

REMEMBERING THE FOUNDERS

EARLY TRUSTEES OF RUST CHAPEL,
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
IN OXFORD, GEORGIA

PART I

*BY STUDENTS AND FACULTY
OXFORD COLLEGE OF EMORY UNIVERSITY*

EDITED BY MARK AUSLANDER

THE NEWTON COUNTY AFRICAN AMERICAN
FAMILY RESEARCH PROJECT

Paper #3

*THE EMORY CENTER FOR MYTH AND RITUAL IN AMERICAN LIFE:
A SLOAN CENTER FOR WORKING FAMILIES*

THE OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP, EMORY UNIVERSITY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction and Acknowledgements	2
Early African American History: Oxford, Georgia (by Mark Auslander)	3
The Founding Trustees and Founding Mothers of Rust	11
Thomas Anderson (by Nicole Chupp)	12
Jessie (“Bass”) Currington (by Kathleen Donaghey)	16
Israel Godfrey (by Rebecca M. Weaver)	19
Nicholas Graves (by Lauren L. Mock)	21
Robert “Bob” Hammond (by Candace C. Coffman)	24
George Sims (by Bionca Jacobs)	29
William H.F. Thomas (by Candace C. Coffman)	32
Appendix I: Sources on Rust Chapel’s History	39
G.W.W. Stone, Jr. (Memoirs)	39
Atticus Haygood, <u>Our Brother in Black</u> (1881)	40
Appendix II: The Life of Richard Rust (by W. Michael Born)	42
Appendix III: Notes on Contributors	46

INTRODUCTION

During Fall 2001, students in Critical Perspectives on a Region: The American South (Social Sciences 209) at Oxford College of Emory University began to explore the early history of Rust Chapel United Methodist Church, in Oxford, Georgia. We are very grateful to all those who have assisted us in this project, including Rev. W. Greene (pastor, Rust Chapel U.M.C), Rev. Michael Lee (pastor, Mount Zion Baptist Church) J.P. Godfrey, Jr., Mary Gaither McKlurkin, Emma Gaither, Sarah Francis Hardeman, and Mildred Joiner. We would also like to acknowledge the assistance of the staff at Emory's Special Collections and University Archives (Woodruff Library) staff-- especially Virginia Cain, Nancy Watkins, and Randall Burkett --and the Newton County Library staff, especially Robert Halcoms and Carole Durasu. Folashade M. Alao undertook research in the Freedman's Aid Society records in the Atlanta University Archives.

This project was made possible by the generous support of the Office of University-Community Partnership and the Center for Myth and Ritual in American Life (the MARIAL Center), Emory University.

Mark Auslander, Assistant Professor of Anthropology
Susan Ashmore, Assistant Professor of History

THE NEWTON COUNTY AFRICAN-AMERICAN FAMILY RESEARCH PROJECT

The Newton County African-American Family Research Project, supported by the MARIAL Center, the Office of University-Community Partnership, and the Southern Studies Program at Oxford College of Emory University, seeks to document and understand the roles played by narrative, story-telling, and ritual performance in the lives of African-American families in the county. For more information about this project, please contact: Dr. Mark Auslander, Department of Anthropology, Oxford College of Emory University, Oxford GA 30054. Telephone: (770) 784-4664. Email: mausland@learnlink.emory.edu

Early African American History in Oxford, Georgia

By Mark Auslander

(Department of Anthropology, Oxford College of Emory University)

The city of Oxford was founded north of Covington, Georgia, around the campus of Emory College in the late 1830s. Most of the Emory College faculty appear to have owned slaves, and a number of the current African American residents of Oxford can trace their ancestry back to at least one person enslaved in Oxford. Nearly all of Oxford's antebellum African American residents were enslaved. (The only known free family in Oxford was the Potters, who included Rev. Potter, 1812-1851, whose headstone in the city's African American cemetery refers to him as a minister of the M.E. Church.)

Emory slave-owners included President Augustus Longstreet, President George Pierce, President James Thomas, President of the Board of Trustees James Osgood Andrew, Trustees Iverson Graves, College President William Parks, Professor of Mathematics G.W.W. Stone, and Professor of Natural Sciences Alexander Means.

It is difficult to estimate how many enslaved African Americans resided in Oxford, since many slaves appear to have been moved by white families between their residences in Oxford and outlying plantations. However, we have been able to identify by name approximately ninety-five enslaved persons who resided, at least for a time, in Oxford during the period 1836-1864.

During the Civil War, Emory College was closed and served as a Confederate Army hospital. Emancipation came in November 1864 as Union troops moved through the area, part of General Sherman's march from Atlanta to

the sea. A number of newly liberated persons departed with Sherman's army, but several later returned to the area.

METHODISM AND AFRICAN AMERICANS IN OXFORD

The city of Oxford was established as a Methodist community, and it would appear that nearly all enslaved African Americans in antebellum Oxford worshipped at Methodist services. Several sources suggest that in some cases domestic slaves were allowed to worship within the white Old Methodist Church on Wesley Street, founded in 1841. However, it would appear that from 1847 to 1865 African Americans in Oxford primarily worshipped at a black Methodist church building (belonging to the Oxford Methodist church, under the administration of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South) located within the current location of the white (southeastern) cemetery. (See Appendix I)

This early church was evidently established in 1848 by the Emory College Board of Trustees, soon after the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, had split from the northern Methodist Church over the issue of slavery in 1845. The minutes of the Board for July 19, 1848 record:

Resolved that the Faculty be authorized to have made to Trustees of a church for the col'd people a deed for part of (illegible) as may be necessary for building the Church, the situation of the (illegible) being left to the discretion of the Faculty, the deed to be made so that the ground reverts to the Trustees in case the Building should be used for any other purposes than a Church." (p. 156)

Emory College graduate Atticus Haygood, later president of the College, served for a period as the white pastor of this church. (See Appendix II) Presumably, one of the first preachers at this black church was Rev. Potter (1812-1851) whose

headstone in the Oxford African American Cemetery (northeastern section)

reads:

“In memory of
[Illegible] Y. POTTER
A colored Minister of the M.E. Church. Faithful, useful and respected.
Born A.D 1812
Died Nov. 1851”

Unfortunately, we have not found no other records of Rev. Potter.

Presumably, he was related to “Tom Potter,” a free African American man living in Oxford on the eve of the Civil War, reported by Henry Branham in a memoir. He may also have been related to Dinah Potter, recorded in the 1870 census as 100 years old, living in the household of Rev. David Cureton, a Methodist minister.

During the Civil War, when Old Church became a confederate hospital, the whites of Oxford moved their worship services over the black church; whites had their services on Sunday morning, and blacks had to have their own services on Sunday afternoons.

After the war, the black church was torn down and the white cemetery expanded into its former grounds. We speculate that the mass grave of Union soldiers, now located near the well-house in the “white cemetery,” was initially located in the church yard of the black church.

The Establishment of Rust Chapel (1867)

Following emancipation at the close of 1864, Oxford African American Methodists joined the northern Methodist Episcopal Church, breaking with the

Methodist Episcopal Church, South, an institution that had supported slavery and the Confederate cause. In 1867, nine African American men established Rust Chapel, on Emory Street, several blocks south of the original African-American Methodist church.

