

AFRICAN-AMERICAN HISTORY

In Oklahoma



NEWSPAPERS IN EDUCATION
THE OKLAHOMAN

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Director's Message

The Oklahoma Arts Council is honored to present, in partnership with Newspapers in

Education at *The Oklahoman*, this educational workbook highlighting the contributions to Oklahoma's history by African-Americans. As we celebrate Black History Month, we pay tribute to the rich diversity that has forged our great state. This edition highlights Oklahomans of African-American descent, featured in the Oklahoma State Capitol Art Collection, who profoundly shaped the future of our state and our nation. Each of these individuals uniquely represents the Oklahoma spirit of perseverance and accomplishment.

As a state agency, the Oklahoma Arts Council is dedicated to supporting a thriving arts and cultural industry, building a robust cultural infrastructure, preparing a creative workforce, and preserving Oklahoma's cultural heritage. Our grant programs and professional development services foster arts education in schools and promote community and cultural development throughout the state.

We invite you to visit the Capitol and our website arts.ok.gov to learn more about Oklahoma's history through the Capitol Art Collection.

- *Kim Baker*
Executive Director
Oklahoma Arts Council



The Oklahoma State Capitol Art Collection

The Oklahoma State Capitol is unique among state capitol buildings nationwide for the amount of artwork adorning its public areas. With more than 100 permanent works of art, each with its unique story of diversity and tradition, the Capitol Art Collection is comprised of pieces ranging from monumental bronze sculptures that embellish the Capitol plaza to magnificent murals, portraits, and paintings that bring vibrancy to its interior. Works in the collection are exhibited on each floor of the building, and several pieces are located on the Capitol grounds.

In addition to enriching a historic civic space, the mission of the collection is to acquire the finest works of art that depict the historic events, significant people, and natural resources that have shaped Oklahoma's history and culture. The collection contains works of art by world-class painters and sculptors that date from circa 1919 to the present. The first public artwork for the Capitol was commissioned in 1926, less than 10 years after the building construction was completed. Recent acquisitions to the collection include the bronze bust of Governor Charles Bradford Henry by Paul Moore, which was dedicated in the Hall of Governors in January 2011, and the portrait of artist Charles Banks Wilson by Mike Wimmer, dedicated in April 2012.

Admission to the Capitol is free. The building is open to the public weekdays 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. and weekends 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Teaching with Capitol Art

Developed by the Oklahoma Arts Council, Teaching with Capitol Art resources are free online tools available to educators statewide. Through the momentous events, notable people, and captivating landscapes recalled in the Capitol artwork, teachers can make Oklahoma history come alive in the classroom, enriching the learning experience for students of all ages.

Aligned with the most current standards for education, the resources are an easy way to bring history and art alive in your classroom.

Resources include comprehensive lessons and activities, a free DVD, and travel subsidies to reimburse your school for field trips to the state Capitol. Visit arts.ok.gov for more information.

Introduction African-Americans have made a momentous impact on the politics and culture of our state. As lawmakers, educators, civil rights activists, religious leaders, and cultural icons, many are honored through works of art adorning the walls of the Oklahoma State Capitol. The art helps illustrate African-American history in Oklahoma.

The struggle for equality has been a central motif in the history of black Oklahomans. Originally not accepted for service in the Civil War, African-American soldiers ultimately proved themselves by serving the Union army with distinction.

As discrimination was fueled in many states by segregation laws, Oklahoma's Land Run of 1889 opened land to anyone, without discrimination. Nearly 1,000 African-Americans participated in the Land Run of 1889, and many more continued to come as more land was opened. By 1900, approximately 55,000 African-Americans had become Oklahoma settlers.

After statehood in 1907, segregation grew more common with the establishment of Jim Crow laws (separate but equal). In response, many all-black towns were established where African-Americans came together to create, occupy, and govern their own communities. All-black settlements provided safety, ready markets for crops, and economic assistance. Some of these towns that still exist today include Boley, Langston, Rentiesville, Taft, and Vernon. By 1920, African-Americans had created more than 50 all-black communities in Oklahoma, more than anywhere else in the country.

After World War I, racial tension grew more violent. In 1921, the Tulsa area of Greenwood, a sizeable black neighborhood and thriving business district, was the

site of what the New York Times called "the worst race riot in history." Hundreds of people, both black and white, were injured or killed. Thirty-five square blocks of Greenwood were destroyed. There were 1,315 homes destroyed, an additional 314 looted and vandalized, and 4,291 African-Americans were left homeless. The impact of the event was historic, and the community is still recovering today. But from the darkness of racial violence and injustice, many African-Americans were inspired for change, and a series of strong political leaders and civil rights activists emerged.

