

## Vital Data, African American Legislators

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Full name: **John William Boyd**

Parent(s):

Philip Boyd and Sophia Fields Boyd

Date of Birth:

ca. 1852

Place of Birth:

Tipton County, Tennessee

Born slave or free:

Slave of Henry Sanford and Jean Murray Feild Sanford

Education: Probably learned reading, writing, and basic mathematics skills during slavery; worked as a store clerk as a young man; read law, was admitted to the Covington Bar Association

Dates of Legislative service:

42<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly (1881-1882); 43<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly (1883-1884)

Representing

Tipton County

Private Career:

Served as a magistrate on the county court for 30 years; also maintained a private law practice.

Achievements:

Served as a county court magistrate until 1906, well past the time when most other African Americans were able to win county or municipal elections.

Religious affiliation:

Boyd's mother Sophia was Presbyterian, had her children baptized in Covington Presbyterian Church; wife Mattie was Episcopalian (St. Paul Episcopal Church); Boyd & his brother were Methodists (now Alexander's Chapel Methodist Church)

Spouse:

Martha C. "Mattie" Doggett

Children:

None of their children survived to adulthood.

Date of Death:

March 10, 1932 (at about 80 years of age)

Place of Death:

Mason, Tipton County, Tennessee – buried in Magnolia Cemetery, Mason.

## Vital Data, African American Legislators

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Full name: **Thomas Frank Cassels**

Parent(s):

Thomas J. Cassels and Frances L. Woodson Cassels

Date of Birth:

ca. 1845

Place of Birth:

Berlin Crossroads, Jackson County, Ohio

Born slave or free:

Free – his community was an active location on the Underground Railroad.

Education:

Probably took preparatory classes at Oberlin College as a young boy; studied law.

Dates of Legislative service:

42<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly (1881-1882)

Representing

Memphis, Shelby County

Private Career:

Attorney; newspaper editor

Achievements:

First African American admitted to the bar in Memphis; first African American to plead before the Supreme Court of West Tennessee; represented Ida B. Wells in her original lawsuit against the railroads.

Religious affiliation:

Congregational church.

Spouse:

Emma Frances Lett, a teacher and school principal.

Children – two sons:

Clinton Cassels, b. 1871, Ohio; died young.

Francis DeWitt Cassels, b. 1873, Kentucky; died January 30, 1899.

Date of Death:

April 2, 1903 (tuberculosis, age 58)

Place of Death:

Memphis, Shelby County, Tennessee

## Vital Data, African American Legislators

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Full name: **Greene E. Evans**

Parent(s):

Alfred Evans and Adelia (maiden name unknown)

Date of Birth:

September 18, 1848

Place of Birth:

Degraffenreid plantation, Fayette County, Tennessee

Born slave or free:

Slave of B. B. Degraffenreid; later of Dr. Solomon and Sarah Degraffenreid Green.

Education:

Paid someone to teach him to read after the Civil War; took night school classes at Tade's Academy in Memphis after work; Fisk University

Dates of Legislative service:

44<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (1885-1886)

Representing

Memphis/Shelby County.

Private Career:

Worked as deputy wharf-master in Memphis; ran a coal and wood yard; was Memphis city councilman (elected to seat previously held by Nathan Bedford Forrest), census enumerator (1880), and mail agent for steamship line; coal dealer in Chicago.

Achievements:

Sang bass in the first group of Fisk Jubilee Singers.

Religious affiliation:

Unknown

Spouse:

Anna G. (maiden name unknown)

Children:

One daughter, name unknown.

Date of Death:

October 1, 1914 (age about 66)

Place of Death:

Chicago, Cook County, Illinois

## Vital Data, African American Legislators

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Full name: **William Alexander Feilds**

Parent(s):

Father unknown; mother, Sophia Fields Boyd.

Date of Birth:

1852

Place of Birth:

Fisherville, Shelby County, Tennessee

Born slave or free:

Slave of Jean Feild Sanford, Haywood County

Education:

Unknown, but he probably received a basic education during slavery. Many families in that area of West Tennessee believed in educating their slaves.

Dates of Legislative service:

44<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (1885-1886)

Representing

Shelby County

Private Career:

Teacher and school principal (5<sup>th</sup> District, Shelby County); Notary Public, census enumerator, Justice of the Peace, and Magistrate.

