's life—for now, we are at the mercy of the handwriting of others, who may have in the stroke of a pen recorded her as "Carrie" or "Corrie," "Beck" or "Peck" or "Buck." That there are no clear traces of her in the easily searched records beyond 1900 does not mean she was not there—only that extra examination will be needed to find her.

In searching, we must chase the ever-shifting classifications of race in turn-of-the-century America. For someone like Carrie, the matter of how her race was recorded was ever-subject to the whims and motivations of the observer; she might be variously recorded as "Cherokee," "Indian," "Mulatto," "Mixed," or "Black"—even, in certain contexts, as "white." In this uncertainty, Carrie represented forcefully the challenges of being a person with an ancestry as complex as that of the land in which she was born. During the course of her life, various external entities took it upon themselves to tell her where she did and did not belong. As an Afro-Cherokee, she was marginalized within her tribe. As a Black person, she was marginalized within her country. As a woman, she was marginalized within her community.

It is only fitting, then, that her name inscribed on a window testifies to her place within the congregation she cherished and devoted her energies to. Carrie found joy and meaning in the structure of the AME Church, in teaching Sunday School and nurturing the growth of others within this community. For Carrie, like Maggie Vaden, the decision to join the Vernon AME congregation represented a profound step in self-identification. While Indian Territory was dissolved and allocated to white newcomers, and Black Americans sought the political, social, and economic freedoms of the new state of Oklahoma, women like Carrie Beck chose to embrace their own powers of self-definition. As part Cherokee, they were deeply connected to

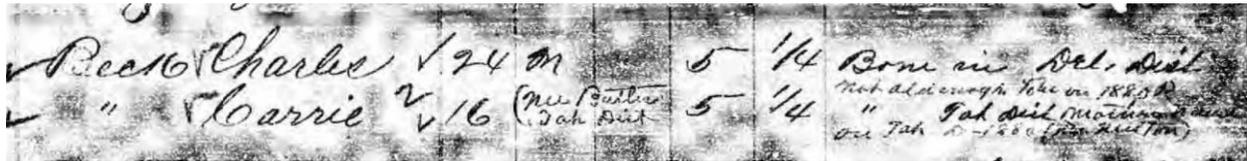
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<sup>75</sup> Census Rolls of the Cherokee Nation, Indian Territory, 1896, NARA.

<sup>76</sup> 1900 Census, Coo Wee Scoo Wee, Cherokee Nation, Indian Territory, Enumeration District: 0019, Page 31, NARA.

the land in which they lived—literal descendants of First Nations, they shared a fundamental tie to the continent that pre-dated European arrival. They had ties to the country before the United States had even been conceived as an idea. In this way, they were rooted to this land.

Yet by their ancestral descent from—as of now, based on the scarcity of available records—unknown African peoples, likely forced onto the shores of a new land without choice, they were indelibly marked as “other.” It is one of the deepest ironies of this history—certain Native peoples, exercising their own agency and seeking to adapt to the new power structures of the increasingly dominant United States, chose to enslave others. Some of the enslaved were African, and their descendants became part of the complex diaspora of all these nations. In Indian Territory, and then Oklahoma, continuous negotiations over belonging, and the power of definition, intrinsically changed the lives of ordinary people, like Carrie, who sought their own place in a complicated racial landscape. Turning to the AME church can be viewed as an act of specific agency. It represented a decision that Carrie and others like her made to join Tulsa’s larger Black community, and seek the comfort of belonging there.



*Charles and Carrie Beck, Census of Cherokee by Blood, 1896, Series 7RA-19, NARA.*

Carrie could not choose how others defined her, but her story is a most fitting one to conclude this story: she *chose* to belong to Vernon.