Even today, in Oklahoma and throughout the country, struggles continue for equal opportunities and for equal justice in hiring practices, for equal opportunities in education, and for elimination of discrimination in housing. A remnant of the wall of discrimination still stands, but it is no longer a barrier that cannot be broken simply because of the color of a person's skin.

The historic pioneers highlighted in this workbook made significant contributions to African-American history and to Oklahoma's history as a whole; however, they do not comprise a complete list of the limitless contributors from our history, present day, and future. In addition, the impact of African-Americans reaches far beyond the endeavor for racial equality. The teaching and leadership of activist Clara Luper, poetry of Melvin Tolson, literature of Ralph Ellison, music of Earl Grant, Jimmy Rushing, and Charlie Christian, and the opera performances of Leona Mitchell are all confirmation of the cultural accomplishments of African-American Oklahomans and merit further study of their contributions.

>> *Bass Reeves*

The U.S. Deputy Marshals brought justice to Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma) after the Civil War and before statehood. The marshals were a diverse group of lawmen who helped settle the territory into a law-abiding state. Consisting of whites, Native Americans and African-Americans, the marshals were perhaps the most integrated group on the frontier.

One such deputy was Bass Reeves, an ex-slave from Texas. Reeves was likely the first African-American west of the Mississippi to become a deputy U.S. marshal. He took the oath of office on May 10, 1875.

Reeves grew up on a plantation near Paris, Texas. Like other slaves in Texas and Indian Territory, he had had no formal education. He escaped slavery by running away to the Creek and Seminole Nations. He learned several Indian languages and became accustomed to the cultural habits of the tribes in addition to becoming well acquainted with the geography of the Indian Territory.

When the Civil War ended, Reeves made his way to Van Buren, Arkansas, and bought land. He soon became a successful farmer. By that time he was married and had fathered the first of his 10 children.

Reeves was recruited for the deputy marshal position by court officials in Fort Smith. As officers of the court, deputy marshals served subpoenas, delivered warrants, and made arrests, among other duties within the 74,000-square-mile Indian Territory. They received no salary, only expenses and fees paid for each arrest or order that they executed. If they killed a fugitive in the process of making an arrest, the deputies forfeited the fee and even had to pay for the burial.

Reeves was an excellent shot with a rifle and his knowledge of the people and places of Indian Territory helped him perform his duties well. Reeves' incredible memory helped



Honor, Serve & Protect by Robert Taylor
 >> ***Located in the Oklahoma Office of the Attorney General***

him overcome his inability to read and write. As a marshal, Reeves learned to associate a written name with the sounds of the name, which allowed him to serve a suspect with the correct document. He used whatever means necessary to make an arrest.

Reeves served as deputy marshal for 32 years. For the last 18 years of that time, he was attached to the federal court in Muskogee. His career was often controversial. During the course of it, he killed 14 men, but was always able to prove that the deaths occurred in self-defense or were accidental. Even with the controversy, Reeves won a reputation as the "most feared U.S. marshal in the Indian country."

Described as fearless, Reeves had several close calls while on duty. On various occasions, while engaging in gun battles, Reeves' belt was severed by a bullet, his hat brim was shot off, the reins he held in his hand were cut, and the button was shot off his coat. Nevertheless, he continued to perform his duty without flinching. In addition, Reeves was a deacon in his church and would preach to the prisoners once they were in custody. He disliked sending a man to



prison without giving him a chance to repent.

Reeves retired as a deputy marshal of the federal court when Oklahoma became a state in 1907. A long-time resident of Muskogee, he signed on as an officer in its police department. Until his death, his assignment was to patrol Muskogee's large black community.

Reeves was a rugged lawman who brought law and order to the American West. He is important for his 32 years as a marshal and his feats of bravery, but he is especially important for representing the early, multiracial Oklahoma. Other valiant, African-American lawmen included Ike Rogers, Bill Colbert, and Zeke Miller, to name a few.

>> About the Art

This triptych (a work of art divided into three sections) depicts three historical peace officers from Oklahoma Territory and Indian Territory including Quanah Parker, Bass Reeves, and Franklin "Bud" Ledbetter. These men helped create the foundation for law in the territories which would become the State of Oklahoma. The painting represents the diversity of

Oklahoma's historical law officials.

In this triptych, Bass Reeves is pictured in the center panel and symbolizes the word "serve." The steel bar window represents a jail cell where prisoners who are brought to justice serve time. The cell also represents the imprisonment Reeves felt as a slave before his career in law. Reeves always wore a black hat and was noted for wearing two Colt revolvers placed in holsters in the reverse direction for quick draw.

The artist used images of significant items and symbols to help tell Bass Reeves' story. Can you identify them all? Discuss their importance to Reeves' life.

"If Reeves were fictional, he would be a combination of Sherlock Holmes, Superman, and the Lone Ranger."

