

AVERY

WINTER 2016/2017

MESSENGER

The Avery You Don't See



A Publication of the

AVERY RESEARCH CENTER

FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE

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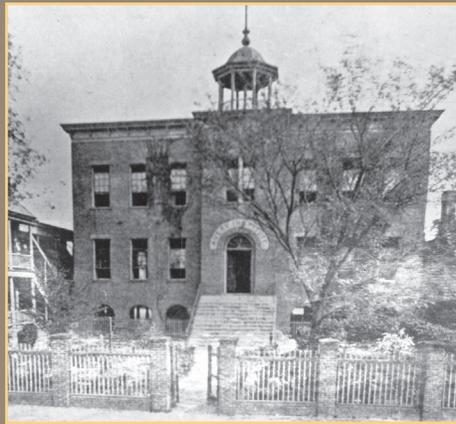
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ON THE COVER



Avery Institute, built 1867, was designed in the "Italianate" style with arched entries and windows, and a domed cupola adorning the roof.

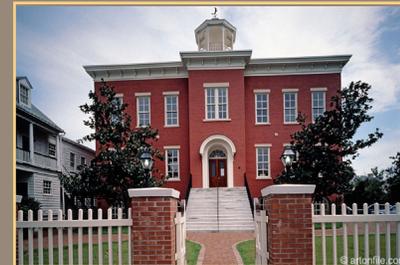
After Avery Institute closed in 1954, Dr. John Palmer purchased the Avery buildings and operated Palmer Business College (PBC) on the site for more than two decades. In 1970's photos of the PBC, the cupola is not visible, appearing not to still be in place. However, during the 1990 renovation, completing the building's majesty, a stately new vane cupola was installed.

THE COVER GIVES A BIRDS-EYE VIEW OF THE CUPOLA.



PHOTOS

Top: Avery Institute building with original cupola,
 Second from top: Cupola is not seen in this photo of the Avery Institute building (former Palmer Business College), c. 1937
 Bottom left: New cupola being installed c. 1989.
 Bottom center: Avery Research Center, new cupola c. 1989.
 Bottom right: The eagle vane at the top of the cupola.



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AVERY RESEARCH CENTER
DR. PATRICIA WILLIAMS LESSANE • EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Greetings, Friends!

I bid you glad tidings and salutations from Andalucía, where I am currently serving as a Fulbright Specialist. I have been enjoying my sabbatical while knowing the Avery Research Center is in the trusted hands of a staff who truly exemplifies servant leadership!

A great deal has happened since my departure last summer: Hurricanes Hermine and Matthew; escalating state-sanctioned violence against Black and other people of color; and, of course, the final lap of a bitter and unbelievable presidential election. All of these events remind us how tenuous Black life is in America. Media coverage of the Southeast's latest natural disasters reveals the devastating toll both storms had in many cities, but especially the mostly poor, Black, and Native-American communities up and down Highway 17 and I-95. And though the Department of Justice recently announced the good news it would no longer contract with private prisons, which are comprised mostly of poor, Black and Brown women and men, Ava DuVernay's documentary *13th*, which premiered on Netflix on October 7, 2016, further exposed this national travesty that continues to ravage Black communities as it lines the pockets of big corporations. Finally, this presidential election has made it crystal clear that while all lives matter, Black and other marginalized lives are truly the ones that lay in the balance.

But all is not lost. In September, the world witnessed the glorious opening of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC). Through the dynamic vision and leadership of Dr. Lonnie Bunch, the NMAAHC staff has established a living, breathing monument—a testament—to the enduring African-American genius and spirit that is indelible to the American story. In doing so, the NMAAHC affirms why places like the Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture are crucial in providing an accurate and holistic narrative of this great nation. To wit on a local level, the Avery Research Center's is important for so many reasons, and not the least of which is to right the one-sided and racist cultural narratives some believe imbue Charleston and its unique charm. By preserving primary-source materials that account our stories and experiences, we arm students, scholars, and future generations with the intellectual and historical ammunition to speak truth to power.

Until next time,
pwl



AVERY INSTITUTE
JOHN BUNCUM • PRESIDENT

Happy New Year to our valued contributors, members, and friends. As a reminder, the principle goal of the Avery Institute is to support the Avery Research Center in the development and implementation of its programs. This is done via our physical presence, encouragement of community support, and, more importantly, financial support. We accomplish this in two major ways. First, we seek memberships. You can find our membership pricing on

the final page of this magazine. Tony Bell is the chairperson of our membership committee and has chaired this committee for several years. I would like to thank Tony and his committee for the excellent job they are doing in soliciting membership and maintaining our membership roll. Membership is the easiest way you can support the work being done at the Avery Research Center and to be informed of the activities hosted and sponsored by the Avery Research Center.

Another avenue of fundraising is through our annual fundraising drive. I would like to commend Catherine Boags for volunteering to chair this vital committee and taking the lead on petitioning for funds from individuals and corporations to support the work and the cause of the Avery Research Center.

In these difficult financial times, we need the support of our members and our donors more than ever. We hope you will continue to support the Avery Research Center through your membership with the Avery Institute. The Avery Institute is a 501(C)(3) organization. This means contributions made to the Avery Institute are tax deductible. Envelopes for membership are inserted in every edition of the *Avery Messenger*.

On June 25, 2016, we held our annual meeting at the Avery Research Center. Our special guest and presenter was Ms. Barbara Gathers, who presented her most recent book, *From Back da Green: Stories from the Heart*. I would like to thank Ms. Gathers once again for being our special guest and presenting her book. The event was well attended and enjoyed by all present.

