2021

The Intersection Of Activism And Black Memory: Space, Memory, And Resistance In John Mitchell, Jr.'s Woodland Cemetery And Remembering Emancipation In Hampton Roads, 1917-1963

Timothy Allen Case
William & Mary - Arts & Sciences, timcase1029@gmail.com

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Timothy Case

San Jose, California

Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts and Sciences, Florida Atlantic University, 2006
Master of Arts in History, San Jose State University, 2015
Master of Arts in Educational Leadership, Santa Clara University, 2019

A Thesis presented to the Graduate Faculty
of The College of William & Mary in Candidacy for the Degree of
Master of Arts in History

Harrison Ruffin Tyler Department of History

College of William & Mary
August 2021

APPROVAL PAGE

This Thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Timothy Allen Case

Approved by the Committee August 2021

Committee Chair
(for) Melvin Ely, William R. Kenan Jr. Professor of Humanities, History
College of William & Mary

Carol Sheriff, Professor, History
College of William & Mary

Adrienne Petty, Associate Professor, History
College of William & Mary

ABSTRACT

"Emancipation is an Act, Freedom is a State of Being": Remembering Emancipation in Hampton Roads, 1917-1963

This paper traces the centralized organization and an activist turn in the commemoration of emancipation in the Hampton Roads region of Southeastern Virginia and Northeastern North Carolina. While considerable scholarship exists on African American freedom commemorations from the Civil War through its semi-centennial, the story told of twentieth-century emancipation memory is mostly one of marginalization and decline. Accounts of these celebrations in the local Black press reveals their persistence well into the twentieth century. Jim Crow and racial violence haunted the celebratory culture of emancipation and revealed its limitations. The elimination of parades and the proliferation of rhetoric calling for a "new" and "complete" emancipation during celebrations in the decades prior to the civil rights movement illustrates a clear activist turn in the political culture of emancipation memory. Organizers replaced parades with protests, civic groups like the NAACP sponsored and coordinated Emancipation Day events, and prominent civil rights leaders and organizations participated in commemorations and weaponized emancipation memory in their campaigns. Commemorating emancipation became interconnected with activism to address its limitations. The intersection of memory and activism with the emergence of the civil rights movement illustrates that Black memory mattered to those who sought a more complete freedom.

"Rest Assured": Space, Memory, and Resistance in John Mitchell, Jr.'s Woodland Cemetery

This paper looks at the origins and significance of Woodland Cemetery in Richmond, Virginia and the legacy of its founder, John Mitchell, Jr. Closer analysis of Mitchell's motivations; the political and economic forces that shaped Woodland; and Mitchell's positioning of the cemetery as a site of memory, racial pride, respectability, and resistance in an era of segregation and discrimination demonstrates that Woodland was more than one of his many real estate ventures. This research reveals that it is impossible to understand the history of Woodland Cemetery without John Mitchell, Jr. and equally impossible to understand the legacy of Michell without considering his project at Woodland. Putting these two histories in conversation with one another allows a more nuanced view of Mitchell's late-life activism, his efforts towards racial progress, the socio-economic limitations of his vision of Black respectability, and the interconnected and communal nature of Black collective mourning in the memory space of Woodland cemetery. Woodland was a venture in Black independence and racial pride. The cemetery's vitality was dependent on its status as a segregated space. Woodland, alongside many business, social organizations, and institutions, helped meet the needs of the Black community in a segregated world. Mitchell intended Woodland to serve as an alternative space for Black people to enjoy in life and rest with dignity in death.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Carol Sheriff and Dr. Adrienne Petty for their support, guidance, and criticism during the completion of these research projects. The pandemic made pursuing this research difficult and I could not have finished without your patience and direction as these projects continuously changed. Thank you Dr. Sheriff for your encouragement to continue this work and present it to others. I would also like to express my appreciation to Dr. Melvin Ely for his thoughtful and extremely helpful feedback on these papers and his support as my advisor.

I am grateful to Dr. Libra Hilde and Dr. Patricia Hill at San Jose State University for their mentorship and for encouraging me to pursue a PhD, and to Dr. Christopher Ely at the Wilkes Honors College for sparking my interest in the intersections of space, power, and identity. Thank you to Kai Werner, Tyler Goldberger, and Peighton Young for listening to me rambling about this work, for your suggestions, and for your friendship.

This endeavor and these projects would not have been possible without the love and encouragement of my family. After a fifteen-year career in secondary education, I was very fortunate to have the opportunity to pursue a life-long dream of obtaining a doctorate this year. Thank you to my wife and daughter, Andrea and Addison, for moving three thousand miles to support me and my dream. I would also like to thank the History department at William and Mary for taking a chance on me.

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Intellectual Biography

I have been studying and writing about the intersections of space, memory, and agency since I was an undergraduate student. The research projects I completed this year—"'Emancipation is an act, Freedom is a state of being': Commemorating Emancipation in Hampton Roads, 1917-1963" and "'Rest Assured': Space, Memory and Resistance in John Mitchell Jr.'s Woodland Cemetery"—represent new chapters in a fairly consistent academic journey. As independent projects, they share a number of commonalities. They are geographically proximate, cover similar chronologies, and explore issues of commemoration and remembrance in public and sacred spaces. I did not plan on this much overlap as both projects evolved considerably from where they began each semester. The consistency between these papers is likely as much a product of pursuing my research interests as it is the result of a pandemic that limited and restricted access to archives and led me to sources that would be more readily available. Both of these projects rely almost entirely on early twentieth century Black newspapers and both involve their editors as protagonists in the story. Considered together, these projects reveal more than they say on their own. Analysis of the regional commemorative network reported on and facilitated by the *Norfolk Journal and Guide* and the advertisements and stories of Woodland Cemetery in the *Richmond Planet* illustrate that early twentieth century Black newspapers were more than just news outlets. These papers were agents and texts in the recording and production of Black collective memory and their editors served as leaders in acts of remembrance that challenged segregation, discrimination, and white efforts to strike Black history and memory from regional and national narratives. A study of early Black newspapers and editors as memory projects represents a fruitful ground for further research.

I knew that I was interested in studying the role of public and sacred spaces as sites of memory when I came to William and Mary. In my undergraduate Honors thesis, I analyzed the commodified nostalgia of new urbanist development projects like Disney's town of Celebration, Florida. This fueled my interest in the way spaces frame and facilitate the behavior of people who inhabit, move through, and utilize them. My first Master's thesis explored the role of sacred spaces in Richmond as physical and spiritual refuges of the Confederate cause during the Civil War and as sites of Confederate memory after the war was over. I knew I wanted to continue to consider how spaces are more than just a backdrop for history and instead look at their active role in shaping it. I also knew that I wanted to continue to look at public and sacred spaces, particularly cemeteries, because of their role in the conflict over the memory of the Civil War and emancipation. Unlike many sites of public history and memory, cemeteries remained open during the pandemic and as a result they were available to safely explore. In the first week of September, after the start of classes, I crisscrossed the region and visited every Civil War era and historic Black cemetery in Norfolk, Portsmouth, Chesapeake, Suffolk, Williamsburg, Yorktown, Petersburg, and Richmond. Both of my projects are the product of findings in these spaces that raised questions about the intersections of race, space and memory.

In the course of trips to Norfolk and Portsmouth's cemeteries, I discovered two of only three monuments to Black Union soldiers that were erected in the South in the first half of the twentieth century. The third was located in Hertford, North Carolina, just forty miles to the south. Explaining this anomaly was the initial focus of my project in Dr. Sheriff's "Civil War Era" research seminar. Though I had some success accessing research conducted on the Norfolk monument by the former archivist at Norfolk State University, Dr. Tommy Bogger, there are unfortunately few existing records on the fundraising, construction, and dedication of these

monuments. This is what led me to the *Norfolk Journal and Guide.* While I struggled to find a record of the building of the monuments in the archives, the *Journal and Guide* contained an elaborate record of stories, editorials, and reports on the commemorative culture surrounding the Civil War and emancipation in Hampton Roads. I eventually narrowed my focus to Emancipation Day celebrations and the evolution of the memory of emancipation in Hampton Roads from 1917 to 1963.

Visiting all of Richmond's cemeteries thoroughly last Fall took some time. While I had been to Hollywood and Oakwood cemeteries and their Confederate sections many times for previous research, I had not been to any of Richmond's post-Civil War Black cemeteries. I was not prepared, practically or mentally, for my experiences at Evergreen, East End, and Woodland. The conditions of these spaces as well as the evidence of restoration work made it clear these were important memory sites. It was at Evergreen where I noticed the names of dozens of different organizations—secret societies, fraternal orders, lodges, and business—inscribed on headstones throughout the cemetery. I volunteered at Evergreen in the Fall to help with research on these organizations and read secondary literature on Black cemeteries over the Winter Break. This is where I started with my second semester project in Dr. Petty's "Wealth and Inequality" research seminar. Drawing on my experience in the fall, I went straight to Richmond's largest Black newspaper, the *Richmond Planet*, to search for evidence of Richmond's post-emancipation Black cemeteries as spaces of both wealth and inequality. I was drawn to stories of the reinternments of prominent Black leaders from the old free Black and slave cemeteries to Evergreen and Woodland. It was in the process of writing a prospectus on "Reinternments and Respectability in Richmond's Black Cemeteries" that I discovered, almost by accident, the owner and editor of the newspaper—John Mitchell, Jr.'s—connections to Woodland. Mitchell's

vision illustrates how Woodland was a space of wealth and inequality, but also a space of resistance and counter-memory to segregation and Jim Crow.

There are a number of similarities between these projects. They are both studies of spaces of memory and commemoration activities in African American communities in the first half of the twentieth century, and both consider how black leaders and communities used memory as a means of resistance and activism. Emancipation Day parades through city streets in Hampton Roads and eventually Emancipation Day marches and sit-ins at the state capital, along with the parades and processions of Black collective mourning in cemeteries like Woodland, illustrate the importance of space and the contestation over its memory. I explored this part of my research on Emancipation Days through a paper that I presented at Graduate Conferences, "Black Memory Matters: The Activist Turn in the Commemoration of Emancipation in Hampton Roads."

Both papers also demonstrate how collective memories evolve and how concerns of the present shape the way the past is remembered. Commemorations calling for a second or new emancipation that recognized its unfulfilled promise confronted the memory of emancipation as a celebratory event. The conditions in the Barton Heights cemeteries that prompted conflict between white town officials and Black leaders threatened the memory of the dead and rendered spaces like Woodland counter-memories and alternative spaces of resistance. Classes I took in the spring while working on this project—Dr. Corney's "History and Memory" and Dr. Stow's "American Memory, Mourning, and Memorialization"—influenced the way I discussed memory in the project on Woodland. Though it appears quite obvious that the persistence of emancipation memory in Hampton Roads is evidence of a lasting counter-memory to the Lost Cause, I did not employ a theoretical framework for memory as directly in the project on Emancipation Days as I did for Mitchell's vision of Woodland Cemetery.

Both projects also offer important contributions to their respective, and overlapping, fields. Studies of Emancipation Days and their commemorative traditions mostly conclude that these celebrations, and the commemorative culture that promoted them, were in decline by the turn of the century and would cease to be politically relevant by the Civil War semi-centennial. The persistence and transformation of commemorations of emancipation in Hampton Roads through the Civil Rights movement questions this narrative. The histories of John Mitchell, Jr. and Woodland Cemetery exist separately. Discussions of Mitchell's legacy omit Woodland Cemetery while histories of Woodland over-emphasize narratives of decline and financial mismanagement. As a result, both projects challenge the view that Black voices and memories were silenced until they re-emerged in regional and national collective memories during the Civil Rights movement.

Finally, my research projects are both examples of the importance of Black newspapers as agents of Black memory. Whether reports on the numbers of people that participated in Emancipation Day parades were accurate, or whether the protests of Black residents about the treatment of their dead in the Barton Heights cemeteries was what allowed Mitchell to open Woodland, the writers, and especially editors, wanted these events to be remembered this way and preserved their memories in the pages of their newspapers. They were also active participants in the stories that they covered. P.B. Young, editor and owner of the *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, was a member and officer of the Norfolk Emancipation Association, a regular Emancipation Day speaker, and a prominent Black leader in Norfolk and Virginia. John Mitchell, Jr. was the President of the cemetery corporation, the land corporation that owned the property, and the Bank that financed the project as well as the editor of the *Richmond Planet* that advertised and promoted the venture. As editors of Black newspapers, they were already memory

men. That both were also heavily involved in spaces of memory and rituals of commemoration may suggests they are Black memory men, par excellence. A study of twentieth century Black newspapers, and their editors, through a lens of memory is something I may continue to explore as I look at potential dissertation topics. Regardless, I am pleased that these projects inform each other and that they successfully demonstrate my interest in the intersections of space, memory, and activism.

"Emancipation is an act, Freedom is a state of being": Remembering Emancipation in Hampton Roads, 1917-1963

On two different occasions—February 20th, 1926 and January 14th, 1934—writers from the *Norfolk Journal and Guide* reviewed a "musty record" they held in their possession. Delivered "out of the obscurity" of the past, the articles described in detail the "venerable paper, yellowed with the accumulation of the years," in order to capture the meaning and significance of the aged manuscript for its readers. The document, "believed to be a genuine original record of the first emancipation celebration held by the colored people of Norfolk" on Jan 1, 1863, was loaned to the paper by the sitting presidents of the Norfolk Emancipation Association. In both instances, the writers took care to offer the reader a vivid description of the activities of the day along with minutes of the first emancipation association meeting from 1863.

According to the writers, "a meeting of the 'Freed Men' of the City of Norfolk" was called to "make suitable arrangements for a Celebration to be held in Norfolk." Those who attended the meeting elected officers and appointed a Chief Marshal to coordinate the day's activities. The "mammoth parade" assembled on Queen Street at "nine o'clock a.m. to the number of about five thousand persons, where the procession was formed." The line of march accompanied by two brass bands proceeded "through the principal streets" to the residence of General Viele, the Military Governor, who wished them "many days like the present." After "almost deafening cheers" were given for the governor, Lincoln, and the proclamation, the procession moved through the city to Cumberland Street, stopping at a lot next to the cemetery where a more formal program ensued with prayer, hymns, and speeches.[1]

Though the structure and features of the event offered direct parallels to the festivities that continued in Norfolk and the Hampton Roads region in the early twentieth century, the

[1] "Aged Record Of First Emancipation Parade In Norfolk Uncovered," *Norfolk Journal and Guide,* Feb 20, 1926, 1.

writer in 1934 concluded that their own observance of the 71st anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation "presented a strong contrast to the first celebration of its kind ever held in Norfolk." Given the continuity in features of emancipation commemorations over time, the perception of the writer is certainly puzzling. The *Norfolk Journal and Guide* routinely referred to the "mammoth" sizes of local parades and applauded the brass bands that led the line of march through city streets. Local ministers offered prayers and each year large crowds gathered in one of the community's sacred spaces to listen to hymns and orations that celebrated their emancipation from slavery.[2]

The accounts of this historic document in the pages of the *Journal and Guide* and the potential answer to why the writer may have perceived a "strong contrast" between the first celebration of freedom and those of 1934 offers a useful grounding point for the central positions of this paper. More than seventy years after their first Emancipation Day celebration, African Americans in Norfolk continued to remember emancipation. The celebrations they participated in were coordinated by the leaders of an emancipation association that saw itself as the caretaker of the memory of emancipation and that utilized direct appeals to the past to support their work in the present. These articles also illustrate the importance of the *Journal and Guide* as both a presenter of the events of the day and an active participant in the construction and representation of emancipation memory. By making the document available and printing an account of historic celebrations as a comparison to observances that had just been held, both the Norfolk Emancipation Association and the *Norfolk Journal and Guide* employed the past to influence the present.

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[2] "Document Describes Details of City's First Emancipation Celebration Jan. 1, 1863," *NJG,* Jan.13, 1934, 16.

A review of articles in the *Journal and Guide* covering the celebrations in 1934 reveals that there was, in fact, a "stark contrast" between these celebrations. It was not the features of commemoration that were different. What the writer may have realized, and what this paper attempts to illustrate, was a difference in how the participants viewed the outcome of emancipation and what it meant for their continued struggles for freedom. The "Free Men of Norfolk," whose cheers for Lincoln and the Emancipation Proclamation were "deafening," believed the sweet taste of the "gracious Goddess" of liberty would forever drown out the "bitter cup" of slavery. Rev. R. A. Riddick, a principal orator in 1934, captured perfectly how the memory of emancipation had changed in his speech titled "Emancipation and Freedom." According to Riddick, "Lincoln liberated the Negro but…his freedom was still in the making. 'Emancipation is an act,'" he declared, "'Freedom is a state of being!'"[3] Lincoln was, as the 1863 document described, a liberator, but his act of emancipation had not produced a state of being capable of washing away the bitter taste of slavery. This explains calls that year in both editorial commentary in the *Journal and Guide* as well as the content of Emancipation Day speeches for a "New Emancipation" and "New Freedom."[4] While the memory of the act of emancipation was clearly still important given the publication of the 1863 document, participants believed a more complete emancipation was still needed. This became a consistent focus in commemorations of emancipation in Hampton Roads through the civil rights movement.