- **Historian Art Burton**

"Reeves was never known to show the slightest excitement under any circumstance. He does not know what fear is. Place a warrant for arrest in his hands and no circumstance can cause him to deviate."

- **Oklahoma City Weekly Times - Journal, 1907**

1. President Abraham Lincoln (responsible for abolishing slavery)
2. Boley, Oklahoma Rodeo
3. A wanted poster with an image of an outlaw represents the work Reeves did as a marshal
4. Lawman wage scale
5. Pistol
6. (Muskogee) Creek Indian medicine bag
7. Wheel of Justice
8. Knife
9. Slave manacles
10. Peace medal with scale of justice represents the lawman's order to carry out his duties
11. Saddle and drinking gourd
12. Rifle
13. Handcuffs

>> *Bill Pickett*

The 101 Ranch was an 110,000-acre cattle ranch in Indian Territory. Located near modern-day Ponca City, it was founded in 1893 by Colonel George Washington Miller, a veteran of the Confederate Army. After his death, it was owned by his three sons, Joseph, George Jr., and Zack. The ranch was the largest diversified farm and ranch in America at that time. It was also the birthplace of the 101 Ranch Wild West Show, which featured roping, riding, American Indian dancers, trick roping, and shooting; it toured across the country as well as Canada, South America, and even Great Britain.

Bill Pickett was perhaps the most famous African-American cowboy and rodeo performer and was a star performer in the 101 Ranch Wild West Show. Developed over years of working cattle and horses, Pickett's skills were the basis of his act. One particular talent became his trademark: the ability to ride beside a running steer, throw himself onto the animal, and toss it to the ground. This maneuver is known as steer wrestling in modern rodeos, and Bill Pickett invented it. But his version had an unusual element. While twisting the steer's horns, Pickett would sink his teeth into the steer's lips. This confused and scared the animal, so Pickett could throw it down more easily. He is credited with introducing this form of steer wrestling, called bulldogging, as a rodeo event.

Pickett practiced his stunt by riding hard and springing from his horse and wrestling the steer to the ground. He used his teeth while wrestling a steer instead of the hands-on-the-horns method used by cowboys today. As one spectator described his style, "He would slide off his horse, grab the bull by the horns, sink his teeth into the bull's nose or lip, and force the animal to the ground." When the show played in Mexico City, he won a large sum of money from a bet with the President of Mexico by throwing a bull and holding him down for the better part of an hour, long past the time limit set in the bet.

Bill Pickett won his place in Western lore by his own strength and courage. In 1907, he won the title of World Champion Bulldogger at Madison Square Garden in New

York City. Though often battered and injured in the arena, Pickett always displayed courage and gave his best performance. One of his most remarkable performances – and most dangerous – was given at Sand Springs, Oklahoma, in 1920. Pickett failed to throw his animal the first time, and the violent steer plowed up the ground with Bill's head. Blood covered his face, and an attendant had to bandage it so that only his eyes were visible. Nobly, the African-American cowboy re-entered the arena and threw the steer.

In 1932, Bill Pickett, often called the "Dusky Demon," was killed when a horse kicked him in the head. He was buried with honors near Marland, Oklahoma, with Zack Miller composing a poetic tribute to the courageous cowboy. For his contributions to the American West, Pickett was inducted into the National Cowboy Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City in 1971. He was the first African-American to receive this recognition.



"Bill Pickett never had an enemy. Even the steers wouldn't hurt old Bill."

- Will Rogers

"...the greatest sweat-and-dirt cowhand that ever lived."

- Colonel Zack Miller
of the 101 Ranch





>> About the Art

This painting depicts Bill Pickett performing his famous bulldogging trick at the 101 Ranch. The ranch's country store can be seen in the background.

Use the following questions to guide you through interpreting this painting. Before beginning the steps, take two minutes to study the artwork. Look at all the details and subject matter. After studying the artwork in silence, follow these steps:

101 Ranch by Harold T. Holden

>> *Courtesy of the Oklahoma State Senate Historical Preservation Fund, Inc., Oklahoma Arts Council, and the artist.*

>> Describe

Be specific and descriptive. List only the facts about the objects in the painting or sculpture.

- What things are in the artwork?
- What is happening?
- List what you see (people, animals, clothing, environment, objects, etc.).

>> Analyze

- How are the elements of art – line, shape, form, texture, space, and value used?
- How are the principles of design – unity, pattern, rhythm, variety, balance, emphasis, and proportion used?

>> Interpretation

Make initial, reasonable inferences.

- What do you think is happening in the artwork?
- Who is doing what?
- What do you think the artist is trying to say to the viewer?

>> Evaluate

Express your opinion.

- What do you think about the artwork?
- Is it important?
- How does it help you understand the past?
- Do you like it? Why or why not?