Achievements:

After Feilds' death the Shelby County Court published a resolution honoring his years of service on the Court; One of William Feilds' descendants is actress/singer Vanessa Williams, whose story was featured on the NBC genealogy series *Who Do You Think You Are?* in February 2011.

Religious affiliation:

Unknown

Spouse:

Elizabeth "Lizzie" Fields (b. 1854, another Feild slave, not a relative)

Children:

At least six: Mary, Cyrus W. (who became a Buffalo soldier), Estella, Luther, Ida, and Bland.

Date of Death:

September 9, 1898 (age 46)

Place of Death:

Shelby County, Tennessee

## Vital Data, African American Legislators

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Full name: **Monroe W. Gooden**

Parent(s):

Monroe Gooden Sr.; mother's name is unknown.

Date of Birth:

May 10, 1848

Place of Birth:

Fayette County, Tennessee

Born slave or free:

Slave, probably of Dr. Frederick Harwell

Education:

Unknown – many of the area's slave owners did teach their slaves to read.

Dates of Legislative service:

45<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (1887-1888)

Representing

Fayette County – he was the only African American Democrat elected to the General Assembly during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Private Career:

Property owner, farmer, and cotton ginner.

Achievements: Owner of at least 1000 acres of prime farmland, Gooden ended up in possession of the very plantation on which he had once been a slave. He was widely respected in Fayette County and was one of the three school directors for Civil District 5.

Religious affiliation:

Baptist – he was a trustee of the Williamson Chapel Missionary Baptist Church; he also belonged to an African American lodge of the Freemasons.

Spouse:

Ann Baskerville (former slave of Rev. John Tabb Baskerville)

Children:

Seven: Mary, Monroe J., John, James, Lillie Bell, and Willa Ola (by Ann Baskerville Gooden); and Frank (by Mollie Coe).

Date of Death:

January 19, 1915 (age 67, of an “aortic obstruction”)

Place of Death:

Fayette County, Tennessee

## Vital Data, African American Legislators

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Full name: **Jesse M. H. Graham**

Parent(s):

Monroe Houston Graham; mother's name is unknown. A number of newspaper stories of the period claimed that Monroe Graham was the natural child of Sam Houston.

Date of Birth:

February 8, 1864

Place of Birth:

Nashville, Davidson, Tennessee, or Clarksville, Montgomery, Tennessee.

Born slave or free:

Free – a newspaper report says that neither of his parents was ever in slavery.

Education:

Graduated from high school in Clarksville; received Peabody Scholarship to Fisk University, where he was said to be a gifted student of mathematics.

Dates of Legislative service:

Elected to 50<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (1897-1898) but was not permitted to take his seat, having been disqualified because of residency requirements.

Representing

Montgomery County

Private Career: School teacher, post office employee, newspaper editor, military officer; employee of U.S. Bureau of Audit

Achievements: Conducted the Clarksville brass band and played slide trombone; served in the Spanish American War; selected for Army officer training for World War I; served in the 317<sup>th</sup> Infantry Engineers.

Religious affiliation:

Methodist: belonged to St. Peter's African Methodist Episcopal Church, Clarksville.

Spouse:

Anna E. Murfree (died young); Geneveva (or Genoveva) Garcia.

Children:

None known.

Date of Death:

July 25, 1930 (age 66)

Place of Death:

Washington, D.C. – he is buried in Arlington National Cemetery, Sec. 4, Lot 2735.

## Vital Data, African American Legislators

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Full name: **William C. Hodge**

Parent(s):

Unknown

Date of Birth:

ca. 1846

Place of Birth:

North Carolina

Born slave or free:

Unknown

Education:

Unknown

Dates of Legislative service:

44<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (1885-1886)

Representing

Hamilton County

Private Career:

Stone cutter, contractor, house mover, city jailer; alderman, night mail transfer agent at the railroad depot; alderman for the 4<sup>th</sup> Ward of Chattanooga.

Achievements:

Unknown – available information about Hodge is sparse and unreliable.

Religious affiliation:

Unknown.

Spouse:

Lou (maiden name unknown)

Children:

1880 Census lists three sons: Walter, Fred, Eddie, but an 1885 news article reports that “Hon. & Mrs. W. C. Hodge of Chattanooga, mourn the loss of their only child,” so the census record evidently refers to another man with the same name.