This paper owes much to an already extensive and rich history of African American commemorations and the memory of emancipation. David Blight's foundational synthesis *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* is a necessary starting point for discussions of

[3] "Bad Weather No Bar to Emancipation Meeting: Stirring Address By Rev. R.A. Riddick Heard By 400," *NJG,* Jan. 6, 1934, 9.
[4] For additional examples of this shift in rhetoric in 1934 see "Current Comment: The Negro's New Emancipation," *NJG,* Dec. 30, 1933, 18 and "Says National Loyalty One Need Of 'This New Freedom,'" *NJG,* Jan. 27, 1934, 2

race and sectional reunion. Blight suggests that three competing visions of the meaning of the Civil War emerged in national culture and public memory: a reconciliationist vision that sought to bridge the sectional divide by emphasizing shared experiences of the war, a white supremacist vision of a Lost Cause that recast the war's origins and Southerners' experience of it, and an emancipationist counter memory that framed the war as a battle to end slavery and achieve Black political freedom and equality. Blight argues that by the turn of the century an emancipationist memory of the war was sacrificed in the name of sectional reunion on white supremacist terms.[5]

The decade following *Race and Reunion* saw an explosion of research on sectional reconciliation, African American commemoration activities, and memory. Mitch Kachum's *Festivals of Freedom: Memory and Meaning in African American Emancipation Celebrations, 1808-1915* (2003), William Blair's *Cities of the Dead: Contesting the Memory of the Civil War in the South, 1865-1914* (2004), Kathleen Clark's *Defining Moments: African American Commemoration & Political Culture in the South, 1863-1913* (2005) and Bruce Baker's *What Reconstruction Meant: Historical Memory in the American South* (2007) all analyze Emancipation Day celebrations and their development over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Collectively, these works beautifully illustrate the efforts of African American communities to celebrate emancipation, assert their claim to an American past, and promote their vision of Black freedom and citizenship as a necessary component of a national community. They illustrate that Emancipation Day celebrations, along with other efforts of Black leaders to forge a shared consciousness about the past, were about constructing, revising, and maintaining a collective Black identity. While these texts offer nuanced positions on the scope and lasting impact of these celebrations, nearly all agree with Blight that the memory of

[5] David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

emancipation and its commemorative tradition was effectively marginalized by the Civil War semicentennial. The trajectory of emancipationist memory and its effect on national culture is viewed largely as one of decline.[6]

More recent syntheses on Civil War memory—Caroline Janney's *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation* (2013) and Robert Cook's *Civil War Memories: Contesting the Past in the United States since 1865* (2017)—depart from this earlier consensus. Both Janney and Cook question the narrative of a reunited America in the early twentieth century, and both look beyond the semi-centennial to assess the evolution of war memory. Janney's main argument, that "reconciliation never was, nor has it ever been, the predominant memory of the war," confronts Blight's conclusion in *Race and Reunion*, that emancipationist visions of the war were silenced by the reconciliation of white Americans through the bonds of white supremacy. According to Janney, the persistence of conflicts over memory—both white and Black—through the onset of World War II is illustrative of the fragility of conclusions that reconciliation and reunion, on any terms, defined war memory. [7] Robert Cook adds an unreconciled unionist vision of the memory of the Civil War to Blight's categories. Though Cook agrees with Blight that Jim Crow policies and culture as well as divisions within the Black community limited the public impact of Black voices, he concludes that an emancipationist

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[6] Mitchell Kachun, *Festivals of Freedom: Memory and Meaning in African American Emancipation Celebrations, 1808-1915* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003). Kachum concludes that developments in American society by the early twentieth century "helped cause the dissolution of the Freedom Day commemorative tradition" (12); William A. Blair, *Cities of the Dead: Contesting the Memory of the Civil War in the South, 1865-1914* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004). Blair argues that "although the celebrations continued in most Black communities, they no longer maintained a connection to partisan political engagement," noting that by the semicentennial, "the ceremonies were beset by ambivalence on the part of black Americans" (193); Kathleen Ann Clark, *Defining Moments: African American Commemoration & Political Culture in the South, 1863-1913* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005). According to Clark, "in one state after another, confident assertions of Black progress gave way to responses ranging from self-doubt to bitter anger in the late 1890s and early 1900s" (12); Bruce E. Baker, *What Reconstruction Meant: Historical Memory in the American South* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2007). Looking specifically at South Carolina, Baker concludes that the "critical fact of Reconstruction – that African Americans tried to enact the vision of America as a free labor republic and were turned away with violence – could not exist in public for the first several decades of the twentieth century" (88).

[7] Caroline Janey, *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 311;.

counter memory remained a potent source to draw from as emancipation re-entered national conversations in the push for civil rights after World War II.[8]

This study adds to existing scholarship by answering Mitch Kachum's call from *Festivals of Freedom* to explore "how commemorative traditions continued to change during the twentieth century" and by "looking more closely at the ways black commemorations worked in particular American communities and regions."[9] Analysis of African American commemorative activities surrounding emancipation from the semi-centennial through the one-hundredth anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation demonstrates that a vibrant regional commemorative culture in Hampton Roads persisted through the civil rights movement. This view challenges the narrative of emancipationist memory as one of decline and marginalization. Differences in celebrations across the region did exist but they were not enough to create a state of division. On the contrary, the continued leadership of emancipation associations, civic clubs, and later branches of the NAACP; the consistency in content of Emancipation Day speeches; and the existence of a regional speaker circuit of orators for Emancipation Day celebrations suggest that continuity, rather than fragmentation, is a better descriptor of mid-twentieth century emancipation memory.

The reality of racism and discrimination in Black communities haunted the celebratory culture of emancipation. Speakers increasingly acknowledged the paradox at the heart of the emancipation they were celebrating. Slavery had ended, but they were far from free. While many struggled to find meaning in these celebrations, the commemorative culture that supported them remained vibrant. These celebrations persisted in part by embracing the reality of the paradox. The act of emancipation was still celebrated, and it remained an important aspect of

[8] Robert J. Cook, *Civil War Memories: Contesting the Past in the United States since 1865* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2017).
[9] Kachun, *Festivals of Freedom,* 14.

commemorations, but a second, more complete, emancipation was needed. The proliferation of the rhetoric of a "new," "second," and "complete" emancipation in Hampton Roads and across its wider regional network demonstrates a clear progressive and activist turn in the political culture of emancipation memory. Regular speakers on the Emancipation Day circuit joined the ranks of civil rights leaders at the same time many civil rights leaders furthered their messages by participating in commemorations of emancipation. Appropriating the rhetoric of emancipation for civil rights activism and political protest permitted honoring the memory of emancipation while simultaneously acknowledging its limitations and failures. The NAACP's Freedom Fund campaign "Free by 63," which aimed to achieve a full emancipation by the centennial of the Emancipation Proclamation, and the "Pilgrimage of Prayer" march on Richmond as a state-wide celebration of Emancipation Day in 1959 and 1960, illustrate the culmination of an activist turn in emancipation memory.

While the focus of this essay is on Hampton Roads, reports on regional and national Emancipation Day celebrations in the *Norfolk Journal and Guide* reveal continuities in the structure, features, and tone of commemorations beyond Hampton Roads. These reports help situate local events within the context of larger national trends. That said, it is not within the scope of this paper to show that what was true for Hampton Roads was true across the South or the nation more broadly. It is also not an intention to discuss the ways in which the white citizens of Hampton Roads responded and reacted to public celebrations of emancipation. The challenges faced by African American communities—segregation, racial violence, economic dislocation, and disenfranchisement—featured prominently in their commemorations and clearly demonstrate the lasting power of white supremacy that overshadowed these celebrations. And yet, Black citizens of Hampton Roads took their concerns to the streets and successfully maintained a

vibrant regional commemorative culture that elevated the voices of African Americans and challenged the dominance of white power in their community. This narrative is meant to highlight their story, in their words, through their actions. As such, this paper draws entirely from the extensive records of these celebrations and other commemorative activities in the *Norfolk Journal and Guide.*

An African American newspaper published in Norfolk, but with news bureaus, agents and correspondents throughout the Hampton Roads region, the *Journal and Guide* was an important voice of the Hampton Roads' Black community. With a readership that topped eighty thousand by the end of World War II, it ranked fourth in circulation of Black newspapers behind the *Pittsburgh Courier, Afro-American,* and the *Chicago Defender.* Though Hampton Roads was covered extensively, the *Journal and Guide* was not simply a repository for local news. It was an unashamed protagonist in the struggle for a complete emancipation. The paper featured Black leaders and prominent progressive intellectuals like T. Thomas Fortune, Carter G. Woodson, and Langtson Hughes, who served as content editors and column writers. P.B. Young, owner, and editor of the journal from his purchase of it in 1910 until his passing in 1962, effectively highlights the evolution of emancipation memory and the *Journal and Guide*'s active involvement in its production and representation. Young served as an elected officer with the Norfolk Emancipation Association, was a benefactor of its wider efforts to promote pride in Black history, was an active orator on the Emancipation Day speaker circuit, and became a prominent leader of the early civil rights movement in Hampton Roads. As a result, the *Journal and Guide* does more than document the experiences of African Americans in the region. It was

an active agent in the recording, presentation, and representation of the meaning of emancipation in local and regional Black communities.[10]

The Centralized Nature of Emancipation Memory in Hampton Roads

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Hampton Roads, comprised of the area surrounding the James, Nansemond, and Elizabeth Rivers in Southeastern Virginia and Northeastern North Carolina, already had an established regional commemorative culture. Led by four of its larger cities—Norfolk, Portsmouth, Elizabeth City, and after World War II, Newport News—Black communities in this region organized, participated in, publicized, and read about annual celebrations of emancipation from the day Lincoln issued his proclamation on January 1, 1863 through its centennial.[11] While the larger cities received the most coverage, records of these annual celebrations in the *Norfolk Journal and Guide* indicate ongoing observation of Emancipation Days in more than twenty additional cities in Hampton Roads including regular occurrences in Hampton, Hertford, Seatack (Virginia Beach), Suffolk, and Williamsburg. In the larger regional network established by *Journal and Guide* correspondents and agents, celebrations were reported in no less than one-hundred thirty cities, including regular accounts from regional cities like Charlottesville, Durham, Greensboro, Lynchburg, Raleigh,

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[10] For background on Young and the *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, see Henry Lewis Suggs, *P.B. Young, Newspaperman: Race, Politics, and Journalism in the New South, 1910-1962* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1988). *Norfolk Journal and Guide* articles also highlight Young's involvement in emancipation commemoration activities. See "Emancipation Ass'n Planning Big Celebration: Several Committees At Work on Annual Event Here," *NJG*, Oct. 25, 1930, 2; "Emancipation Association Meets," *NJG*, Nov. 12, 1927, 2; "Progress Notes In Fundamental Areas: Emancipation Speaker Points To Important Supreme Court Decisions," *NJG*, Jan. 11, 1941, 11; Guide Staff Writer, "Educator, Humanitarian: On 3 College Boards, 5 Degrees; Didn't Graduate," *NJG*, Oct. 13, 1962, B1. For further reading on the significance of the Black press and the intellectual leaders of the NJG, see Shawn Leigh Alexander, ed., *T. Thomas Fortune the Afro-American Agitator: A Collection of Writings, 1880-1928* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2008); Burnis R. Morris, *Carter G. Woodson: History, the Black Press, and Public Relations* (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2017); Gerald Horne, *The Rise & Fall of the Associated Negro Press: Claude Barnett's Pan-African News and the Jim Crow Paradox* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2017); D'Weston Haywood, *Let Us Make Men: The Twentieth-Century Black Press and a Manly Vision for Racial Advancement* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2018).

[11] While nearly all the existing studies of Emancipation Days discuss celebrations in this region, Kathleen Clark offers the most detail on the development of a commemorative culture in Norfolk after the war. See Clark, *Defining Moments,* 3, 7, 15-17, 19, 24, 29-30, 37, 39. Referencing the first celebration in Norfolk, she writes, "When they took to the streets in Norfolk in joyous procession, Black Virginians lay claims to a vital form of public rite and civic participation."(17).

Richmond, and Rocky Mount as well as national observances in Baltimore, Charleston, Memphis, New York, Philadelphia, and Washington D.C..[12] The extensive reporting on Emancipation and Freedom Day celebrations by just one periodical in the roughly fifty years between World War I and the Civil War Centennial is telling. The persistence of celebrations demonstrates that previous conclusions by Mitch Kachum suggesting conflict in Black communities and conditions in American society had "helped cause the dissolution of the Freedom Day commemorative tradition" by the early twentieth century could not be further from the truth.[13]

While the day of celebration varied in communities across the region, the format and features of commemorations in Hampton Roads remained remarkably constant.[14] The persistence of these celebrations and their consistency is, in part, due to the centralized organizational structure of emancipation commemorations and the existence of what I call an Emancipation Day "speaker circuit." Orations and keynote speeches were the central feature of the Emancipation Day tradition in the twentieth century. They often took the form of sermons because the speakers were frequently religious leaders and the regular location of celebrations were in the largest churches of a community. This became even more true as grand parades were criticized by many in the press for their opulence during the Great Depression and racial tensions

[12] See Appendix I for a detailed breakdown of annual observances of Emancipation and Freedom Days in Hampton Roads and the wider network reported on by the *Norfolk Journal and Guide.* Notations are made to indicate celebrations hosted by Emancipation Associations/Committees and NAACP branches when reported. Notations are made only if reporting identifies the specific sponsor. This may explain the year-to-year variance in some cities.

[13] Kachun, *Festivals of Freedom,* 12.

[14] See Clark, *Defining Moments* and Kachum, *Festivals of Freedom* for a discussion of the origins of the various days elected for observation. The primary dates include: January 1st, Lincoln's Signing of the Emancipation Proclamation; February 1st (Freedom Day), Passage of the 13th Amendment; April 9th, Lee's Surrender at Appomattox; June 19th, Emancipation in Texas; and September 22nd, draft of Emancipation Proclamation published as a demand to Southern States. Kachum offers the best look at the broader Atlantic tradition of emancipation including August 1st, tied to the 1834 abolition of slavery in the British West Indies and January 1st, the abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade in 1808. The overlap between the Emancipation Proclamation and the abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade made January 1st the most widely observed date in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. June 19th (aka "Juneteenth") has increased in popularity since the end of the twentieth century.

in many cities made public celebrations increasingly difficult. Several prominent local and national figures spoke regularly across the region often traveling from one city to another delivering the same message. Securing a respected and influential speaker was a priority for the organizations sponsoring these events. Even local speakers were in high demand. A report on plans for the observance in Portsmouth in 1937 noted that the Rev. Charles E. Stewart, pastor of the local Emanuel A.M.E. church, "was secured in the face of other tempting speaking offers made him from other cities."[15] Citizens of Elizabeth City were treated to a rousing speech by C.C. Spaulding of Durham in January of 1925. The headline of the news story, "Elizabeth City Hears Address By Spaulding," was only partially true. Absent from the event was Spaulding himself, as an "Editor's Note" reveals the speech was read by a Mr. Curley, "a member of Mr. Spaulding's staff," as the writer had been "unavoidably detained" due to other speaking commitments.[16]

Other local and national figures featured prominently on the circuit. Richard H. Bowling, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Norfolk and writer of the regular feature "The Guide Post" in the *Journal and Guide,* first delivered remarks when the celebrations were held at First Baptist in 1925 and was secured again by the Norfolk Emancipation Association for events in 1932. His last recorded appearance on the circuit was in Newport News in 1946.[17] J. Thomas Newsome, a respected Black lawyer from Newport News, reflects the regional network that speakers routinely traveled. He delivered the principal address in Hampton in 1921, Danville in 1922, Franklin in 1924, Williamsburg in 1925, and was last recorded speaking in Gloucester in 1935.

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[15] "Stewart To Be Emancipation Day Speaker: Sons of Va. Arrange Big Program For Jan. 1," *NJG,* Jan. 2, 1937, 12.
[16] "Elizabeth City Hears Address By Spaulding: Durham Business Man Recounts Events of Past And Present And Urges Race To Greater Future Efforts," *NJG,* Jan. 10, 1925, 8.
[17] For records of Bowling, see "Anniversary of Emancipation is Celebrated," *NJG,* Jan. 3, 1925, 1; James E. Smith, "Rev. R. H. Bowling Is Emancipation Orator: 60 Organizations Make Plans for Jan. 1," *NJG,* Nov. 19, 1932, 11; "Bowling is Emancipation Day Speaker in Newport News," *NJG,* Jan. 5, 1946, 5.

The report from Franklin indicated that Newsome said "that on the first of January for the last twenty-five years he had been privileged to speak somewhere in the South on occasions similar to the one that brought him to Franklin."[18] Reverend, and later Congressman, A. Clayton Powell Jr. was also a regular speaker on the regional circuit. The first Black representative in Congress for the state of New York, Powell's national profile as a civil rights leader was established, in part, for his role in commemoration events across the country. He delivered speeches in Durham in 1941, Richmond in 1943, and later in Newport News in 1956.[19]

While certainly less represented, women were also featured on the Emancipation Day speaker circuit. Charlotte Hawkins Brown, president of the North Carolina State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, framed emancipation as a particularly important fight for Black women. Unafraid of the gendered conventions of emancipation commemorations, Brown called for Black female empowerment and leadership. Addressing an Emancipation Day crowd in Raleigh in 1926, in a speech "calling on the women of Raleigh to work diligently for the race," Brown argued that "it remained for the Negro woman to do…what the men had failed to do." Her messages remained unashamedly political as she crisscrossed the country on the circuit delivering speeches in Roxboro in 1929, Buffalo in 1930, Goldsboro in 1937, and Elizabeth City in 1943.[20]

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[18] For records of Newsome, see "Emancipation Day at Hampton Institute:..J. Thomas Newsome, Colored Lawyer, Pleads for the Support of Negro Leaders and the Co-operation of White and Colored Citizens," *NJG,* Jan. 15, 1921, 3; "Att'y J. T. Newsome Speaks in Danville," *NJG,* Jan. 7, 1922, 1; "J. Thos. Newsome. In Emancipation Day Address. Declares Justice in Virginia is Expanding to Include the Colored People," *NJG,* Jan.5, 1924, 1; "Newsome Points Way To Success In Able Address," *NJG,* Jan. 3, 1925, 1; "Emancipation Speaker Says Suffrage Is Not A Right: A Privilege, Says Newsome at Gloucester," *NJG,* Jan. 12, 1935, 6.