Finally, I am pleased to report that *The South Carolina Black History Bugle* magazine mentioned in the previous edition of the *Avery Messenger* has been published and distributed to elementary schools in South Carolina. *The South Carolina Black History Bugle* is an educational magazine and resource for fifth-grade students. This edition of the *Bugle* went to press in August and was delivered to the schools in September. Thanks again to Dr. Patricia Williams Lessane, her staff, and contributors for work they did to put this magazine together.

AVERY ARCHIVES NEWS

INTRODUCING: AAISHA N. HAYKAL, MANAGER OF ARCHIVAL SERVICES

Tell us a little about your professional background.

I have two bachelor's degrees from Syracuse University—one in English and Textual Studies and one in African American Studies—and a Master of Science in Library and Information Science from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. I have worked in libraries and archives for the past ten years in various positions and institutions, and what has connected all my positions is a commitment to documenting those who have been left out of the narratives and including them into the broader scope of global histories.



Aaisha N. Haykal

For the past four years, I worked at Chicago State University (CSU) as the University Archivist; served on state and local boards; and held leadership positions in national organizations, such as the Society of American Archivists and the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH). Additionally, I served as the CSU partner lead in an Institute of Museum and Library Services grant called Preserving (Digital) Objects with Restricted Resources (Digital POWRR), which examined how small to mid-sized institutions can implement a digital preservation program.

What led you to a career in the archival profession?

I knew I wanted to be in the library and information profession since middle school, but it was not until college that I learned about archiving and archivists. My African American Studies research methods classes featured discussions about archives and who gets represented; and I was a student employee in the Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, which was the African American Studies Library. While there, I worked with researchers and the special collection materials. Based on these experiences, I determined I wanted to be a part of preserving Black history by working with scholars to create new academic works and engaging communities about the importance of their histories.

Share your experience(s) as IMLS fellow at the Avery Research Center and in Charleston from 2011 to 2012.

As the Institute of Museum and Library Services fellow, I was responsible for processing archival collections, social media outreach, and planning and implementing a project. I processed four collections, including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Charleston Branch papers, which is now part of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) grant for digitization. While I was here, Avery Research Center hosted a viewing of the documentary *Woke Up Black* by Mary Morten, which depicted the lives of Black youth in Chicago. I was inspired by this and decided to do a modified version by developing a project called "Black in the Lowcountry," which featured

oral histories of Black Charleston youth, specifically students from St. John's High School and from the College of Charleston. I spent approximately two months conducting and transcribing the interviews, which can be listened to online. In addition to working, I engaged with the Charleston community, including being involved with the ASALH's Charleston Branch, the Preservation Society of Charleston's African-American history projects, the Slave Dwelling Project, and giving presentations on archiving to community organizations.

As Manager of Archival Services, what will be your role in the Avery Research Center?

I will be responsible for managing the processes regarding Avery Research Center's archives, which consist of manuscript collections, a library, audiovisual records, photographs, and artifacts. Additionally, I will be working on ways to make our collections accessible physically and digitally, expand our collecting priorities, and evaluate our current collections. I will also work with colleagues to conduct outreach and in-house activities. One of the exciting roles that I will have in the coming year is providing substantial input on the HVAC renovation that is occurring in 2017 and the subsequent fundraising that will be needed to upgrade our archival storage areas. These improvements will allow the Avery Research Center to improve the visitor and researcher experience and to be better stewards of the collections.

Do you have a special or particular project/goal for the Avery Research Center archives?

The staff of the Avery Research Center archives has done great work and I want to expand on it by continuing to document the lived experiences of African Americans in the Lowcountry. However, there are gaps in the collection that need to be filled, such as more collections regarding the twenty-first century, music (i.e. hip-hop, rock, alternative, etc.), author papers, religions other than Christianity or Judaism, Black business owners, gender and sexuality issues, athletics, artists, etc. Additionally, I want to engage and work with museums, libraries, and archives nationally and internationally to get the stories of Black Charlestonians and South Carolinians into wider narratives.



Manager of Archival Services Aaisha Haykal (center) instructing Avery Research Center graduate assistants Asia Folk and David Rothmund.

Any thoughts (philosophical or otherwise) on the current status and future of African-American archives/archiving?

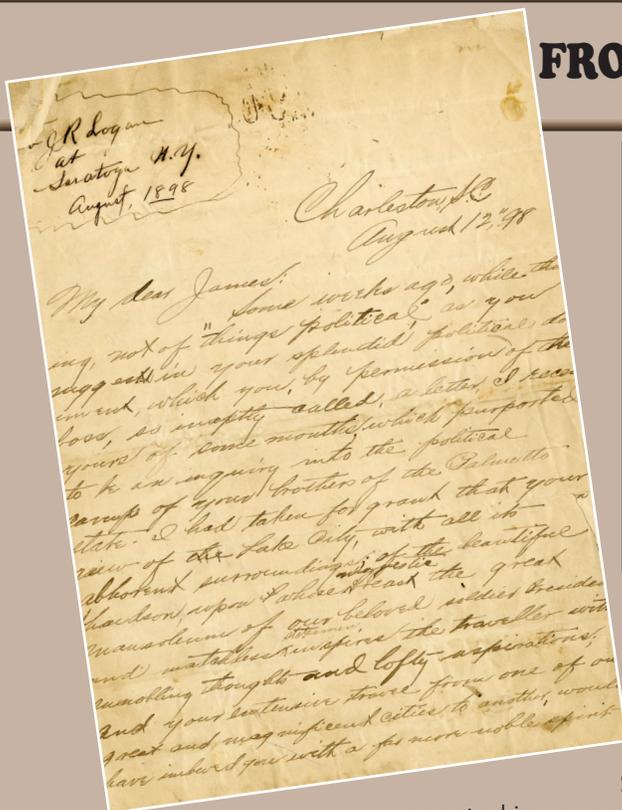
I think we are at an interesting point within African-American archives and archiving because we have two conversations happening. One involves institutionalization and institutional building and the other involves digital spaces, power, community, and independence. The Smithsonian Institution's opening of the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) in Washington, DC, exemplifies the first conversation in that it guarantees there will be an increased interest in documenting not only Black experiences but also those of other ethnic groups. However, the NMAAHC cannot tell all of the stories; thus, local and state museums and archives must continue, or start, to document these narratives. Furthermore, communities and individuals can document themselves and not wait for an institution to do so. This is even more vital in a time when cultural and historical institutions are restricted due to limited funding sources. Therefore, it is important for individuals and organizations to financially support these