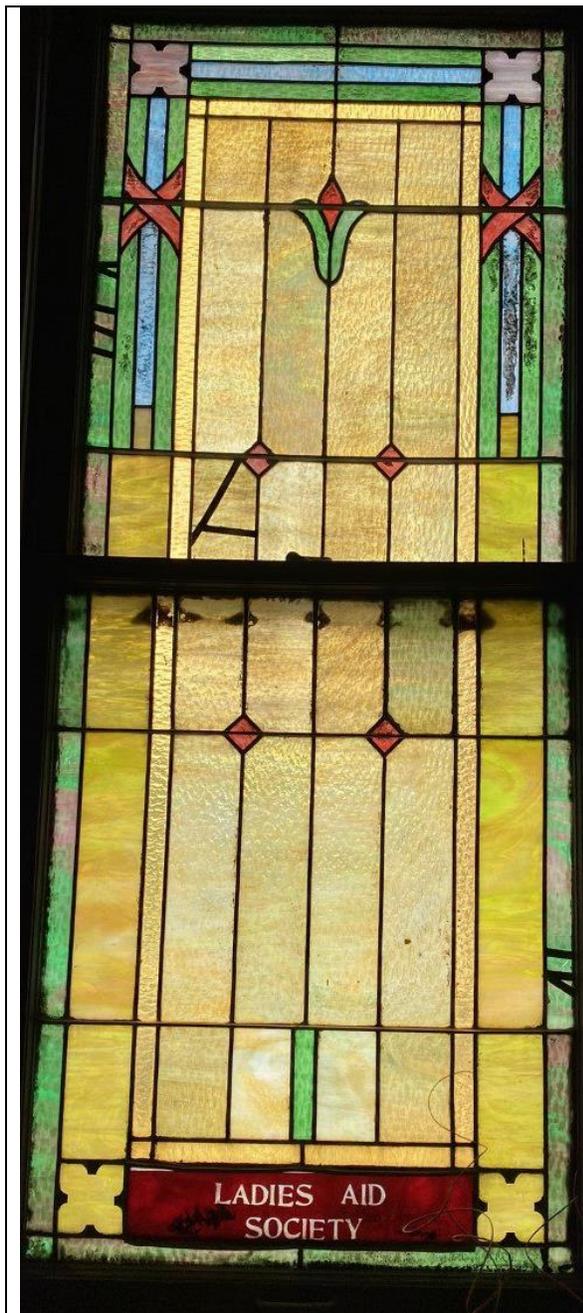
## Part II: Organizational Windows

In some ways, the windows representing groups and organizations that raised money for rebuilding Vernon are straightforward tributes—we know the names of the organizations, and we can state broadly what their connection to Vernon was. They existed before 1921, and, of course, continued after. The Junior and Senior Choirs were composed of members of the congregation, and performed at services; many of these performances were noted in local newspaper sources, such as *The Tulsa Star* while that publication was still in operation. Stewardesses were then and are now select groups of women who assist in the maintenance and comfort of the Reverend and the congregation. The Ladies Aid and W. H. & F. (Women’s Home and Foreign) Missionary Society represented a local branch of a national organization.

In other ways, these windows leave many unanswered questions. At this time, almost nothing is readily available in terms of allowing us to say who the individual members of these organizations were at the time of Vernon’s rebuilding. Details are no doubt contained in church records and the memories of the congregation—there are no doubt rich and valuable sources of information to pursue.

What we can say is this: each of these organizations was composed of individual members. As the vibrant history of the named windows indicates, they surely represented diverse, complicated, and strikingly personal narratives that deserve to be told in a more complete way than can be accomplished here. Like the windows themselves, they are no doubt a colorful and multifaceted collection of stories. And, like the windows themselves, they were tenacious and integral parts of what held the congregation together as it rebuilt.

## Ladies Aid Society



Ladies Aid Societies have existed in the United States since the Civil War, when they formed alongside Soldier's Aid Societies as part of congregational efforts to support Union troops. Traditionally, younger women formed the core membership, as they were able to travel to assist soldiers. Some worked "through local hospitals and community organizations, while others chose to organize independently." The Ladies Aid Society associated with Vernon AME Church, often simply referred to as "Ladies Aid," appears to have formed in 1918 in response to the First World War.