[19] For records of Powell, see "Powell Warns Students To Beware of Fifth Columnist," *NJG,* Jan 25, 1941, 5; "Powell To Be Emancipation Speaker in Richmond Jan. 1," *NJG,* Jan 2, 1943, 13; "Cong. Powell Tells Area Group," *NJG,* Jan. 7, 1956, B1.

[20] For records of Brown see, "Emancipation Address Stirs Raleigh Folks: Mrs. Charlotte Hawkins Brown Declares…," *NJG,* Jan 9, 1926, 8; "Mrs. Charlotte Hawkins Brown Roxboro Orator," *NJG,* Jan. 12, 1929, 12; Zenobia A. Alexander, "Women Not Freed By Emancipation," *NJG,* Mar 22, 1930, 3; "Dr. Charlotte H. Brown Emancipation Speaker in Goldsboro, N.C.," *NJG,* Jan. 9, 1937, 19; "Elizabeth City Group Hears Charlotte Hawkins Brown," *NJG,* May 8, 1943, 3. While it is not within the scope of this paper, extensive records exist of female speakers, the role of Women's Clubs, and the role of women in Emancipation Associations. Kathleen Clark, *Defining Moments,* focuses a chapter of her book on "A Resurrection of Manhood: *Gendered Reconstruction."* An analysis of the gender dynamics of twentieth century celebrations is needed to assess the extent to which

No speaker covered by the *Journal and Guide* figured more prominently on the circuit in Hampton Roads and the surrounding region than Charles Satchell Morris, Jr. A native of Norfolk, the great grandson of Frederick Douglass, and son of Charles Satchel Morris, Sr.—the beloved pastor of the historic Bank Street Baptist Church in Norfolk—Morris Jr. was destined to be a great Emancipation Day speaker. He delivered his first Emancipation Day address in Hertford, North Carolina on January 1, 1914 when he was just fourteen years old. The circumstances of this curious situation suggest the experiences of C.C. Spaulding noted earlier were not uncommon. Morris, Sr. had double booked himself that year in both Hertford and Philadelphia. Morris, Sr. offered his son as a solution and, after providing a sample of the address Morris, Jr. intended to give, the chairman noted, "I guess you will do." The young boy made such an impression on the crowd that the organizer of the event wrote Morris, Sr. to tell him that his son was so successful: "We are glad that you did not come." Dubbed the "boy orator" by the residents of Hertford, the speech continued to resonate with the local community as these details were recalled in an article published sixty-five years later in the *Journal and Guide*. This speech would mark just the beginning of his emancipation circuit dominance.

In addition to the extensive network he traveled delivering speeches, Morris offers perhaps the best example of how singular messages and themes could quickly pervade entire regions. Morris was a vocal advocate of the need for a "New Emancipation." While this will be covered extensively in the next section, Morris's popularity, appeal, and broad network assisted with the proliferation of this rhetoric in the 1930s. He delivered the same speech, "The New Emancipation," in Gary and Weldon in 1932, Warrenton in 1933, and Zuni in 1934. The audiences that assembled to listen to Morris were always reported to be significant. His ten-day

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they remained gendered as women more broadly factored in national conversations and assumed leadership positions within this commemorative culture.

tour of ten cities in the Carolinas in 1924 was expected to draw more than twenty-five thousand observers and required a staff to assist and direct these efforts. The influence and access that speakers like Morris on the emancipation circuit had in Black communities illustrates how continuities could and did preserve the tone, and more importantly, the content, of emancipation memory throughout the twentieth century.[21]

Another significant factor contributing to the existence of a consistent regional commemorative culture surrounding emancipation in Hampton Roads was the coordination of these celebrations by emancipation associations and committees. Nearly every major city or county in Hampton Roads had an established emancipation association that coordinated commemorations. Extensive organizational records including meeting minutes, officer elections, commemoration plans, and records of their broader activities suggest that the Norfolk Emancipation Association and the two organizations in Portsmouth—the Portsmouth Emancipation Association and the Emancipation Committee of the Sons and Daughters of Virginia—were the most organized and persistent caretakers of emancipation memory in Hampton Roads. Though most records of Emancipation Day celebrations in the *Journal and Guide* do not identify the sponsoring group, those that are noted indicate that emancipation associations existed in close to thirty cities across its reporting network. As commemorations became more political and expanded in scope in the middle part of the twentieth century, city and county civic leagues and branches of organizations, in particular the National Association for

[21] For the account of Morris in Hertford, see "Hertford Remembers Boy Orator of Jan, 1, 1914," *NJG,* Aug. 17, 1979, 15. For additional records of Morris speeches, including some not referenced in this essay, see "C.S. Morris, Jr. Speaks At Tappahannock," *NJG,* Apr. 14 1917, 5; "Representative Audience Heard Morris Sunday," *NJG,* Dec. 31 1921, 8; "Morris Captures The Two Carolinas," *NJG,* Jan. 26, 1924, 9; "Charles S. Morris, Jr. Heard In Richmond In Stirring Speech," *NJG,* Jan. 12 1929, 9; "Tells Negro To Take Jim-Crow Out Of Himself…," *NJG,* Apr 16. 1932, 11; "Weldon, N.C.," *NJG,* Oct. 1, 1932, 8; "Warrenton, N.C.," *NJG,* Dec. 30, 1933, 11; "Zuni, VA," *NJG,* Sep. 15, 1934, 18; "Dr. Morris To Speak Sunday At Zion Church," *NJG,* Jan. 6, 1962, B16.

the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), continued to coordinate celebrations in their local communities.[22]

While emancipation associations and committees were primarily focused on organizing and coordinating the celebrations in their communities as the stewards of emancipation memory, many sought and embraced much larger objectives such as improving the community, encouraging civic engagement, and promoting Black history. George Holland, the president of the Elizabeth City County Emancipation Association in Hampton, stated that the purpose of their association was "to keep alive the story of the sacrifices which have made possible the opportunities of the present-day Negro." This emphasized their role in preserving the memory of the past, but it also spurred their efforts to sponsor adult education classes at the Hampton Institute where Black residents could honor the sacrifices of those who made it possible for them to learn new skills. The Brunswick County Emancipation Association of Lawrenceville proclaimed their main objective to be community improvement, such as the funding of a community house from proceeds raised at their celebrations. Suffolk's Nansemond Emancipation Association expanded their focus hoping to bring new life into the organization by leading efforts to improve the local cemetery. The group also coordinated Memorial Day exercises for the Black community in the city.[23] The emergence of wider goals beyond annual freedom celebrations for these memory organizations serve as precursors to the political projects such as voter registration initiatives, poll-tax fundraising drives, and the NAACP "Freedom Fund" that

[22] See Appendix II for a list of the emancipation associations and committees identified in the reporting of Emancipation Day events. Appendix I also marks these cities in the years where associations and NAACP branches are identified as the sponsors. These sponsorships are only marked when newspaper reports identify them. As a result, there are several cities where associations were likely more persistent than indicated but the continued coordination cannot be verified by the reports in the *Journal and Guide.*

[23] For discussion of E, see "Emancipation Brings Progress," *NJG,* Jan 19, 1924, 11. For Lawrenceville, see "Lawrenceville, VA," *NJG,* Feb 6, 1932, 14. For Suffolk see M.E. Estes, "Suffolk," *NJG,* May 6, 1922, 2.

would become staples of the regional commemorative culture in Hampton Roads over the next several decades.

The Norfolk Emancipation Association and, to a lesser extent, the Sons of Virginia of Portsmouth, represent the most active groups outside of Emancipation Days. Their actions suggest these groups were responsive to local conditions and endeavored to be leaders in their communities. When America entered World War I in April of 1917, the Norfolk Emancipation Association responded to calls for patriotism by drafting a declaration of support for the government of the United States. The declaration expressed their feeling that "no single organization or individual can better express the attitude of the Colored Citizens of Norfolk toward this Government in this great National Crisis than this Association, which has existed in Norfolk for fifty-five years." In keeping with the traditions and culture they understood, they staged a parade that the *Journal and Guide* called "[t]he greatest patriotic demonstration ever held in this city and one of the finest ever held in this country." Perpetuating the memory of patriotic and loyal Black Americans was a central part of their mission and something the group continued to do through emancipation days and expanded efforts to promote Black history.[24] African Americans faced the challenge of demonstrating, often defending, their patriotism and loyalty while simultaneously acknowledging and confronting the reality of their incomplete citizenship as Americans. This required balancing their experiences of discrimination with visions of a Black past that was worth remembering and celebrating. As a result, dedication to Black history was interwoven with emancipation memory.

For most of the 1930s, the Norfolk Emancipation Association and the Sons of Virginia answered the national call to observe "Negro History Week" by Carter G. Woodson and the

[24] On their declaration of patriotism see, "Race Organizations Pledge Their Loyalty," *NJG,* Apr. 21, 1917, 1. For a discussion of the parade, see "Big Patriotic Demonstration," *NJG,* May 5, 1917, 1.

Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. Woodson was a regular contributor to the *Journal and Guide* in the month of February, providing editorial commentary as well other information to be disseminated to assist with the observance of "Negro History Week," which would later become Black history month. These efforts not only furthered the writing of Black history by Black Americans, but they also fueled emancipation commemoration. The Norfolk group secured Woodson as their Emancipation Day speaker in 1931 and added an Emancipation Day feature, the keynote speech, to their coordination of celebrations of Black history. Rev. Bowling, the emancipation circuit speaker, delivered the last recorded keynote speech for these events in 1941 before World War II disrupted the association's activities.[25] These efforts illustrate the importance of promoting Black history as a means of honoring the memory of Black leaders who made emancipation possible while also furthering knowledge that would aid in their efforts to achieve a more complete emancipation in the future.

The persistence of Emancipation Day commemorations throughout the twentieth century does not suggest there were no questions or objections raised about the purpose or appropriateness of these celebrations. Quite the contrary, residents offered critical opinions on these celebrations, and emancipation associations and speakers responded to, and accounted for, these objections in their plans and messaging. Dr. J. A. Young, the principal speaker in Norfolk in 1923, navigated the difficulty of acknowledging these concerns, continuing to defend the memory of emancipation, while calling for changes that might ease these tensions. "We should not forget 'Emancipation Day'," Young insisted, "but it is about time that we ceased using the day to rehearse the drama of the striking of the shackles from the slaves." In an appeal to what

[25] On Woodson, see "Prominent Historian Will Be Emancipation Day Speaker," *NJG*, Dec. 13, 1930, 5. For "Negro History Week" coordination and cooperation between emancipation groups, see "Norfolk-Portsmouth Plan for Negro History Week," *NJG,* Jan. 21 1933, 2; "Cooperating" and "Handy Guide for Negro History Week," *NJG,* Feb 11, 1933, 3;

would eventually become a continuous message in Emancipation Day speeches, Young argued that they must "use it instead, to draw attention to some of the shackles that still enslave us."[26] Navigating concerns proved to be difficult, particularly when those concerns conflicted. While Young appealed to those who believed more attention should be given to fighting current impediments to freedom, other objections suggested emancipation celebrations put too much emphasis on the continuation of challenges that "only serve to emphasize the belief, so generally entertained by the detractors of the race that we are not far enough removed from slavery."[27]

Economic depression and widespread poverty in many Black communities presented practical challenges for commemorations and amplified the voices of those who wished for more solemn celebrations. C.W. Yearnwood of Waverly, Virginia, wrote to the *Journal and Guide* to correct what he saw as errors in the reporting on Emancipation Day in 1932. Yearnwood did not object to the facts presented. His issue was with the tone and descriptions that gave an "unfavorable impression" of the events in Waverly. The celebration was not, as the paper described it, "a day of general revelry," Yearnwood insisted. "It was a day of sober thoughtfulness."[28] Shifting the tone of representations of these events would not save the annual parade in cities across the commemorative regional network. Reporting on Portsmouth celebrations in 1934 noted that the Sons of Virginia had stopped sponsoring their parade as they believed "that solemnity rather than hilarity should mark its observance." The response in Norfolk was not as reactive to social conditions or the opponents of continued celebrations. The Norfolk Emancipation Association did notify participants that prizes would no longer be awarded and asked them "to abandon the old idea of elaborateness in dress," but they held to the

[26] "City Observes Emancipation Day Fittingly…Dr. J.A. Young Was Principal Speaker," *NJG*, Jan. 6. 1923, 1.
[27] "Would Abandon Emancipations," *NJG*, Jan. 26, 1924, 9.
[28] C.W. Yearnwood, "Day of Sober Thought," *NJG*, July 11, 1932, 6.

tradition of parades started in Norfolk several decades earlier. The memory of liberated former slaves marching through the streets of Norfolk in 1863 proved too strong. In this light it seems likely it was not a coincidence that David Altson, President of the Norfolk Emancipation Association, delivered the document of the original celebration in Norfolk to the *Journal and Guide* at the same time parades and "revelry" were being challenged as out of touch. By 1934 Norfolk was the only city in Hampton Roads that continued this feature.[29]

A Second, New, and Complete Emancipation: The Activist Turn and Appeals to Memory

R.A. Reddick's identification of the paradox of emancipation in 1934—that the act of emancipation could be achieved without a resulting emancipated state of being—eloquently captures what would quickly become a consistent theme in emancipation memory from the late 1920s through the middle of the 20th century. While practical and important factors like economic depression and war no doubt influenced decisions like those of the Sons of Virginia and others to cancel the more festive features of their celebrations, there existed another, more subtle force, that weighed heavily on the tone and content of Emancipation Day speeches and editorial content in the *Norfolk Journal and Guide.* As calls for a "second," "complete," and "new emancipation" proliferated in Hampton Roads and its wider regional commemorative network, it became more difficult to reconcile the tone of celebrations with the reality being acknowledged by the speakers at these events. A need for a "second emancipation" meant the first was insufficient. When J.A. Young called for focusing on "the shackles that still enslave us" rather than "rehearsing the drama" of emancipation, he was suggesting that commemoration focus on addressing present challenges rather than being consumed entirely by an incomplete

[29] For Porstmouth response, see "Bad Weather No Bar…", *NJG, 9.* For Norfolk response, see "Emancipation Ass'n Expects Committees To Report Monday", *NJG,* Dec. 5, 1931, 5.

past.[30] The seeming contradiction of celebrating existing challenges with parades was why so many called for solemnity over festivity in commemoration activities. In response, emancipation celebrations replaced parades with protests and in the process completed a distinctively political turn that combined memory and activism.

While the first reference to a "second emancipation" in the *Journal and Guide* appears in the content of an Emancipation Day speech in Suffolk in 1922, a more complete meaning does not emerge until January of 1924 in an editorial piece in Norfolk titled "Emancipation Celebration." The writer suggests that limited participation on the part of the younger generation is because their "attention is focused more upon gaining a newer emancipation, an emancipation that will…make him a man free in opportunity, free in the enjoyment of the privileges and immunities of American citizenship, than [they are] upon celebrating the issuance of Abraham Lincoln's immortal proclamation." For the writer, and for participants and observers of emancipation celebrations, the proclamation could be identified as flawed in the same sentence it was deemed "immortal." This demonstrates the complexity of emancipation memory in the middle of the 20th century. It is fitting that this initial reference in criticisms of Emancipation Day celebrations would eventually define them in the next several decades.[31]

When the National Equal Rights League and Race Congress of America called for cities across the country to hold "Completion of Emancipation" celebrations on New Year's Day, 1929, they began a process of politicizing commemoration activities that foreshadowed efforts of the NAACP decades later. Whether this call influenced the content of emancipation memory, or vice versa, hundreds of editorial comments, organization records, and speeches referred to a new,

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[30] References to new, second, and complete emancipation are cited below. For content and Young, see "City Observes…," *NJG,* 1.

[31] "Suffolk News and Advertisements," *NJG,* Jan. 7, 1822, 2; Quotes in "Emancipation Celebrations," *NJG,* Jan. 5, 1924, 12.

complete, and second emancipation in the *Journal and Guide.* E. Franklin Frazier labeled "the second emancipation of the negro" the solution to the chief problem facing African Americans in an Emancipation Day speech in Nashville in 1931.[32] One year later, George Haynes argued a "new emancipation proclamation" was needed to address "economic exploitation, political domination, and cultural exploitation" in an Emancipation Day oration in New York. In 1933 in Elizabeth City, Rev. C. Alexander acknowledged that they celebrated the anniversary from "physical slavery" but they "must still have the New Emancipation" to call themselves free.[33]

In the eyes of many speakers, a new emancipation required new communities and new leaders. In 1937, William Meachem told an audience in Charlotte, Virginia. that a "second South" was needed to fully accomplish a "second emancipation." The failure of the "first emancipation" was due to the immobility and defensiveness of the "first South." "The second South," he argued hopefully, "is gradually changing for the good." Rev. Harvey Johnson declared race prejudice as "the granddaddy of stupidity" in his 1944 Portsmouth Emancipation Day speech. He positioned "The New Emancipation" as the enemy of "the evils of present-day segregation." Taking aim at white southerners' distortion of race history, Johnson declared that the "intelligent man…reads history not with his prejudices but with his mind." For Johnson, "The New Emancipation" required more "intelligent" white men. That same year in Greensboro, North Carolina, Dr. Carl W. Hill, professor at A and T College, pinned the hope of a "real emancipation" on "the caliber of leadership" of the race. Hill's position—that "ultra-conservative" leaders who believe "too much in interracial conciliation" become "Uncle Toms of the Negro race"—illustrates the political nature of a "real emancipation." Hill believed good

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[32] "'Completing of Emancipation' Object Of Race Congress At Washington By Rights League," *NJG,* Dec. 8, 1928, 9; "Race Must Have 2d Emancipation Speaker States," *NJG,* Jan. 24, 1931, 16;

[33] "Sees Communism As Challenge To Church," *NJG,* Jan. 23, 1932, 4; "'Must Conquer Self,' Is Emancipation Talk," *NJG,* Jan 14, 1933, 11.

leaders—moderate or radical—must be willing to concede that emancipation had not been fully successful at emancipating Black people in America. [34]

T. J. Sellers, the main speaker at an Emancipation Day event in Charlottesville in 1943, had already staked out which path of leadership was preferable. Earning a "physical freedom" had been a centuries long battle. Sellers drew on the record of that battle to defend a "militant leadership" as "essential if the race is ever to be fully emancipated from 'second-class citizenship.'" Acknowledging emancipation was incomplete permitted discussions of the successes and the failures of emancipation simultaneously. Dr. Vernon Johns's address to an Emancipation Day audience in the same city two years later illustrates the tensions of embracing "new emancipation" rhetoric. Someone could be an activist leader claiming Lincoln cared only about preserving the Union and still commemorate Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, but it was not acceptable for African Americans to claim they were free. Those who call "these conditions in which we live freedom," Johns declared, do not "deserve to be free."[35]

Regardless of how communities approached their struggles, they saw a new emancipation in the outcomes. Victories, perceived and real, provided confidence in the ultimate result. The unanimous ruling by the Supreme Court in *Chambers v. Florida* in 1940 was heralded by S.D. McGill, the lead lawyer from the NAACP, as "a Second Emancipation." The success of the NAACP in court freed four young Black men who were said to have willingly confessed to murder despite evidence of coercion and torture during questioning. McGill used the language that was already popular nomenclature in the regional commemorative culture of Hampton Roads. Presidents also had the power to issue executive orders and presidential decrees that

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[34] "Second Emancipation Of Race Greatest Need, Dr. Wesley Tells N.O.S. Group," *NJG,* Nov. 20, 1937; "Prejudice Is Granddaddy Stupidity," *NJG,* Jan. 15, 1944, 8; "Emancipation From Ignorance And Disease Held Race Need," *NJG,* Jan. 22, 1944, 17.