institutions so they can be sustainable and stories can be preserved.

The second conversation really has been happening for a while and has resulted from past injustices and silences in predominately White institutions. However, what has increased are the number of projects and how they are becoming more accessible digitally. Some of the projects that are taking this on are Documenting the Now (DocNow), Diversifying the Digital Historical Record (DDHR), Documenting Ferguson, and Synergies among Digital Humanities and African American History and Culture. These projects are examining the ways in which the historical record can be read, who is doing the preserving and collecting, and how will these records be used.

Ultimately, I think there is space for both conversations and they serve different purposes and constituencies. I want to ensure records can be retrieved and accessible centuries later no matter where individuals and organizations archive them.

FROM THE ARCHIVES



This featured gem is a letter from the James R. Logan Scrapbook (AMN 1010). Renaissance man and "Race Man" James Raymond Logan (1874-1958) was the first native Charlestonian to receive a civil service appointment for work at the Charleston Navy Yard and was the first African-American appointee. Logan was a musician, bandleader, choir director, and orator.

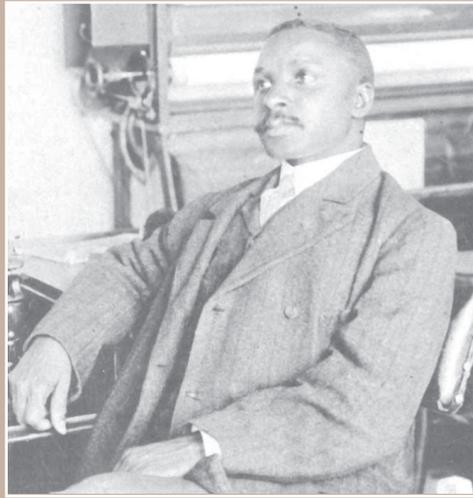
The handwritten letter, dated August 12, 1898 is from Charleston attorney Alonzo E. Twine to James Logan, who is in Saratoga, NY, traveling with the Jenkins Orphanage Band. Twine is filling Logan in on the latest news and events locally, regionally and nationally in a six-page, honest, and often tongue-in-cheek intellectual discourse. Excerpted are portions of the letter. (Box 1, Folder 2)

Note: This letter has been transcribed to the best of our modern language ability from the original 1989 document. "Sic" means as written, and blank spaces represent that the word or words were not legible to us.

My dear James:

Some weeks ago, while thinking, not of "things political" as you suggested in your splendid political document, ...I received yours of some months, which purported to be an inquiry into the political camp of your brothers of the Palmetto state.

But, as you are desirous of knowing the conditions as they exist, I will state them, not as a politician, but as a journalist. You are aware of the official appointment of Geo I. Cunningham, _____ R. Tolbert and Lawson D. Melton. I shall, therefore, not touch upon any phase of their appointment but shall only state, that they are as bad as democrats [sic] not pleasing even their ardent supporters, so far as the appointments of officers are concerned. A few Republicans have been recognized, however. Among whom are H. W. Purvis, Birnie and so many others to petty positions. Democrats are in the majority, though, up to date of this writing. This condition of affairs has greatly displeased the heterogeneous mob or the motley crowd of the party, and as a result, Mr. Murray was sent for and the "black Bismark" came from his high eminence to speak to and console his constituents. A crowd was out to hear him, and his use of gallah [sic], ... and his senorous [sic] voice was in play as usual, but of course his remarks had the desired effect. His speech was as usual, with the exception of his statement, that hereafter the two factions must harmonize. Since his advent everything has remained perfectly quiet in Republican quarters. They are making extensive preparations, though, to vanquish Congressman Elliott and his host with Murray as his their [sic] standard bearer.



James Raymond Logan

In state politics, the different aspirations for state positions are canvassing the state

Congressman Tilman [sic] is making a splendid race for Gov. and I doubt not that he will be elected and thus redeem the state from the curse of Tilmanism. [sic] The other positions will be occupied by reformed democrats [sic], I believe, as all indications point that way.

Ah James! What say you now of McKinley and his statesmanlike handling of the grave questions that have arisen during his administration. [sic] I think he is raising an everlasting monument to his immortal name. His sagelike [sic] advices on the war question, his conservative declaration of war and its successful culmination along with his redeeming the credit of the nation has so endeared him to the American nation that his reelection is sure.

But, aside from politics. The war as you know has caused the our [sic] flag to wave not over "that land of the free and home of the brave" ; but over the battle scared, oppressed, bleeding and Weyler-ridden Cuba, and over Manilla, the Ladrones, Porto Rico and last but not least the Phillippines [sic]. Snatched from the hands of tyranny by the matchless dash, inconceivable valor and skill of our arms. Thank God! By the ebonied hands of my race, as well, [sic] as the opposite.