Date of Death:

Unknown

Place of Death:

Unknown

## Vital Data, African American Legislators

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Full name: **Leonidas (Leon) Howard**

Parent(s):

Father unknown; Mother: Ellen Howard (maiden name may have been Faulkner)

Date of Birth:

1849

Place of Birth:

Tennessee

Born slave or free:

Unknown, probably slave

Education:

Unknown – he was listed as illiterate in the 1870 census.

Dates of Legislative service:

43<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly (1883-1884)

Representing

Shelby County

Private Career:

Porter at Gayoso Hotel, cook, janitor at Customs House, clerk; partner in firm Odeneal & Howard, which owned a boarding house; later worked as a janitor in Bakersfield, California.

Achievements:

Unknown.

Religious affiliation:

Unknown.

Spouse:

Estella Bryand.

Children:

Six: Leon S., Blakemore, Henry B., Annie P., Wilbur S., Irma.

Date of Death:

ca. 1915 (at about 65)

Place of Death:

Bakersfield, Kern County, California



## Vital Data, African American Legislators

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Full name: **Styles Linton Hutchins**

Parent(s):

William Dougherty Hutchins; unknown mother

Date of Birth:

November 21, 1852

Place of Birth:

Lawrenceville, Gwinnett County, Georgia

Born slave or free:

Free – his father was a freeman working as a barber before the Civil War.

Education:

Early education unknown; graduated from Atlanta University; earned law degree from University of South Carolina, admitted to the bar of South Carolina, Georgia (first African American admitted to the Georgia bar), Tennessee, and Illinois.

Dates of Legislative service:

45<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (1887-1888)

Representing

Hamilton County

Private Career:

Attorney, barber

Achievements:

Founder of the National American Colonization Organization. He and his law partner took a Chattanooga lynching case to the Supreme Court, receiving a favorable ruling in a landmark case still studied in law schools.

Religious affiliation:

Unknown

Spouse:

Clara Thomas (divorced 1883); Mattie (maiden name unknown); perhaps one other

Children:

A son, Styles Jr. (b 1893), and a daughter, Viola (b 1887). We are not certain who their mother was – there is a tombstone for a Dora Hutchins, d 1895 at 27; on his marriage application, Styles Jr. listed his mother's name as "Cora."

Date of Death:

September 7, 1950 (age 98!)

Place of Death:

Mattoon, Coles County, Illinois (buried in Dodge Grove Cemetery, Mattoon)

## Vital Data, African American Legislators

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Full name: **Sampson Wesley Keeble**

Parent(s):

Sampson W. Keeble; Mary or Nancy Keeble (maiden name unknown)

Date of Birth:

1833

Place of Birth:

Rutherford County, Tennessee

Born slave or free:

Slave of Horace Pinkney Keeble

Education:

Probably learned to read during slavery; read law in a law office where he worked as a custodian.

Dates of Legislative service:

38<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (1873-1874)

Representing

Davidson County

Private Career:

Newspaper “roller boy” in his youth; barber; owned a boarding house and the Rock City Barber Shop; later magistrate, teacher.

Achievements:

On the board of directors of the Colored Agricultural and Mechanical Association and the Nashville Freedmen’s Savings and Trust Company Bank.

Religious affiliation:

Baptist – his funeral was conducted by the Rev. Nelson G. Merry at the First Colored Baptist Church in Nashville.

Spouse:

Harriet (maiden name unknown), who died in 1870; Rebecca Cantrell Gordon.

Children:

One son, Samuel “Thomas” from his first marriage; a daughter, Jeannette, and a son, Sampson W. Jr., from his second.

Date of Death:

1887 (at 54)

Place of Death:

Nashville, Davidson County, Tennessee; buried in Greenwood Cemetery, Nashville.

## Vital Data, African American Legislators

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Full name: **Samuel Allen McElwee**

Parent(s):

Robert McElwee; Georgiana (maiden name unknown)

Date of Birth:

ca. 1858

Place of Birth:

Madison County, Tennessee

Born slave or free:

slave

Education:

Taught to read by his master's children during slavery; attended Oberlin College for one year; studied privately with a Vanderbilt student; received a Peabody Scholarship to Fisk University; law degree from Central Tennessee College.