Some have asserted that Chapel was named for a white family named “Rust” that supposedly donated land for the church. However, this seems highly unlikely: there is no record of a white family named Rust in Newton County during this period. It is much more likely that the Chapel was named for Rev. Richard S. Rust, the Secretary of the Freedmen’s Aid Society, an arm of the northern Methodist Episcopal church that funded a school attached to the Chapel. (In 1869, the Freedmen’s Aid Society founded Clark University, later Clark College, in Atlanta.) In 1881 Atticus Haygood recalled meeting Rev. Rust while visiting the Oxford school.¹

This small school was established on land purchased, for a token price, from Emory College. An 1870 deed, still in the possession of the Church, records the sale (for the price of five dollars) from Emory College of two acres of land for a school for freed African American children in Oxford. The document states that the site is to be “used for the education of Freedman and children irrespective of Race or Color.” Like other Oxford deeds of its time, it specifies that the signatories should not “sell or allow to be sold any intoxicating liquors, play or allow to be played any games of hazard,” on penalty of the property reverting to Emory College.

¹ Atticus Haygood, *Our Brother in Black*, p. 230

The deed is signed with “X” marks, next to the names of three African American trustees of Rust Chapel: J. Henderson, Levi Harvey and Henry Trimble.

Rev. E.D. Petty was one of Rust Chapel’s early pastors. It is said that one of the first church buildings was an Emory classroom, transported by mules from the College campus.

The Free Community in Oxford (1870)

Our primary source on the newly emancipated African American community in Oxford is the 1870 U.S. Census. Because slave schedules did not record the names of enslaved persons, it is unclear precisely how many of the 1870 African American residents of Oxford had been enslaved in Oxford before 1864. In a few cases, such as Cornelius and Ellen Robinson (enslaved by Alexander Means, an Emory College professor) and Tom Mitchell (enslaved by Bishop James Andrew, the first President of Emory’s Board of Trustees) we have clear evidence of pre-war residence.

During this immediate postwar period, Emory College had begun to rebuild itself; a number of African Americans were employed in this labor, or worked at supporting the college faculty and students in various ways. Many former slaves continued to work for their former owners--such as the Stone, Branham and Anderson families--as farm laborers and domestic servants.

In the 1870 census, 279 persons of color were enumerated in Oxford, nearly all residing in 68 black-headed (either individual or multiperson) households.

AGE. 42% (118 persons) were under the age of sixteen. Four percent of the population (12 infants) are listed as under one year old. Ten persons (five women and five men) were sixty years old or older; only one person (Dinah Potter at 100 years old) was over 80.

HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURE. About 95% resided in multiperson households; the only exceptions to this pattern were eight persons living on their own in single-person households and four young domestic servants listed as residing in the homes of their white employers. 42 of the 58 multiperson households list a male head of household. 16 of the multiperson households list a female head of household. A number of these female-headed households contain children with a different last name than that of their apparent mother; so it seems likely that in some cases children were given the last names of the absent fathers.

37 households appear to have contained a married couple (in only two of these do the male and female members of the apparent couple list different last names.)

Not all members of these households were related by blood or marriage; in a number of cases an older female or male head of household seems to have gathered around her or him a group of unrelated persons, who later moved on to found their own households. 21 households contain persons of two or more different last names.

OCCUPATION. 58 persons gave their occupation as "domestic servant." 42, nearly all male, stated "farm worker." 23 women listed "keeping house." 10 women listed "laundress." Four are listed as blacksmiths, two as carpenters, one as "shoe maker, " one as "basket maker" and one as "brick mason." Two give as

their occupation, "Methodist Minister." One couple appears to have been running (or at least managing) a boarding house for Emory College students.

Nine children were listed as being "at school," but more children are listed as employed as farm laborers, domestic servants, or being at home.

BIRTHPLACE. 91% were born in Georgia. Seven were born in North Carolina. Seven were born in South Carolina. Six were born in Virginia. Four were born in Alabama. One appears to have been born in Mississippi.

32 persons are listed as "mulatto," the rest as "black."

In many cases, freedpersons appear to have taken the names of their former owners. In other cases, new names were taken. For example, the Godfrey family recalls that Israel, who had been enslaved by the Cody family of Covington, took the last name Godfrey from a local businessman who had impressed him. In contrast, his brother Erastus (or Stephen?), also enslaved by the Cody family, is said to have taken on the name Cody.

MOUNT ZION BAPTIST CHURCH

Mount Zion Baptist Church is the second-oldest African American church in Oxford. Founded in the 1890s by members of Bethlehem Baptist Church of Covington (the oldest African American Church in Newton County) the church was built on land donated by the Stones, a prominent white family that employed many members of the African American community. (Prior to 1865, the Stones had been slaveowners in Oxford.)

Under the early laws of the city of Oxford, only Methodist churches were allowed within city boundaries. Thus, Mount Zion was technically outside the old legal boundaries of the city. (Some members recall that its front steps came within the city limits!)

Although Mount Zion and Rust Chapel were of different denominations, they have been intimately linked throughout their history. For many decades, members of the Oxford black community attended both churches, which held services on alternating Sundays. Even today, members of the two congregations remain close and render mutual assistance, visiting one another's services and sharing responsibilities in caring for the ill and elderly.

The current pastor of Mount Zion is Rev. Michael Lee.

EARLY TRUSTEES, RUST CHAPEL

Tom Anderson (b. 1849)
Nick Graves.
A. Pitts.
B. Currington
A.E. Bose Hays
Robert Hammond
Israel Godfrey
G.W. Sims.
S. Hunter
J. Henderson
Levi Harvey
Henry Trimble.
Zack Perry, Sr.
A.C. Wright
W.C. Gaither
William Thomas, Sr.
Henry Gaither
Sylvester Brown
Corra Belcher
Roland Belcher

SOME FOUNDING MOTHERS OF RUST CHAPEL

Minerva "Nannie" Sims Anderson
Hannah Cureton
Sallie Sims Godfrey
Rena Graves
Angeline Sims

THOMAS (“TOM”) ANDERSON

By Nicole Chupp

Thomas Anderson was born into slavery in 1849 in Georgia. His parents have not been identified. According to the 1870 Census, the earliest record I found of Thomas, he was living in Oxford with four other men, ranging from age sixteen to twenty-one². This evidence leads to the assumption that Thomas was somehow separated from his family during his childhood. Thomas lived during this period next door to the residence of George Sims, the father of the girl whom he would soon marry. Minerva Sims, also known as Nannie, was born somewhere between 1854 and 1856. Her birth year is unclear due to discrepancies in the U.S. Census. Nannie and Tom were married on June 7, 1874, in Newton County by Justice of the Peace M. Alexander³. Both Nannie and Tom could read, however, only Nannie could write. Neither Nannie nor Tom had formal education.

Soon after their marriage they began to start their family. Thomas and Nannie had six children; three boys and three girls. The order in which they were born is Will, Thomas, Luvenia, Pauline, Angeline, and Henry (of which very little is known). Almost all of Thomas Anderson’s family stayed within Newton County, and here they started their own families and their own homes.