During 1918, there are numerous references in the *Tulsa Star* to Ladies Aid meetings in Tulsa, such as one that was reported on April 20, 1918, and included a drawing and prizes.

A house social with a drawing contest as the chief amusement will be held in the home of Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Stovall, 321 North Elgin. Two prizes will be awarded for the best drawing and for the worst. The Ladies' Aid will be hostess.

The last reference appears on March 13, 1920, when "The Ladies Aid met with Mrs. G. I. Johnson Friday afternoon."

The Ladies Aid met with Mrs. G. L. Johnson Friday afternoon.

The Vernon's Ladies' Aid represented one of many such societies.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>77</sup> While some sources indicate that these societies originated within the Presbyterian Church, they were formed in many congregations by the end of the American Civil War. <https://www.history.pcusa.org/caring-soldiers-and-freedmen-uscc-ladies%E2%80%99-aid-societies-page-4>

## Junior Choir



“Religious music constitutes one of the most important music types in black American culture. Since slavery, people of African origin have not only used religion as a means to cope with the degradation they suffered as a result of their forced entrance to the New World, but through religious music performances they have been able to physically and spiritually escape adverse living conditions that still exist today.”<sup>78</sup>

“Easter program by the Sunday school 3:00. Special music by the Junior choir.”<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Jacqueline Cogdell DjeDje, *Black American Religious Music from Southeast Georgia*, Folkways Records, 1983, viewable at <https://docplayer.net/54139215-Hynl-ns-spirituals-gospf-l-ensenl-ble-music-solo-music-folkways-records-fs-folkways-records-fs-34010.html>

<sup>79</sup> *Tulsa Star*, April 4, 1917.

Out of all the singing choirs of the state the Little Junior Choir is the outlaw. It sings all the songs that the other choirs sing, and then sings some that they can't sing. In remarking about the fowls of the air some few Sundays ago, Rev. R. A. Whitaker said the mocking bird was the outlaw singer because he sang all the songs that the other birds sang and then sang some they couldn't sing. What is true of the bird is true of the Junior.

*Tulsa Star*, April 13, 1918.

Easter Sunday Program for Vernon AME Church, reprinted in *Tulsa Star*, April 7, 1917.

Note the appearance of several names familiar throughout this report, including Dr. R. T. Bridgewater and J. T. A. West, in addition to both the Junior and Senior choirs.

C. R. Tucker.

Easter program by the Sunday school 3:00. Special music by ~~the~~ Junior choir.

Christian Endeavor at 3:30.

At 8:00 the following program will be rendered:

Voluntary—Miss Alice Rogers.

Apostle's Creed, led by Miss Rosa Hutcherson.

Hymn—All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name.

Invocation—Dr. R. T. Bridgewater.

Selection by the choir.

Scripture Lesson—Read by Mr. Vann.

Gloria Patri, led by the choir.

Piano solo—Mrs. Lucille Washington.

Easter Selection—Miss Marguerite Idelett.

Vocal Solo—Mrs. Bessie Burke.

Paper—Mrs. Lucy Vann.

Quartette—Booster Club.

Reading—The Appeal of the Secretary of Missions—Miss Annie Porter.

Address—What Easter Should mean to Us.—Prof. J. T. A. West.

Selection by the choir.