Dates of Legislative service:

43<sup>rd</sup>, 44<sup>th</sup>, and 45<sup>th</sup> General Assemblies (1883-1888)

Representing

Haywood County

Private Career:

Attorney; newspaper editor.

Achievements:

First African American to serve three terms in the General Assembly; first African American to be nominated for Speaker of the Tennessee House of Representatives; temporary chairman of State Republican Convention and delegate to National Convention, 1888.

Religious affiliation:

Methodist

Spouse:

First wife unknown (d 1885); second wife, Georgia M. Shelton

Children:

Two children from his first marriage, gender unknown, raised by his wife's parents; two daughters from his second marriage: Ethel and Helen. (Four other children from the second marriage died in infancy.)

Date of Death:

October 21, 1914 (about age 56)

Place of Death:

Chicago, Cook County, Illinois

## Vital Data, African American Legislators

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Full name: **Isham (Isaac) Franklin Norris**

Parent(s):

Unknown

Date of Birth:

October 15, 1851

Place of Birth:

Tennessee

Born slave or free:

Unknown

Education:

Unknown

Dates of Legislative service:

42<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly (1881-1882)

Representing

Shelby County

Private Career:

Coal and wood dealer; managed grocery store; ran livery stable and Southern Transfer Moving Company in Seattle

Achievements:

Active in local civic affairs in Tennessee, Oklahoma, and Washington; frequently mentioned in newspapers in all three places.

Religious affiliation:

Unknown

Spouse:

Stella R. Butler

Children:

Five sons: Ira Franklin, Percy Fernandis, Carl Love, Claudius Daniel, Wendell Bryant

Date of Death:

September 23, 1928 (age 77)

Place of Death:

Seattle, King County, Washington

## Vital Data, African American Legislators

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Full name: **David Foote Rivers**

Parent(s):

Unknown father; mother was Edmonia Rivers, a free woman of color.

Date of Birth:

July 18, 1859

Place of Birth:

Montgomery, Montgomery County, Alabama

Born slave or free:

Free

Education:

Unable to read until the age of 19, when he first attended high school; won Peabody Scholarship to Roger Williams University in Nashville where he earned a degree in theology.

Dates of Legislative service:

43<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly (1883-1884)

Representing

Fayette County (He was elected to a second term but was driven out of the county by white supremacists and was not permitted to serve his term.)

Private Career:

Taught theology at Roger Williams University; later a minister.

Achievements:

Frequent public speaker; served his Washington, D.C., church for more than 40 years. One of his sons was a member of the New York General Assembly and the first black justice of the City Court of New York.

Religious affiliation:

Listed as Methodist in General Assembly data, but was actually Baptist – he was minister of the Metropolitan Baptist Church in Kansas City, Kansas, and then of the Berean Baptist Church in Washington, D.C., for many years.

Spouse:

Silene Gale

Children:

Three sons – David G., Mark E., and Ellis F.; one daughter, Eleanor.

Date of Death:

July 5, 1941 (age 82)

Place of Death:

Washington, D.C.

## Vital Data, African American Legislators

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Full name: **Thomas A. Sykes**

Parent(s):

Unknown

Date of Birth:

ca. 1835

Place of Birth:

North Carolina

Born slave or free:

Slave

Education:

He said he was taught the alphabet by a little girl – he paid her 6 cents – and then he taught himself to read. Further education is unknown, but his job required knowledge of mathematics, weights, and measures.

Dates of Legislative service:

42<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly (1881-1882)

Representing

Davidson County

Private Career:

Internal Revenue collector/gauger; co-owner of a Nashville furniture store; County Magistrate; Assistant Superintendent of Tennessee Industrial School.

Achievements:

Davidson County delegate to 1875 State Colored Men's Convention; attended 1884 Tennessee Convention; served on State Temperance Executive Committee; frequent public speaker at events across the state.

Religious affiliation:

Unknown

Spouse:

Martha (maiden name unknown); Viola E. Hoyt, a teacher; divorced in 1891.

Children:

At least two daughters (C.J., b 1860, and E.C., b 1870)

Date of Death:

Unknown (probably between 1900 and 1910)

Place of Death:

Unknown