## Southwest Charles Town: The Heart of the Black Business Community

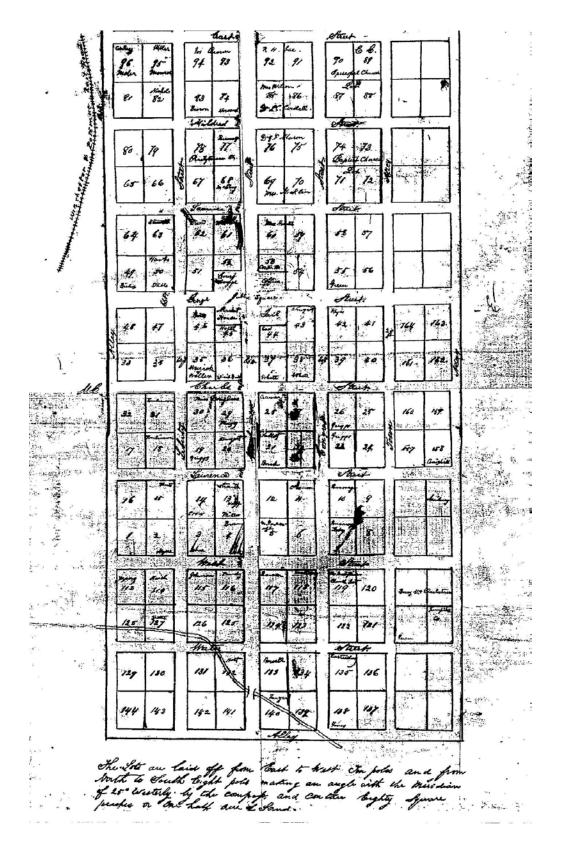
#### By Linda Downing Ballard

The history of Charles Town predates its name as evidenced by its locale in the Shenandoah Valley situated a few miles from the confluence of the Shenandoah and Potomac rivers and within proximity of the Opequon Creek. The names of these landscapes are indicative of the societies who preexisted in the Valley before the boundaries of Charles Town were mapped. History is infinite and complex. It is written, invariably, in bits and pieces. An author must decide which pieces of history one will research, consolidate and preserve. This piece is written to preserve the history of the southwest district of Charles Town.

The era of interest will begin in 1850 to formulate a backdrop for the significance of the timeframe the subject era will conclude – 1970. Together, we will rediscover the complex history of Charles Town, West Virginia.

In 1850, the United States Federal Census tells us 15,357 people populated Jefferson County. Of them, 4,341 men, women and children were enslaved, and further 341 were documented as mulatto. By then, Charles Town was the epicenter of Jefferson County.

The original boundaries of Charles Town were North Street, East Street (later, renamed Church Street), South Street (renamed Avis Street), and West Street. (Reference Plan of Charles Town, Jefferson County, Virginia, circa 1850s map on page 2.) The southwest district, heretofore, includes West Street which flows north to south; the southwest ends of Congress, Avis, Academy and Ann streets, all of which flow east to west; the southwest sections of Charles, Lawrence and Water streets, all flowing north to south; Mordington and Weirick streets which branch off South West Street, heading south, toward the left and Augustine Avenue which branches toward the right (formerly the Berryville Pike). Congress, Avis (old South Street), Charles, Lawrence, and West streets are within the original borders. Academy and the southwest sections of Charles, Lawrence and West streets border the southern perimeter of the town's original boundaries.



In 1862, three years after abolitionist John Brown led a Provisional Army in the insurrection against slavery in Harpers Ferry, the Emancipation Proclamation signed by President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed, "freedom to the slaves in the Confederate States if the States did not return to the Union by January 1, 1863". The year 1863 brought partial emancipation and formation of a new state, West Virginia, though Virginia and West Virginia disputed the ownership of Jefferson and Berkeley counties over the commerce benefits of the Shenandoah and Potomac waterways in and near Jefferson County and the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad which runs through Jefferson and Berkeley counties until a ruling was made by the Supreme Court of the United States in 1871. The Supreme Court ruled in West Virginia's favor.

August 1863, "Property Impressed from R. B. Washington of Jefferson County by United States Troops" lists "Negroe [sic] slaves of R. B. Washington liberated by the war". The names of 27 people are listed, ranging from age 10 to age 50. At least twelve of these individuals began their free, newfound habitation in Charles Town.

Edward Johnson, blacksmith	age 50
Maria Johnson, accomplished cook	age 45
Benjamin Galloway	age 35
Charlotte Galloway	age 33
Samuel Galloway	age 15
Lucy Galloway	age 13
Dolly Nelson	age 30
Benjamin Nelson	age 17
Lucy Nelson	age 16
Jane Nelson	age 14
Thomas Nelson	age 12
Hannah Nelson	age 10

Descendants from at least two of these families lived in the southwest district of Charles Town: descendants of Benjamin and Charlotte Galloway and descendants of Dolly Nelson and son Benjamin Nelson.

The complete list of people who were liberated by the Civil War in the Property Impressed from R. B. Washington of Jefferson County by United States Troops follows. R. B. (Richard Blackburn) Washington was the third-grandnephew of George Washington, first President of the United States.