You would hardly know Charleston now. More than 600 men were taken to Cuba to work ... And 85 have enlisted in the U.S. Army. Thus showing, that Charleston boys yield in patriotism to none.

The city has also improved, by way of transportation and railroads. We have now a new Seashore Line which transport [sic] passengers in a commodious and elegant steamer named "Comodore [sic] Perry", half way to Mt. Pleasant and from there one is hastened on trolley cars to Sullivan's Island and from there to the Isles [sic] of Palms 17 miles from Charleston. I took a days [sic] outing in the company of some ladies to your new pleasure resort last week.

And so James, you are with Rev. Jenkins and the boys again. I am pleased to know it. I hope that you shall stay with them until October... How is Rev. Jenkins? Is he still and [sic] ideal hustler, energetic and kind as when in Charleston.

The work at the Orphanage in the city is progressing nicely. Robt. Wainwright is at the printing press. Grant and myself in the company of some ladies... {who are} are seeing to the success of The Messenger.

Now James answer soon, take the best care of your health and xxx and improve along all lines not forgetting that your spiritual welfare is included.

Your truly [sic]
Alonzo E. Twine
8 Montague St.
Charleston, SC

WHO WAS ALONZO EDGAR TWINE?

- Born 1877 in Charleston, South Carolina to a freeborn carpenter father, who was also a Union Army veteran, and domestic servant mother.
- Graduated from what is now Claflin University, passed the South Carolina Bar, and became an attorney who argued cases before the South Carolina State Supreme Court.
- In 1910, under the tutelage of Louis Gregory, (a fellow attorney and Black Charlestonian), he converted to the Baha'i Faith.
- FBy 1911, Twine's former pastor's, amid growing concern about Twine proselytizing his new faith, had Twine arrested and placed in a psychiatric ward in Charleston. The charge/crime: "religious obsession." Although his family had testified that he had been neither "irritable" nor "quarrelsome" and had remained regular in his work and spotless in his behavior, a White judge ruled him a threat to society and ordered him transported to the South Carolina Hospital for the Insane in Columbia, South Carolina.
- In October 1914, after three years being housed in a building for Black "inmates" that was in dire conditions (extreme crowding, vermin infestation, overflowing toilets, and thin, straw bedding on the ground for beds) Alonzo E. Twine died a lonely death, alone and broken.
- Alonzo Edgar Twine is buried in the Old Bethel United Methodist Church Cemetery in Charleston, SC.

ALONZO E. TWINE,
ATTORNEY AND COUNSELLOR AT LAW
 Collections Made. Estates Attended To.
 Promptness Guaranteed.
 No. 48 SPRING ST.
 Will practice in all the Courts of the State.

Advertisement for Attorney Alonzo Twine from *The Afro-American Citizen* newspaper, January 17, 1900. This newspaper was published weekly at 71 Hasell Street, Charleston, SC. From website: <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83025782/1900-01-17/ed-1/seq-2.pdf>

For more information: No Jim Crow Church: The Origins of South Carolina's Bahá'i Community" by Louis Venters, PhD (University Press of Florida, 2015).

PUBLIC HISTORY INITIATIVES

by Mary Battle, PhD

UPCOMING CONFERENCE

"TRANSFORMING PUBLIC HISTORY FROM CHARLESTON TO THE ATLANTIC WORLD"
JUNE 15-17, 2017 • College of Charleston, Charleston, SC

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

In partnership with various local, national, and international cultural heritage organizations, academic institutions, and historic sites, the Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture, the Carolina Lowcountry and the Atlantic World Program (CLAW), Addlestone Library, and the Race and Social Justice Initiative are hosting a conference on transforming public history practices from Charleston to the Atlantic World to be held at the College of Charleston and other partner sites in Charleston, South Carolina, June 15-17, 2017, with a pre-conference day of workshops on June 14, 2017. The conference will include workshops, roundtables, panels, and individual papers from public history professionals, scholars, educators, librarians, archivists, and artists that address issues surrounding the interpretation, preservation, memorialization, commemoration, and public application of major themes in local, regional, and Atlantic World history.

SPECIAL FOCUS

Based on the United Nation's declaration of 2015-2024 as the International Decade for People of African Descent, and the conference location in Charleston, South Carolina, on the second anniversary of the tragic shooting at the Emanuel AME Church, the conference will particularly highlight speakers and topics relevant to transforming practices of interpreting the history of slavery and its race and class legacies in Charleston and historically interconnected local, regional, and international sites.

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE THEME

Starting in the fifteenth century, the Atlantic Ocean became a corridor of trade and migration—both voluntary and coerced—between Africa, Europe, and the Americas. In the centuries that followed, the violent encounters, power struggles, cultural exchanges, labor systems, and economic ties surrounding these trans-Atlantic connections became ever more complex and globally intertwined, producing distinctive race, class, and gender experiences and hierarchies throughout the Atlantic World and beyond. How have cultural heritage institutions, public historians, scholars, artists, activists, filmmakers, and educators in various international regions engaged with and depicted the diverse histories of the Atlantic World? How have these representations changed over time, and how will they continue to change in the twenty-first century?

CONFERENCE SPEAKERS



Dr. Lonnie G. Bunch III

Keynote Lecture: : Lonnie G. Bunch III, PhD is a historian, author, curator and educator who is the founding director of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC).