>> *Green I. Currin*

Green I. Currin was the first African-American to serve in the Oklahoma territorial legislature. He was born October 20, 1842, in Williamson County, Tennessee. Following emancipation from slavery, he lived in Nashville until he joined the great westward movement. By 1877, he lived in Kansas, eventually establishing himself as a lawman in Topeka.

Currin staked a claim in the Land Run of 1889 in Kingfisher County, Oklahoma Territory. With the support of Republican voters, he was one of five delegates elected to the House of Representatives from Kingfisher County. On August 27, 1890, he took his seat in the First Session of the Legislative Assembly of Oklahoma Territory. Currin had recognized racial tension building between blacks and whites and saw the need for legislative action. He introduced Oklahoma's first civil rights legislation, House Bill 119. Although the proposed law contained penalties for racial violence, the bill failed to become law by one vote.

Currin continued to perform as a respected and influential public servant after one term in the assembly. He served as deputy U.S. marshal and was appointed to the Colored Agricultural and Normal College (now Langston University) Board of Regents in 1897. He also held the position of grand master of the St. John Grand Lodge, A.F. & A.M. Masonic Order of Oklahoma for the last 19 years of his life. He and his wife Caroline had five children. Currin died at his home in Dover, Oklahoma, on October 21, 1918, and was buried in Burns cemetery.



Green I. Currin by Timothy C. Tyler

>> Located on the 4th floor, North hall

***>> Oklahoma State Senate Historical
Preservation Fund Collection***

>> Dedicated in 2007

>> *Edward P. McCabe*

One of the early prominent African-American settlers was Edward P. McCabe. Before coming to Oklahoma, McCabe was closely identified with Nicodemus, Kansas, near which he settled as a farmer and attorney. A Republican activist, he was elected to office as a clerk in Graham County, Kansas, the county seat of Nicodemus. He was twice elected a state auditor, until 1886 when racism surfaced in Kansas and he failed to be re-nominated. After working for the state's leading Republicans in the election of 1888, he unsuccessfully sought the position of register of the Kansas treasury in 1889.

After going to Washington, D.C., to solicit newly elected President Benjamin Harrison to champion African-American voting and civil rights, McCabe came to Oklahoma in 1889 and settled about 11 miles east of Guthrie. He purchased 160 acres of land and founded the town of Langston. McCabe believed that the only way for African-Americans to achieve political power was to become a voting majority – that is, to have the largest voting-aged group in a given area. In this case, the area was Oklahoma Territory, and McCabe made a concentrated effort to establish Oklahoma as an all-black state.

McCabe started a newspaper called the *Langston City Herald* and used it to promote African-American immigration into Oklahoma Territory. He wrote articles encouraging African-American people to seek political, social, and economic freedom in the territory and distributed his newspaper throughout the Southern states. Many like McCabe envisioned two states, one for African-Americans and one for Native Americans. Although McCabe never realized his dream of a black state, the Republican Party appointed him to serve as deputy territory auditor, the first



Edward P. McCabe by Simmie Knox

>> *Located in the Capitol's 4th floor, Outer hall*

>> *Sponsored by the 2003-2005 Oklahoma Legislative Black Caucus*

>> *Dedicated in 2005*

African-American to hold major political office in Indian Territory. Langston never became the African-American metropolis he envisioned, but it did become the site of Langston University, the first African-American institution of higher learning in the state of Oklahoma.

>> *Albert Comstock Hamlin*

A.C. Hamlin was the first African-American to serve in the Oklahoma Legislature after statehood. He was elected in 1908 and was the only African-American to be elected until 1964.

Born in Topeka, Kansas, Hamlin was the son of Andrew Jackson and Fanny Hamlin, former slaves from Tennessee who had migrated to Kansas in 1880. The family moved to Logan County, Oklahoma Territory, in 1890. After his father's death in 1891, Hamlin stayed on the Logan County farm and married Katie Weaver in 1899. The couple had five children.

Hamlin served on the local school board and was a trustee of Springvale Township where his family lived. He won the state legislative seat by a two-to-one margin in the prominently African-American Third District of Logan County (the county was one-quarter black in 1900) but lost his bid for reelection in 1910. His defeat was a direct result of a Democrat-sponsored constitutional amendment that essentially prevented most blacks from voting called the "grandfather clause."

In 1910, the Democrat-controlled legislature added a Jim Crow law similar to those in other southern states that limited voting by African-Americans. The bill sent to Oklahoma voters stipulated that, to register to vote, a person had to prove that he could read and write parts of the state constitution or was a descendent of a person who was eligible to vote on January 1, 1866. This was commonly called the "grandfather clause" because the right to vote was based on whether his father and grandfather could vote. Although the law did not specifically mention blacks, it virtually denied African-Americans the right to vote.