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PROPERTY IMPRESSED FROM R. B. WASHINGTON OF JEFFERSON COUNTY BY UNITED STATES TROOPS
1861 By Captain Hay of Gen. Patterson's Command
June Fifty bbls of corn
1865 One Gray Mule
Aug By Captain Summers U.S. Cavalry
   One pair of gray horses for use of his Cavalry
Aug By
    2000 bu's of wheat
Nov. 4 Mules and 3 horses
    30 head of fat beef cattle
   100 <sup>8</sup> hogs
150 <sup>8</sup> sheep
    40 tons of timothy hay
    200 bbs " housed corn
    80 scres of growing corn
    Four horse wagon loads of wheat from stacks
    Burnt as fuel & used for breast works 30,000 rails also
    200 cords of fire wood
     3000 lbs of bacon
      Four horse loads of oats in straw
    500 bus. of potatoes
      Negroe slaves of R. B. Washington liberated by the war.
  James Reeler accomplished house servant & gardener age
  Phillip Reeler
                                                            28 #
  Edward Johnson blacksmith
                                                            50
                                                            45
 Maria Johnson accomplished Gook
                                                            45
 Meridith Johnson
  Louisa Johnson
                                                            其名
                                                            17
  Mary Johnson
 Abby Johnson
 Meredith Johnson, Jr.
                                                            14
                                                            10
  Cinthia Johnson
 Margaret Taylor
 Albert
                                                            14
 Benjamin Galloway
  Charlotte Galloway
                                                            33
  Samuel Galloway
                                                            15
 Lucy Gallowoway
                                                            13
  Prince Johnson Excellent Blacksmith
                                                            XA
 Mingo Johnson . .
                                                            18
  John
  Dolly Welson
                                                            30
  Benjamin Nelson
                                                            17
  Lucy Nelson
                                                            16
  Jane Melson
                                                            14
                                                            10
  Thomas Nelson
                                                            10
  Hannah Nelson
  Thomas Saunders accomplished house servant
  Eliza Thomson accomplished house servant
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Copy of Property Impressed from R. B. Washington of Jefferson County by United States Troops. (Courtesy of Walter Washington, Harewood, Charles Town, WV.)

The Dred Scott Supreme Court Decision in 1857 held that "a negro, whose ancestors were imported into, and sold as slaves, whether enslaved or free, could not be an American citizen" . . . Charles Town (then) Virginia, was not acting in isolation. Charles Town was functioning in accordance to Federal Laws.

#### **Dred Scott**



The Civil War between the United States and the Confederacy began in 1861 at Fort Sumter, SC, and ended in 1865 when Robert E. Lee surrendered to Ulysses S. Grant at the Appomattox Court House in Appomattox, VA. Jefferson County was divided. Though heavily Confederate, local men also fought to keep the United States whole, and starting in 1863, more than 120 men from Jefferson County were United States Colored Troops (USCT).

After the Civil War ended, "three Reconstruction Amendments" to the United States Constitution, the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments, were passed by Congress. The Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution "abolished slavery and involuntary servitude, except for punishment for a crime" (passed January 31, 1865). The Fourteenth Amendment "addressed citizenship rights and equal protection of the law" (adopted July 9, 1868). The Fifteenth Amendment "prohibits the federal and state governments from denying a citizen the right to vote based on the citizen's race, color, or previous condition of servitude" (ratified February 3, 1870). The Civil War and Amendments brought

change throughout America. At last, all citizens in Charles Town, WV, too, were free to purchase land, free to build and buy their own homes, free to receive pay for their labor, free to learn to read and write – free without compensation.

Freed families began to settle around the perimeter of Charles Town, as well as throughout the county. Edward Johnson, Charlotte Galloway, Dolly Nelson and their families (listed as "slaves" of R. B. Washington) settled in the 1<sup>st</sup> Ward of Charles Town. Land and homeownership became generational.

Research of the Jefferson County Court House Land Books (books start at 1872), deeds, Index to Wills from 1801 – 1977, Will Books, vital statics record books (including birth, death and marriage records), Church Trustee Books, Corporations Books, and other related source documents confirm the following.

# African American Presence 1<sup>st</sup> Ward and 2<sup>nd</sup> Ward of Charles Town, WV During Post-Civil War Reconstruction Era 1865 – 1876 And Beyond

Land Book	Name	Description of lot and location	Value of bldg. on the lot	Value of lot & bldg.			
1872, 1873 and 1874 (same information and same page numbers) Table of Town Lots							
Page 13	Jerry Blue	½ acre, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Ward	400	500			
	Caroline Blue	1 acre, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Ward	50	100			
Page 15	Charlotte Galloway	1½ acre, 1 <sup>st</sup> Ward	250	550			
Page 19	Dolly Nelson	1 acre, 1 <sup>st</sup> Ward	180	330			
Page 21	E. Talbott	½ acre, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Ward	250	350			
	John Talbott	1 acre, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Ward	400	500			
	John Welcome	½ lot, 32 Congress St.	40	120			
	John Welcome (for life)	1 acre, #8 West Street	640	800			

**Charlotte Galloway** death record lists date of death Dec. 3, 1874, spouse Benjamin, occupation servant, reported by Dolly Nelson, neighbor.

**Edward Johnson** death record lists date of death April 4, 1874, age 76, spouse Maria Johnson, occupation laborer, father F. Johnson, informant Dolly Nelson, sister.

**Dolly Nelson, 1**st Ward, paid taxes on land and a building until 1900. No death record found.

**John Welcome** is listed twice in the Jefferson County Court House marriage records in the 1800s. First, John Welcome "free mixture" and "Bearsheba" Lucas marriage is listed November 23, 1826. Second, John Welcome (age 60) and Ellen (Helen)Thornton marriage is listed April 28, 1870. In 1870 Federal Census John and Helen Welcome are spouses. No death records found.

Index to Wills from 1801 – 1977 Jefferson County lists in year 1867 "Bersheba" Welcome, Will Recorders W.B., page 54. Will Book inaccessible to determine contents.

Index to Wills from 1801 – 1977 Jefferson County lists in year 1895 Helen Welcome, Will Book B, page 232. "I give, and bequeath and devise to . . . my interest that certain house and lot on West Street for a longtime occupied by . . . and myself, I direct that same be sold to be paid to Nancy Goens . . . she has taken care of me . . ., Nancy Goens has been thoughtful and kind to me in every way". 17<sup>th</sup> day of December 1894. Helen Welcome signed her will with an "X". Helen Welcome deceased 30<sup>th</sup> day of July 1895.