[35] "T.J. Sellers Tells Citizens To Insist On Emancipation," *NJG,* Jan. 16, 1943, 19; "Race Celebrates Freedom Before It Is Won," *NJG,* Jan. 13 1945, 3.

could result in a new emancipation. Franklin D. Roosevelt's "New Deal" and his successful courting of Black voters was routinely characterized in editorials and speeches as a "New Emancipation." Executive Order 8802, which barred employment discrimination in defense industries, was largely symbolic with limited enforcement. Still, proponents in the *Journal and Guide* hailed it as a great victory. "This order," one article claimed, "has given new meaning, new vitality to the Emancipation Proclamation." According to the writer, the proclamation "freed us physically," but it was "Roosevelt's proclamation of 1941," that represented, "the beginning of our economic freedoms."[36] No victory meant more for a "second emancipation" than the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court ruling declaring segregation of public schools unconstitutional. Local historian and journalist Gordon B. Hancock used predictable language in an article for the *Journal and Guide* in 1961. He declared that "the Supreme Court's decisions of 1954…meant a second Emancipation Proclamation for the Negroes of the South."[37] The overlap between the language of these pronouncements with rhetoric used in commemorations of emancipation demonstrates that the regional commemorative culture linked to Hampton Roads was connected to larger regional and national trends. Over time it became difficult to distinguish between memory and activism.

Recognizing the limitations of the first emancipation did not mean abandoning its memory. In an Emancipation Day address at events sponsored by the Norfolk Emancipation Association in 1939, Rev. S. E. Dixon joined the chorus of speakers on the circuit addressing the subject of "The New Emancipation." Though Dixon argued that Lincoln had not fully freed

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[36] "Florida Case Called Second Emancipation," *NJG,* Feb. 24. 1940, 1. While it is not the focus of this paper to dive significantly into national trends, there is an extensive body of evidence available for a discussion of the New Deal as a "new emancipation." Eleanor Roosevelt delivered Emancipation Day speeches linking her husband's platform to the rhetoric prevalent in commemoration. This research would examine some of William Blair's conclusions in *Cities of the Dead* on the political relevance of emancipation memory in the twentieth century. For starters, see "The Negro's New Emancipation," *NJG,* Jan. 7, 1933, A6. "Weapon Against Hitlerites," *NJG,* Jan. 24, 1942, B6.

[37] Gordon B. Hancock, "Behind Headlines: Old South Repulsed Once Again," *NJG,* Dec 23, 1961, B14.

slaves, he actively defended the importance of emancipation memory. "To forget to pause once each year for this celebration and give thanks for the prayers of our forefathers which broke the shackles of slavery," he proclaimed, "would be to forget God" who had moved their forefathers to justice.[38] For Dixon, it was divine intervention—not Lincoln's Proclamation—that compelled commemorating emancipation. The persistent practice of reading the Emancipation Proclamation as a feature in most Emancipation Day celebrations in Hampton Roads illustrates that African American communities still valued and honored Lincoln, even if it required God's intervention for him to act.

The physical document could be a useful tool for those who believed in its intentions. Stories in the *Journal and Guide* routinely went "Looking For [the] Emancipation Proclamation." They found it, and its various draft versions, at the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church in Washington D.C. where Lincoln regularly attended services. It was used as part of a dedication ceremony for renovations at the church. They found it an exhibit on full display at the National Archives in January 1963 as part of centennial celebrations. Attorney General Robert Kennedy, who was there to open the exhibit, urged "Deeds For a New Emancipation." Dr. Charles Wesley declared the placement of the historic document on display to be an inspiration for "another turning point" to achieve a full freedom.[39]

In November of 1947, the American Heritage Foundation collected the 1862 draft and 1863 original copy of the signed Emancipation Proclamation, along with original copies of the Declaration of Independence and Bill of Rights, and put them on a train to travel throughout the country. While the Declaration of Independence and Bill of Rights were foundations of freedom,

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[38] "Two-Day Emancipation Celebration Significant," *NJG,* Jan. 14. 1939, 2.

[39] For the search for the actual Proclamation, see Louis Cassels, "Looking For: Emancipation Proclamation," *NJG,* Feb. 3, 1962, B10; "Church Of Abe Lincoln Given Slave Document," *NJG,* Dec. 22, 1951, 2; "Eisenhower Sees Lincoln Slavery Draft Unveiled," Feb. 14. 1953, A4;

the *Norfolk Journal and Guide* and the correspondents that viewed the "Freedom Train" focused almost exclusively on the copies of the documents tied to emancipation. Norfolk's Albert L. Hinton, also an Emancipation Day speaker, coyly discussed ways the Freedom Train could be used to "strike a blow for democracy and justice." He suggested Attorney General Tom Clark pay close attention "to the routing of the train," making sure "it stops in those places and geographic areas…whose inhabitants have demonstrated…they stand badly in need of another look at these time-worn and hallowed documents." Hinton got his wish. On the eve of the departure of the "Freedom Train" for the South, two southern cities—Memphis, TN and Hattiesburg, MS—declared their intention to open the train at different times to ensure separate white and Black viewings of its contents. Just as emancipation did not mean a full emancipation, white leaders in the South tried to prove that viewers of the Freedom Train could be denied a full freedom. In what may have been interpreted as a sign of a new emancipation, the American Heritage Foundation refused to let Jim Crow ride the Freedom Train.[40]

Even though Black communities throughout Hampton Roads had listened to Emancipation Day orations that acknowledged the limitation of Lincoln's Proclamation for over a decade, viewing these documents had deep meanings for the correspondents who reported on their experiences. Norfolk was one of the first stops of the Freedom Train on its venture into the South in early December 1947. Carrie P. Ricks took her children and their friends "to appreciate the heritage of freedom and liberty which the founders of the American Republic vouchsafed to every American citizen." Ricks noted that "many of the documents were yellow with age." Feeling moved by the experience of seeing the documents directly, she "began to think of the past and to wonder what the future holds in store for us as a race." It was a day that she believed

[40] Albert L. Hinton, "Behind the Lines: A Golden Opportunity for Attorney General Tom Clark," *NJG,* Jan. 18, 1947, 6; William Gordon, "Freedom Train Hits Snag: Two Cities Wave Jim Crow Flag," *NJG,* Nov. 29, 1947, A1;

would "long be remembered and cherished." The Freedom Train returned to Hampton Roads at Newport News near the end of its tour in January 1949. Correspondents in Norfolk declared the campaign a success for the memory of emancipation. Though its sponsors "had their troubles with racial customs and traditions in the South," the article affirmed the train's mission by carrying "a great message to the American people which can never be told too often."[41] Those who ventured to the exhibit and reflected on the history of these documents thought of the future.

From a "New Emancipation" to Emancipation Centennial Activism

In January of 1953, Clifton L. Williams, *Journal and Guide* staff writer, made a telling observation. In an article titled, "Emancipation Celebrations Lose Appeal in Norfolk," Williams, like the many who questioned the celebrations in earlier decades, tried to explain why interest in the celebrations seemed to be waning. His answer for this lack of interest explained that a new generation of African Americans was "more anxiously concerned about obtaining the freedom and equality of citizenship which Lincoln's Proclamation and the intervening 80 years have failed to provide." It is harder to find a better description of the basic premise of a "new emancipation" than Williams's explanation. The types of celebrations Williams criticized—"Colorful parades and lengthy programs each succeeding January"—was not what emancipation memory looked like by the time Williams sat down to write about the celebrations. He did offer a solution to the lack of interest. It was a solution that had been adopted decades earlier when most communities in Hampton Roads eliminated parades as features of their celebration. It touched on the same current that led C.W. Yearnwood of Waverly, Virginia. to write and correct the festive tone used to describe the activities in his community. "Unless the pomp and glamor of these

[41] On Freedom Train in Norfolk, see "No Bias to Ride Freedom Train Here," *NJG,* Oct. 25 1947, 18; "Freedom Train Due Here On Date Marking Pearl Harbor Attack," *NJG,* Dec. 6, 1947, A18; Recollection by correspondent, Carrie P. Hicks, "Journal and Guide Agent Gives Her Impression Of Freedom Train," *NJG,* Dec. 20, 1947, A16; In Newport News see, "Freedom Train Belongs To Every American," *NJG,* Feb. 5, 1949, 19.

affairs is subordinated to efforts to convert them into united support for the NAACP and into endeavors aimed at tripling the Number of qualified voters," Williams warned, "they prove of no substantial worth."[42]

A review of sponsors of Emancipation and Freedom Day celebrations in the decade prior to the Centennial of the Emancipation Proclamation in the *Norfolk Journal and Guide* reveals that the NAACP had a significant role in the coordination of emancipation memory by 1963. Analysis of the larger regional network connections by the *Journal and Guide* suggests that NAACP sponsored Emancipation Day celebrations were a reality in at least twenty cities in the decade and a half prior to the centennial.[43] Furthermore, commemoration activities not in the hands of an emancipation association or the NAACP were most often run by associated women's clubs or Civic and Voter Leagues. The objectives of these organizations, communicated both in word and deeds, mirrored precisely the type of celebrations that Williams asked for and eliminated most of what Williams was criticizing. The Voters League of Suffolk coordinated post-war commemoration activities. Their sponsorship influenced the focus of celebrations. Emancipation Day services in Suffolk in 1946 featured a report "on a study of voting in Suffolk and Nansemond county" for the purpose of informing strategies to increase voter registration and identify local needs. Dr. Luther P. Jackson stressed the importance of voting in a 1948 emancipation address in Seatack. Jackson urged the audience "to pay the poll tax, and to qualify to vote" as the "ballot is the key to freedom." The Virginia Voters League of Richmond, often in coordination with the Richmond NAACP branch, embraced campaigns against poll taxes.[44] They used commemoration exercises as a vehicle to start a poll tax drive to assist voters with access to

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[42] Clifton L. Williams, "Emancipation Celebrations Lose Appeal in Norfolk," *NJG,* Jan. 3, 1953, A19.
[43] See Appendix I.
[44] Marye E. Backus, "News of Suffolk Activities," *NJG,* Jan. 5, 1946, A16. "Norfolk Suburban: Dr. Jackson Issues Challenge In Emancipation Day Address," *NJG,* Jan. 17, 1948, A15; "Richmond Voters League To Start Poll Tax Drive," *NJG,* Nov. 15, 1852, 23.

freedom. These examples demonstrate that the commemorative culture Clifton Williams was calling for to stave off the final decline of the commemorative tradition in Hampton Roads was already alive and well. For more than a decade, Black communities throughout the region had emphasized the limitations of emancipation and had eschewed festivity for solemnity in their observances. The local, regional, and national efforts to celebrate and appropriate the memory of emancipation leading up to the centennial of Lincoln's proclamation signified the final merging of memory and activism.

When Martin Luther King, Jr. stepped forward to deliver the Emancipation Address at the First Baptist Church to a packed house on January 2nd, 1958 in Newport News, his appearance would not have seemed surprising to those in attendance.[45] Newport News had a well-established commemoration program that secured high-profile speakers who were both steeped in the commemorative culture of emancipation and engaged in activism on civil rights. The overlap that existed between Emancipation Day speakers and civil rights icons—regionally and nationally—was striking. Rev. Moses Wright, the great uncle of the young, martyred Emmett Till headlined Brooklyn's emancipation program in 1956. Congressman Powell, Jr of New York returned to the speaker circuit in Newport News for Emancipation Day in 1957.[46] The NAACPs Freedom Fund speakers were equally as connected to civil rights activism. Mrs. Daisy Bates, the "solid rock" of the Little Rock 9, who was involved in the integration of Little Rock Central High School under the spotlight of national media, delivered the principal address at Freedom Day exercises in Raleigh, NC in 1958. Rev. Ralph Abernathy, one of the leaders of the Montgomery Bus Boycotts spoke in Petersburg in 1960. The principal speaker in Raleigh in

[45] For program of event see, "Display Ad 23 – No Title," *NJG,* Dec. 28, 1957, A3; "Dr. Martin L. King, Jr. To Speak Here Jan. 2," *NJG,* Dec. 28, 1957, B1

[46] For Powell, see "Cong. Powell Tells Area Group," *NJG*, Jan. 7, 1956, B1. Moses Wright, see "Emancipation Day Speaker," *NJG,* Dec. 24, 1955, 15.

1961 was Thurgood Marshall, dubbed "Mr. Civil Rights" by the Raleigh NAACP chapter that sponsored the talk.[47] Simply put, the regional commemorative culture by the time of the Civil War Centennial had accomplished its activist turn.

King's declaration that "we stand today between two worlds, the dying old and the emerging new" addressed both the underlying idea of a new emancipation and the anxieties of a younger generation about emancipation's history. African Americans "made a big step forward…with Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation," King said, but it was the Supreme Court in 1954 that "issued a new order of freedom."[48] He understood more than most that the audience he addressed was not driven to involvement in a great cause by speeches. King's presence in Virginia, along with other civil rights leaders, was linked to a larger goal of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) for a meeting in Norfolk to train Black communities in Virginia, as well as others from across the South, in the methods of nonviolence popularized in his earlier movements. In the fall of 1958, close to four thousand people attended the SCLC's "Mass Meeting For Human Rights" in Norfolk. Rev. F.L. Shuttlesworth, Rev. Abernathy, and Vivian Carter Mason, the president of the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW), served as primary speakers at the conference. The work and training proved useful almost as soon as the conference had ended.[49]

The "Pilgrimage of Prayer" marches on Richmond that occurred on Emancipation Day in January of 1959 and 1960 and the NAACPs Freedom Fund Campaign, titled "Free By 63," represent the final elimination of any distinction between commemorating emancipation and engaging in activism for a more complete version of it. The decision to organize the non-violent,

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[47] On Bates, see, Carl E. DeVane, "Tarheel Beat: Mrs. Daisy Bates Hears At Freedom Day Rally," *NJG,* May 31, 1958, 8; On Abernathy see, "Freedom Day Held In Petersburg," *NJG,* May 21, 1960, 12.
[48] J.H. Knight, "Two Worlds: The Dying Old. The Emerging New," *NJG,* Jan. 11, 1958, B1..
[49] "Over 3,000 Attend: Mass Meeting For Human Rights," *NJG,* Oct. 4, 1958, B1.

"Pilgrimage of Prayer" march on the day of the annual observance of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation signaled action was required for remembering.[50] The march to the capitol, their vocal protests, and the sit-ins they staged were not just political acts, they were also acts of remembrance. Protesters drew upon their recent training and formed an effective political bloc that could influence political outcomes. The NAACP's Freedom Fund—"Free By 63"—campaign accomplished the same thing. Though the annual Freedom Fund Days that raised money for the NAACP's legal efforts did not take place in January, the culmination of the campaign, the "63", was the centennial of the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation.[51] While they used the memory of Brown vs. Board of Education in May to hold Freedom Days, the complete Freedom brought about by the NAACP's efforts was meant to be achieved on the 100th anniversary of the signing of a document that Black communities in the Hampton Roads revered and had concluded was still incomplete. If they believed in the "second emancipation," which the persistence of this rhetoric and tone in the *Norfolk Journal and Guide* suggests they did, then their only option was to fight for its completion. They remembered emancipation to better know their struggle and fought for a mew emancipation to honor what the past stood for.

Epilogue – Black Memory Matters

In a 2009 article "Celebrating Freedom: The Problem of Emancipation in Public Commemoration," William Blair questioned whether we "should set aside a national public holiday to commemorate emancipation," while also noting that Congress already established February 1st, the anniversary of the signing of the 13th Amendment, as an official Freedom Day

[50] For important coverage of the "Pilgrimage of Prayer" see, "Prayer Pilgrimage," *NJG,* Dec. 13, 1958, 1; "Dr. M. L. King Joins Pilgrimage Supporters," *NJG,* Dec. 20, 1958, 1; Obie McCollum, "2,500 Assemble At Capitol To Protest State Defiance," *NJG,* Jan. 10, 1959; "5,000 Expected For Prayer Pilgrimage," *NJG,* Dec. 26, 1959, 1; "Governor Almond Urged To Open Prince Edward County Schools," *NJG,* Jan. 9, 1960, 1.