Will Anderson, Thomas Anderson’s oldest son, was born in 1875 in Georgia and resided in Oxford until at least 1910. He married a mulatto woman

² 1870 United States Federal Census

³ Newton County, Georgia Marriages 1822-1903, 5

named Bessie (born in 1876, Georgia). Both Will and Bessie could read and write although neither had attended school prior to 1919. Together they had three boys and three girls by 1920, and all were born in Georgia. William Anderson (third generation) was born in 1898, and Clifford, born in 1902 disappeared between the 1910 and 1920 censuses. It is unclear if he moved, died, or simply was not present at the time. Mary Lillian (born 1904, Georgia), Robert (born 1912, Georgia), Bessie (born 1914, Georgia), and Mattie (born 1917, Georgia) were all third generation descendants of Thomas Anderson through Will and Bessie, and all of them were born in Georgia. Will Anderson and his family worked daily on the family farm in 1910, however, in 1920 Will worked as wage earning laborer in an oil mill. Mary Lillian in 1920 was attending school (she could read and write), while the rest of the children remained at home.⁴

Thomas Anderson (second generation) was born in 1879 in Georgia. Thomas Anderson and his wife Myra (born 1884, Georgia) resided in Oxford in 1910 with his sister Pauline and her husband John Wright. Pauline was born in 1889 in Georgia, and John Wright was born in 1886. Thomas Anderson (second generation), his wife, his sister Pauline, and her husband John Wright might have moved from Newton County because they are not present in the 1920 census. It is unclear if either couple had children.⁵

Luvenia Anderson was born in Georgia in 1887. She married a man named Horace Dobbs (born 1886, Georgia) and in 1920 was living in Atlanta, in DeKalb County, Georgia. They lived off New Street, where Luvenia worked at home doing laundry and Horace worked as a wage-earning laborer in an oil mill.

⁴ All information about Will Anderson was found through the 1910 and 1920 United States Federal Census'

⁵ All information found through the 1910 and 1920 United States Federal Census'

Both Luvenia and Horace could read and write; yet neither attended school prior to 1919. Luvenia and Horace had five children by 1920. Luvenia and Horace's first two children, Evelina (born in 1911, Georgia) and Willie H. (born 1913, Georgia), both attended school prior to 1919. Other children of third generation descendents of Tom Anderson through Luvenia Anderson Dobbs and Horace Dobbs were: Leroy (born 1915, Georgia), Mildred (born 1917, Georgia), and a newborn in 1920 Tomie Pauline (also born in Georgia).⁶

Angeline Anderson was born in 1893 in Georgia. She lived with her parents Tom and Nannie until at least the age of 17, as noted in the 1910 US census. In 1920, Angeline is not present, however, living with Thomas Anderson is a son-in-law named Henry Gaither. Through the process of elimination allows one could conclude that Angeline and Henry were married. It is unknown if they had any children.⁷

In 1920, Tom Anderson was still living at age 72 and Nannie Sims was still living at age 68. They resided in Oxford, Newton County, Georgia. Tom Anderson worked as a wage earning laborer, and Nannie was a washwoman at home. Living with them was a nephew, named plainly by the last name Hubbard, who was born in 1914 in Georgia. The death years of Tom Anderson and Nannie Sims are not known, due to their missing presence in the Oxford Cemetery.⁸

⁶ All information found through the 1910 and 1920 United States Federal Census'

⁷ All information found through the 1920 United States Federal Census

⁸ All information found through the 1920 United States Federal Census

WORKS CITED

Newton County, Georgia Marriages 1822-1903 (p 5)

1870 United States Federal Census: Microfilm No. M593 Roll No. 168 (p 168)

1910 United States Federal Census: Microfilm No. T624 Roll No. 204 (p 6)

1920 United States Federal Census: T625-271

1920 United States Federal Census: T625-249

JESSIE “BASS” CURRINGTON

BY KATHLEEN DONAGHEY

The current building of Rust Chapel, a sacred part of Oxford’s history, was constructed in 1908 by Rev. E.D. Petty P.C and Rev. Z.K. Gowen D.S.. The names of the founding fathers of the church are engraved in the corner stone that upholds the Methodist church. The fifth name etched in stone reads B.F. Currington, also know as Jessie “Bass” Currington.

It is currently speculated that the Currington family originated under the ownership of a slaveholder named A.M. Cureton. A.M. Cureton is the only Cureton slaveholder in Newton County during the 1860’s.¹ During Reconstruction, when African Americans gained their freedom, many adopted the last name of their former owner. The Cureton name was traced to Rev. David Cureton, a friend of the sixth president of Emory College, Atticus Haygood.²

Haygood was an inhabitant of Oxford during much of the Nineteenth century. He noted the rising population of African Americans in 1880 and their steady increase in land ownership. By 1880 black men owned about 586,664 acres of land in Georgia alone.³ Haygood’s relationship with the free men of Oxford was one of mutual respect and friendship. In his book, Our Brother in Black (1881), Haygood commented on the African American enthusiasm and their strong religious belief when he said, “their religion is their most striking and important, their strongest and most formative, characteristic.”⁴ Yet, out of all the black people who expressed religious devotion, one was noted above the rest. This one was David Cureton, described by Haygood as “an old man in this

village from whom the wisest may learn and the holiest may receive new inspiration in their religious life. Many times has he done me good. David Cureton will claim many stars in his crown of rejoicing.”⁵

Jessie Cureton (possibly the son of David Cureton) married a woman by the name of Hanna. The couple had two children, George and Charlotte.⁶ By the second generation the spelling of the Cureton family name began to change to Currington (the spelling found on the chapel corner stone). Charlotte married a Dobbs and thus united the Currington family to another local family.⁷

George Currington fell in love with Katie Gaither, the sister of Rust Chapel Deacon Willie Gaither.⁸ Katie, also known as Daisy, was one of six children.⁹ According to Mary Gaither McLurkin, daughter of Deacon Willie Gaither, George and Katie had six children: George (Sunny Boy), Layline, Hanna, Katie (Sis), Luceil, and Margaret. All six children are currently buried in the Atlanta Lincoln cemetery.¹⁰ The Currington family pedigree contains three known generations, while the relation of the first generation is currently unknown.

1. *Ronald V. Jackson, Georgia 1860 Slave Schedule Census Index (North Salt Lake: Accelerated Indexing Systems, 1990), 169.*
2. Atticus G. Haygood, *Our Brother In Black* (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1881), 221-222.
3. Haygood, 10
4. Haygood, 221-222
5. Haygood, 221-222
6. McLurkin, Mary Gaither: Interviewed by Kathleen Donaghey, 6 September 2001.

7. McLurkin, Interview
8. Henry, Faulkner, *History of Newton County Georgia* (USA: Newton County Historical Society, 1988), 694.
9. McLurkin, Interview
10. McLurkin, Interview

Bibliography

Faulkner, Henry. History of Newton County Georgia. USA: Newton County Historical Society, 1988.

Haygood, Atticus, G. Our Brother in Black. New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1881.

Jackson, Ronald, V. Georgia 1860 Slave Schedule Census Index. North Salt Lake City: Accelerated Indexing System International, 1990.

McKlurkin, Mary: Interview by Kathleen Donaghey, 6 September 2001.

ISRAEL GODFREY

by

Rebecca Marie Weaver

Between 1847-1850, an enslaved woman Litha (born in 1814) gave birth to the child who would become Israel Godfrey. Born in Alabama, Israel grew up in slavery in where his role in life may have been that of a field hand or artisan. We believe Israel's father was John Godfrey, listed in the 1870 census as born in Virginia in 1798.