Land Book	Name	Description of lot and location	Value of bldg on the lot	. Value of lot & bldg.			
1875, 1876, and 1877 (same information, page numbers differ) Table of Tracts of Land							
Page 39	Robert Blue	1 A, C.T. turnpike, SW	I	100			
Table of Town Lots							
Page 12	Jerry Blue	½ lot, 1 <sup>st</sup> Ward	400	500			
Page 15	Charlotte Galloway Heirs	1 ½ acre, 1 <sup>st</sup> Ward	300	500			
Page 19	Dolly Nelson	1 acre, 1 <sup>st</sup> Ward	180	330			
Page 20	E. Talbot	¼ acre, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Ward near Academy	300	400			
	J. Talbot	½ A, near Academy	400	500			
Page 21	John Welcome	½ lot, Congress	40	120			
	John Welcome Heirs in 1877	1 acre, #8 West	800	1000			

1878 Table of Town Lots ½ lot, 1<sup>st</sup> Ward 400 500 Page 31 Jerry Blue Sam Galloway 1 ½ acre, 1<sup>st</sup> Ward 300 Page 34 500 Page 38 Dolly Nelson 1 acre, 1<sup>st</sup> Ward 200 300 Page 40 J. Talbot, Sr. ½ A, near Academy 400 500 2<sup>nd</sup> Ward E. Talbot 300 400 Page 41 John Welcome heirs ½ lot 40 120 John Welcome heirs lot #8 West 800 1000 1882 Table of Town Lots 1/8 lot, Lawrence Page 42 100 150 L. L. Page deed from John Lock 1883 Table of Town Lots Page 37 L. L. Page 1/8 lot, Lawrence 450 550 1884 Table of Town Lots 1/3 acre, 1st Ward 50 Page 37 Benjamin Nelson 1 acre, 1<sup>st</sup> Ward 300 Dolly Nelson 200 1885 Table of Town Lots 1/3 acre, 1<sup>st</sup> Ward Page 44 Benjamin Nelson 250 200 1 acre, 1<sup>st</sup> Ward **Dolly Nelson** 200 250 1888 Table of Town Lots Page 39 Benjamin Nelson 1/3 acre, 1<sup>st</sup> Ward 450 500 **Dolly Nelson** 1 acre, 1<sup>st</sup> Ward 200 250

200

300

1 acre, 1<sup>st</sup> Ward

**Thomas Nelson** 

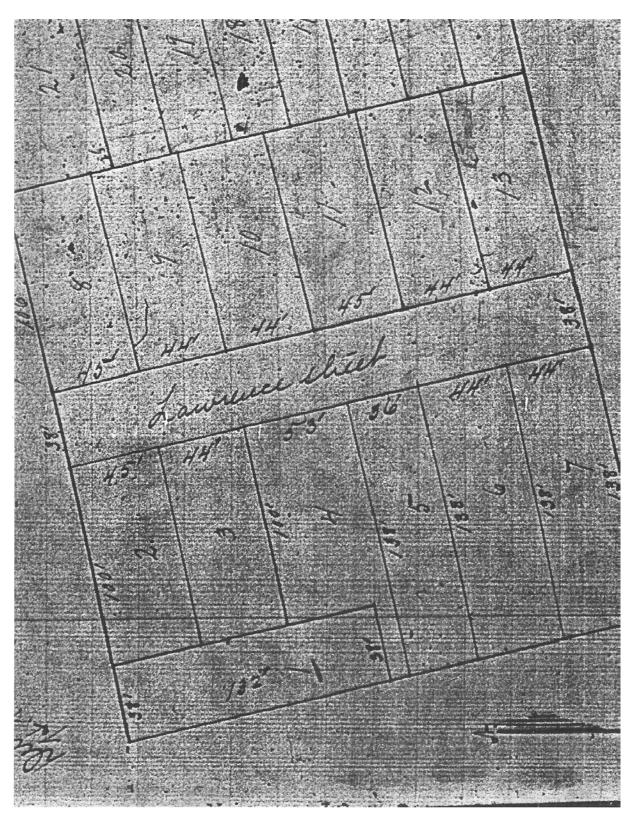
**Dolly Nelson** and her sons Benjamin Nelson and Thomas Nelson were all enslaved on the R. B. Washington property. By 1891, Benjamin Nelson's property value had escalated to \$600 for value of building on the lot and \$650 for value of lot and building on the lot. Dolly Nelson lived to see her sons become land and homeowners.

**Benjamin F. Nelson**, Will Book C, page 227, "I Benjamin F. Nelson, being of sound mind and memory, though in delicate health do make this my last will and testament. My house and lot on the corner of South Alley and Lawrence St. in Charles Town, WV, and all my household and kitchen furniture, except my parlor furniture and the organ I devise and bequeath to my wife Nancy for and during her life, and at her death to my granddaughter Nellie Miller and grandson Reynolds Miller (children of my deceased daughter) and my son Robert Benjamin Nelson, share and share alike, one-third to each if they survive my wife. . . The parlor furniture in my life I have given my said wife, and the organ I have heretofore given to my said granddaughter. . ."

"I devise and bequeath my interest in the estate of my mother, Dolly Nelson, to my sister Hannah Nelson. . ."

"I appoint my brother, Thomas Nelson, as my executor. Witness my hand this 4<sup>th</sup> day of September 1906".

**Thomas Nelson** married Cora L. Warner December 26, 1888. He was age 29. She was 25. Cora L. Nelson died January 4, 1920. David is listed as father on Thomas Nelson's death record. Thomas H. Nelson lived until May 18, 1934. He is in the Star Lodge #1 picture taken June 27, 1915, that follows on page 15.