[51] For coverage of NAACP Freedom Fund see, "NAACP Rally Attended by 1000 In Portsmouth," *NJG,* Jan 18, 1958, C12; "NAACP Chapters Across Nation Marking 100th Anniversary of Freedom," *NJG* Dec. 29 1962, 2.

in the 1940s. The inevitable questions Blair leads the reader to—if a national day in honor of emancipation and freedom already exists, why isn't it celebrated and what does this say about the memory of emancipation?—reinforces his larger argument that Emancipation Days "faded from African American communities" in the 20th century. By studying the persistence and evolution of these celebrations from the early twentieth century into the civil rights movement, this paper suggests a more complex understanding of Black commemorative culture surrounding emancipation. Blair's analysis that Emancipation Days "appear to have sustained their last gasp with the increasing success of the civil rights movement" demonstrates that appearances can be deceiving.[52] For communities in Hampton Roads, these celebrations would continue into the twenty-first century, though Juneteenth, rather than the long-standing anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, would become the primary day of commemoration by the end of the century.[53]

The official adoption of Juneteenth, the anniversary of the emancipation of enslaved people in Texas, as a national holiday this June illustrates the persistence of commemorating emancipation and the intersection of activism and memory in struggles for complete freedom. In their petition to make Juneteenth a national holiday, Black Lives Matter activists declared that, "Just like our lives, our HISTORY matters."[54] Their call, along with attempts to describe why, in the words of one commentator, "Juneteenth went viral," acknowledged that the fuel for recognizing and honoring Black memory was tied to "the failure of emancipation." The murder

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[52] William Blair, "Celebrating Freedom: The Problem of Emancipation in Public Commemoration," in *Lincoln's Proclamation: Emancipation Reconsidered*, eds. William A. Blair and Karen Fistor Young (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 196, 204, 206.

[53] For some coverage of the origins and evolution of Juneteenth in Hampton Roads see "Newsreel Pictures Texas Celebration," *Norfolk Journal and Guide,* July 8, 1944, 13; "Juneteenth," *Norfolk Journal and Guide,* August 5, 1981, A7; Mariel Frasier, "Today is Juneteenth in some parts of the nation!," *Norfolk Journal and Guide,* June 19, 1991, 1; Leonard E. Colvin, "Juneteenth: 'Freedom' holiday gains in popularity," *Norfolk Journal and Guide,* May 31, 1995, 1; Leonard E. Colvin, "June 19th: How Juneteenth came about," *Norfolk Journal and Guide,* May 31, 1995, 9;

[54] Black Lives Matter, "Make Juneteenth a National Holiday," #BlackLivesMatter, June 17, 2020, https://blacklivesmatter.com/make-juneteenth-a-national-holiday/.

of George Floyd and the disproportionate burden of the COVID-19 pandemic on African American communities revealed how the "descendants of those emancipated…still live in conditions commensurate with second class citizenship."[55] This recognition of the incompleteness of emancipation as part of a call for its commemoration on Juneteenth, and the importance of memory for activism, mirrors the central positions of this paper.

A commemorative culture tied to emancipation did not just persist through the civil rights movement, it became an integral part of it. The success of the movement was not the "last gasp" of a commemorative culture, it was the embodiment and, in part, result of it. African Americans in places like Hampton Roads understood their involvement in political protest as acts to achieve a complete emancipation. The civil rights movement increasingly embodied the evolution of emancipationist memory over the first half of the twentieth century. As Black communities and their celebrants embraced the rhetoric of a "second emancipation" they implicitly acknowledged the limitation of the first. The appropriation of the term emancipation as a representation of the struggles for full citizenship in the present merged memory with activism. No longer limited to the memory of the *action* of emancipation, African Americans engaged in protests and celebrated victories that achieved the freedom and *state of being* that should have come with emancipation. Protests, sit-ins, marches, and public speeches *were* the second emancipation that reflected and attempted to achieve a more complete freedom. Civil rights leaders, who were themselves participants in this commemorative culture, utilized emancipation in their campaigns. The NAACP's "Free By 63" Freedom Fund initiative is just one example of the merging of activism and memory. Activism entailed an acknowledgement both of emancipation's past and of its limitations. Activists honored that memory by fighting for its full realization in the present.

[55] C. Brandon Ogbuno, "Why Juneteenth Went Viral," Wired, June 19, 2020, https://www.wired.com/story/why-juneteenth-went-viral/

While the celebratory culture of emancipation memory may not have remained constant over time, the politics of memory and its role in activism focused on achieving a more complete emancipation remains a persistent, but contested, force in American culture. The simultaneous national recognition of Juneteenth while states across the country pass legislation banning Critical Race Theory demonstrates that Black history and memory continue to matter.

Appendix I.

Table 1. Listing of references to Emancipation Day/Freedom Day Celebrations in the *Norfolk Journal and Guide*

Year	Hampton Roads Noted Celebrations	Other Noted Celebrations
1917	Elizabeth City, NC*; Norfolk, VA*; Portsmouth, VA*; Smithfield, VA	Asheville, NC; Columbia, NC; Danville, VA; Rocky Mount, NC; Tappahannock, VA
1918-1920	Norfolk Journal and Guide not available for these years	
1921	Elizabeth City, NC*; Hampton, VA*; Norfolk, VA*	Belhaven, NC; Emporia, VA
1922	Carrollton, VA*; Elizabeth City, NC*; Franklin, VA; Hampton, VA*; Hertford, NC; Norfolk, VA*; Seatack, VA; Suffolk, VA; Sunbury, NC	Danville, VA; Murfreesboro, NC; Petersburg, VA*
1923	Elizabeth City, NC*; Norfolk, VA*; Portsmouth, VA*	Brighton, NC; Mackey's Ferry, NC; Sanford, NC; Williamston, NC
1924	Driver, VA; Elizabeth City, NC*; Franklin, VA; Hampton, VA*; Norfolk, VA*; Seatack, VA; Suffolk, VA*; Winfall, NC	Belhaven, NC; Chicago, IL; Edenton, NC*; New York, NY; Philadelphia, PA; Plymouth, NC*; Shelby, NC; Tryon, NC
1925	Deep Creek, VA; Elizabeth City, NC; Norfolk, VA*; Suffolk, VA*; Williamsburg, VA	Goldsboro, NC; Murfreesboro, NC; Washington, NC*
1926	Franklin, VA; Hertford, NC; Norfolk, VA*	Raleigh, NC*
1927	Newport News, VA*; Norfolk, VA*; Portsmouth, VA*; Suffolk, VA	Chattanooga, TN; Raleigh, NC; Rocky Mount, NC; Wilson, NC
1928	Norfolk, VA; Portsmouth, VA*	Belhaven, NC; Burlington, NC; Raleigh, NC; Wilson, NC
1929	Newport News, VA; Norfolk, VA*; Portsmouth, VA*; Williamsburg, VA	Cape Charles, VA; Durham, NC; Edenton, NC; Georgetown, SC; Lottsburg, VA*; Richmond, VA; Roxboro, NC; Winton, NC
1930	Norfolk, VA*	Greensboro, NC
1931	Berkley, VA; Norfolk, VA*	Columbia, SC; Nashville, TN; Richmond, VA
1932	Elizabeth City, NC*; Norfolk, VA*; Portsmouth, VA*; Williamsburg, VA*	Edenton, NC; Gary, WV; Goldsboro, NC; Henderson, NC; Lawrenceville, VA*; Lynchburg, VA; Newport, RI; Rocky Mount, NC; Roxboro, NC*; Salisbury, NC; Waverly, VA
1933	Elizabeth City, NC*; Franklin, VA*; Norfolk, VA*; Portsmouth, VA*; Suffolk, VA; Williamsburg, VA	Greensboro, NC; Lynchburg, VA; Waynesboro, VA
1934	Hertford, NC; Norfolk, VA*; Portsmouth, VA*	Clifton Forge, VA; Denver, CO; Halifax, NC; Martinsville, VA; Trenton, NJ; Warrenton, NC; Zuni, VA
1935	Elizabeth City, NC*; Newport News, VA; Norfolk, VA*; Phoebus, VA; Portsmouth, VA*; Smithfield, VA	Durham, NC; Freehold, NJ; Greensboro, NC; King William, VA; Memphis, TN; Parmele, NC; Pulaski, VA; Roxboro, NC*; Smithfield, NC

1936	Norfolk, VA*; Portsmouth, VA*	Capeville, VA; Fredericksburg, VA; Jacksonville, FL; Lynchburg, VA; New Orleans, LA; South Boston, VA*
1937	Norfolk, VA*; Portsmouth, VA*; Williamsburg, VA	Cape Charles, VA; Des Moines, IA; Greensboro, NC; Greenville, NC; Henderson, NC; Leonardtown, MD; Raleigh, NC*; Petersburg, VA*; Pocahontas, VA; Winston-Salem, NC
1938	Elizabeth City, NC*; Norfolk, VA*; Hertford, NC; Suffolk, VA; Williamsburg, VA*	Durham, NC; Scotland Neck, NC*
1939	Norfolk, VA*; Portsmouth, VA*; Williamsburg, VA*	Cape Charles, VA; Danville, VA; Greensboro, NC*; Lynchburg, VA; Newark, NJ; New York, NY; Richmond, VA**; Scotland Neck, NC*; St. Louis, MO*; Tarboro, NC; Washington D.C.
1940	Hampton, VA; Hertford, NC; Newport News, VA; Norfolk, VA*; Portsmouth, VA*; Williamsburg, VA*	Charlottesville, VA*; Colerain, NC; Detroit, MI; Long Branch, NJ; Richmond, VA**; Scotland Neck, NC*
1941	Elizabeth City, NC*; Norfolk, VA*; Portsmouth, VA*	Amelia, VA; Anderson, SC; Camp Wolters, TX; Charlottesville, VA*; Cheraw, SC**; Conway, SC; Danville, VA; Durham, NC; Gastonia, NC; Greensboro, NC; High Point, NC; Louisburg, NC*; Memphis, TN; Newark, NJ; New York, NY; Roanoke, VA; Roxboro, NC; Scotland Neck, NC*; Smithfield, NC; Washington D.C.
1942	Elizabeth City, NC*; Norfolk, VA*; Portsmouth, VA*	Baltimore, MD; Charlottesville, VA*; Cheraw, SC**; Chicago, IL; Detroit, MI; Henderson, NC; Philadelphia, PA; Salisbury, NC; Scotland Neck, NC*; Statesville, NC; Warrenton, NC; Washington D.C.; Weldon, NC
1943	Elizabeth City, NC*; Newport News, VA*; Portsmouth, VA*	Baltimore, MD; Black Mountain, NC; Charlottesville, VA*; Cheraw, SC; Monroe, NC; New York, NY; Philadelphia, PA; Reidsville, NC; Scotland Neck, NC*; Richmond, VA*; Springfield, IL; Weldon, NC
1944	Elizabeth City, NC*; Newport News, VA; Norfolk, VA; Portsmouth, VA*	Baltimore, MD; Buffalo City, NC; Charlottesville, VA; Greensboro, NC; Louisburg, NC*; Memphis, TN; Monroe, NC; New Bern, NC; Philadelphia, PA; Reidsville, NC; Richmond, VA*; Rocky Mount, NC; Washington D.C.
1945	Elizabeth City, NC*; Newport News, VA	Asheville, NC; Baltimore, MD; Charlottesville, VA; Columbia, SC; Philadelphia, PA; Richmond, VA*; Sanford, NC; Warrenton, NC*;
1946	Newport News, VA*; Portsmouth, VA*; Suffolk, VA; Seatack, VA	Atlanta, GA; Birmingham, AL; Charlottesville, VA; Columbia, SC; Greensboro, NC; Hartsville, SC; Indianapolis, IN; Macon, GA; Mullins, SC; New York, NY; Richmond, VA*; Sanford, NC; Warrenton, NC
1947	Elizabeth City, NC*; Portsmouth, VA*	Cheraw, SC**; Chicago, IL; Fort Riley, KS; New York, NY; Raleigh, NC; Reidsville, NC; Richmond, VA*; Roanoke, VA; Salisbury, NC;

1948	Elizabeth City, NC*; Norfolk, VA; Portsmouth, VA*; Seatack, VA; Williamsburg, VA	Pantego, NC; Richmond, VA*; Roanoke, NC**; Rocky Mount, NC; Sanford, NC; Winston-Salem, NC
1949	Elizabeth City, NC*; Hampton, VA; Newport News, VA; Portsmouth, VA*; Virginia Beach, VA	Atlanta, GA**; Durham, NC; Florence, SC; Ontario, Canada; Richmond, VA*; Shawboro, NC; Washington D.C.
1950	Elizabeth City, NC*; Newport News, VA; Portsmouth, VA*; Suffolk, VA**	Buffalo, NY; Cheraw SC**; Fayetteville, NC; Louisburg, NC; Mullins, SC; New York, NY; Raleigh, NC; Richmond, VA*
1951	Elizabeth City, NC*; Portsmouth, VA*; Suffolk, VA	Chapel Hill, NC; Cheraw, SC**; Hume, VA; New York, NY; Richmond, VA*; Wendell, NC**; Winston-Salem, NC*
1952	Elizabeth City, NC*; Norfolk, VA; Portsmouth, VA*;	Chapel Hill, NC; Concord, NC; Durham, NC; Fayetteville, NC; High Point, NC**; New York, NY; Richmond, VA*; Tampa, FL; Winston-Salem, NC*
1953	Portsmouth, VA*; Suffolk, VA	Albany, NY; Charleston, SC*; New York, NY; Richmond, VA*; Walterboro, SC**; Yemassee, SC**
1954	Norfolk, VA; Portsmouth, VA*	Charleston, SC; Cheraw, SC**; Farmville, NC; New York, NY; Richmond, VA*; Roxboro, NC*; Savageville, VA; Sunbury, NC; Washington D.C.
1955	Newport News, VA; Norfolk, CA**; Portsmouth, VA*; Suffolk, VA	Charlottesville, VA; Durham, NC; Falls Church, VA; Goldsboro, NC**; Hickory, VA**; Orangeburg, SC**; Richmond, VA*
1956	Hertford, NC**; Newport News, VA; Norfolk, VA**	Alexandria, VA; Durham, NC; Greeleyville, SC; New York, NY; Jacksonville, NC; Raleigh, NC**; Richmond, VA*; Roanoke, VA
1957	Elizabeth City, NC*; Newport News, VA; Portsmouth, VA	Baltimore, MD; Fayetteville, NC; New York, NY**; Raleigh, NC**
1958	Elizabeth City, NC*; Newport News, VA; Norfolk, VA**; Portsmouth, VA	Raleigh, NC**, Tarboro, NC**; Warrenton, NC
1959	Newport News, VA; Norfolk, VA**; Virginia Beach, VA	New York, NY; Richmond, VA**; Salisbury, NC
1960	Newport News, VA; Norfolk, VA**	Atlanta, GA**; Chase City, VA; Durham, NC; Hickory, VA; New York, NY**; Petersburg, VA**; Raleigh, NC**
1961	Newport News, VA	Durham, NC; Raleigh, NC
1962	Newport News, VA; Norfolk, VA**; Lynnhaven, VA; Portsmouth, VA	Detroit, MI; Gary, IN; Raleigh, NC**; Richmond, VA**; Winston-Salem, NC
1963	Hampton, VA; Newport News, VA; Norfolk, VA; Portsmouth, VA; Suffolk, VA; Yorktown, VA	Ann Arbor, MI; Belvidere, NC; Charlotte, NC; Charlottesville, VA; Columbia, SC**; Gloucester, VA; Greensboro, NC; Greenville, NC; Kinston, NC; New York, NY; Philadelphia, PA; Richmond, VA**; Snow Hill, NC; Toledo, OH; Tuskegee, AL; Washington D.C.

Note – This is undoubtedly an incomplete list of commemorations. It represents what I discovered during my research.

* Emancipation Association/Emancipation Committee Organized

** NAACP Branch Sponsored

Appendix II.