The U.S. Supreme Court later struck down Oklahoma's grandfather clause finding it a violation of the Fifteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which gave all citizens of the United States the right to vote. Governor Robert L. Williams (1915-1919) continued to find a way to limit the black vote by basing the exemption on military service, rather than literacy, but Oklahomans voted against the proposal. Another effort established a two-week registration period for voters not previously eligible, which was practiced until it was declared unlawful in 1939.

As a Republican, Hamlin was in the minority party; however, he was able to sponsor legislation for the appropriation of \$35,000 for



Albert Comstock Hamlin by Simmie Knox

>> *Located in the Capitol's 4th floor, Outer hall*

>> *Sponsored by the 2003-2005 Oklahoma Legislative Black Caucus*

>> *Dedicated in 2005*

Taft School, a black school for deaf, blind, or orphaned children. He also sponsored successful legislation that would make facilities truly equal for both black and white railroad passengers and an amended bill to prevent certain activities such as theatrical performances and baseball games on Sundays. Hamlin died of unknown causes on August 29, 1912, at his farm when only 31 years old. He was a member of the African Methodist Episcopal Church for 14 years and is buried in Robison Cemetery near his home.

>> *Roscoe Dunjee*

Roscoe Dunjee was a minister and editor of *The Black Dispatch* newspaper in Oklahoma City for many years. He worked tirelessly with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) for legislation and changes in the law that would provide better opportunities for African-Americans. His leadership in both the state and national NAACP organizations was forceful and recognized. He was an avid spokesman and worker for civil rights. He was respected by both African-American and white communities.

Dunjee was responsible for African-Americans being allowed to serve on juries. He urged African-American voter registration and participation at the polls even when it was dangerous to do so. He voted himself, even though he had to have a police escort to the polls because of building racial tensions. Dunjee also organized a chapter of the National Negro Business League.

No movement of any consequence affecting civil rights was started in Oklahoma for a period of 40 years without the counsel, and usually active support, of Dunjee. He was a strong supporter of excellence in education and believed that excellence would never be possible in education as long as schools were segregated. Perhaps one of the best testimonies to Dunjee's work was expressed by one of his political foes. Governor William H. "Alfalfa Bill" Murray said, "You fellows have been listening to Roscoe Dunjee, and he's a hundred years ahead of his time."

In addition to segregation laws, African-Americans also suffered under de facto (actual, if not legal) segregation. For example, in Oklahoma City, blacks made up about 10 percent of the population, and most lived in segregated neighborhoods in generally undesirable areas. Some blacks prospered and began to buy houses in all-white neighborhoods. But, the Oklahoma City Board of Commissioners enacted an ordinance (a local law) making it illegal for a person to move into a block on which 75 percent of the buildings were of a different race. The ordinance effectively prevented blacks from moving into white neighborhoods and segregated everything from churches to dance halls.

In 1916, Dunjee tested the Oklahoma City ordinance promoting segregation. He encouraged William Floyd, a black shoemaker, to purchase a house in an all-white neighborhood in Oklahoma



Roscoe Dunjee by Simmie Knox

>> *Located in the Capitol's 4th floor, Outer hall*

>> *Sponsored by the 2003-2005 Oklahoma Legislative Black Caucus*

>> *Dedicated in 2005*

City. Floyd tried to move in to his new home several times, but each time he was arrested, and each time Dunjee bailed him out. When the case reached the federal court, a judge ruled that the ordinance was unconstitutional and Floyd had the right to move into his property.

"Some people succeed because they are destined to, but most people succeed because they are determined to."

- Roscoe Dunjee

>> *George Washington Carver*

Born into slavery, George Washington Carver became one of the most prestigious scientists of his time, revolutionizing the research methods and agricultural processes of the day.

Breaking racial barriers in education, he became the first African-American faculty member at Iowa State University and later joined Alabama's Tuskegee Institute. He received many honors and awards in his lifetime, including a museum at the Tuskegee Institute and a national monument at his birthplace in Diamond Grove, Missouri.

In May 1929, George Washington Carver attended the dedication ceremony for the junior high school bearing his name in Tulsa, Oklahoma. More than 3,000 citizens, black and white, were present.