As his life went on, Israel met and married Mahala (whose father was also born in Virginia). Once they were freed, Israel continued to work as a farmer to provide for his growing family.⁹ Together he and Mahala had three children.¹⁰ Their oldest son, born in 1859, Elisha, went on to marry Mary at the age of nineteen. During their first year of marriage, Mary gave birth to Charles Godfrey.¹¹ Israel and Mahala's other two children were born nine years apart. Ephraim was born in 1863 and Adie was born in 1872.¹² However, sometime between 1800 and 1882 Israel evidently lost his wife and daughter.

Israel continued on with life and married Sallie Sims on November 30, 1882¹³. Within a year, Israel and Sallie were blessed with their first child, Julia.

⁹ 1870 Census, Newton County, Georgia, Reel # pg 33.

¹⁰ 1870 Census pg 33 and 1880 Census ed 100 sheet 36 line 19.

¹¹ 1880 Census ed 100 sheet 36 line 10.

¹² 1870 Census pg 33 and 1880 Census ed 100 sheet 36 line 19.

¹³ John I. Bruno, comp., Newton County Georgia Records Marriage Licenses 1822-1903 (Conyers, GA).

Following on Julia's heels arrived Valeria, John Pliny, Althera, and Sallie over the span of ten years. Israel's new family continued to grow over the years bringing Israel Jr., Joice, Hibbler¹⁴, Warren, and Elsie.¹⁵ In 1900, Israel and Sallie lived with their twelve children in one home, along with Israel's aging mother of eighty-six. We assume that John was named in honor of Israel's father, John Godfrey. Most likely it was in honor of Israel's mother (listed in census records as "Litha") that Israel and Sallie named their fifth child "Althera." Litha probably helped in the rearing of the Godfrey children. Even with Litha's help it was difficult to care for so many children in school but Israel managed to provide for his large family, still working as a farmer.

We believe that Israel's deep connection with his family partially explains his involvement with the founding of Rust Chapel. He desired a place for his family to worship together. By working with others to build Rust Chapel, Israel not only helped his family have a place to worship; he also extended his family to include the entire community.

¹⁴ 1900 Census ed 86 sheet 7 line 93

¹⁵ Descendents of George Sims J.P. Godfrey

NICHOLAS (“NICK”) GRAVES

By Lauren Mock

In the wake of the recent terrorist attacks, Americans have come together as a nation, embracing their liberty and the true meaning of freedom. It is striking that less than two hundred years ago slaves living in this country did not know what it meant to be free. African American men, women, and children were robbed of their freedom and liberties in a country that prides itself on morality and human rights. Despite the terrible circumstances in which slaves were forced to live, they persevered and gained their freedom after the Civil War. Slaves wanted to be free in all aspects of their lives, including their religion. According to the Newton County Historical Society, “in 1865, as soon as the Negroes were free, they began organizing churches of their own.”¹⁶ Rust Chapel was one such church in Oxford, Georgia.

Recently freed slaves organized Rust Chapel United Methodist Church in 1867. Its founding members included nine black men, one of whom was Nicholas Graves¹⁷.

Graves was born into slavery in 1845, according to the 1900 Census.¹⁸ (His birth year and age vary depending on the census, but the 1900 Census is assumed to be most accurate due to its detail.) He most likely worked on the Mount Pleasant Plantation, owned by Iverson Lea Graves, “one of Emory’s first

¹⁶ Newton County Historical Society, *History of Newton County, Georgia*, (Newton County Historical Society, United States, 1988), p.508.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 508.

¹⁸ United States Census, 1900, vol. 52, sht. 1, ln. 86.

trustees” and founding member of Mt. Pleasant Methodist Church.¹⁹ Little information is known about Nick’s life before the 1870 census, in which the names of black men and women were first recorded. Before 1870, census takers listed the slaves in a Slave Schedule. This list contained the name of the owner followed by a list of his slaves and their sex, age, and color. The accuracy of the schedules is questionable because of the hastiness of the recordings and the unreliability of the census takers.

In the 1870 census Graves is recorded as a free American citizen. According to this census, he was 22 years old and married to Rena. He supported his family as a day laborer in Oxford. Rena’s occupation was keeping her family’s house. The young couple had two children—Nancy, a daughter age 5, and John, a son age 3. Robert Graves, age 76, also lived with the family. He was presumably a family member and contributed to the family income as a basket maker.²⁰ Nick and Rena Graves had a total of six children. Nancy and John followed by Jesse, Nick Jr., Elizabeth, and Iverson. The census confirmed that Nancy and John attended school.²¹ The other children may have received an education, but the 1890 Census containing that information was destroyed.

In 1910, Nick Graves, Sr., lived on Watson Street. His adult daughter, Nancy Hill, lived with him and Rena. Whether Nancy married or not is unknown. Obviously her name changed, but she was single and did not report any pregnancies. A young boy, listed as a grandson, also lived with the family. His name was John Teshen. He is not Nancy’s son, and his parents are not listed.

¹⁹ Newton County Historical Society, *History of Newton County, Georgia*, (Newton County Historical Society, United States, 1988), p.707.

²⁰ United States Census, 1870, roll 168, sht 75, ln. 24.

²¹ United States Census, 1880, vol. 18, sht. 32, ln. 37

Another child of Rena and Nick Graves, Nick Jr., married a woman named Willie. Nick Jr. and Willie had four children--Nellie, Hutchinson, Addie M., and Clarence E and they lived on Watson Street. As head of the household, Nick Jr. supported his family as a butler. His wife Willie was a seamstress.²²

Nicholas Graves, Sr., was certainly a respected man in Oxford, GA. He lived in the community for at least fifty years and was a founding member of Rust Chapel, one of the oldest African-American churches in Oxford. The 1920 Census, the latest census available to the public, shows Graves, age 75, continuing to live in Oxford. He lived with his wife Rena, age 68, and his adult daughter Nancy Hill, age 47²³. He most likely lived the remainder of his life in Oxford, but no records were found of his death date or burial location.

²² United States Census, 1910, vol. 69, sht 5, ln 40.

²³ United States Census, 1920, vol. 78, sht. 1, ln 36.

ROBERT “BOB” HAMMOND

“Faithful – Efficient”

By Candace C. Coffman

Upon reading the headstone of Robert “Bob” Hammond, one learns vital facts including his birth in 1858 and death in 1923. More importantly, one may begin to understand the high regard and affection held for this man of color by the entire Oxford community. The marker, perhaps the finest in the historically African-American section of the city cemetery, includes a touching inscription: “Faithful - Efficient / A Token of Respect from Emory Men.” Robert Hammond served 42 years as Head Janitor for Emory College in addition to being one of the founding trustees of Rust Chapel, the first African-American Methodist church in the town. The close association between “Bob” and those who remembered him best, the students, exemplified the agreeable race relations in Oxford during the tumultuous times following the Civil War and Reconstruction.

Robert Hammond was born to Charles (a day laborer) and Melissa (a laundress), both of Georgia, and shared his childhood with one brother and five sisters: Raymond, Mary, Eady, Carrie, Irene, and Frances.²⁴ On February 6, 1883, he married Amanda Moore of Georgia.²⁵ Due to conflicting census records, her exact age cannot be pinpointed, but she was born around 1867-1872. The

²⁴ Theodore Davis, comp., The United States 1870 Census: Freedmen in Newton County, GA (Oxford, GA: Oxford College of Emory University), 36.

²⁵ John I. Bruno, comp., Newton County Georgia Records Marriage Licenses 1822-1903 (Conyers, GA), 77.