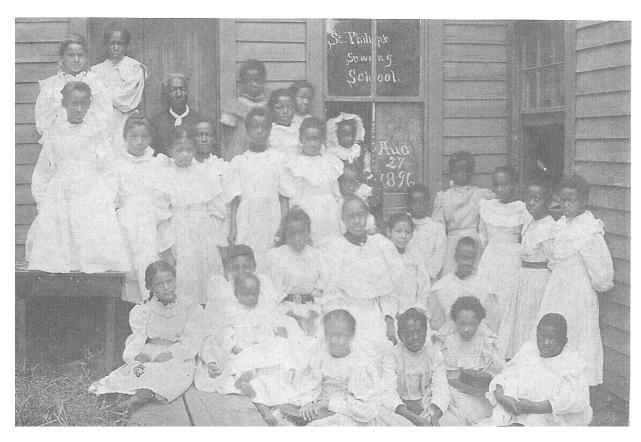


Pictured is lot inherited by Nancy D. Nelson (widow of Benjamin F. Nelson) described as No. 2 on plat recorded in Deed Book R, page 257. The lot was located at the south corner of South Alley (Avis) and Lawrence streets in Charles Town.

During Reconstruction, the Freedmen's Bureau (established by Congress in 1865) was instrumental in building schools and churches in the South to educate "former slaves" who, for centuries, were deprived of the fundamental right to learn to read and write. The first school in Charles Town for freed African Americans was established in the home of Ellen and Achilles Dixon, a free African American blacksmith. Their home was located on the corner of Liberty and Samuel streets and functioned as a school until the county established a public-school system to educate African American students, circa 1867 - 1874.

(On August 16, 1839, Achilles Dixon appeared in the Jefferson County Courthouse to buy his wife and children. He paid Margaret Kearsley a sum of one hundred dollars and "she set free from slavery, his wife, a daughter and a son". From *A Collection of Black History Events in Jefferson County, WV,* Volume 1, 1700 – 2001, page 8, Jefferson County Black History Preservation Society.)

Three churches were built in the southwest district during the Reconstruction Era or shortly thereafter. In August 1866, a parcel of land on South Charles Street was transferred to the trustees of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church. John Welcome and John Talbot were two members on the Trustee Board. Construction of the church was completed in 1867. It was the first African American Methodist Church in Charles Town. Partially destroyed by fire, the front of the church was restored in 1887. Mt. Zion was added to its name around 1887. On September 13, 1899, "a lot and house situated on the west side of South Lawrence Street was purchased for \$1,040 to be used as a parsonage" for the Mt. Zion Methodist Church. In 1868, Nathan Brackett of the Freedmen's Bureau donated land for the newly organized Colored Free Will Baptist Church of Charles Town. The church was constructed on West Avis Street. Reverend Chester C. Wainwright was its pastor from 1874 until his death in 1902. The church was posthumously renamed Wainwright Baptist Church. It is the oldest African American Baptist church in Jefferson County. In 1885, the St. Philip's Episcopal Church was erected on South Lawrence Street.



Teacher and students at the St. Philip's private school in 1896. (Picture is courtesy of the Jefferson County Museum.)

Mt. Zion Methodist Church parsonage located on South Lawrence Street in Charles Town. The house was razed in 1988.



(Reference booklet *The History of Mt. Zion United Methodist Church* 305 South Charles Street, Charles Town, WV, "130 Years with God", "Nathaniel Downing, Sr., Historian for this project".)

Meanwhile, growth in the southwest district continued – growth in population, growth in land and homeownership, growth in civic involvement, and, ultimately, growth in self-empowerment. Our ancestors knew their history – and they were history in the making.

In 1875, at the behest of three men living in the southwest district, the Fairview Cemetery Corporation was established as a corporation to oversee the "burial place for the dead of the colored" (as cited on page 5, Corporation Book 1, in the Jefferson County Court House). Land for the graveyard was purchased in Gibsontown (formerly Ventosa) on Berryville Pike a few miles south of Charles Town.

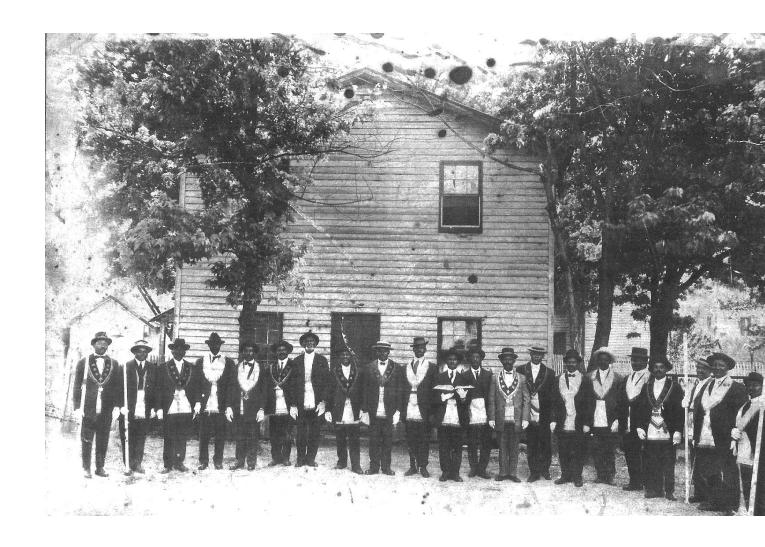
In 1877, a contingent of African American men from Jefferson County petitioned the Maryland Prince Hall Grand Lodge for a charter. A charter was granted March 21, 1877. Star Lodge #1 became the first Prince Hall Affiliated Free and Accepted Masons Lodge in West Virginia. Star Lodge #1 advanced its cause by organizing the Rising Sun Lodge in Harpers Ferry and the Mount Pisgah

Lodge in Martinsburg, both of which were chartered by the Grand Lodge of Maryland in 1881 at a convention held in Martinsburg to organize the Grand Lodge of West Virginia. In 1885, Star Lodge #1 Free and Accepted Masons, Ancient Free and Accepted Masons, and Queen of the Valley Lodge #1558, Grand United Order of the Odd Fellows, purchased the Locke House located at the corner of West Avis and South Lawrence streets.