Table 1. List of Emancipation Associations/Committees that coordinate Emancipation/Freedom celebrations

City	Association/Committee
Hampton Roads	
Carrollton, VA	Carrollton Emancipation Association
Elizabeth City, NC	Elizabeth City Emancipation Association
Hampton, VA	Elizabeth City County Emancipation Association
Newport News, VA	Newport News Civic League Emancipation Proclamation Committee Newport News Emancipation Association
Norfolk, VA	Norfolk Emancipation Association
Portsmouth, VA	Portsmouth Emancipation Association Sons and Daughters of Virginia Emancipation Committee
Suffolk, VA	Nansemond Emancipation Association
Williamsburg, VA	Williamsburg Emancipation League
***Norfolk Journal and Guide* Network**	
Charleston, SC	Charleston Emancipation Association
Charlottesville, VA	Emancipation Organization of Charlottesville
Edenton, NC	Edenton Emancipation Committee
Franklin, VA	Franklin Emancipation Association
Greensboro, NC	Greensboro Emancipation Proclamation Committee
Lawrenceville, VA	Brunswick County Emancipation Association
Lottsburg, VA	Lottsburg Emancipation Club
Louisburg, NC	Colored Emancipation Committee of Franklin County
Parmele, NC	Parmele Emancipation Association
Petersburg, VA	Petersburg Emancipation Association
Plymouth, NC	Plymouth Emancipation Society
Raleigh, NC	Raleigh Emancipation Association
Richmond, VA	Richmond Civic Council Emancipation Celebration Committee
Roxboro, NC	Emancipation Committee of Roxboro Person County Emancipation Organization
Scotland Neck, NC	Halifax County Emancipation Association
South Boston, VA	Halifax County Colored Emancipation Association
St. Louis, MO	St. Louis Emancipation Celebration Committee
Warrenton, NC	Warren County Emancipation Celebration Committee
Washington, NC	Washington Emancipation Celebration Committee
Winston-Salem, NC	Winston-Salem Emancipation Association

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"Rest Assured": Space, Memory and Resistance in John Mitchell, Jr.'s Woodland Cemetery

On September 22, 1917, a near full-page advertisement in the *Richmond Planet,* the Black newspaper of the famed "Fighting Editor" John Mitchell, Jr., marketed "The New Cemetery"—Woodland—to Black communities in Richmond. Its opening lines framed the project as a matter of racial pride and respectability: only "races possessing the highest degree of civilization are most careful in looking after the last resting place of their dead." The ad assured readers that "two years of effort" had been expended to secure the location, an endeavor no doubt led by the President of the Repton Land Corporation, John Mitchell, Jr., who purchased the property. Woodland, the ad suggested, was a "beautiful, well-drained, 'near-to-Richmond" cemetery with all the modern features: a park, lake, reservoir, lavatories, baths, a chapel, and gardens. Woodland was accessible to Black communities but also "situated in a neighborhood where the progressive colored people may rest assured that they will not be disturbed."[56]

Because "[t]he ground has been paid for in full," it was noted, all paid lot owners would receive a deed to their land "so that he will hold a valid title to the place of interment." The ad framed investment in the venture, in life and death, as a collective enterprise offering shared ownership and a stake in the efficacy of the cemetery's upkeep and management. Profits from the sale of lots, would "go into a treasury for the improvement of the cemetery grounds." All members would mutually benefit from its success. The advertiser in question, the Woodland Cemetery Corporation, represented by its President, John Mitchell, Jr., could offer "undisturbed possession" through an arrangement with the Repton Land Corporation for ownership and

[56] All quotations in advertisement, Woodland Cemetery Corporation, "The New Cemetery: Information Concerning It-A Boon to Colored People-Now Have Undisturbed Possession-You Can Buy A Lot on Long Time Payment," *Richmond Planet,* September 22, 1917, [9]. According to state records, John Mitchell, Jr. founded the Repton Land Corporation on November 23, 1916. See State Corporation Commission of Virginia. "Repton Land Corporation." *Charter Book.* No. 93. Pages 358-359, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA. For additional details on Woodland's acquisition see Varina Davis, *Here I Lay My Burdens Down: A History of the Black Cemeteries of Richmond, Virginia* (Richmond: The Dietz Press, 2003), 34-38 and Ryan K. Smith, *Death & Rebirth in a Southern City: Richmond's Historic Cemeteries* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2020), 219-220.

management of sold lots on the property. The garden-like setting, convenience and security of location, assurances of control and ownership, and commitment to upkeep and racial pride were meant to demonstrate that "[t]he intention of the promoters of this project is to make it second to none in this section." For more information, prospective buyers were urged to call or visit the Woodland Cemetery Corporation's office, a space in the building owned by the cemetery's largest promoter and financier, and the holder of the loan on the purchase of the property, the President of the Mechanics Savings Bank, John Mitchell, Jr.[57]

It would be easy to miss upon first glance what is obvious with more research into this advertisement of Woodland: John Mitchell, Jr.'s stamp was all over it. At the time of its publication, Mitchell was the editor of the newspaper that ran the ad, the founder and President of the cemetery corporation that placed the ad, the founder and President of the land corporation that purchased the cemetery property, and the founder and President of the financing bank that held commanding shares in the land corporation and housed the cemetery's offices in its building. As Grand Chancellor of the Virginia Knights of Pythias, one of the largest Black fraternal organizations in Richmond, Mitchell's leadership was integral to the social and financial support of its members in life and death. As editor of the *Richmond Planet,* Mitchell advertised all aspects of the industry surrounding this venture while providing an outlet for the community in the form of obituaries, resolutions of condolences, and reports to community members on the grandeur and respectability of funerals and services. In these intersecting, overlapping, and often conflicting roles, Mitchell was the owner, member, financier and

[57] For quotations see advertisement, WCC, "The New Cemetery, Information Concerning…," *RP*, Sept.22, 1917, [9]. According to state records, John Mitchell, Jr formed the Woodland Cemetery Corporation on the same day as the Repton Land Corporation, November 23, 1916. See State Corporation Commission of Virginia, "Woodland Cemetery Corporation," *Charter Book.* No. 93. Pages 360-361, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA. For a description of the relationship between the different components of Mitchell's business portfolio, see Abram L. Harris, *The Negro as Capitalist: A Study of the Banking and Business Among American Negroes* (New York: Haskell House Publishing, 1936).

promoter of Woodland Cemetery and a leader in nearly every aspect of the industry and social sphere supporting Richmond's African American communities in death in the early twentieth century. These connections and conflicts demonstrate that it is impossible to understand the history of Woodland Cemetery without John Mitchell, Jr and equally impossible to understand the legacy of John Mitchell, Jr. without a deeper awareness of his role in the creation of a cemetery that was intended to provide Black citizens of Richmond the respect in death that they were often denied in life. A closer analysis of Woodland reveals its importance as a space of racial pride, respectability, and resistance to Jim Crow and segregation. It was a space where Richmond's Black residents could "rest assured that they will not be disturbed."

Despite Mitchell's influence in the politics, industry and social sphere surrounding Black collective mourning, the histories of Mitchell's activism and Woodland Cemetery exist separately. For scholars who have studied Mitchell, Woodland Cemetery was one among many of his real estate ventures and is entirely absent from discussions of his legacy.[58] While recent works highlight the evolving complexity of his activism, most narratives that analyze Mitchell's political career center on his editorial anti-lynching campaigns, his role as a member of Richmond's city council, his run for governor, and his leadership in the boycotts against streetcar segregation. Though these works acknowledge the dangers of viewing Black leadership on a binary scale of accommodation and militancy, they tend to overemphasize Mitchell's conservatism, putting his more activist past in conflict with his role as a business leader. In this view, his accommodation to white norms and views on class differences and respectability dulled and even muted the voice of "Fighting Editor." The resulting scholarship has overlooked the

[58] Ann Field Alexander's biography of Mitchell, which remains the most comprehensive review of his life, summarizes the extent of Mitchell's role at Woodland in just two sentences. Viewing Mitchell through Woodland Cemetery is an opportunity to read his late life different. In Alexander, *Race Man: The Rise and Fall of the "Fighting Editor" John Mitchell, Jr.* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002), 182.

activist nature of many of Mitchell's business ventures and has over-emphasized a narrative of their decline and collapse.[59]

Like Mitchell's activist legacy, African American cemeteries deserve greater attention from scholars. A number of recent works have explored Richmond's Black cemeteries, revealing a complex relationship between sacred space and collective mourning.[60] Others have effectively placed Black cemeteries' history in the context of wider social, political and economic developments; connecting cemeteries to funeral homes, fraternal orders, churches, monument builders and other businesses. These "environment[s] of mutual support" or "network[s] of death" that emerged around Black cemeteries reveal the importance of the social nature of death and the industry that supported it in African American communities.[61] Scholars have also begun to explore the role of post-emancipation Black cemeteries as businesses in a Jim Crow economy

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[59] For works on Mitchell's limited activism and accommodationist politics, see Alexander, *Race Man* and Fitzhugh Brundage, "'To Howl Loudly': John Mitchell Jr. and his Campaign Against Lunching in Virginia," *Canadian Review of American Studies* 22, no.3 (Winter 1991):325-341, 338. Brundage argues that "only twice in his career [street car boycotts and flirtation with Marcus Garvey's racial Nationalism]…did he demonstrate any interest in mobilizing blacks as a radical bloc outside the political arena." For recent works that offer more complexity on Mitchell's leadership, see Blair Kelley's *Right to Ride: Streetcar Boycotts and African American Citizenship in the Era of Plessy V. Ferguson* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010) and Marvin Chiles, "'Down Where the South Begins': Black Activism before the Modern Civil Rights Movement, 1899-1930," *Journal of African American History* 105, no.1 (Winter 2020), 82. Kelley highlights Mitchell's leadership role in the organization of the streetcar boycotts in Richmond and reveals division on issues of class. Comparing Mitchell with Maggie Walker, Kelley argues that Walker was more consistently progressive in her activism to establish a safety net for the Black poor, while Mitchell "constantly spoke from both sides of the spectrum, one day stating that 'unacceptable' behavior…were the root cause of repression aimed at African Americans and on the next day castigating white segregationists for their blanket attacks on black citizenship." Viewing Mitchell and other Black leaders in Richmond as part of a longer movement for civil rights, Marvin Chiles argues that analysis of Black leadership in Richmond in the first three decades of the twentieth century reveals a shift towards activist Black leadership. Chiles suggests that Richmond's Black leaders, like Mitchell, utilized tactics and strategies that served as the foundation for later activism.

[60] For research on Richmond, see Davis, *Here I Lay My Burdens Down;* Ellen Chapman, "Richmond's Archaeology of the African Diaspora: Unseen Knowledge, Untapped Potential," *African Diaspora Archaeology Newsletter* 15, no.1 (Spring 2015): 12-29; Mail-Linh K. Hong, "'Get Your Asphalt Off My Ancestors!': Reclaiming Richmond's African Burial Ground," *Law, Culture and the Humanities* 13, no.1 (2017): 81-103; Ellen L. Chapman, "Buried Beneath the River City: Investigating an Archaeological Landscape and Its Community Value in Richmond, Virginia," PhD diss., College of William and Mary, 2018; Smith, *Death and Rebirth;* Ryan K. Smith, "Disappearing the Enslaved: The Destruction and Recovery of Richmond's Second African Burial Ground," *Building and Landscapes* 27, no.1 (Spring 2020): 17-45, 19.

[61] See Smith, *Death and Rebirth*, 220 on "environment[s] of mutual support." Lynn Rainville argues that Black entrepreneurs participated in a more regulated and formalized funeral industry in service to their community, forming a "network of death" in, *Hidden History: African American Cemeteries in Central Virginia* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2014), Chapter 5. For work concentrating on the importance of the funeral industry see Michael Plater, *African American Entrepreneurship in Richmond, 1890-1940: The Story of R.C. Scott* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1996); Christopher Leevy Johnson, "Undertakings: The Politics of African-American Funeral Directing," PhD diss., University of South Carolina, 2004; and Beverly Bunch-Lyons, "'Ours is a Business of Loyalty': African American Funeral Home Owners in Southern Cities," *The Southern Quarterly* 53, no.1 (Fall 2015).

where "self-help worked in conjunction with black separatism" to allow these cemeteries to prosper in spite of, and separate from, white institutions.[62] Drawing on works that look critically at the relationships between physical space and segregation —how people use, move through, and write about segregated spaces—this paper positions Woodland Cemetery as a counter-memory and an alternative space to Jim Crow.[63]

While the scholarship on Woodland Cemetery acknowledges Mitchell's role in its creation and demise, he has been treated as a peripheral actor only: the "fighting editor" who founded a cemetery and the owner of a bank that failed and forced the cemetery corporation into receivership. This portrayal risks simplifying Mitchell's vision, stake, and role in the project at Woodland. Closer analysis of Mitchell's motivations, the political and economic forces that shaped Woodland, and Mitchell's positioning of the cemetery as a site of memory and respectability in an era of segregation and discrimination clearly demonstrates that Woodland was more than just a real estate investment.[64] Putting these two histories in conversation with one another allows a more nuanced understanding of Mitchell's late-life activism and his efforts

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[62] See Kami Fletcher, "Founding Baltimore's Mount Auburn Cemetery and Its Importance to Understanding African American Burial Rights," in Allan Amanik and Kami Fletcher (Eds.) *Till Death Do Us Part: American Ethnic Cemeteries as Borders Uncrossed* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2020): 129-156, 150. Fletcher argues that by fostering and supporting a number of other ventures and businesses, and by virtue of segregation, Mount Auburn effectively cornered the market in a way that resulted in profit and revenue streams that went back to the community. Woodland Cemetery, like Mount Auburn, afforded lot owners deeds to the land and purchase was treated as evidence of property ownership.

[63] This paper relies heavily on the scholarship of Elsa Barkley Brown and Gregg D. Kimball, "Mapping the Terrain of Black Richmond," *Journal of Urban History* 20, no. 3 (March, 1995): 296-346. They argue that a closer reading of the spatial dimensions of the city adds to understandings of culture and power in Black spaces. Brown and Kimball offer a critical perspective and effective methodology for exploring the interconnection between memory and space. See also Kenneth E. Foote and Maoz Azaryahu, "Toward a Geography of Memory: Geographical Dimensions of Public Memory and Commemoration," *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* 35, no. 1 (Summer 2007): 125-144; Robert R. Weyeneth, "The Architecture of Racial Segregation: The Challenges of Preserving the Problematical Past," *The Public Historian* 27, no. 4 (Fall 2005): 11-44; Elizabethada Wright, "Reading the Cemetery, 'Lieu de Mémoire par Excellence'," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 33, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 27-44; Elizabethada Wright, "Rhetorical Spaces in Memorial Places: The Cemetery as a Rhetorical Memory Place/Space," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 35, no.4 (Fall 2005): 51-81.

[64] Davis, *Here I Lay My Burdens Down*, 37 and Smith, *Death and Rebirth* are the only detailed descriptions of the cemetery during its time in receivership. Davis concludes that "when the Mechanics Savings Bank of Richmond collapsed in 1921, turmoil struck the elegant cemetery." Smith grounds his discussion of Woodland's demise in a section on why these cemeteries faced neglect. As evidence of their mismanagement, Smith writes that "Another signal arose when the Woodland Cemetery Corporation went into receivership in 1924 with the failure of the Mechanics' Savings Bank, owned by John Mitchell Jr." This paper demonstrates that these conditions were neither the practical end of the cemetery or its current reality.

towards racial progress, the socio-economic limitations of his vision of Black respectability, and the interconnected and communal nature of Black collective mourning in the memory space of the cemetery.

Mitchell's project at Woodland Cemetery illustrates the error in concluding that his business life tainted his activist legacy. Woodland was a business connected to a larger network of industries that operated according to communal norms surrounding death. The advertisement above framed it as a cooperative economic project, one that appealed to black ownership of property and offered agency in the shared project of the cemetery. Woodland generated jobs and served as a space where an array of professionalized services facilitated Black collective mourning. This view not only disrupts the narrative that Mitchell's business life reflected a moderate, accommodationist politics but gives added meaning to his title as a "Race Man."[65] Woodland was a venture in Black independence and racial pride. Mitchell framed Woodland as a Black space, situated where Black people would avoid disturbance and could achieve respect and dignity in death. The cemetery's vitality was dependent on its status as a segregated space. Woodland, alongside many business, social organizations, and institutions, helped meet the needs of the Black community in a segregated world.

Though Woodland Cemetery offers additional evidence of Mitchell's activism in early twentieth-century Richmond, the vision of Black respectability promoted in advertisements and reports on burials at Woodland reveal the importance of a multidimensional view of his leadership. Mitchell's idea of respectable behavior, though thoroughly middle-class, nevertheless shapes Woodland as a place where dignity in death could be experienced by all. Stories and reports of interments, and especially reinterments, focused exclusively on notable members of

[65] See Alexander, *Race Man.*

the Black community. Though access and levels of ownership varied along class lines, and the vision of Woodland marketed to the community was filtered through a middle-class perspective, the cemetery still offered the entire community space for a respectable death. Woodland combatted white attempts to shutter and displace Black cemeteries and offered a space to counter the neglect and treatment of their sacred dead.

Mitchell's project at Woodland would outlast all of his other ventures. It continued to serve Richmond's Black community after his Bank closed, the Knights of Pythias dwindled in membership, and the *Richmond Planet* published its last edition. As the cemetery survived, so, too, did the memories of the people who were buried there and the collective accomplishments of the community. This was and remains Mitchell's most enduring legacy. Woodland cemetery survived as a landscape of Black memories inscribed in stone, spoken through eulogies, performed in memorial parades and public remembrances, and preserved in the pages of the *Richmond Planet* and on the grounds of Woodland. While society as a whole sought to silence Black voices, control Black actions, and wipe Black memory from public space, sites like Woodland stood as counter-memories and alternative spaces that were built by and for the Black community in the face of segregation. Mitchell's struggle to establish a respectable resting place for Richmond's black residents was, in essence, a battle between segregation and memory, redefining who and what deserved to be remembered and forgotten.

We tend to like stories for their narrative arc, simple beginnings, and endings that provide closure. It would be easy to tell a story of Woodland's purported demise with the collapse of the Mechanics Savings Bank and tie Woodland to a narrative of financial mismanagement brought on by Mitchell's business dealings. It would also be easy to conclude that the sale of Woodland to the Atlantic Finance Corporation, a white-owned business, was Mitchell's legacy. This

narrative is too simple because it fails to carefully consider the beginning of the story. Recent efforts to reclaim this space illustrate that the lasting memory of Woodland Cemetery is a story that is still being written. This is a story not about Woodland's decline, demise, and neglect, but of its beginnings; a story of the cultural, political, and social realities that led to its formation, of the man who produced the drama, and its persistence as a space where Black memories live on tp this day; "rest assured."

"The growth of the city sent white people out to Barton Heights."

At the turn of the twentieth century, Richmond was the fifth largest city in the South and poised for more growth. It boasted one of the largest manufacturing centers in the South, a vibrant retail sector, valuable financial institutions, a healthy real estate market with the expansion of white suburbs, and modern infrastructure including sewer lines and transportation networks. While Richmond's population remained stable in the 1890s, it ballooned between 1900 and 1910 in part due to the incorporation of surrounding neighborhoods and as a result of rural migration to the city for job opportunities. The city's Black population increased by forty-five percent to more than forty-six thousand in 1910, representing thirty-six percent of the city's total population and making Richmond the largest population of African Americans in any city in the upper South. Though Richmond was touted as an example of the potential of a New South, it was also a lasting symbol of the past. Richmond had been the capital city of the Confederacy and it remained in many ways the capital city of Confederate memory. These conditions make Richmond a poignant place to consider the intersection of space, memory, and resistance to segregation in the early twentieth century.[66]

[66] For initial population statistics and a discussion of Richmond's urban and industrial growth, see Chiles, "Down Where the South Begins", 59. For a discussion of demographic shifts and population increases, see Alexander, *Race Man,* 171 and Kelley, *Right to Ride,* 118.