Hammonds had no children but did enjoy 40 years of marriage. Interestingly, Robert's youngest sister Irene, remaining unmarried, took residency with them for at least the remainder of his life, appearing in both the 1910 and 1920 census records as living in his household. Both Amanda and Irene enriched the community as teachers in the segregated black public schools.²⁶

Although Robert Hammond died in 1923, his memory continued to live on in the minds of the scholars of Emory College. The headstone purchased by some students implied a great deal, but their generosity did not end there. In 1966, the Class of 1913 dedicated a tree and erected a bronze plaque in front of Few Hall on the now Oxford College campus to honor "the memory of Bob Hammond and Billy Mitchell, who together contributed 95 years of faithful and efficient service to Old Emory."²⁷ These men apparently held tender places in the hearts and minds of the students they touched, even if it was only a friendly "Hello" spoken in the morning as they passed the old janitor sweeping or an occasional smile or helping hand offered in a time of need. Just as the students thought of Bob Hammond, he also remembered them, as demonstrated by the actions of his wife.

As Emory College moved to Atlanta, the campus at Oxford became Emory Academy. After a few years, the board of trustees decided to elevate the Academy's status to a junior college and called for \$100,000. In an article from that time period, Bob Hammond appeared again, if only in spirit: "At the outset of the movement Amanda Hammond, the widow of the faithful [sic] old janitor, "Bob," offered, without solicitation, one hundred dollars as a contribution to the

²⁶ 1910 census, Dist. 148, Sheet 4; 1920 Census, Supervisor's District 8, Enumeration District 122, Sheet No. 7, Line 52.

²⁷ "Tree Dedication at Old Emory", Hoke O'Kelley Memorial Library Special Collections, Oxford, GA.

proposed fund. This gift speaks volumes for the friendly relations of the white and Negro races in the South. Where else would such a generous gift from such a source be possible?”²⁸ This article illustrated the pleasant race associations around Oxford, if not also including a hint of the accepted racist tone at that point in time. No matter how friendly the interaction between each ethnic group, a definite division existed, which the journalists of that time continued to illustrate.

The piece began with some background on Robert Hammond, “a respectable and highly respected colored man [who] enjoyed the perfect confidence of both faculty and students, and he well deserved their high esteem. [...] He never had the slightest friction with any of the thousands of students who attended the institution, and was never remiss in the discharge of any duty. His amiability and fidelity characterized all his daily work.”²⁹ Although highly praising, the editorial continued to possess a tone of racial inequality.

Nevertheless, Robert “Bob” Hammond became a distinguished, well-loved African-American member of the Oxford Community and will always be remembered as such, from his legacy as a founder of Rust Chapel to his loyal dedication to Emory University.

²⁸ “Amanda Hammond’s Gift”, Hoke O’Kelley Memorial Library Special Collections, Oxford, GA.

²⁹ “Amanda Hammond’s Gift”

BIBLIOGRAPHY

“Amanda Hammond’s Gift.” Hoke O’Kelley Memorial Library Special Collections, Oxford, GA.

Bruno, John I., comp., Newton County Georgia Records Marriage Licenses 1822-1903 (Conyers, GA).

Davis, Theodore, comp., The United States 1870 Census: Freedmen in Newton County, GA (Oxford, GA: Oxford College of Emory University).

“Tree Dedication at Old Emory.” Hoke O’Kelley Memorial Library Special Collections, Oxford, GA.



Plaque to Robert Hammond (1858-1923) and Billy Mitchell (1886-1958)

GEORGE W. SIMS

by Bionca D. Jacobs

George W. Sims, a slave, was born between 1825 and 1830, based on records from the 1870 and 1880 Georgia Census report. The exact year and date is unknown due to a lack of credible sources. George married a young lady by the name of Angeline (maiden name unknown). They had fourteen children: Bulb, George Jr., Henry, Lucy, Minerva (Nannie), William (Willie), Sally, Emma, Cory, Addison, Key, and three whose names are unknown.³⁰

According to the Slave schedule of 1860, George may have spent part of his life performing farm labor for Richard L. Sims of Newton County.³¹ Richard L. Sims was one of many who helped install Oxford Female Academy Program in 1840 at Emory College, then an all-male institute.³²

George was one of the founding trustees of Rust Methodist Church in Oxford, Georgia. Founded in 1867, Rust Chapel was the first church of its kind built in Oxford. The church marked a new beginning for African Americans, because they could now worship God in their own church.

Even though few exact details of the life of George W. Sims are known, his contributions to Rust Chapel earned him an engraved brick in the corner stone of the church. The Sims' daughters married men who played a vital role in the formation and development of Rust Methodist Church, a coincidence, which must have pleased their father.

³⁰ United States. Bureau of the Census. 1870 and 1880 Georgia Census: 1870 roll #168, pg.85; 1880 soundex section S520.

³¹ United States. Bureau of the Census. 1860 Georgia Slave Schedule, roll #150, microcopy 652.
3 Newton County Historical Society. History of Newton County Georgia. United States, 1988.

According to the 1870 and 1880 Georgia census records, Sally Sims was born between the years 1860 and 1862.³³ This year varied significantly from the year listed on the Sims family tree. I soon learned that the year recorded on the family tree was taken from Sally Sims-Godfrey's headstone. This situation has caused great confusion for others as well, especially J.P. Godfrey, Jr., grandson of Sally Sims-Godfrey. Mr. Godfrey came across a discrepancy in the years when completing the family tree, when he was not allowed to enter the birthday and year of one of Sally's daughters who was born in 1881.³⁴ If the date on the headstone were correct, Sally would have been a mother at the age of ten, a highly unlikely occurrence. Clearly, the date on the headstone is not correct, but the exact year of her birth is still a mystery.

I have talked to several descendants and Rust church members throughout my research, all of whom knew little about George W. Sims. However, I had a powerful thought-provoking conversation with Mrs. Eva Henderson, a lunchroom employee of Oxford College.³⁵ Mrs. Henderson told me that it is widely believed that all African-American families in Oxford are related to each other due to the ties stemming from the 1800's. I was very puzzled by this comment until I began looking over the Sims family tree. This time I saw the connection, for the names of each of the ladies and men I spoke with on

4 United States. Bureau of the Census. 1870 and 1880 Georgia Census: 1870 roll #168, pg.85; 1880 soundex section S520.

⁵ United States. Bureau of the Census. 1870 and 1880 Georgia Census: 1870 roll #168, pg.85; 1880 soundex section S520.

6 Godfrey, J.P. Personal interview. 17 and 6 September. 2001.

7 Henderson, Eva. Personal interview. 12 September 2001.

September 6, 2001, are listed on the Sims family tree. This suggests that the legend concerning the Sims family is true.

William Henry Franklin Thomas

By Candace Coffman

Note: Although Federal Census records in Georgia for freedmen begin in 1870, William Henry Franklin Thomas does not appear until 1900. Unfortunately, the data for the 1900 Federal Census differs from that of its Soundex listing (the abbreviated note card listing the essentials), leaving it difficult to be accurate, especially with birth dates. Nevertheless, the Census did provide some very valuable information on the Thomas family.