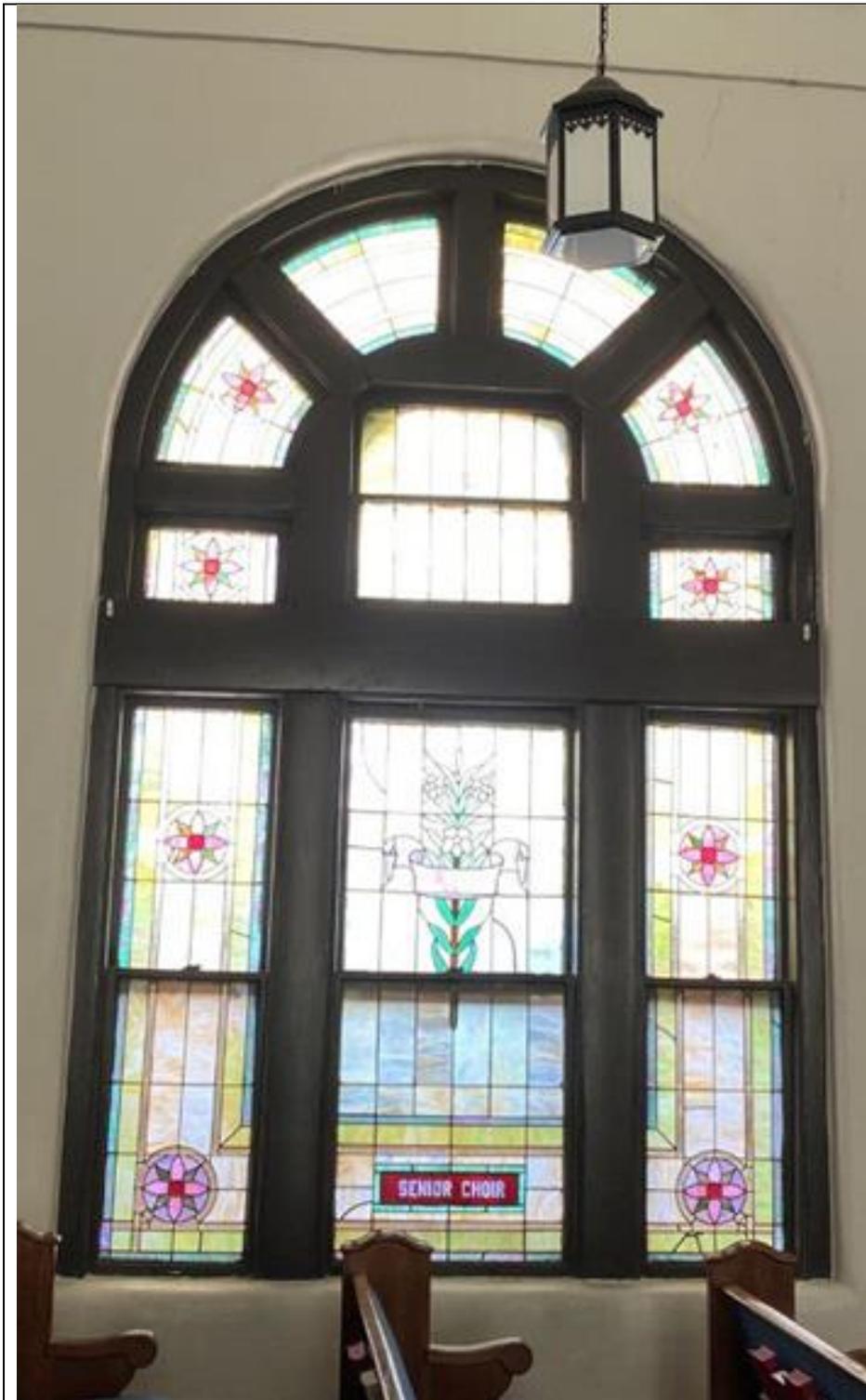
Announcements by the pastor.

Silver offering.

Doxology.

Benediction.

## Senior Choir



For as long as it had a congregation, Vernon no doubt had a choir. Further research is needed to document the names of those who were members of Vernon's senior choir over the years. No doubt of all the organizations represented on Vernon's windows, this one includes the greatest cross-section of members.

## Stewardesses No. 1



Stewardesses represented an important leadership organization within AME Church.

According to *The Doctrines and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, the Steward of a congregation could “appoint annually three or more female Members as Stewardesses whose duty it shall be to assist the Preacher’s Steward in making provisions for the support and comfort the Pastor and his family.” Each Stewardesses group elected its own President, Secretary, and Treasurer from among its members.