Other conference speakers include: Michael Allen, Community Partnership Specialist, National Park Service Southeast Regional Office, and Director for the National Historic Landmark Theme Study on the U.S. Reconstruction Era, 1861-1898; Ana Lucia Araujo, PhD, Professor of History, Howard University; Richard Benjamin, PhD, Director of the International Slavery Museum, Liverpool, United Kingdom; Alissandra Cummins, Director of the Barbados Museum & Historical Society and former Chairperson of the UNESCO Executive Board; Rex Ellis, PhD, Associate Director for Curatorial Affairs, Smithsonian's

National Museum of African American History and Culture; Makiba Foster, Assistant Chief Librarian, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture; Bayo Holsey, PhD, Associate Professor of History, Rutgers University; Ned Kaufman, PhD, Principal of Kaufman Heritage Conservation; Caryl Phillips, Author and Playwright; Fath Davis Ruffins, Museum Curator, Smithsonian's National Museum for American History.

The Keynote Lecture and Plenary Session Panels for "Transforming Public History from Charleston to the Atlantic World" are Free and Open to the Public, all other conference sessions require conference registration. Registration rate is \$75 per person to attend the conference, and the pre-conference day of workshops on June 14, 2017. Online conference registration will open Spring 2017.

For more information please see: <http://claw.cofc.edu/2017-conference-registration-information/>
or visit the Carolina Lowcountry and the Atlantic World Program (CLAW) Web site:

<http://claw.cofc.edu/conferences/2017-conference/>

The Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture will be closed to the public from February 1, 2017 through October 15, 2017, to implement a major improvement project to replace the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems throughout the building. These crucial renovations will greatly enhance the building's archival storage conditions.

**CLOSED FOR
RENOVATION**

During the renovation phase, the Avery Research Center building will be closed and there will be **NO ACCESS** to the Avery Research Center's archival collections, no new acquisitions of archival materials, and no on-site tours or programming.

The Avery Research Center's faculty and staff will be temporarily relocated to the College of Charleston's Addlestone Library. Please continue to contact Avery Research Center faculty and staff members via their individual College of Charleston emails throughout the renovation.

For general Avery Research Center inquiries throughout the renovation, email at averyadmin@cofc.edu or call 843-953-7609.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding archival materials, contact Barrye Brown, Reference and Outreach Archivist at brownbo@cofc.edu.

EVERY RESEARCH CENTER: CLOSED FOR



Palmer Business College (Avery Institute building), c. 1978.

Avery Institute closed its doors in 1954. Shortly after that, Dr. John Palmer purchased the Avery buildings and operated Palmer Business College on the site for more than two decades. In 1978, a group of Avery graduates (known as "Averyites") and friends of Avery organized the Avery Institute of Afro-American History and Culture (AIAAHC). Their purpose was to obtain the former Avery Normal School buildings and establish an archives and museum dedicated to preserving African-American history and culture in the South Carolina Lowcountry.

At that point, the Avery/Palmer building was in very bad shape and needed lots of repair and renovation. To obtain institutional support and fulfill its long-term goals, the AIAAHC chose to become affiliated with the College of Charleston.

A planning grant awarded in 1981 resulted in the concept of a research center as a cooperative project between the AIAAHC and the College of Charleston. In 1987, funding was allocated for the purchase of the Avery buildings (123 and 125 Bull Street) and renovation on the main building, beginning with replacing the roof.

In September 1989, Hurricane Hugo devastated the main building, destroying much of the roof that was being repaired. It was reported that engineers speculated that the scaffolding used for renovation might have prevented the collapse of the building itself!



Avery Institute building with Hurricane Hugo damage. September 1989.

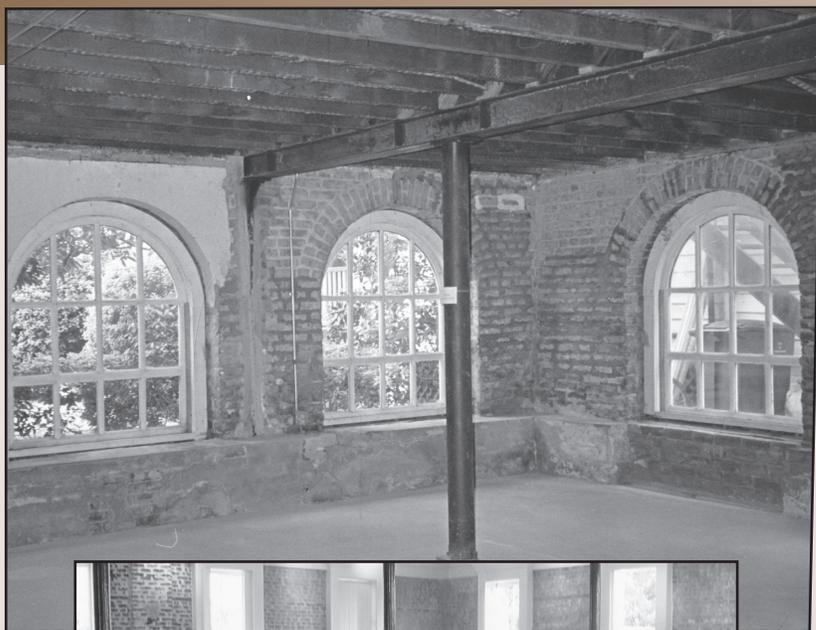
By 1990, Phase I was completed on the second floor interior of the building. Progress was being made, but Dr. Marvin Dulaney, Avery Research Center's Executive Director at that time, pointed out that:

All of the operations of the [Avery Research] Center were on only one floor of the building. In addition, the first phase of the building renovation had left much to be desired. Due to the lack of heating and cooling on the first and third floors, the building's climate-control system did not work properly. As a result, 125 Bull Street was too cold in the winter and too hot in the summer. We used portable humidifiers to control the humidity levels in order to protect the archival and artifact collections. But under the circumstances, we were always fighting a losing battle. (Avery Messenger, Fourteen Years at Avery, Summer 2008, Volume 6, Number 2)



Phase I: View of the second floor grand staircase during renovation process, c. 1989.