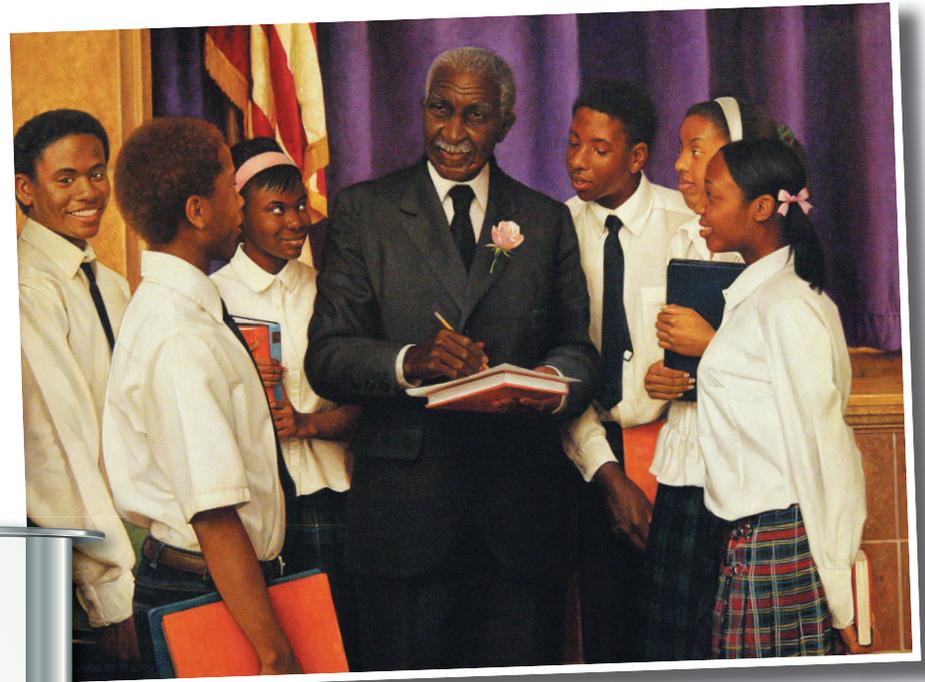
The meek and gentle Carver felt awe when he saw the Carver School's magnificence. He said it made him feel unworthy—more than any honor he had received before. In his speech, he encouraged the students of Carver Junior High and all attendees with his belief that, "We each determine how our lives proceed, by choices that we make."

"...when you do the common things in life in an uncommon way, you will command the attention of the world."

"Education is the key to unlock the golden door of freedom."

"There is no short cut to achievement."

- **George Washington Carver**



George Washington Carver in Tulsa by Mike Wimmer

- >> **Located in the Capitol's 4th floor, North Senate hallway**
- >> **Oklahoma State Senate Historical Preservation Fund Collection**
- >> **Dedicated in 2004**

>> *Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher*

In January 1946, Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher of Chickasha, a black honor graduate of Langston University, applied for admissions to the University of Oklahoma School of Law. Due to state segregation policies, Sipuel was denied admission to the law school,

and with the encouragement of Roscoe Dunjee, she began the process to take legal action. Thurgood Marshall assisted Sipuel and her attorney Amos T. Hall. Although defeated in lower courts, the case was taken to the U.S. Supreme Court, which ordered the state to provide an equal education for blacks. A Langston University School of Law was set up at the State Capitol, but Sipuel refused to enroll in the makeshift school. Legal efforts continued, and in 1949, the Supreme Court ruled that black students must be permitted to attend previously white schools. Fisher became the first black admitted, under court order, to the OU

Law School. The case broke barriers of discrimination against African-Americans in Oklahoma higher education.

After graduating in 1951 and passing the state bar exam the same year, she practiced law in Chickasha. In the 1950s, she became a professor at Langston University where she taught for 32 years. She earned a master's degree in history at OU in 1968.

Following her retirement from Langston University, Fisher worked as Corporate Counsel for Automation Research System Limited in Alexandria, Virginia, the second largest African-American owned computer corporation in the country at that time.

In 1981, the Smithsonian Institution designated her as one of the 150 outstanding black women who have had the most impact on the course of American history. In 1991, OU honored her with an Honorary Doctorate, and in 1992, more than 45 years after she was denied admission to the law school, Governor David Walters appointed Fisher to the University of Oklahoma Board of Regents. She died in 1995.

Segregation laws in higher education continued to be challenged after Sipuel Fisher's case. In 1948, George W. McLaurin was admitted to the OU graduate school, but he was required to sit in a small side room during class lectures. McLaurin sued the Oklahoma Board of Regents and, in 1950, the Supreme Court ruled that black students must be treated the same as white students and that the school could not be segregated.

Further progress continued, and in 1949, Nancy Randolph Davis was allowed to enroll in summer classes at Oklahoma A&M College, even though it was illegal for blacks and whites to be in the same classroom. Davis was relegated to the back of the room and to a hallway, until other students demanded she be treated equally.

On June 3, 1946, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that laws requiring segregation of races on public vehicles could not apply to interstate public transportation. On November 13, 1956, the court ruled that all such laws were unconstitutional, whether in-state or interstate. In February 1965, the Oklahoma Legislature repealed the 1908 law, Senate Bill 1, requiring segregation in railcars, waiting rooms, restrooms, and drinking fountains. The walls of discrimination began to crumble.

"The Sipuel decision was not a decision for Ada Lois, it was a decision for America."