The significance of Vernon’s two Stewardess organizations is surely deserving of further research. Stewardesses continue to serve Vernon today. At one time, until at least 1915, Mrs. Bridgewater served as a Stewardess and represented Vernon at the AME Annual Conference.

As this note from the *Tulsa Star*, November 27, 1920 shows, fundraising was a familiar activity for Vernon’s Stewardesses.

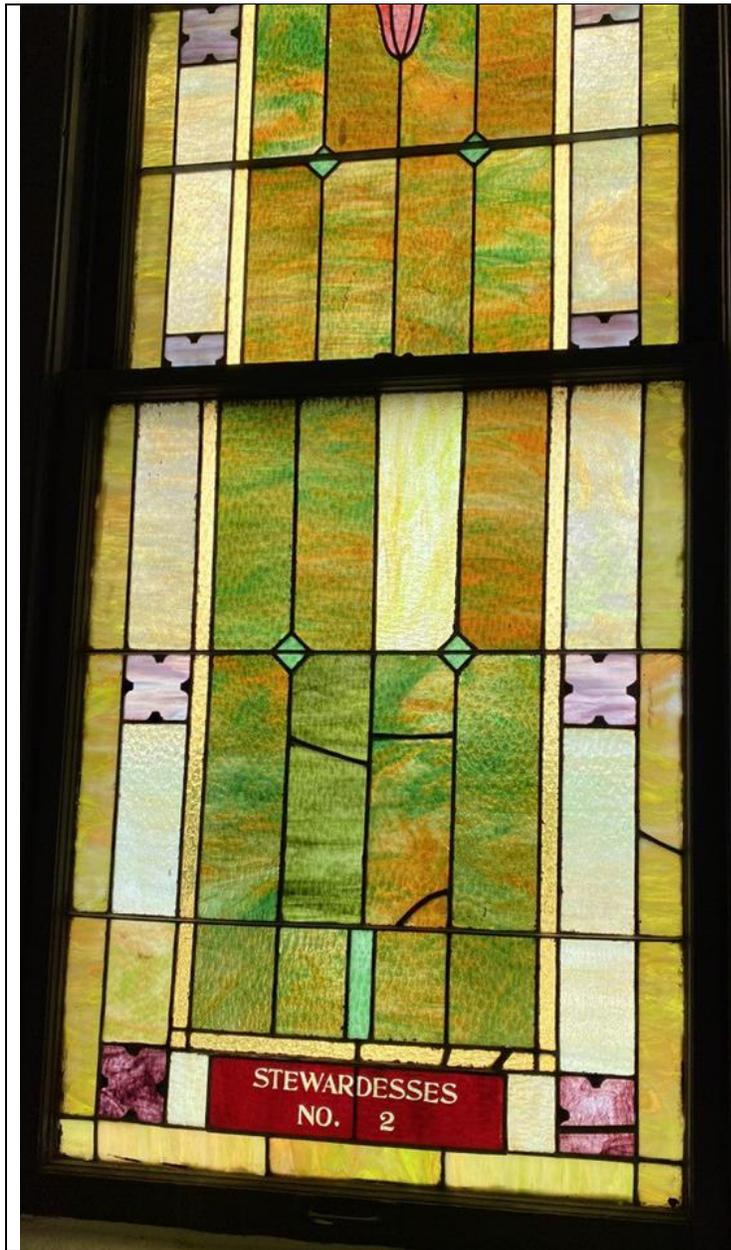
The Colored Taylor Glee Club of M. T. H. S. gave a very excellent concert at the A. M. E. Church for the benefit of the Stewardess Board.

Stewardesses are mentioned in books describing the operations of AME Churches dating back to at least 1876, and continue serving Vernon to this day.<sup>80</sup> Stewardesses of Vernon included, among others, Mrs. Bridgewater—this makes her one of several members who are represented on more than one window.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>80</sup> G. L. Blackwell, *The Doctrines and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church*, revised by the General Conference, Knoxville, Tennessee, 1920 (Charlotte: Zion Publication House, 1921), 373; see also Charles Spencer Smith, *A History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1856 – 1922* (Philadelphia: Book Concern of the AME Church, 1922), 81.