FEBRUARY 1, 2017 - OCTOBER 15, 2017



In 1999, Phase II renovated the first floor and part of the third floor of the Avery building. This allowed for the reclamation all of the usable space in the building, which included an expansion of archival storage space, additional staff offices, a new reading room for researchers, a classroom, and exhibit preparation space. Most importantly, the new central heating and cooling system came on line; and for the first time in five years, temperature was able to be controlled in the building.

Additional renovations later replaced wood flooring on the ground, second, and third floors.



Photos

Top left: Phase II, Phillis Wheatley Literary and Social Club Reading Room in early stages of renovation, c. 1999.

Bottom left: McKinley Washington Auditorium floor replacement.

Sources: *The Bulletin*, newsletter of the Avery Institute of Afro-American History and Culture, Volume XIX Number 2 (Spring 1999); Volume XX Number 1 (Winter 2000)

Charleston's Avery Center: From Education and Civil Rights to Preserving the African American Experience, by Edmund L. Drago, PhD, revised and edited by W. Marvin Dulaney, PhD. The History Press, June 2006

REFLECTIONS ON 100 YEARS WELL LIVED:

A Conversation with ANNABELLE DENT RICHARDSON

by Georgette Mayo

EARLY YEARS AND FAMILY

Born to Samuel and Elizabeth Seabrook Dent in 1916, the family initially resided in downtown Charleston. Upon the death of her father when Mrs. Richardson was two years old, her mother eventually remarried Isaac J. Godfrey, and the family relocated to neighboring James Island (approximately seven miles west of downtown Charleston). The family lived in what was known as the "Cut Ridge" area, where the majority of African Americans in the community farmed. Mrs. Richardson reflects that the entire family was employed by doing "truck farming," producing "all types of vegetables to take (sell) to the city."

Part of Mrs. Richardson's youth was spent with her grandparents William and Ella Seabrook, who were born and lived on Wadmalaw Island. Her early impression of Wadmalaw was that it was "more country than James Island." Her family did not discuss the institution of enslavement even though her great-grandmother had been enslaved and her grandfather had been a toddler when slavery had ended. While Mrs. Richardson was her mother's only living child (a sister and brother had passed away in infancy), she had siblings on her stepfather's side. Her stepbrother, also named Isaac, attended Avery from the second grade to high school.

SCHOOL DAYS AND BEING AN "AVERYITE"

Mrs. Richardson returned to James Island to attend Cut Bridge Elementary School when she was five years old. She attended Burke Industrial School from the fifth through seventh grades. However, her mother had bigger educational plans.

"Burke was all right but not what [my] mother wanted," Mrs. Richardson recalls. What Mrs. Richardson's mother wanted was for her daughter to attend the Avery Normal Institute. Making her mother's visions a reality, Mrs. Richardson entered Avery's eighth-grade class and went on to graduate from its teacher-training normal school in 1941. Mrs. Richardson "was very happy at Avery." Being an Averyite meant, "Being dignified and professional. Everything was so fine; no arguments or fighting."

Reflecting on her teachers and education, Mrs. Richardson notes there was "closeness" conveyed through the academics taught. "[Teachers were] interested in the students as people. They were beautiful and very strict."

Mr. Frank DeCosta was the principal when she attended Avery and tuition was \$1.50 a month. While there was not a designated dress code, young women wore midi blouses and skirts with bobby socks and saddle shoes. Her favorite teachers were Mrs. Lucille (Mears) Poinsette, Mr. Alphonso Hoursey, Mrs. Serena Hamilton (Morrison), and Miss Florence Clyde, whom Mrs. Richardson states was "very strict." Mathematics was Mrs. Richardson's favorite subject and Miss Geneva Singleton was her preferred math teacher.

Amazingly, Mrs. Richardson walked to and from school daily and didn't miss a day. "[I] woke up at five a.m. to fix breakfast for [my] parents, then walked to school," she remembers and recalls traveling across the Wappoo and Ashley River Bridges. This is at least five miles one way! "[Students] had to be at Avery before the 8:30 a.m. gate closed. If they were late, they had to wait until 9:30 a.m. [to attend classes.]" Years later, her cousin taught her how to drive an "8-miler Ford," which she eventually drove to school.

Her three closest friends, who have moved to New York, have the best memories of Avery. Whenever they get together, they reminisce about their school days.

"Avery was everything. Avery made me who I am."

THE RICHARDSON FAMILY AND A TEACHING CAREER

In Avery's only yearbook (1939), the name "Jessie" appears under the section of "Student Statistics" as Mrs. Richardson's "Strong Point." This "Strong Point" was Mr. Jessie Richardson, the man who became her husband. As a carpenter employed in Charleston, he constructed the house in which his wife still resides and also built his mother-in-law's house. They had three children: Jessie Jr., Patricia, and Douglas.