- **Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher**

"I wish I could say that racism and prejudice were only distant memories. We must dissent from the indifference. We must dissent from the apathy. We must dissent from the fear, the hatred and the mistrust... We must dissent because America can do better, because America has no choice but to do better."

- **Thurgood Marshall**



**Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher
by Mitsuno Ishii Reedy**

>> **Located in the Capitol's
4th floor rotunda**

>> **Dedicated in 2007**

>> About the Art

Mitsuno Ishii Reedy's painting of Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher is comprised of several different significant images from the notable Oklahoman's story.

1. The image of Ms. Fisher was painted from an old black and white photograph taken of her as she heard the news of the Supreme Court's decision to permit her to enroll at OU School of Law.
2. The newspaper she is holding is from the day a story was published about her success.
3. The University of Oklahoma School of Law is pictured in the background.
4. The United States Supreme Court Building is shown representing where she won her case.
5. A Sipuel family portrait from 1943 is shown in the background: Travis B. and Martha Bell Sipuel are in the front row; Ada Lois, Lemuel, and Helen Marie Sipuel are in the back row.
6. The American flag is included in the painting because Fisher's stand against segregation laws impacted not only Oklahoma, but the entire nation.

>> *Dr. John Hope Franklin*

Born in Rentiesville, Oklahoma, John Hope Franklin graduated from Booker T. Washington High School in Tulsa and went on to become a nationally recognized historian and civil rights advocate. Franklin said it was his desire “to weave into the fabric of American history enough of the presence of blacks so that the story of the United States could be told adequately and fairly.”

In 1941, Franklin earned his doctorate in history from Harvard University and went on to a lifelong career in teaching. Franklin became the first person of color to head a major history department when he was selected to chair the history department at Brooklyn College. In 1983, Franklin became the James B. Duke Professor of History and Professor of Legal History at the Duke University Law School where three academic units are now named for him. Duke offered to name a center for African-American Studies after Franklin, but he politely declined, saying he was a historian of America and the world too.

Franklin’s prolific writing might only be outdone by his dedication to civil rights. His work *From Slavery to Freedom* was first published in 1947 and has sold more than three million copies worldwide.

In the early 1950s, Franklin served on the NAACP Legal Defense Fund team led by Thurgood Marshall that helped develop the case for *Brown v. Board of Education*, which eventually ended segregation in public schools. Franklin also marched with the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. in Selma, Alabama.

In 1995, President Clinton awarded Franklin the nation’s highest civilian honor, the Medal of Freedom. In 2002, scholar Molefi Kete Asante included Franklin on his list of 100 Greatest African-Americans, and in 2004, the State of Oklahoma recognized Franklin as a Cultural Treasure.

A few months prior to his 2009 death, Franklin made one of his last public appearances during the groundbreaking of the John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park in Tulsa. Reflecting on his life he noted that he “would like [his] students to take up where [he] left off and to carry on the fight to establish history as a powerful force for good - a constructive force to rectify the ills of our society-- to change the world, as it were.”



Dr. John Hope Franklin by Everett Raymond Kinstler

>> Located in the Capitol’s 2nd floor rotunda

>> Dedicated in 2012

“We must get beyond textbooks, go out into the bypaths and untrodden depths of the wilderness and travel and explore and tell the world the glories of our journey.”

- Dr. John Hope Franklin

>> *Benjamin Harrison Hill*

Benjamin Harrison Hill was a leading religious figure and a state lawmaker from Tulsa. His accomplishments provided a peaceful transition for the community during the racially turbulent 1960s. He was born in Sydney, Nova Scotia, on November 1, 1903. His family moved to Pueblo, Colorado, where he spent his childhood years. Hill earned a graduate degree at Wilberforce University in Ohio and studied law at the University of Nebraska. While teaching at Campbell College in Jackson, Mississippi, Hill met his wife, Fannie Ezelle Johnson. They were married 39 years and had a son.

Hill was dedicated to serving God and humanity which motivated him to pursue his career as a minister, teacher, and public servant. In 1938, he was licensed to preach at the St. John A.M.E. (African Methodist Episcopalian) Church in Plains, Georgia, and subsequently led other congregations in Boley, Claremore, Muskogee, and Tulsa. Hill was a junior high school principal for many years in Okfuskee County and pioneered the area of special education. He contributed to the A.M.E. church in many ways while serving as Director of Christian Education, chairman of the Commission on Educational Institutions, member of the Episcopal Committee, secretary of the General Conference, and editor of the A.M.E. Church Review.