<sup>81</sup> *Tulsa Star*, October 23, 1915.

## Stewardesses No. 2



These windows represent the agency of Vernon's women. Stewardesses were regarded as "assistants to the minister's assistants, or a sort of ladies' auxiliary to the Stewards," and the formation of these offices both "enhanced their visibility" and "increased their authority."

It may, therefore, be significant that two Stewardesses groups are represented on Vernon's windows—it indicates the central role these women chose to take in rebuilding their congregation.

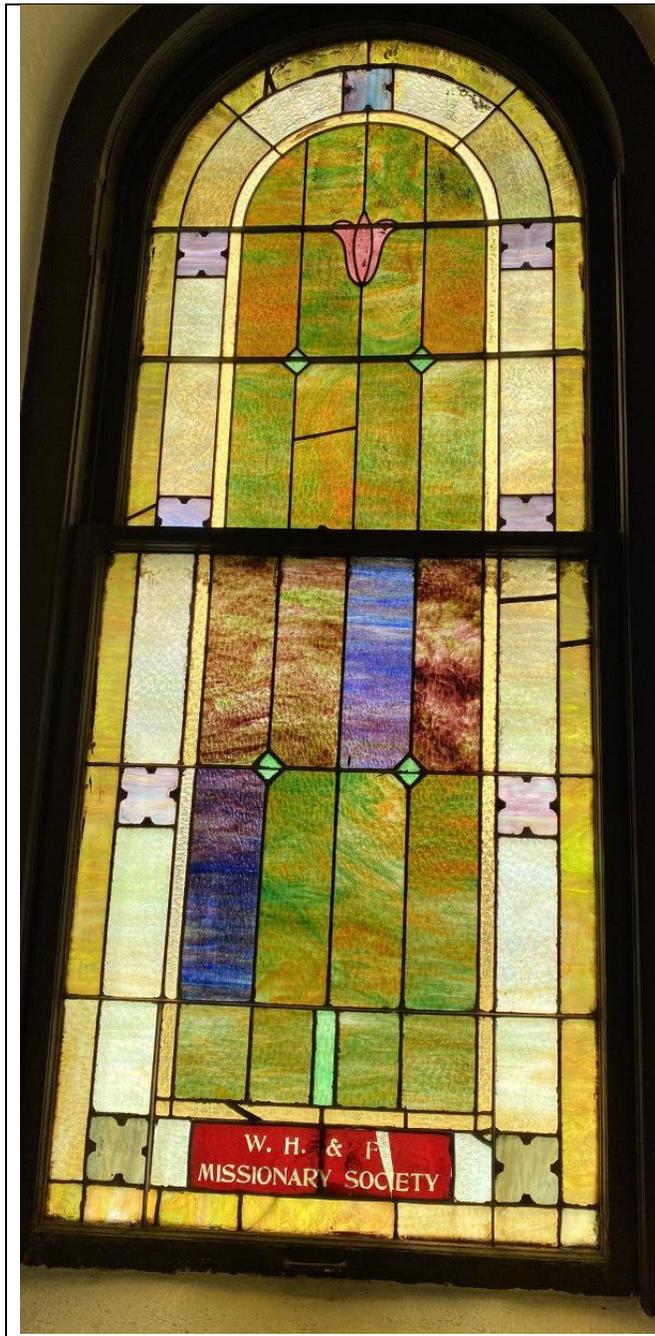
Small notes like this one, which appeared in the *Tulsa Star* on December 18, 1915, make clear that Stewardesses Board No. 2 had been in operation at Vernon for many years.

Stewardess Board No. 2 of A. M. E. church was entertained by Sister S. Rabon, Mondan.

The importance of Stewardesses, and the connections between their organization and the expansion of women's rights in the late nineteenth century, are a reminder that congregations, like the nation, grew and changed over time.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>82</sup> R. Marie Griffith and Barbara Diane Savage, eds., *Women and Religion in the African Diaspora: Knowledge, Power, and Performance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 136 – 137.