William Thomas, a black male, is listed as being 56 years old, born in October 1844. He and his father were both born in Georgia, his mother in South Carolina. William owned his farm, but it was mortgaged. He married his wife, Ann, 23 years prior to the Census, which concurs with the Newton County Record of Georgia Marriage Licenses.³⁶ It documented that a W. H. F. Thomas married Annie Bates on November 8, 1876, their race was black, and they were married by Toney Baker, MG.³⁷

Annie would have been twelve years old at the time of her marriage, for the Census shows her birth date to be in December 1863. It appears that her race was first listed on the 1900 Census as black then later erased and changed to a W (for white). Annie and her father were both born in Georgia, her mother in Virginia. She had given birth to four children, all of which were born in Georgia,

³⁶ 1900 United States Census, Vol. 52, Dist. 86, Sheet 8, Line 23.

³⁷ John I. Bruno, comp., Newton County Georgia Records Marriage Licenses 1822-1903, (Conyers, GA), 184.

listed as black, and still living at home. Her occupation was listed as a laundress.³⁸

Will, the eldest son, was listed as both 20 and 21 at the time of the census, his birth date being in December 1879. He is single, and his occupation is a day laborer. Robert, the next son, was born in June 1880, which makes him a premature birth coming only 6 months after the birth of Will. Robert was single and a day laborer. Henry, the youngest son, was listed as either 18 or 19 at the time of the census, his birth date being in October 1882. He was single and a day laborer like his brothers. The Thomas family finally had a daughter in April 1884. She was 16 years old, probably helping her father with his farm as she was listed as a farm laborer.³⁹

Also included in the Thomas household was the William Senior's nephew, John Bass. He was listed as 28 (being born in March 1872), single, black, and a farm laborer. There was no indication as to when he came to live with William Thomas or why, although he and both his parents were all born in Georgia.⁴⁰ There is some speculation as to him being a former slave of John Bass, a prominent white politician and slaveowner in Newton County, but no concrete evidence has been found to assert this.

Another piece of information found in the 1900 Census included the close proximity of three households, those of William Thomas, Israel Godfrey, and Robert Hammond. The person who would record census information would walk along from home to home, taking the number of each household he visited in order. In the town of Oxford, residence 103 was that of Israel Godfrey,

³⁸ 1900 United States Census, Vol. 52, Dist. 86, Sheet 8, Line 24.

³⁹ Ibid., Lines 25-28.

⁴⁰ Ibid., Line 29.

residence 106 was that of Robert Hammond, and residence 109 was that of William Thomas.⁴¹ This information could possibly attest to the reason why each of these men was a Trustee of Rust Chapel.

A lot changed between 1900 and 1910 in the Thomas household, along with some conflicting evidence between the two censuses. First, William Thomas, Sr., was listed as 59 years old and mulatto. This would have given him a birth year of 1850 or 1851. He was still a farmer on a “general farm” business, which he owned and mortgaged. William could also read and write. Annie M., his wife, was listed as a mulatto laundress working in the home, also able to read and write. Interestingly, she is listed as having given birth to five children, four of which were still living in 1910.⁴² Therefore, the family must have had an infant death between the years of 1900 and 1910.

William, the first son, was still living at home, single, mulatto, and his age was 32. This would have given him a birth year of 1877 or 1878. He was a brick mason in the chimney business and could read and write.

The Thomas family acquired an addition to the family sometime before 1910. In their household lived Julia A. Thomas, William Sr. and Annie’s granddaughter. Julia was a mulatto two-year-old whose parents were both born in Georgia, yet she was born in Arkansas.⁴³ The marriage records for Newton County were searched to find a marriage of any of the Thomas children to account for the birth of Julia and all the children but Will, Jr., leaving the home,

⁴¹ Ibid., Sheet 7, Lines 93-100; Sheet 8, Lines 1-29.

⁴² 1910 United States Census, Vol. 69, Dist. 148, Sheet 4.

⁴³ Ibid.

but none was found.⁴⁴ Perhaps the marriages occurred after 1903, when the book ceases to record marriage licenses.

Unfortunately, William Thomas Sr., was not listed in the 1920 Soundex, nor was William Wells Thomas. Emma Thomas, William Wells' wife, was listed, however, as both Enma and Emma Thomas. She was 35 at the time of the Census, black, living in Oxford, and was born in Georgia. Emma and William were blessed with four children, all born in Georgia.⁴⁵

First, Callie Lou was 7 years old. Then William W. Thomas, the first son, was 5 years old. Another daughter came, Vera May, and she was 3 years and 5 months old. Finally, Annie S. Thomas was only 7 months at the time of the census.⁴⁶ If the 1920 Census were researched, it would undoubtedly give more information on the William Wells Thomas, Sr., family.

Luckily, Dorothy "Dot" Thomas, the granddaughter of William Wells Thomas, Sr., was available to give more information on the Thomas family. According to her information, William Henry Franklin Thomas was married to Annie Mariah Thomas. William Wells Thomas, Sr., their son, was married to Emma Cargile Thomas. William Wells was a trumpeter and played in the local Oxford band.⁴⁷

William and Emma had four children: Callie Larain Thomas (married to Sylvester Brown, Jr.), William Wells Thomas, Jr. (married to Mary Elizabeth

⁴⁴ John I. Bruno, comp., Newton County Georgia Records Marriage Licenses 1822-1903, (Conyers, GA).

⁴⁵ 1920 United States Census Index. Lists information for 1920 Census Records: Vol. 78, Dist. 122, Sheet 8, Line 24.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Dorothy "Dot" Thomas, telephone interview, November 10, 2001.

Thomas), Vera Mae Thomas, and Annie Sallie Thomas (deceased) who married Robert Howard.⁴⁸

Callie Larain Thomas and Sylvester Brown, Jr., have three children: Emma Elizabeth Brown, Nathan Carver Brown, and Callie Larain (known as “Pat”) Brown Smith. Pat is a graduate of Emory College, class of 1969.⁴⁹

William Wells Thomas, Jr., and Mary Elizabeth Thomas have six children: Mary Lillian Thomas, William Wells Thomas, III, Annie Christine Thomas Harper, Grace Lee Thomas, Geraldine Thomas, and Dorothy (“Dot”) Thomas.⁵⁰