Marvin Chiles argues that John Mitchell, Jr. worried about Richmond's growing economic prosperity, noting that Mitchell "sensed black Richmonders would end up bearing the social brunt of economic progress" as "Jim Crow laws ensured that blacks remained the low-wage labor by which white wealth was created," relegating them to the status of "second-class citizens in the white political power structure." These divisions were further entrenched through residential segregation and suburban development. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Richmond had developed a clear urban core and suburban periphery. Between 1880 and 1920 the city nearly tripled in size at the same time all sectors became increasingly segregated. The street cars that Mitchell famously boycotted were integral in facilitating the growth of white suburban communities north and west of the city. Black residents remained concentrated in the urban center of Jackson Ward, which housed almost half of the city's Black population.[67]

Jackson Ward was created as a political district in 1871 during Reconstruction to enable Black officials to enter government office. While many local Black leaders, including Mitchell, represented the ward, the end of Reconstruction and the rise of Jim Crow short-circuited this success. Between 1885 and 1915, Jackson Ward "was gerrymandered out of existence" and Black leaders were therefore pushed out of office. Shut off from political representation, the lack of equity in the provision of public services and urban infrastructure was predictable. Black areas of the city lacked basic municipal services such as reliable light, running water, garbage collection, and police protection, and had limited access to social institutions for learning and leisure, like public parks, libraries, and schools. Dawn Bowen notes that by 1920, "three-quarters of Richmond's Black population lived at or below the 'line of minimum subsistence.'" Health officials warned of the spread of diseases in what Mitchell described as cesspools of filth. A

[67] Quotes on Mitchell in Chiles, "Down Where the South Begins", 59-60. For patterns of residential segregation and the growth of white suburban communities, see Brown and Kimball, "Mapping the Terrain of Black Richmond" and Alexander, *Race Man.*

study of Richmond's death rates in the second decade of the twentieth century found that the death rate for African Americans was twenty-eight per one thousand people compared with seventeen for white residents. As an article on Woodland in 1918 noted, "[t]he heavy death rate has tended to increase the number being buried in this popular burying ground." These were among the circumstances that prompted the emergence of Richmond's Black segregation-era cemeteries.[68]

These conditions, however, did not render Richmond's Black residents powerless. Elsa Brown and Gregg Kimball argue that response to these pressures, Black Richmonders constructed an urban environment of support—such as churches, business, and banks. While the working poor remained in the majority in the city, Richmond also witnessed the growth of a Black middle class of entrepreneurs, bankers, and businessmen; many of these, like Mitchell, became leaders in the community. Bowen highlights how Jackson Ward gained the monikers the "Birthplace of Black Capitalism" and "Black Wallstreet" owing to the financial and business district that by 1910 contained three Black owned insurance companies, four Black banks, three benevolent societies, two attorneys, three real estate offices, and a dozen funeral homes; as well as the title of "Harlem of the South" for its entertainment district of theaters and dance halls. Robert Weyeneth argues that Black business and their customers in spaces like Jackson Ward operated and accessed a separate economy whose success was tied to segregation—to "the ability of merchants to provide goods and services denied blacks in white establishments." For Weyeneth, "Jackson Ward became an alternative community" for Black residents, "due to the disenfranchisement of Black Richmonders and the advent of Jim Crow." Brown and Kimball

[68] For background on Jackson Ward, see Kelley, *Right to Ride,* 118-119*;* Alexander, *Race Man;* Chiles, "Down Where the South Begins"; and Weyeneth, "The Architecture of Racial Segregation." On gerrymandering, see Plater, *African American Entrepreneurship*, 5. For conditions in Jackson Ward see, Bowen, "The Transformation…", 272; On death rates see Smith, *Death and Rebirth,* 213. "The New Cemetery," *RPt,* December 14, 1918, [2].

highlight the importance of these Black spaces, noting that "[e]ach visible evidence of progress—the constructions of these buildings as well as the telling of their tales of achievement in newspapers, books, speeches, poetry—was part of a ritual of memory, struggle, and hope." It is within this context that we must understand the long battle over Black cemeteries in Barton Heights and the efforts by Mitchell to build and maintain Woodland. Mitchell's cemetery should be seen as an alternative space and counter-memory to efforts that aimed to regulate Black burial grounds, police Black collective mourning practices, and silence Black public memories.[69] Stories of its construction and of the grand burials and civic rituals performed there represented "visible evidence" of Black success, community, and agency in the age of Jim Crow.

Barton Heights was the first of a number of planned suburban real estate projects north of Richmond. Spurred by the construction of the First Street Viaduct that linked Richmond's downtown area with the surrounding "heights," it became a stop on the city's street-car network in 1894 and incorporated as a town in 1896. Advertisements marketed Barton Heights as "Richmond's Ideal Residential Suburb." It was a "town of beautiful homes" that were "built on spacious lawns" where children could "romp and play away from the dangers of city life." Barton Heights was marketed to include everything that Jackson Ward lacked: modern infrastructure, "First-Class" education, "Police Protection," and an artesian well that supplied water to all residences, "[i]ts healthfulness…unsurpassed." Unsaid but clear in its promotion of "beautiful homes" that were "occupied by its owners," was a set of final distinctions: white and middle class.[70]

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[69] Brown and Kimball, "Mapping the Terrain of Black Richmond," 315-317; Bowen, "The Transformation…", 263. Weyeneth, 34, 1.

[70] For development projects and a history of Barton Heights, see Virginia Department of Historic Resources, "Town of Barton Heights Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. DHR# 127-0816. https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/VLR_to_transfer/PDFNoms/127-816_Town_of_Barton_Heights_HD_2003_Final_Nomination.pdf (Accessed 5/7/2021) and Eric Huffstutler, "And They Weep…A Richmond Disgrace." *Church Hill Association of RVA Newsletter* (October 2014): 8-9 and "And They Weep…A Richmond Disgrace – Part 2" *Church Hill Association of RVA*

The subject of decades of land speculation and home to small enclaves of free black artisans, the area surrounding Barton Heights contained six separate African American burial grounds—Cedarwood (formerly Phoenix Burying Ground), Union Mechanics (formerly Union Burial Ground), Ebenezer, Methodist, Sons and Daughters of Ham, and Sycamore—most established between 1815 and 1865. These cemeteries served the city's Black churches, benevolent organizations, and fraternal orders. The pre-emancipation burial societies that managed their construction and maintenance are often seen as the precursors of the insurance companies established in the late nineteenth century to provide death services to the Black community. With Jackson Ward to the South and these cemeteries in their midst, white Barton Heights residents found themselves in the middle of the rituals of Black collective mourning and commemorative culture, rituals that entailed elaborate processions, marches, and public expressions of remembrance through and in an increasingly white space. Cemeteries were the site of mourning for families grieving loved ones and a space for honoring the memories of those who died through civic commemorations like Memorial and Emancipation Days. The Barton Heights cemeteries quickly became a point of conflict between the town's white officials and Richmond's Black community.[71] The white residents of Barton Heights routinely scrutinized these cemeteries and charged their managers of using old graves for new burials.

It did not take long for Mitchell, the "Fighting Editor," to enter the battle. In an editorial that appeared in the *Planet* on March 21, 1896 entitled "The Colored Cemeteries," Mitchell decried the actions of Barton Heights property owners and their "airing of the alleged

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Newsletter (November/December 2014): 14-17. For the ad, see "Barton Heights: Richmond's Ideal Residential Suburb," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, April 10, 1910.

[71] For a review of the Barton Heights Cemeteries and their significance, see Davis, *Here I Lay My Burdens Down*, Smith, *Death and Rebirth*, Chapter 4, as well as Virginia Department of Historic Resources. "Barton Height Cemeteries." National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. DHR# 127-5679. https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/VLR_to_transfer/PDFNoms/127-5679_Barton_Heights_Cemeteries_2002_Final_Nomination.pdf (Accessed 5/7/2021).

discoveries, relative to the interment of bodies" to be "as reprehensible as it was unsuccessful." He called it "a scheme to advance the value of property in that section by an interference with the sacred dead." Mitchell employed the memory of the treatment of Black Richmonders in death in his protest against Barton Heights officials and residents. "This was done," he explained, by the same "people who profited by the desecration of the burial ground on Poor-house Hill…when graves were dug into, bones scattered, coffins exposed, and the hearts of the surviving families made to bleed by the desecration of the remains of their loved ones." Noting that the grand jury "took no notice of the charges further than to refuse a true bill," Mitchell implored Barton Heights to "[l]et these people be content with their losses." [72]

The situation grew more tense in September of 1899 as word of an injunction on burials at the request of Barton Height's Town Attorney, W.H. Beveridge, reached the Black community. A meeting of section owners was called for September 4 at the Third Street Methodist Church to "take steps to protect their interest and do what is necessary to keep the burying ground from being closed." Though the meeting was tense, erupting at one point when a motion to prohibit non-section owners from participating "caused protests long and loud," members agreed on a resolution to form a burial association that would protect Black interests while bringing the cemeteries into compliance with the demands of the injunction. Though this organization never came to be, the passionate outcry from the community, whether they were section owners or not, illustrates the importance of these spaces to the entire community.[73]

Less than a year later, Barton Heights officials passed an ordinance that limited burials to existing section owners, prohibited new burials where another had already occurred, and required

[72] "The Colored Cemeteries," *RP*, March 21, 1896, [2].
[73] "They Want to Close the Colored Barying Ground," *RP*, September 2, 1899, 4. "The Graves of the Buried," *RP*, September 9, 1899, 1.

documentation proving that no grave was previously dug there before being granted a burial permit. Due to the state of existing records, this made it nearly impossible to comply with the law. The situation drew the attention of the *Times* on March 3, 1900 when it reported that Benjamin Harris, the keeper of one of the Barton Heights cemeteries, and funeral director W. I. Johnson came before the court on a warrant that charged them with failing to procure a burial permit. Harris was fined twenty-five dollars while the case against Johnson was still to be resolved. The *Times* reported later that month that Beveridge had given notice to Harris that he would be removed "as trustee of said cemeteries" and that Beveridge would move the judge to "appoint such persons as the town of Barton Heights may nominate." Interment of existing lot owners would be prohibited until the cemeteries "furnished the health officer of Barton Heights a plat designating sections, names of owners and number of persons buried therein."[74] Beveridge's effort to oust Harris was likely unsuccessful as Harris appeared before the city council that June as the "superintendent of the colored cemeteries" to request a "modification to the ordinance." The *Times* reported that after Beveridge brought council members to the cemeteries it was likely "an ordinance will be framed closing the grounds." Though the cemeteries remained private entities through the 1930s, and were technically beyond the city boundaries, town officials sought to impose strict regulatory control on Black mourning. City and county ordinances segregating residential communities ensured that Blacks could not live in Barton Heights. Town officials fought to prevent them from being laid to rest there as well.[75]

Public scrutiny of activities in the Barton Heights cemeteries and attempts to enforce city ordinances regarding burials and funeral practices continued. Reports from September 1900 and

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[74] "Keeper Fined: The First Case in the Barton Heights Cemetery Question," *Times,* March 6, 1900, 4. "Barton Heights' Cemeteries: Town-Attorney Beveridge Has Given Notice to Benjamin Harris," *Times,* March 28, 1900, 5.
[75] Quotes in "Cemetery at Barton Heights," *Times,* June 13, 1900, [3]. See VDHR, National Register of Historic Spaces form for the Barton Heights Cemeteries for additional context on the role of the Virginia General Assembly giving control of the cemeteries technically outside of their jurisdiction to the town of Barton Heights.

March 1901 indicate that Moses Tyler, "keeper of the cemetery adjoining Barton Heights," was charged with "disturbing the lines of a grave" and "opening a grave for the purpose of interring another body." In one case the matter was settled out of court, and in the other Tyler was fined $10, but both cases illustrate that the conflict had not been settled.[76] Ongoing discussion between Black leaders and city officials in 1910 revealed a striking admission and moment of clarity on the underlying motives of the citizens of Barton Heights. Mitchell's *Richmond Planet* reported that officials "object to the mile-long processions of the colored brethren and sisters who turn out for 'the last sad rites.'" The new "City Attorney Gardner" acknowledged "that the colored burial problem has been a standing municipal question" and asked that the existing law be maintained "on the ground of sanitation, and because the length of the funeral processions disturbed the people in his town." More than simply a health concern, restrictions on Black mourning rituals reflected white officials' alarm about the movement of Black people through this white neighborhood.

As Mitchell had predicted, Black Richmonders bore the "social brunt of [white] economic progress" in Barton Heights. Restrictions on mourning rituals and limitations on Black residents' access to cemeteries were the means by which they were treated as "second-class citizens in the white political power structure." Giles Jackson, a Black attorney, who for decades represented the interests of lot owners in struggles with Barton Heights officials, understood the underlying source of these conflicts. "In the old days the cemeteries had been far out in the country," Jackson noted, "but the growth of the city sent white people out to Barton Heights." Ongoing rumors and fears of the closing of the Barton Heights cemeteries along with decades of conflict with town officials fueled Mitchell's efforts to secure land that afforded Black

[76] "Say He Dug Into Grave.: Barton Heights Negro Arrested on the Charge," *Times*, September 25, 1900, [6]; "Settled Out of Court," *Times*, September 27, 1900, [7]; "Mayor Starritt's court was in session…," *Times*, March 10, 1901, [12].

Richmonders a respectful and dignified death. The first announcement in the *Richmond Planet* of the "New Cemetery" made its purpose clear. Woodland was intended "to furnish a place for numbers of people who own sections or lots in the old cemeteries in Barton Heights and who wanted a place in the neighborhood."[77]

"You are invited to inspect the grounds and spend a while in this city of the dead."

Woodland Cemetery opened as the "Talk of the Town" on Memorial Day, May 30, 1917. The day began with a moment that was fitting to the memory of struggles in Barton Heights over Black rituals of collective mourning and celebration. John Mitchell, Jr. led the Uniform Rank, Knights of Pythias on a march from the Pythian Castle on North 3rd Street in Jackson Ward, across the 5th Street viaduct following the streetcar line into Highland Park, up fourth street to Magnolia, crossing the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad tracks, and then up the hill through the recently completed granite gate adorned with its namesake: Woodland Cemetery.[78] The march meant more than its pageantry. It established Black claims to public and sacred space for the purpose of mourning and commemoration and publicly declared their honorable dead worth remembering.

Onlookers and attendees gathered for the ceremony around the front of the keeper's residence at the top of the hill overlooking the cemetery and downtown Richmond. From that vantage point, people could see what Mitchell framed as "the Most Remarkable Tract of Land ever set apart for our people in the State." Mitchell introduced Rev Z.D. Lewis of the Second Baptist Church, who "delivered a stirring address expressive of his gratification over the success

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[77] For discussion on processions and the commentary of Giles Jackson see "Cant Use Grave Except For One: Barton Heights Gets Favorable Report on Bill to Stop Cemetery Congestion," *RP*, February 26, 1910, [1]. Quotes on Mitchell in Chiles, "Down Where the South Begins", 59-60. The prospect of closure was floating again in 2015. See "Barton Heights Cemeteries to be Removed," *Richmond Evening Journal*, October 12, 1915. For the first article on Woodland in the *Richmond Planet* see "A New Cemetery for Richmond," *RP*, January 27, 1917, [1].

[78] For a description of the ceremony, see "Woodland Cemetery Dedicated," *RP*, June 2, 1917, [1]. For advertisement, see "You Can Buy A Lot Now!!," *RP*, June 2, 1917, 7.

in at last having secured a proper location for the interment of their dead." In remarks that were applauded as "forceful and timely," Rev. M.E. Davis, pastor of the Third Street A.M.E. Church spoke on the "The Place of the Cemetery Among Things Sacred." Rev. W. T. Johnson, pastor of the First Baptist Church, would have had many memories to draw from in his address, "The Sad Spectacle of a Neglected Cemetery." The speech "made a profound impression" on the audience.[79]

That it took only "two years of effort" to secure thirty acres of property that was "situated in a neighborhood where the progressive colored people may rest assured that they will not be disturbed" is remarkable given the history of the property. Mitchell was not the first to envision a cemetery for Black Richmonders on this land. In 1891, the Greenwood Memorial Association purchased the property known as the "Hedge Plain" to establish a cemetery on thirty acres of farmland between Barton Heights and the Mechanicsville Turnpike. Greenwood Cemetery was intended to "be to the colored people what Hollywood Cemetery is to the white people." The Greenwood Association sold just sixteen plots before surrounding landowners successfully argued for an injunction from the Henrico County Chancery Court to stop burials and lot sales. In language that prefigured the position of city officials and residents in Barton Heights, the plaintiffs argued that the cemetery was in violation of Section 1414 of the State Code of Virginia that "prohibited the establishment of a cemetery within four hundred yards of any residence without the consent of the owner of such residence." The plaintiffs argued that allowing the cemetery adjacent to their lands would "seriously and irreparably injure them by rendering their property almost valueless, and by spreading sickness and disease in their midst." While the Greenwood Association fought the injunction and demanded proof that they were in violation of

[79] First quote, "You Can Buy A Lot Now!!," *RP*, June 2, 1917, 7. All other descriptions in "Woodland Cemetery Dedicated", *RP*, June 2, 1917, [1].

state codes, the court made the injunction permanent, and the Greenwood Association was forced to abandon its plans.[80] There is certainly some irony that opposition to the Greenwood Association's plans for a cemetery on the "Hedge Plain" prevented the opening of a space that could have relieved the pressure on the Barton Heights cemeteries.