In 1885, a local tabernacle of the Grand United Order of the Galilean Fishermen (G.U.O.G.F.) was chartered in Charles Town. The G.U.O.G.F. was a self-reliant, business-minded organization that "catered to the financial and commercial needs of its members, setting up banks and insurance companies well before the turn of the century" (as cited in the Fishermen's Hall brochure). The Charles Town Industrial Association, an African American organization for the local tabernacle, built Fishermen's Hall on the property purchased by the local Order on South West Street.

Procurement of land and homes in the southwest district progressed to include the farthest southern blocks of Charles and Lawrence streets, Ann Street which flows east to west at the base of South Charles and South Lawrence streets, the section of Academy Street between South Charles and South Lawrence streets, the last block of South West Street, Weirick Street, and the southern end of Water Street.

Littleton Lorton Page and Philip Jackson, both prominent educators, resided in the southwest district on South Lawrence and West Academy streets, respectively. Page and Jackson were the first and second principals at the "Second Colored School" in Charles Town (the Charles Town District Colored School). Page Jackson High School, the first and only high school in Jefferson County for African American students, was named in honor of these two men.



Star Lodge #1 Prince Hall Affiliated Free and Accepted Masons of Charles Town, WV. Picture was taken June 27, 1915. Exact location unknown. Pictured left to right: John McDaniel, Charles R. Ross, Samuel Tucker, Thomas Nelson, George Rutherford, Charles A. Ross, William Payne, William White, David Carey, Benjamin Shelton, Lewis Rutherford, George Washington, Thomas Bailey, Unknown, Thomas Young, Daniel Carey, Unknown, Earl Johnson, Unknown, Peter Brooks, Robert Lindsey. Thomas Nelson, fourth from left, was enslaved on the R. B. Washington property.

#### From Slavery to Reconstruction to Jim Crow

As a new century approached, another devastating hurdle was ruled constitutional by the United States Supreme Court - Plessy v. Ferguson, 1896. The United States Supreme Court Decision upheld the dogma of "Separate but Equal". Segregation in public places was, at the stroke of a pen, sanctioned by the Highest Court in the United States.

African Americans in Charles Town, and throughout their Homeland for generations, continued to think their way through their relentless, downtrodden circumstances.

African American homeownership and communities continued to emerge around the town's borders in each quadrant at its farthest point. George Street flows north to south and dissects the town into east and west. Washington Street flows east to west and dissects the town into north and south. George and Washington streets intersect at the center of town formulating four distinct quadrants. "Potato Hill" emerged at the western brink of town; "Dog Town" at the northeast edge; "Big End" at the extended portion of South George Street; and the Southwest District as described earlier. The Southwest District emerged as the black business district in Charles Town. South West Street, more specifically, became the black business strip. Folks needed a business corridor of their own – a place that provided relief from the unceasing injustice bestowed upon them.

African American men from Jefferson County served their Country in the Spanish-American War (1898) and beginning in 1917 when the United States got involved in the war in Europe, African American men throughout the United States were inducted to serve in World War I. Eight young African American men from Jefferson County, one of whom was killed in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive overseas, lost their lives during World War I.

In 1918, the St. Philip's Episcopal Church functioned as an emergency hospital during the world-wide, catastrophic Influenza Epidemic exacerbated by World War I. The causalities were extreme. St. Philip's also functioned as a parochial industrial school until the Great Depression.

American Legion Post 63 was first organized in 1919, as the Loyal Afro-American Post in Martinsburg. The charter was cancelled in 1925. Post 63 was re-charted in Charles Town in 1929 as Green-Copeland Post 63. Post 63 was a segregated Post organized in Charles Town to support black veterans who served in WWI. Shields Green and John Anthony Copeland, Jr., were two of the five African American men who served in John Brown's Provisional Army during the revolt against slavery in Harpers Ferry in 1859. John Brown and six men in the Provisional Army were hanged at the gallows in Charles Town: John E. Cook, John A. Copeland, Jr., Edwin Coppic, Shields Green, Albert Hazlett, and Aaron Dwight Stevens. Green-Copeland Post 63 was named in tribute to Shields Green and John A. Copeland, Jr., a testament to the depth of thought given to preserve history. Post 63's meetings were conducted in the southwest district at Fishermen's Hall and the Star Lodge #1 Mason Building.

Residents started small businesses that gradually formed a linier three-block stretch down South West Street. Businesses included a physician, a hotel, barbershops, restaurants, a dry-cleaning business, convenience stores, a health aids business, billiards, taverns, and other small businesses. A livestock yard and stables business were also in the vicinity.

Dr. Chester D. Wainwright, the first African American physician in Charles Town, ran his medical practice on Augustine Avenue. He was the son of Reverend Chester C. and Sezzie Wainwright.

The February 1925 semi-monthly issuance of *The Comet*, an African American newspaper printed by the Zion Baptist Church on Potato Hill, advertised a skin and hair care product business for "Mrs. Queen Shorts, Agent, 213 S. West Street, Charles Town, W. Va.".

Following are excerpts from an interview with Mrs. Genevieve Bradford Baylor conducted January 28, 2010. She was born December 4, 1920. Mrs. Baylor grew up on South West Street.