## W. H. & F. Missionary Society



The Women's Home and Foreign Missionary Society represented a local branch of a national organization. Founded in 1869 and incorporated in 1884, the organization raised funds for carrying out missionary work—as the name implies—throughout the world. For the congregation of Vernon AME, this would have truly represented international work. Several members of Vernon's congregation, including those named on windows, spoke in support of missionary efforts in Africa, and certainly these were pressing concerns in the increasingly global world of the early twentieth century.

WH&F Missions funded educational and health endeavors in many places, including the construction of schools, hospitals, and settlement houses.

This is a fitting window to conclude this report—as the WH&F Missionary Society sought to send their message around the world, so Vernon's windows allow light to shine on knowledge, understanding, and legacies that carry far beyond the physical building on Greenwood Avenue.

W. H. & F. Missionary Society of  
Ward's Chapele met with Mrs. Ethel  
Jackson Wednesday. Next week with  
Mrs. L. B. Mason.

*Tulsa Star*, December 18, 1915

Numerous sources discuss the formation and efforts of the Women's Home and Foreign Missionary Society. Further research will no doubt shed light on individual members of Vernon AME who participated in their work in Tulsa and around the world.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>83</sup> See, for instance, Frances J. Baker, *The Story of the Women's Home and Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1869 – 1895* (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1898).

## Conclusions

The findings in this report should be considered preliminary. They are starting points for further research, and reveal some cross-sections of the diverse, resilient, and vibrant congregation that has been Vernon AME Church for more than a century. As the stories of the men and women named on Vernon's windows indicate, the congregation represents in powerful ways the diversity that has always been part of Oklahoma's history.

The linkages between the Vernon AME congregation and Sovereign Nations, including the Cherokee, Creek, and Choctaw, reveal an important aspect of this story. Legal documents, including title information for the property, indicate that the church is, in fact, built on land that was a Cherokee allotment.

The names of church members recorded on the windows at Vernon represent direct and family ties to more than a dozen American states, and at least two Native American Nations. They represent economic backgrounds ranging from slavery to prosperity. They operated a broad spectrum of businesses, raised families, and committed their time in various ways to building the community of Greenwood.

One key finding of this report is the central significance of women in every effort, from establishing the original congregation of Vernon, to its outreach efforts across many decades. The rebuilding of both the church building and the community following the events of 1921 was a significant and meaningful part of this effort.

Numerous women contributed substantially to the funds that paid for the physical building. Several, including Maggie Vaden, ran businesses that helped Greenwood once again rise to prominence in the 1930s and 1940s—another story deserving of further investigation. Women also served in organizations that substantially contributed to rebuilding—as stewardesses, fundraisers, missionaries, and supporters. It is clear, even from these brief findings, that the women of Vernon had agency and played decisively active roles.

The men and women represented on Vernon's historic stained-glass windows left a legacy—one that reaches far beyond a building, but is forever imprinted there.

## Fundraising Recommendation

Our top fundraising suggestion, which emerged through site visits and discussions with members of Vernon AME Church, is to brand this square of class, which is present as a design element of all of the windows:

	<p>A common Art Deco-era motif, the square is simple, yet strong. It represents a foundation.</p> <p>This image will be easy to reproduce in a variety of materials, and is instantly recognizable as an element of the windows at Vernon.</p> <p>It lends itself to a variety of mediums, and would be possible to brand.</p> <p>It represents, in a fundamental way, the basic shape of a cross.</p>
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We chose this specific square because it would allow those with an interest in supporting the maintenance of Vernon to hold an item that represents the windows, but does not detract from their significance by trivializing the names or other design elements of the windows.

Items that might be branded drawing on the square might include commissioned art pieces, stickers, stationary, jewelry items, ornaments, bookmarks, and a host of other items which lend themselves to a variety of price-points.

Finally, the square could be reproduced in glass and other mediums that would, indeed, allow light to shine through.

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