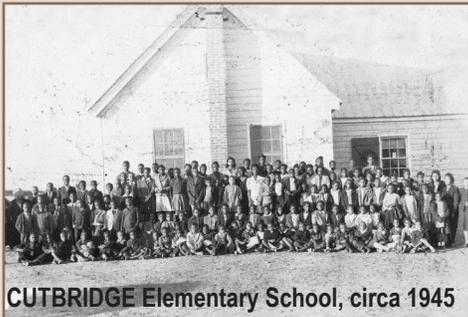
When a person lives to experience a century of life with its numerous transitions, it is a milestone to acknowledge and celebrate. Recently, Deborah Wright, Avery Messenger Editor; Daron Calhoun, Race & Social Justice Initiative Project Coordinator, and myself, had the pleasure of interviewing Mrs. Annabelle Elizabeth Dent Richardson, a Charleston-born, James Island resident. Ms. Richardson is also a proud Averyite, having attended classes from the eighth to twelfth grades and graduating from Avery's Normal School. During our conversation, we discussed a wide range of topics, including Avery, her family, teaching career, and life in rural James Island and its rapidly changing landscape. As this interview reveals, Mrs. Richardson's life is one of education, determination, and devotion to family and community.



Annabelle Dent, yearbook photo, 1939.

After her graduation from Colored Normal Industrial Agricultural and Mechanical College of South Carolina (presently known as South Carolina State University) in 1943, Mrs. Richardson began her teaching career in McClellanville, a small fishing town roughly forty miles northeast of Charleston. Shortly thereafter, she obtained a teaching position on her home island at Cut Bridge Elementary, the school she attended when she was five years old. Mrs. Richardson taught mathematics at Cut Bridge until 1971. After schools became integrated in Charleston County, she transferred to James Island Middle School.

Pondering on her thirty-eight years of teaching experience, Mrs. Richardson says, “[I] saw all the children in the area grow up and [I] would later teach their children. [Today,] kids have more opportunities.” When she was growing up, the major professions for African Americans were “doctors, teachers, or preachers.” Much to her dismay, “[Black] kids do



CUTBRIDGE Elementary School, circa 1945

not want to go into teaching anymore. But somebody has to do it! [Teachers of other ethnicities] are not relating to [African-American] students.” In one instance, a student expressed to Mrs. Richardson that a teacher stated, “If you don’t get it this year, you will get it the next year” (meaning the child would have to repeat the same grade).

In 1978, a family member found Mrs. Richardson’s mother after she’d fallen. Concerned about her mother’s health, Mrs. Richardson decided to retire at the age of sixty-two. But her choice came with opposition. Mr. McCray, a local African-American principal, did not want her to retire. Mrs. Richardson called the superintendent’s office at the Charleston County School District and spoke to Mrs. Buffalo, an administrative assistant who informed her to take her ninety days of sick leave first and then retire. Mrs. Richardson noted that Mr. McCray did not help her in retiring but rather Mrs. Buffalo, a white woman, who did.

Prior to her retirement, numerous people informed Mrs. Richardson that a teacher’s life expectancy was to live only to seventy years old. With a sly smile she declared, “I will send a certified letter to let them know that I am still alive.” She has lived longer than her tenure as a teacher!

FIRST TIME VOTING

When asked about her first opportunity to vote, she remembered it was during her college years. She was fortunate to exercise her civic duty because in many parts of the state, African Americans could not vote. Mrs. Richardson shared a story of her friend who was threatened by a white man that “if they voted, they would not have a house...”

She does not remember who she voted for, but stated, “[Franklin Delano] Roosevelt opened up a way for Blacks.”

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A COMMUNITY IN TRANSITION

Living for one hundred years has enabled Mrs. Richardson to see tremendous changes in and around James Island. In her youth, the island was mostly farmland and very few White people lived in the area. With time, “The children of the elders moved away, did not keep up the land, and/or sold out farms.” Yet upon their retirement, many moved back, “having to re-purchase the land they [had] previously sold.”

Mrs. Richardson reflects that James Island was a “closely knit community; everyone looked after each other. There was one grocery store in the Cut Ridge area which took care of all their needs.

“When supermarkets moved in, they pushed out the local grocery store. Now there are more Whites on James Island than Blacks. People are not self-sufficient [anymore].”

FINAL REFLECTIONS

When asked about how it felt to celebrate her centennial birthday, Mrs. Richardson simply stated, “Felt like another day....Grateful to see another day.”



SPECIAL THANKS to Avery Institute Board member Mrs. Catherine E. Boags for recommending Mrs. Richardson’s oral history.

Mrs. Annabelle Dent Richardson at her James Island home. She celebrated her 100th birthday August 24, 2016. (Photo by Georgette Mayo, November 2016)

RESOURCES

For more information on James Island history and families:

ARCHIVAL COLLECTIONS

•**Albertha Johnston Murray Papers–AMN 1020.** This collection holds documents and photographs from the former principal of Cut Bridge Elementary (later renovated and renamed Murray-LaSaine Elementary School). It was also the first school Mrs. Richardson attended. She later taught mathematics there.

•**Avery School Memorabilia Collection–Box 2, Folder 21:** *The Averyite 1939 Yearbook.* Mrs. Richardson is featured several times in Avery’s only published yearbook. Mentions that Annabelle Dent desired to become a seamstress. She ultimately became a teacher.

BOOKS

•**Bonstelle, Carolyn Ackerly, and Geordie Buxton.** *Images of America: James Island.* Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2008.

•**Frazier Sr., Eugene.** *A History of James Island Slave Descendants & Plantation Owners: The Bloodline.* Charleston: History Press, 2010.

•**Frazier Sr., Eugene.** *James Island: Stories from Slave Descendants.* Charleston: History Press, 2006.