"Mama used to wave gleaners (cards with pockets to hold coins) at the race trackers on Saturday", (Ms. Genevieve reminisced) "as they walked passed our house to raise money for the church". Most of her customers were men who worked at the racetrack.... Mrs. Genevieve said her mother set-up a restaurant at their house "complete with a cash register". Her mother placed tables on the front porch and covered them with table clothes. The children had to

gather (wood) "chips out the yard to fire-up the cook stove". "A meal was ready in half-hour". "Pretty good business".

Mrs. Genevieve said her father owned three horses. She remembers "getting ready for the big horse show every August". The horse show took place near the (now extinct) Shenandoah Downs Racetrack. Her mother prepared a picnic lunch "including fried chicken". "We had a private(viewing) box".

Mrs. Genevieve said her father and mother operated businesses, previously, "on main street". Her father had a barbershop and her mother had a restaurant. She didn't know how her mother and father "managed to have a business on main street in those days". At some point, the Bradfords bought a building near "West Street" for their businesses.

Mrs. Genevieve said she lost her father when she was about ten.

In 1934, William and Lavinia Payne deeded property from Woody's Filling Stations Corporations. Per the deed, the lot was immediately adjacent to and on the north side of the Bradford Lot located at the corner of West and Congress streets. The Paynes built and operated a hotel on the lot. Deed of Trust dated July 7, 1949, states the structure had 20 rooms and a restaurant. Travelers and well-known artists performing and traveling through the South as part of the "Chitlin Circuit" stayed at Payne's Hotel. Prominent artists included Fats Domino, Ike and Tina Turner, and others. Since hotels in Charles Town were segregated, Payne's Hotel filled a necessary void. The lower level of the hotel was later transformed into a dance hall. It was named the Tap Room.

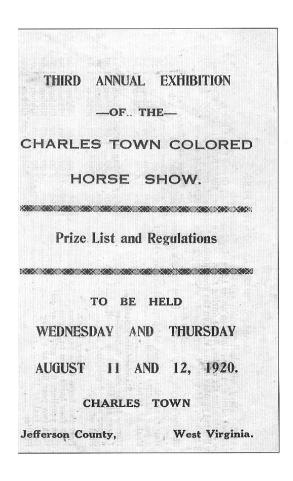
Payne's Hotel was owned afterward by Sylvia Rideout Bishop. She and her husband, John Bishop, were both successful entrepreneurs each by her and his own right. Sylvia Bishop became the first licensed African American female racehorse trainer in the United States. John Bishop was a key promoter and component of the "Chitlin Circuit" during its zenith.

(The "Chitlin Circuit" was a circuit of performance sites located, not limited to, but mostly in the South where African American entertainers could perform during the Jim Crow era.)

Samuel "Sam" Galloway (grandson of Benjamin and Charlotte Galloway and son of Samuel Galloway, age 15, listed on the Property Impressed from R. B. Washington, 1863) owned and operated a livestock yard, (per Deed Book 273, page 41) on "South Alley (Avis Street), plot adjoining Free Will Baptist Church. . .".



Property owned by Mr. and Mrs. William and Queen Victoria Shorts at 213 S. West Street. This is the same property owned by John Welcome. (Reference Land book 1872, #8 West, Table of Town Lots.) Picture from Mr. Edward O. Morgan's Collection.





Picture from Mr. Edward O. Morgan's Collection. The man in picture and year of picture are no longer known.



Mr. and Mrs. Thomas and Georgiana Lawson. In 1900 the Lawsons lived on S. West Street, along with five sons. Son Venning is below. They married in 1870. (Picture date is unknown).



Venning Lawson and daughter Madalean Lawson (McIver) in front of Gold Kettle Restaurant at 211 S. West St. (circa, 1930s.) The Gold Kettle Restaurant was operated by Amanda Galloway. Amanda Galloway was the great-granddaughter of Charlotte and Benjamin Galloway.



Pictured is the Star Lodge No. 1, Free and Accepted Masons' Building located at the corner of South Lawrence and West Avis streets, circa 1930s.



Charles Ross, J. Frank Briscoe, Lewis Rutherford, and J. Wesley Tolbert (These men are listed as trustees for the Odd Fellows in 1927. Picture date is unknown.)



Mrs. Mamie Bradford sitting on her front porch on South West Street. A son and daughter are below.



Genevieve Bradford (Baylor) and brother Jesse "Bus" Bradford, World War II veteran, in front of Fishermen's Hall located at 321 South West Street.



Eugene McDaniel and Sonny Dennis standing in front of 213 South West Street. (circa, 1952 – 1953.)



Ramanda Galloway Williams and Frank Bradford standing in front of Bradford's business at the corner of S. West and W. Congress streets. (circa, 1950s.)



Mrs. Louise Rogers with daughters in front of Fishermen's Hall. Note Imperial ice cream sign. Note child in doorway and man in background. (circa, 1954.)



Geraldine Rutherford (Johnson) at work at Rankin Taylor's Tavern at 321 South West Street. (circa, 1950s.) Mrs. Johnson became principal at Cardozo High School in Washington, D.C.



Mr. and Mrs. Charles "Tip" and Isabelle Hester Brown at a place of business on South West Street. (circa, 1950s.)

The original boundaries of the town remained impenetrable, unless someone needed essentials such as food, clothing or medical care or, essentially, unless someone was needed to clean or cook at houses, restaurants or hotels, or to do similar work, until Brown v. the Board of Education in 1954. Conversely, if someone living inside the original boundaries wanted services from someone living outside the original boundaries, then one would venture into the segregated communities, for example, to drop off laundry to be ironed or make a round-trip to drive someone to work for him. Until Brown v. Board, an invisible "Keep Out" sign remained steadfast barricading the original "80 acres of land" Charles Washington had surveyed to lay out the town in 1786.