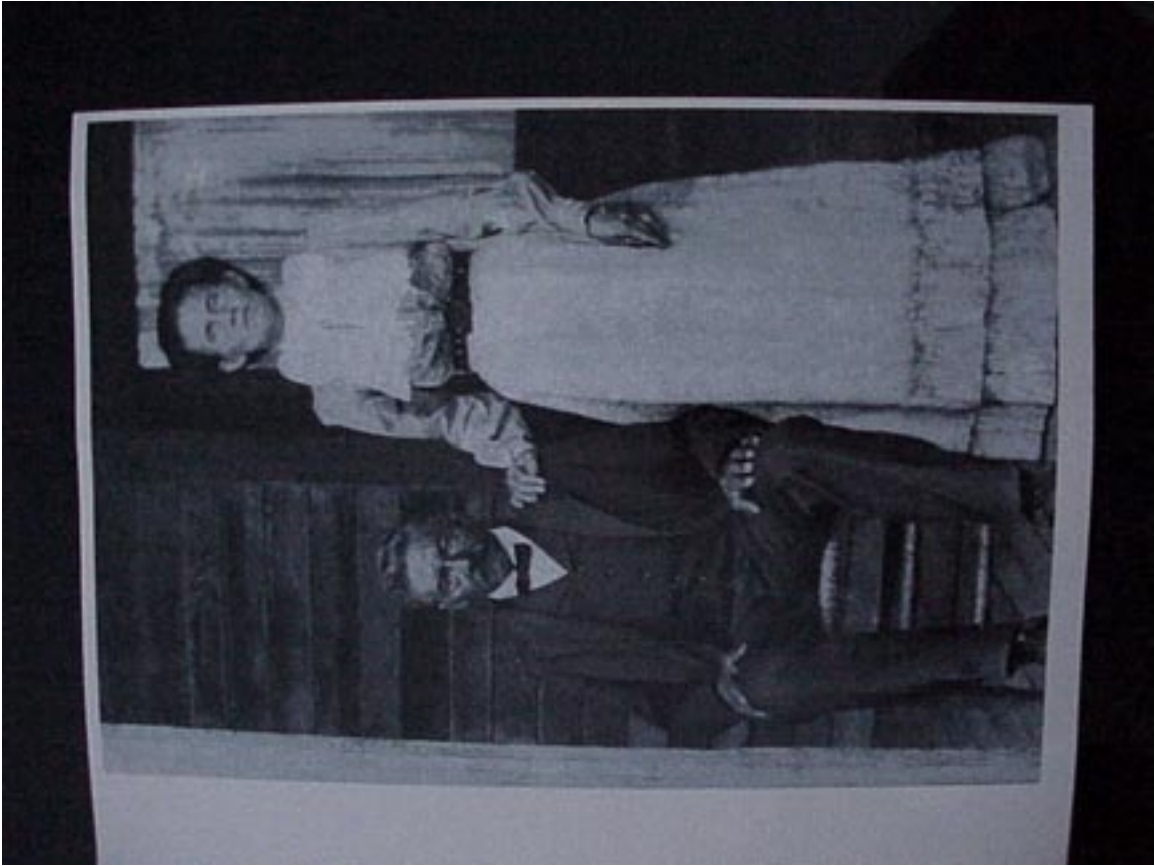
⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.



William Wells Thomas, Sr.



William H.F. Thomas and Annie Bates Thomas

APPENDIX I

SOURCES ON RUST CHAPEL'S EARLY HISTORY

G.W.W. Stone, Jr. Memoirs

One source on the early history of Methodism in the Oxford African American community is a typescript (#3) in the possession of Virgil Eady, dictated by G.W.W. Stone, Jr., evidently in the 1930s:

“Early during the war the confederate Government took over our Oxford church, using it for a hospital. At that time the Negro Methodists all belonged to our church, so that while they worshipped in separate buildings and to themselves, those buildings belonged to the church. Their Oxford church was a very good building. It stood on the ground which was afterwards taken into the white cemetery. The church stood near or between our lot and your fathers.

Many of the negroes were very religious. Almost all of them were good singers and their congregational singing was fine and full of spirit. I love to hear them sing. Some of them were very accomplished shouters. I remember one woman named Martha who belonged to Mr. Branham. It was said she could make a circuit of the church jumping from bench to bench. Our Louisiana often carried Sallie and me up there. We delighted to find the pins lost by the Negro women while they were shouting.

So while the old church was used for a hospital, the white folks moved their worship up there every Sunday morning, and the Negroes used the same building in the afternoon.

After the war, all the Negroes went over to the northern Methodist church. Then the building was torn down to build a store (near Mr. D.T. Stone's store). The ground it stood on was then added to our cemetery.”
(p. 3)

II. Atticus Haygood's Our Brother in Black (1881)

Atticus Haygood, President of Emory College, had a long history of involvement with the African American Methodists of Oxford. Soon after his graduation from Emory College he served as one of the official pastors of the black church in Oxford, while it was still under the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. After the Civil War, he kept up friendly relations with many of the leading African American Methodists in Oxford.

In his 1881 book, Our Brother in Black, Haygood recalls:

“I have had good knowledge of the work of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the South. I have studied the subject carefully in their broad exhibit of statistics and in their press. I have studied it also in detail. In my town of Oxford they have a church. Some of its members are of my household. Among its older members are those who were members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, before the war. I was, with the Rev. John W. Talley, at one time, in 1859, their pastor. The old college janitor, the Rev. David Cureton, now a superannuated preacher of the Savannah Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, was a local preacher in the old organization. "Judge Levi," and "Mrs. Judge"--as they were known to the students--who lived near the college campus thirty years ago, where they live to-day, were members then and they are members now. In this congregation is the quadroon woman, "Aunt Amie," or Mrs. Williams, (she that has "had her own time and her own way" for thirty years,) who will be remembered by many old students for excellent laundry work. And others of the "old set" still survive--much inclined they are to look upon the younger negroes, who never knew the "old times," as mere *parvenus*. In their social and religious character they are as good as the new, and as workers somewhat better. Faithful work was done for them, and the colored pastors of to-day will not take it to heart if it be suggested that the preaching in the old time averaged better than it does now.

“ Since this Church, with many others, "went over" in a body to the Methodist Episcopal Church, in 1867, I have had exceptionally good opportunity to know their affairs. My honored father-in-law, the Rev. John W. Yarbrough, of blessed memory, who was an itinerant (and ordained elder by Bishop Morris) before the "division," who had been from 1844 a traveling preacher in the Church South, entered the ministry of the Church North, January, 1867. After seven years of faithful service in the Church North, he returned to the Church South, and having, in both Churches, diligently "served his generation according to the will of God," winning many trophies in each, died, December 16, 1879, in the fullness and triumph of Christian faith. He was for two years the pastor of this Oxford Colored Church in their present organization, and for four years their presiding elder. From him I learned all the facts that characterized their transition period, and whatever was important in the opinions and sentiments of the other colored Churches in his charge.

“ For six years and more I have had my residence very near their Church, preaching for them and helping them in all ways possible to me. [Footnote: Some of the more "stylish" have imitated white people, going from their pastor for exceptional service, as a marriage or a funeral, and have insisted on my presence. But the colored pastors have not seemed to be at all jealous; the "fees" disturb no man's equanimity.]

I was welcomed by them before the "Cape May Treaty" between the two Churches.

“I think I know the Oxford Colored Church well. My opinion is, it is steadily improving, being yet far from perfection. For years the Freedmen's Aid Society helped to support a school for them. It was while on an official visit to this school that I first met the Rev. Dr. R. S. Rust, the Secretary of the Society, and began to learn something of their methods. In this school many have been taught the "rudiments," and so the average intelligence has increased. I have known their pastors, who, for several years past, have been colored men. Some of them have been very ignorant, some of them rather superior for their class. But this is certain, they improve. This Church "commands better talent" than it did six years ago. One of its dangers is, and it is no small danger, nearly every man among them who feels that he has some "gift of speech" wants "license." As many white Churches have done, they, too, have overdone the "license" business, sometimes mistaking, I have thought, a desire to do good for a call to preach.

“The reader will pardon these rather gossipy details. I wished to show that I have not been looking at these people through a telescope, that I have some right to an opinion as to their characteristics and tendencies.” (pp. 229-231)⁵¹

⁵¹ The full text of Haygood's *Our Brother in Black* is available on line, at <http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/haygood/haygood.html>

APPENDIX II.

RICHARD S. RUST, A MINISTER WITH A MISSION

A UMNS Feature By W. Michael Born.
Reprinted with permission from the United Methodist News Service
<http://umns.umc.org/00/oct/449.htm>

In 1866, only a year after the cannons of the Civil War had been silenced, a small group of dedicated Methodist missionaries traveled from Cincinnati to Holly Springs, Miss. Their goal was to educate former slaves and their children. Members of the Freedmen's Aid Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, they started a school in Asbury Methodist Episcopal Church in Holly Springs.