THE SEPTIMA CLARK CIRCLE

by ANAHITA MODARESI

This is a transformative time at Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture. A key part of Avery Research Center's mission is to ensure that African-American history is accessible and discoverable to all as this history is central to understanding Charleston and the surrounding Lowcountry's past and present. Despite this, Black experiences and struggles have long been marginalized in the region's public representations, from popular tourism narratives to political and social policies and debates. Recent tragic events and protests in Charleston and throughout the nation indicate a critical need for organized resources and dialogue to address this marginalization. Now is the time to expand the Avery Research Center's reach and further educate the world about this important history.

The vision of the Septima Clark Circle is to increase the Avery Research Center's organizational capacity and renovate the physical building through both cash and planned gift contributions.

FLEXIBLE DOLLARS WILL ALLOW THE AVERY RESEARCH CENTER TO:

- Update the Avery Research Center Classroom on the first floor (used for tours and educational programs)
- Build better exhibit space at Avery to exhibit the African Art Collection and others
- Expand K-12 outreach efforts to increasingly educate students about African American history and heritage
- Digitize and preserve rare and important collections
- Increase the number of paid internships for students in African American Studies (interns are cross trained in public history, museum exhibition development, archival processing. The internship prepares students for careers in museums, library sciences, non-profits, and higher education)

JOIN THE SEPTIMA CLARK CIRCLE BY:

Giving a cash gift of \$50,000 over 4-5 years

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Donors may choose to contribute in honor or memory of a family member, and all donors will be listed on a commemorative plaque at the Avery Research Center. Septima Clark Circle members will also be invited to an annual luncheon with the executive director and Avery Advisory Board.

For more information, contact Anahita Modaresi at: modaresia@cofc.edu or (843) 953-6526.

Anahita Modaresi is Development Officer at the College of Charleston

AVERY INSTITUTE MEMBERSHIP NEWS



**Tony Bell,
Membership
Chairman**

Greetings!

We would like to thank you for your continued support. Remember that your support of the Avery Institute Board ensures that we can continue to supplement the Avery Research Center.

The membership committee is busy updating member information on our respective lists. We want to ensure that members receive all pertinent information.

And please do not forget to renew your membership today! Remember, it is tax deductible!

Thanks again for helping us to make sure the Avery Research Center remains the community jewel and national treasure it is.

Also, visit us online at:
www.averyinstitute.us



Correction from last issue's "Avery Profile" (*Avery Messenger*, Fall 2016): **Shirley Eaton Randall** graduated, Avery Class of 1954, (not 1953). She received her bachelor of science degree from Charter Oak College, New Britain, CT and her master of science from Southern Connecticut State University, New Haven, CT.

MUSEUM NEWS

Forms and Motifs in African Art: The John F. Dupree Collection at the Avery Research Center Nathan and Marlene Addlestone Library—College of Charleston February 24, 2017–August 1, 2017

John F. Dupree began to amass his extensive African art collection in 1972 while living in Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo) and working for the Federal Aviation Authority (FAA). Dupree, in concert with a small group of other employees of the FAA, were in Zaire to assist with building and establishing a civil aviation program at the behest of President Mobutu. Dupree's living quarters in Kinshasa, the capital city, were close to a major open-air market that he had frequented and from which he had acquired numerous works during the three years he was there. The John F. Dupree Collection, housed at the College of Charleston's Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture, contains over 150 items, with the majority of them in wood—particularly ebony and mahogany. There are also wonderful pieces of ivory in the collection as well as brightly colored works on canvas that will be on view as a part of the exhibition.

When one considers the collection in its totality, as well as the exhibition, one is reminded of the powerful observation Susan Vogel made in her seminal work on the Baule of the Ivory Coast. In her book titled *In Beauty in the Eyes of the Baule: Aesthetics and Cultural Values*, Vogel made the following observation regarding the importance of the head in Baule sculpture and statuary, "The head is considered the seat of freedom and intelligence." That same observation is quite evident in many of the works in the Dupree Collection, even as they represent the artistry of the following ethnic groups from Central Africa: Luba, Luluwa, and Songye.

by **Curtis J. Franks**

AVERY PROFILE



IRMATRUDE GRANT was born in Charleston, South Carolina on November 11, 1936, to Julius Grant Sr. and Minnie Washington Grant. She attended Henry P. Archer Elementary School and Avery Institute High School thereafter. After the closing of Avery, she attended Burke Industrial High School.

Ms. Grant, a nurse by profession, began her nursing career as a nurse's aide in the pediatric unit at King's County Hospital in Brooklyn, New York. Upon completion of her associate degree at Kingsborough Community College, she became a staff nurse at King's County Hospital in 1974. She continued her education, completing her bachelor's degree in Health Science at Brooklyn College and adding two master's degrees in community health and education and a PhD in Nursing from Walden University. During her avid pursuit of education, she furthered her nursing career by joining the East New York Diagnostic and Treatment Center in 1979. She served as head nurse in OB/GYN and Family Primary Care, as well as facility educator, until her retirement in 2015. She also served as an adjunct professor at City Technical College in Brooklyn. In recognition of her many contributions and over fifty years of service, East New York Diagnostic and Treatment Center renamed its pediatric center the Irmatrude Grant Pediatric Division on February 17, 2016. Ms. Grant was also the recipient of numerous awards and honors for her community service and dedication to nursing, including the Red Cross Certificate of Merit from President Jimmy Carter. Irmatrude Grant, RN died on July 24, 2016, in New York City. The Avery Institute honors Ms. Grant, a dedicated patron and member.

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Forms and Motifs in African Art:

The John F. Dupree Collection at the Avery Research Center

Nathan and Marlene Addlestone Library—Special Collections

Opens February 24, 2017 through August 1, 2017



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Acquired c. 1972–1976 from “Zaire” (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo)
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