The Charles Town Private Library within the original boundaries excluded African American citizens. The Wright Denny Elementary School excluded African American children. The Charles Town High School excluded African American students. Ironically, Wright Denny Elementary was built in the southwest district between West Avis and West Academy streets, and the schoolyard for the Charles Town High School protruded into the southwest African American community and was bordered on the east, the south, and the west by African American families. Still, the neighboring children living at these surrounding borders could not attend

Wright Denny Elementary nor Charles Town High School. Instead, they had to walk, in all types of weather conditions, to the Eagle Avenue School at the farthest west edge of town adjacent to the Norfolk and Western railroad tracks. In addition, the Charles Town movie theater was divided into first floor and balcony seating. The balcony seating was for African American clientele. The New Central Restaurant (former Town Hall building) at the town's center went beyond segregation – persons of color could not eat in the restaurant at all, and the people employed as cooks had to enter through the back door. These exclusionary practices were exercised, also, at the hotels.



"The Charles Town Academy just before it was razed in 1912 to clear the site for the new Charles Town public school building". The houses bordering the school are homes in the southwest district African American community. Note the similarity between the white flat roofed house on the right and the Mt. Zion Methodist Church parsonage on page 13. (Picture from *History of Jefferson County West Virginia*, page 254, Bushong, 1941.)

The Brown v. Board of Education in Topeka Kansas case was led by Attorney Thurgood Marshall. The landmark decision made on May 17, 1954, ruled that racial segregation of schools "violated the <u>Equal Protection Clause</u> of the <u>Fourteenth Amendment</u>". This landmark decision cracked the Plessy v. Ferguson Decision, "Separate but Equal", sanctioned in 1896. Attorney Thurgood Marshall, later, became the first African American Supreme Court Justice (1967 – 1991) in the history of the United States.

Jefferson County implemented passive integration of schools, a system in which African American students could continue attending segregated schools or enter any public school. Page Jackson High School operated until 1965. Eagle Avenue School functioned as an elementary school until the spring of 1966. Eagle Avenue School was destroyed by fire in September 1966. The cause of the fire was undetermined. Charles Town did not fully desegregate its schools until it was forced to do so in 1966, 12 years after the Brown v. Board of Education Decision in 1954. In contrast, Storer College in Harpers Ferry, the college for higher education of African American students and an avid proponent for producing teachers, was closed almost immediately. Storer College's doors were closed in 1955.



Page Jackson High School graduating class of 1960.

It is impossible to compartmentalize the history of Charles Town. The history of Charles Town is a microcosm of the history of the United States.

The Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s brought massive change. The Movement was the catalyst behind the authorization of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. These Acts were sanctioned to enforce the protections prescribed in The Fourteenth Amendment (1868) and The Fifteenth Amendment (1870) to the Constitution of the United States — essentially, 100 years later. The quest for full citizenship for African American citizens continues.

Thousands of stories could be told about the history of Charles Town. This one is dedicated to the thousands of men, women and children who were enslaved in Jefferson County "who made a way out of no way," and developed the southwest district of Charles Town into a black civic and business community that lasted until the 1970s.



Wainwright Baptist Church celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 1968.

## Southwest District of Charles Town, WV African American Businesses, Churches and Schools

### South West Street 100 Block

Congress streets

Payne's Hotel and Tap Room (razed)— West Street near corner of West and Congress streets

James and Mamie Bradford's Barber Shop and Restaurant (razed) — at corner of West and

Rideout's 1<sup>st</sup> Dry Cleaners – same location

Frank Bradford's Billiards – same location

Bowie's Barber Shop – same location

Edwin Lark's Law Office – same location

Pete Lee's Billiards - same location

#### 200 Block

David "Skinny" Butler's Restaurant (razed)— South West St. at corner of South West and Congress streets

Russell Roper's Taxi Service (razed) – adjacent to Skinny Butler's Restaurant

Ella Hughes's Candy Store – 207 South West St.

Rev. Sherlock Patterson's Electrical Contractor and Convenience Store – 207 South West St.

Amanda Galloway's "Gold Kettle" Restaurant – 211 South West St.

St. Mark's Primitive Baptist Church – 211 South West Street

George Harris' Barber Shop (George Sr. and later, George Jr.) - 211 South West St.

T.I.A.B.L.E. (This is a Black Local Enterprise) Record, Wig and Ethnic Attire Shop – 211 S. West St.

Queen Victoria Shorts' Beauty Shop & Beauty Supplies – 213 South West St.

John Smith's 1<sup>st</sup> Dance Hall, Billiards and Tavern (razed) – at corner of South West and Avis streets

Mabel Smith's Restaurant – same location

#### 300 Block

John and Mable Smith's 2<sup>nd</sup> business location – 305 South West St.

Little Brown Jug – building north of Fishermen's Hall

Grand United Order of the Galilean Fishermen's Hall, 1885 – 321 South West St.

Over the years, Fishermen's Hall served as a community center, meeting place for various civic and fraternal organizations and a tavern. Organizations included the Galilean Fishermen, Star Lodge Masons, John Brown Elks, Knights of Pythias and American Legion Post 63.

#### 400 Block

Jesse "Bus" Bradford's Barber Shop – 400 South West St.

Venning Twyman's Billiards (razed) – 404 South West St.

#### **Augustine Avenue**

Dr. Chester D. Wainwright medical practice – 110 Augustine Avenue

Tollgate House – 114 Augustine Avenue

In 1903, Sezzie Wainwright, widow of Reverend Chester C. Wainwright purchased the former tollgate house from the County Court of Jefferson County. Sezzie Wainwright was the mother of Dr. Chester D. Wainwright, the first African American physician in Charles Town.

#### **Avis Street**

Wainwright Baptist Church, 1868 – 413 West Avis St.