The new little school accepted adults as well as children for instruction in elementary subjects. In 1867, it moved from the church to its present-day campus, and in 1870 was chartered by the state of Mississippi. Twelve years later, the college was named in honor of the Rev. Richard S. Rust of the Freedmen's Aid Society.

Located in Holly Springs, a town with a population of 7,261, Rust College is now an accredited four-year, co-educational liberal arts college, the oldest of 11 historically black United Methodist-related colleges and universities.

Rust was the founder of the Freedmen's Aid Society and its sole administrator during the organization's early years. He selected the sites and secured the lands for a number of African-American colleges and seminaries in the South. He and his fellow Methodist missionaries put their lives in danger by teaching former slaves how to read and write.

But just what do we know about this Methodist minister for whom Rust College is named?

Research indicates three major interests in Richard Rust's life: education, helping African Americans and preaching. Born in 1815 in Ipswich, Mass., he was a descendant of English settlers who had come to the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1635. At age 9, he was orphaned and went to live on an uncle's farm. After a few years, he left the farm to take an apprenticeship in cabinetmaking. In those days, apprenticeships were generally for seven years, and any unused portion could be bought from the master craftsman if desired. Eager for an education, young Richard saved his earnings and purchased the unused portion of his contract so he could attend school.

He enrolled in Phillips Academy, a non-denominational school in Andover, Mass. His active interest in anti-slavery can be traced to his academy days. It was there he attended a lecture given by George Thompson, an anti-slavery leader from England. In 1834, Thompson conducted a lecture tour in the northern states, where he is credited with the formation of more than 150 anti-slavery societies. Following Thompson's visit to Andover, Rust took part in forming an anti-slavery group on campus. The students' activities so upset the faculty that a call was issued for the group to disband. Refusing to do so, Rust and two other students were expelled in 1834.

Rust then journeyed to Canaan, N.H., to enroll in Noyes Academy, a new school open to African Americans as well as white students. Local abolitionists, who sponsored the school, believed all youth should be educated with no regard to race. But there was growing fear among many Canaan residents that the presence of African Americans would lead to interracial dating and that African huts would soon be built along the main street of the community.

Although the school did open, opposition grew. In August 1835, a committee of local citizens, encouraged by outside agitators, closed the school. With a large number of oxen, an angry mob pulled the school building off its foundation and carried it down to the town common. The building was then burned. Rust and the other students were fortunate to have escaped with their lives.

Still determined to receive an education at an institution sympathetic to his anti-slavery views, he went south along the Connecticut River to Wilbraham, Mass., to enroll in Wesleyan Academy. The school, operated by the New England Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, was home to a number of faculty and students opposed to slavery. Some years later, the campus became a station on the Underground Railroad for fugitive slaves on their way to Canada. At the academy, Rust became an active Methodist.

Upon completing his studies at the academy, he traveled south to Middletown, Conn., to enroll in Wesleyan University, the first Methodist institution of higher education to begin classroom work. While a student, Rust earned money giving anti-slavery lectures. And in his junior year, he compiled a book entitled *Freedom's Gift or Sentiments of the Free*, which contained verse and prose by William Lloyd Garrison and other anti-slavery writers.

The book also included a lecture by Rust to a Connecticut anti-slavery group, which he urged, "When the history of the anti-slavery reform is written, I ardently desire that there may be, as in the New Testament, a large book of Acts. Let the abolitionists of Connecticut see to it that they are well represented there."

After graduation in 1841, he obtained a trial ordination in the New England Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church and served Massachusetts pastorates in Springfield and Worcester. During this time, he gained a reputation as a powerful preacher. He also founded and edited an annual publication, *The American Pulpit*, which published sermons by Christian ministers.

Drawn by his love of education, Rust moved in 1846 to Northfield, N.H., to become principal of the New Hampshire Conference Seminary of the Methodist Episcopal Church. (Known today as Tilton School, the seminary moved in 1864 from Northfield across the Winnepesaukee River to the town of Tilton.) According to school records, Rust was remembered by alumni as having seen to it that all his students became abolitionists.

While serving as principal of the seminary, he was appointed by the state of New Hampshire as commissioner of common schools. In 1847, he was credited with the passage of a state law requiring all towns to pay the tuition of students who had to attend school in another community in order to receive an education.

...After Rust completed his term as principal of the seminary, he returned to the pastoral ministry serving churches in New Hampshire and northern Massachusetts. But his concern for African Americans eventually won out over his preaching assignments.

He asked to be transferred to the Church's Cincinnati Conference in 1858 and soon played a major role in founding Wilberforce University, an institution whose purpose was to educate former slaves. The university, named after the 18th century English statesman and abolitionist William Wilberforce, was jointly sponsored by the Methodist Episcopal Church and African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church. Before becoming its first president, Rust served as chairman of the new university's board of trustees.

In what was to become his approach of inclusiveness as he helped former slaves and their children, Rust worked closely with African-American leaders including Bishop Daniel A. Payne of the A.M.E. Church and Ashland Keith of the Negro Baptist denomination. Rust stepped down as president in 1863 when the A.M.E. Church bought the university. Wilberforce continues today as the nation's oldest private African-American university. It is also interesting to note that Rust's two sons attended the school from 1859 to 1860.

Rust devoted his life to helping former slaves in the South. In establishing Rust College, he worked closely with the African-American minister there, the Rev. Moses Adams. And believing that schoolteachers should evangelize as well as educate, he took a leadership role in establishing as many as 14 colleges for teachers throughout the South. In 1882, it was estimated that three-quarters of a million African-American children had been or were being taught by teachers sent out by these schools.



R. S. RUST, D.D., LL.D.

Honorary Secretary of the Freedmen's Aid and Southern Education Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church ; Secretary from the Foundation of the Society in 1866 to 1888

R. S. RUST, D.D., LL.D. Honorary Secretary of the Freedmen's Aid and Southern Education Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Secretary from the Foundation of the Society in 1866 to 1888. Rust was Professor of Theology and Mental Science at Wesleyan University.

Notes on Contributors

Susan Youngblood Ashmore is an assistant professor of History at Oxford College of Emory University.

Mark Auslander is an assistant professor of Anthropology at Oxford College of Emory University.

Nicole Chupp is a freshman from Conyers, GA. She plans to major in history or psychology.

Candace Crystal Coffman is a freshman from Mayflower, Arkansas. She attended the Arkansas School for Mathematics and Sciences in Hot Springs, AK, for high school.

Bionca DeAnn Jacobs is a sophomore from Monticello, GA. She plans to major in nursing and pursue a master's degree in Health Care Administration.

Kathleen Donaghey is a senior from Boston, Mass. She is majoring in English and History and hopes to go to Law School.

Lauren Mock came to Oxford College from Albany, GA. She is a sophomore and has enjoyed working on this project. Through her participation she gained a deep appreciation for the African American members of the community, past and present. The "way things were" stories told by ladies of the church proved to be her favorite part of the project. Lauren hopes to one day research her own family genealogy, using the skills she acquired while helping with the history of Rust Chapel.

Rebecca Marie Weaver is originally from Shiprock, NM and was reared in Rock Spring, GA. She is a sophomore at Oxford and is majoring in German. Rebecca has been very excited to help Rust Chapel and the Godfrey family learn more about their history and their ancestors.