From 1951, Hill served as editorial editor and columnist for the Oklahoma Eagle, a Tulsa-based newspaper covering African-American society and culture. He was active throughout Tulsa and the state of Oklahoma in community-oriented organizations including the Tulsa Urban League, the Tulsa Council of Churches, the National Conference of Christians and Jews, the Ministerial Alliance, the Boy Scouts of America, and the Council of Churches and Community Chest. Hill also served as director of the Tulsa Economic Task Force and president of the Tulsa branch of the NAACP. For his notable achievements in the community, Hill was named Tulsa's outstanding citizen by the Tulsa Park and Recreation



Benjamin Harrison Hill by Simmie Knox

>> Located in the Capitol's 4th floor, Outer hall

>> Sponsored by the 2003-2005 Oklahoma Legislative Black Caucus

>> Dedicated in 2005

Department; a park and recreation center was named after him —the Ben Hill Recreation Center.

At the time of his death in 1971, Hill was a member of the Oklahoma State House of Representatives where he served two terms. In his 31 years of service as a prominent Tulsa leader, he gained recognition as a progressive thinker, a creative legislator, and one who sought practical solutions. Hill always had an encouraging message and provided a sense of worth to individuals on any social and economic level.

PORTRAITS

A portrait is a painting, photograph, sculpture, or other artistic representation of a person. The intent is to display the likeness, personality, and even the mood of the person. For this reason, in photography a portrait is generally not a snapshot, but a composed image of a person in a still position. A portrait often shows a person looking directly at the painter or photographer in order to most successfully engage the subject with the viewer.

In 2005, artist Simmie Knox was commissioned to paint a series of four portraits to commemorate significant African-American Oklahomans. The portraits, including Edward P. McCabe, A. C. Hamlin, Roscoe Dunjee, and Benjamin Harrison Hill, were sponsored by the Oklahoma Legislative Black Caucus.

Knox has specialized in portraiture since 1981. He earned a Master's of Fine Art from the Tyler School of Art at Temple University in Pennsylvania. Knox was commissioned to paint the official portrait of former President Bill Clinton, resulting in Knox becoming the first African-American to ever paint an official portrait of an American president. Knox has painted portraits of U.S. congressmen and state senators, civic leaders, celebrities, and religious leaders.

Regarding his work, Knox states, "I think that a good portrait is the most difficult thing for an artist to bring off successfully. Not only must you get an accurate likeness but you must also create a good painting. Somehow you must convey a subject's character, spirit and personality; and everything must communicate the dynamism of the subject."

>> ANALYZE

Look over all of the paintings in this workbook. Can you identify which ones are portraits? Hint: there are six.

Do you think the artists captured the character, spirit, and personality of their subject in each of the portraits? Why or why not?

List some various types of portraits you seen before that are not in this workbook. Some may be small like those seen on bills of money, some may be large like those seen in a museum, some may have several copies, like school portraits of your friends, and some may even be painted by the artist themselves (called self-portraits).

Do all portraits depict famous people? All of the portraits in the Capitol Art Collection are of notable Oklahomans. But, do all portraits need to be of a famous person? Can you name any portraits you have seen that are not of famous people?

Who would you paint a portrait of and why? Where would you hang it?

**OKLAHOMA LEGISLATIVE BLACK CAUCUS**

The Oklahoma Legislative Black Caucus (OLBC) is made up of African-American State Senators and Representatives who sit on the Oklahoma Legislature. Founded in 1974, OLBC is committed to addressing the variety of issues faced by African-American Oklahomans including health disparities, education, minority contracting, corrections, and prevention of bullying, domestic abuse, and violence.

Current members of OLBC include the Honorable Sen. Constance N. Johnson, Chair, Oklahoma County; Honorable Sen. Jabar Shumate, Tulsa County; Honorable Rep. Mike Shelton, Oklahoma City; Honorable Rep. Anastasia A. Pittman, Oklahoma City; and, Honorable Rep. Kevin L. Matthews, Tulsa.

The Oklahoma Legislative Black Caucus Foundation was subsequently founded in 1987 and serves as the fundraising arm of the OLBC to support the mission and goals of the caucus. Its charitable and educational purposes are to promote social welfare and benefit public interest through the elimination of prejudice and discrimination. The Foundation provides scholarships, conducts seminars and workshops, and monitors local, state, and federal legislation and regulations which complement the work of OLBC.

Among the many significant projects of OLBC, the A.C. Hamlin Awards Banquet was named for the state's first African-American legislator. The event is a biennial fundraiser that features and honors African-American leaders from across the state. The 20th biennial A.C. Hamlin Awards Banquet will take place on April 30, 2013, and will honor African-American Firsts in Justice.



Love's is proud to partner with the Oklahoma Arts Council and *The Oklahoman's* Newspapers in Education program to help bring broader awareness of African-American History and contributions from some of our most remarkable residents. Supporting education initiatives is a main focus in our community giving. Since 1964, Love's has been giving back to the communities we serve. Nearly 50 years later, our goal remains the same: to continue to make a difference in our home state of Oklahoma and across the nation.

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