Samuel Galloway's Livestock Yard - extreme corner of W. Avis and S. Water streets. Sam Galloway was the grandson of Charlotte and Benjamin Galloway. Charlotte and Benjamin Galloway are listed on the Property Impressed from R. B. Washington of Jefferson County by United States Troops as "Negroe slaves of R. B. Washington liberated by the war", 1863. Their son, Samuel Galloway age 15 when he was freed, is also listed on the Property Impressed list. He married Lizzie Reed on October 5, 1876. Samuel Galloway and Lizzie Reed Galloway are listed as father and mother on the Death Certificate of Samuel Galloway, occupation stock dealer, DOD 6/25/1948.

Rosa Key Galloway Johnson's Hair Salon – 415 West Avis St.

(Samuel Galloway (the stock dealer) and Elizabeth (Mary Elizabeth Carter) are listed on the Death Certificate as the father and mother of Rosa Key Galloway, birth 7/4/1915 and of Amanda Galloway, birth 2/2/1912. Rosa Key and Amanda Galloway were great-granddaughters of Benjamin and Charlotte Galloway.)

#### **Charles Street**

Mt. Zion Colored Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church, 1867 – 303 South Charles St.

"Lou" Rutherford's Stables – 416 South Charles St.

1882 The *Virginia Free Press* reports that a new plank walk has been laid on South Charles Street from Congress to South Street in Charles Town. The same paper reports that "Wm. Furr, one of our polite and worthy colored citizens, has opened in the basement of the Taylor House, an Oyster Saloon, where he will keep at all times (the) very best that the city market will afford. His saloon is neatly fitted up and he will serve oysters in every style at moderate prices". (From *A Collection of Black History Events in Jefferson County, WV,* Volume 1, 1700 – 2001, page 123, Jefferson County Black History Preservation Society.)

**Lawrence Street and Martin Robison Delany Place** (renamed in tribute to Major Martin Robison Delany, first African American Field Officer commissioned Major in the U.S. Army during the Civil War)

Star Lodge #1, Free and Accepted Masons, chartered in 1877, purchased the Locke House (Mason Building) in 1885 – 218 South Lawrence St.

Pentecostal Church services – Mason Building, 218 South Lawrence Street

St. Philip's Episcopal Church, 1885 – 409 South Lawrence St.

Emergency Hospital – 1918 Influenza Epidemic during WWI

Parochial Industrial School

Mission Helper, newspaper

**Mordington Avenue and Page Jackson Way** (renamed in honor of Littleton Lorton Page and Philip Jackson, prominent educators at the segregated schools in Charles Town)

Page-Jackson High School, 1951-1965

Page-Jackson Alumni Room

Ernest M. Dandridge, Sr. Athletic Field (only principal at Page-Jackson High School on Mordington Avenue and Page Jackson Way)

#### **Water Street**

Phyllis Creamer's Hair Salon – 214 South Water St.

House of Prayer Church – 501 West Congress St. (at corner of Congress and Water streets)

#### **Acknowledgements**

Working on the history of the Southwest District in Charles Town, WV, was enlightening. Tying its evolution from slavery to achievement was heartfelt. **Dolly Nelson** peaked my interest from the onset of my research and, I found myself literally rooting for her longevity. Dolly Nelson the wife, the mother, the sister, the neighbor, the friend – the person who lived enslaved until she was freed in 1863 at the age of 30.

**David Nelson**, the unsung man, is listed as head of household, husband and father in the 1870 and 1880 Federal Census. Dolly Nelson is listed as wife. His profession is listed as carpenter. I was relieved to learn that David Nelson lived beyond slavery. David Nelson is not listed on the 1863 "Property Impressed from R. B. Washington" list or in the property tax records beginning in 1872 through 1900. It is unclear why and, though my imagination tells me many things, it is best to not speculate. Regardless, David and Dolly Nelson must have inculcated an unbreakable will and sense of determination within their children. Their son Benjamin owned property in the southwest district and on Potato Hill and their son Thomas owned property on Potato Hill.

This venture began as a topic of discussion at a Jefferson County Black History Preservation Society meeting. I am an associate member of the Society and volunteered to research the history of the Southwest District. The initial focus pertained to the many black-owned businesses that arose and sustained on "West Street" until the 1970s. To value wholly the accomplishments of our ancestors, one must revisit the rugged road they traveled.

Much gratitude is extended to the Jefferson County Black History Preservation Society, and especially to Mr. James Tolbert, Sr., for his unwavering support. To illustrate, he sketched the entire business strip as a point of reference and, of his own volition, made copies of background information for me to read and use.

Appreciation is given to Walter Washington of Harewood who invited me to his estate along with the Black History Preservation Society and other guests. At the luncheon, he gave me a copy of the "Property Impressed from R. B. Washington". Interestingly, the invitation at the time had no correlation with the

Southwest District project. I discovered the connection while conducting research for the Southwest District project.

Appreciation is conveyed to all who provided pictures: Deadra Bryant, James L. Taylor, Jacqueline Jones, Leslie Ash, George Rutherford, Janet Baylor, Jane Rissler and anyone else who I may have inadvertently omitted. Appreciation goes to Jane Rissler of the Jefferson County Museum and to the Charles Town Mapping Office for their assistance with acquiring an early map of Charles Town. Gratitude is expressed to my husband, Maurice Ballard, for helping with the photographs. Appreciation is extended to James Green, Jr., for assisting with the preliminary review of the businesses list.

Though they are no longer with us, I am grateful for having access to my father Nathaniel Downing, Sr.'s historical files and Mr. Edward Morgan's photographs. My father instilled an interest in history within my soul. Mr. Morgan was known for taking pictures of community life. I am grateful, also, for Mrs. Genevieve Baylor allowing me to interview her.

My sincere gratitude to my mother Julia Downing for sharing what she remembers about the Southwest District.

I am grateful to everyone who contributed to this project in any way.

Linda Downing Ballard December 10, 2017