A number of factors may account for what had changed between the Greenwood Association's attempt to start a cemetery on the "Hedge Plain" in the 1890s and Mitchell's acquisition of the property more than two decades later. If there was any concern or objection to the cemetery by the white residents of Highland Park, a neighborhood situated between the "Hedge Plain" and Jackson Ward, Mitchell had proven that he was more than capable at navigating them. He successfully fought the surrounding white neighborhood with the city council for a building permit for his bank at Third and Clay Streets despite facing the same type of arguments—loss of property values and neighborhood decline—that proved successful against the Greenwood Association. Whether Mitchell faced staunch opposition or not, advertisements for the cemetery claimed white support for the venture. "Our white friends," one ad announced, "have felt keenly the criticisms we have made over the loss of the Old Cemeteries in Barton Heights," and as a result, "they have ungrudgingly approved of the site we have selected and called Woodland Cemetery." By 1917, Mitchell understood Richmond politics enough to know how to play its game. Though Mitchell undoubtedly had a hand in lobbying the support of "our white friends," the ad lauded the entire community's effort in resisting city policy. It was the actions of Black Richmonders in public battles over the memory of their dead in Barton Heights

[80] Henry C. Heckler et al. v. Greenwood Memorial Association of Virginia et al., Henrico County Chancery Causes, 1892-0016, Library of Virginia.

that helped secure a final victory in a decades long effort to establish a cemetery on the "Hedge Plain," and Mitchell wanted it to be remembered that way.[81]

Stories like these demonstrate how Mitchell, and Richmond's Black communities, created a counter-memory at Woodland, one that remembered the creation of these spaces, "as an act undertaken by black people, a distinction that turned it into a place of congregation as well as segregation." The advertisements claimed these spaces for the Black community by emphasizing and embracing their separateness. One ad suggested it was the "Most Remarkable Tract of Land ever set apart for *our* people." Another declared that "the Colored People of this Community were entitled to a New Cemetery" that would be "unexcelled by any other similar place in the city." The advertisements' appeals to Woodland's separateness called attention to it as an alternative space. Cemeteries like Woodland allowed Black people "to be remembered the way they wanted to be remembered in spite of their late nineteenth-century society that stereotyped and negated their full and three-dimensional lives." As a separate space, Woodland memorialized the relationships among Black people in ritual performance and stone, fashioning a landscape of collective memory that told alternative stories of Richmond's Black residents. Woodland's material space, its gravestones and memorials, acted as a framework for memory. Their physicality made them impossible to deny and forget. By naming walkways and streets in memory of famous Black leaders like Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, and local Reverend John Jasper, Mitchell employed Black history to shape a Black counter-memory.[82]

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[81] For additional accounts of the Greenwood Memorial Association and the start of Woodland Cemetery see Davis, *Here I Lay My Burdens Down,* 34-38; Smith, *Death and Rebirth,* 216-220. "Plat of the Cemetery," *RP,* December 8, 1917, [6].

[82] Brown and Kimball were describing Jackson Ward, but the analysis seems equally true for Woodland. "Mapping the Black Terrain of Richmond," 317. Ads in order: "You Can Buy a Lot Now," *RP,* 7 (italics are mine, added for emphasis) and "It's a Grave (Yard) Subject," *RP,* January 18, 1919, [8]. Kami Fletcher's study of Mount Auburn in Baltimore is very comparable with Woodland. Fletcher, "Founding Baltimore's Mount Auburn Cemetery," 146.

As an alternative space, the grounds at Woodland offered more than just a cemetery. "Adjacent to the magnificent Woodland Cemetery," "Woodland Park" offered Richmond's urban Black residents a space for leisure that was, as the cemetery, theirs alone. Ads described Woodland as a "suburban park, with all the modern improvements for colored people." The park included a lake for boating and fishing, fresh running water, and "large porches with hammocks where the cool afternoon breezes can be enjoyed." Drawing on the rural cemetery movement ideal of transforming cemeteries into public parks to be enjoyed by the living in honor of the dead, Woodland marketed itself as a space welcoming both. In one of the earliest advertisements of the cemetery, titled "Memorial Park: Sounds Better Than Cemetery," the ad suggested it was "a place that you will delight to go whether living or dead." Another proclaimed that, "Living or Dead, you will find satisfaction here. If you are living," the ad noted, "you can decide just where you would want your friends at rest. If dead, you will be inside of this Cemetery and you cannot be disturbed." In a full-page feature advertisement of the cemetery gate, the ad acknowledged that the gate was "not the entrance to heaven," but it was "the entrance to one of the most beautiful and well-kept cemeteries in the country." The ad invited the reader "to inspect the grounds and spend a while in this city of the dead." In an editorial note that suggested these appeals were working, Mitchell boasted that "people are now patronizing this new 'city of the dead' in a way that is highly gratifying."[83]

Advertisements and editorial commentary on Woodland consistently focused on features that represented twentieth-century reforms and the modernist call for improvements in beauty, health, and space. The first article on the cemetery in January of 1917 reported on plans to spend

[83] "Woodland Park is Now Open For Engagements…," *RP,* July 7, 1917, [17]; "Woodland Park," *RP,* August 18, 1917, [2]. "Memorial Park: Sounds Better Than a Cemetery," *RP,* April 14, 1917, [2]. "Living or Dead…," *RP,* March 16, 1918, [5]. "The New Cemetery," *RP,* April 6, 1918, [2]. For information on the Rural Cemetery Movement see Jeffrey Smith, *The Rural Cemetery Movement: Places of Paradox in Nineteenth-Century America* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017).

"from eight to ten thousands dollars on the Grounds." By March of 1917, T. Crawford Redd and Brothers, a prominent white architecture firm that produced county maps, had finished laying out the sections. An April article noted that this map, "published in the planet, is now cut out on the ground." "From all its elevations," the article praised, "the design may be seen in all of its artistic beauty." More than a mile of paved road and walkways had been built, a pump was installed that could move more than nine thousands gallons of water, and the reservoir, capable of holding thirty-five thousand gallons of water, was complete. The granite gate, built by Contractor W. R. Mason, "the price of which was $1,500," was completed just in time for the grand opening of the cemetery. Though it is difficult to know exactly how much was invested in the early years of the venture, Mitchell's ad was likely accurate when it noted that, "[n]o expense will be spared to make this Cemetery compare favorably with any other Cemetery in the city."[84]

T. Crawford Redd and Brothers sub-division of the land into lots, and their mapping of Woodland, helped improve its artistic grandeur, yet their employment was about more than aesthetics. While just two lot certificates from the time of Mitchell's management of the Cemetery Corporation remain, these certificates, and the advertisements of the cemetery in the *Richmond Planet*, demonstrate that Redd and Brothers work was about ownership and property. Ads routinely referenced that the ground "has been paid for in full" and "have been bought and every penny paid on the purchase price." As a result, Woodland could issue deeds to each lot owner, "so that he will hold a valid title to the place of interment." Their concern for a "valid title" suggests the importance of property rights in the framing and marketing of cemetery plots. The earliest dated Lot Certificate recorded and issued, identified Geo. W. Booker as "the lawful

[84] "A New Cemetery for Richmond," *RP*, January 27, 1917, [1]; "Proposed Entrance," March 3, 1917, [5]; "The New Cemetery: Roadways Being Completed," *RP,* April 7, 1917, [1]. For articles on the gate, see "Woodland Cemetery Corporation," *RP,* April 21. 1917; "Woodland Cemetery Dedicated," *RP,* June 2, 1917 [1] For final quote, see "You Can Buy a Lot Now," *RP,* June 2, 1917.

owner" of the lot "according to the plan of T. Crawford Redd & Bro. with rights and privileges conferred by the charter of the said Woodland Cemetery Corporation."[85] Another ad in June of 1920 stated the offer simply, "When you pay all the money for a lot, your Deed to the same is ready." Similar to Kami Fletcher's study of Mount Auburn Cemetery in Baltimore, the subdivision of Woodland, "allowed black people to become unconventional property owners." Through land ownership of cemetery sections and lots, "death was used as a vehicle to freedom and cultural uplift." This arrangement added to Woodland's position as an alternative space and counter-memory. In addition to the public performance of the funeral and the lasting memory in stone, lot owners performed their legal relationship with space as property and deed holders, with a "valid title" to the land.[86]

While property was the primary appeal, a deed to a lot at Woodland meant more than just property ownership. It also conferred to owners a stake in the company as members "with the right to Voice and Vote." Ads noted that "the board that controls the cemetery is elected by lot-owners" and that "profits from the sale of lots will go into a treasury for the improvement of the cemetery grounds." While membership in the Cemetery Corporation was limited to lot owners—excluding those who only purchased single graves and limiting benefits along class lines—this structure still made Woodland a cooperative enterprise. While it is difficult to say how often the members met and what specific agendas they tackled, a list of the Board of Managers was often printed on Cemetery advertisements; changes suggest there was regular movement to infuse new leadership. Records reported in the *Richmond Planet* do indicate that one board member, Dr. R. E. Jones, whose lot at Woodland attracted great attention from patrons, issued a notice in

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[85] "The New Cemetery: Information Concerning It…," *RP*, September 22, 1917, [9]; "Lot Certificates," Evergreen and Woodland Cemeteries Records, 1893-2016. Accession 52003. Box 47, Folder 1. Cemetery Record Collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA.

[86] Woodland Cemetery Grounds," *RP*, June 5, 2020, [4]. For a comparison to Mount Auburn Cemetery, see "Founding Baltimore's Mount Auburn Cemetery," 143, 146.

November of 1918 to "all section owners of Woodland Cemetery" to be "present at a meeting at my office."

Whether Mitchell truly succeeded in running a cooperative business venture at Woodland is less important than what his vision says about the intention of Mitchell's business ventures. Far from an accommodationist position that sought compromises with whites, Mitchell's vision for Woodland appears closer to the economic philosophy of DuBois who believed that "economic self-sufficiency through cooperation" was the best avenue for Black economic and social progress. As an alternative space that resisted segregation, economic and social independence from whites at Woodland created conditions for stronger internal group unity. Because cemeteries were the final act in the performance of mourning as a collective activity, they not only cornered an artificial Jim Crow market, but also supported a wide range of other business involved in the materiality of mourning. As Kami Fletcher rightfully concludes, "Black separatism," allowed spaces like Woodland, "to thrive as a business within a twentieth-century cash economy that was bordered by Jim Crow segregation."[87] Woodland was an alternative space of Black enterprise and in the process a counter-narrative to accounts that depicted Black Richmonders as passive victims of segregation. Mitchell utilized Woodland, as a space and as a business, to remember Black Richmond, and its citizens, differently.

"The last chapter in the after-death history…was written… in 'beautiful Woodland Cemetery.'"

Memorial exercises in honor of the late Rev. John Jasper on July 4, 1918 were fitting for such a famed man of God. A former slave and founder of the Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church,

[87] "You Can Buy A Lot Now!!," *RP*, June 2, 1917, 7; "The New Cemetery: Information Concerning It," *RP*, September 22, 1917, [9]. Dr. R. E. Jones, "Notice," *RP*, November 16, 1918, [2]. On DeBois position on Black cooperativism, see Curtis Haynes Jr., "From Philanthropic Black Capitalism to Socialism: Cooperativism in DuBois's Economic Thought," *Socialism and Democracy* 32, no. 3 (November 2018):125-145; Fletcher, "Founding Baltimore's Mount Auburn Cemetery," 150.

Jasper was well known, by Blacks and whites, for his dramatic style. Complete with scripture readings, prayer, a eulogy for the deceased, reflections on his life and a benediction, the celebration of Jasper honored the man and preserved his memories. Rev. Evans Payne spoke of "Memories of the Past," while John Mitchell, Jr. followed with his own reflections: "Rev. Jasper as I knew Him." Mitchell "gave a graphic account of his childhood experiences," reminiscing on his memories of "listening to the fervid oratory of this great preacher." He then turned his attention to the cemetery. Interweaving the memory of Jasper and Woodland, Mitchell "told of the effort to establish Woodland Cemetery" and "of the desire of the colored people" of Richmond "to have a cemetery in the Northern section of the city." He pointed to the roadway in front of them that carried Jasper's name and where "the remains of the distinguished divine now rested." Mitchell gestured to the "granite shaft in Rev. John Jasper's memory" that was soon to be unveiled and to stand tall "at nearly the highest point in the cemetery."[88] In Mitchell's designs of Woodland, and through his remarks at the memorial, the remains of the dead and the space of the cemetery were joined as permanent markers of the memory of John Jasper and those he inspired.

The day was a beautiful tribute to Jasper's life, but it also spoke to his life in death. Despite all of the pageantry of a funeral service for a respected member of the Black community, there was no burial of a body. These services in July of 1918, performed seventeen years after Jasper's death, were in honor of the rededication of a monument to Jasper after his remains had been re-interred at Woodland in April from Union Mechanics Cemetery in Barton Heights. According to coverage in the *Richmond Planet,* "thousands of people" made their way there "and

[88] For coverage of the memorial exercises see "Rev. John Jasper Memorial Exercises," *RP*, June 8, 1918, [2]; "The Rev. John Jasper Memorial Exercises, July 4: Impressive Services to Be Held at Woodland Cemetery," *RP*, June 29, 1918 [2]; "Colored Minister is Stricken While Speaking," *Richmond Times-Dispatch,* July 5, 1918, [7]; Quotes in "John Jasper Monument Unveiled: Noted Biblical Scholar's Remains Now Rest in Woodland Cemetery," *RP,* July 13, 1918 [1] .

strolled over the cemetery grounds." The committee of the Sixth Mount Zion Church validated Mitchell's vision for Woodland in their selection of the new cemetery as the (second) final resting place of "one of the most celebrated divines in all of the Southland." Because of his fame in both white and Black communities, the reinterment of Jasper drew the attention of the white press, and, for the first time since Woodland opened, the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* acknowledged the "new cemetery" and Mitchell as President.[89] Jasper's reinterment embodied the sacredness of the cemetery and helped position Woodland as a counter-memory to Black experiences in the Barton Heights cemeteries. Jasper's reinterment also made him *the* respectable citizen in death at Woodland. Lot purchases and burials were measured in value by their proximity to the Jasper section.

In an editorial announcing plans to move Jasper "to Rest in the Beautiful Woodland Cemetery," Mitchell wrote of the "deplorable conditions existing at the old cemeteries in Barton Heights" and made it clear who was to blame. "The authorities there," Mitchell argued, "succeeded in having the cemeteries virtually condemned." Because of prohibitions on interments, the cemeteries companies "went out of existence" due to lack of revenue, "and this sacred spot has become the dwelling place of snakes and other reptiles." Another article noted that "conditions in the old cemeteries had become so bad that it was found impossible to get to the Jasper lot during the summer months." In choosing a site, the committee "wanted some place where the devout members could go and pay their respects to their beloved."[90] These comments illustrate that the essence of sacred space for mourning was not just about the conditions of the

[89] ibid., [1]. "Rev. John Jasper's Remains to be Removed: Celebrated Divine to Rest in the Beautiful Woodland Cemetery," March 9, 1918, [1]; "Move John Jasper's Body," *Richmond Times-Dispatch,* March 6, 1918, [7]
[90] "Rev. John Jasper's Remains to be Removed: Celebrated Divine to Rest in the Beautiful Woodland Cemetery," *RP,* March 9, 1918, [1],[5]. "Rev. John Jasper is Reburied in Woodland Cemetery," *RP,* April 27, 1918, [1].

spaces for the dead, it was also about the ability to sustain performances to their memory by the living.

At the same time, Jasper's reinterment was an event that most Black Richmonders could not afford to replicate. Order books from the monument company responsible for the movement of the Jasper monument provide some insight into the tangible costs of a respectable death. The Sixth Mount Zion Church were charged sixty dollars just for accessing the casket and removing the monument from its foundation. This alone cost more than Jasper's lot at the cemetery. The rebuilding and setting of the monument at Woodland would cost another three-hundred and eighty-one dollars.[91] While Woodland remained a site accessible to all, the stories of the re-interments of distinguished citizens from the Barton Heights cemeteries, reports on the efforts of lot owners at Woodland to improve their section, and the content of advertisements of the cemetery reveal the class-based dimensions of Mitchell's vision of respectability.

News of Jasper's move to Woodland set off a wave of reinterments from the Barton Heights cemeteries. On May 11th, 1918 the *Richmond Planet* reported that the remains of Rev. W.W. Browne, founder and former Grand Worthy Master of the Grand Foundation, United Orders of True Reformers were removed from Sycamore Cemetery in Barton Heights and reinterred at Woodland. Browne was rescued from the "most unfavorable surroundings" to an ideal lot at "the intersection of Jasper Road and Elm Avenue…directly opposite the remains of the distinguished churchman and philosopher, Rev. John Jasper." Mitchell's editorial suggests he was aware they were making memories. "The last chapter in the 'after-death' history" of Browne, Mitchell mused, "was written…in 'beautiful Woodland Cemetery."[92] The following

[91] J. Henry Brown Monuments. 1917-1918. "Order Books, 1899-1920. Accession 23985, 24142, Business Records Collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA, 191, 208, 229.
[92] "The Founder of the True Reformers: Remains of Grand Worthy Master, W.W. Browne Now Rest in Woodland Cemetery," *RP*, May 11, 1918, [1].

week, the remains of Rev. James H. Holmes, former pastor of the First Baptist Church, were reinterred from Ham Cemetery in Barton Heights to Woodland along with four of his family members. The story described Holmes as "one of the best-known divines in the Southland" and found it fitting that he was moved, "opposite that of the late Rev. W.W. Browne." The article also reported that the remains of Dr. Samuel H. Diamond and his wife and child were reinterred to a lot "opposite the fine section of Dr. R. E. Jones and in close proximity to the resting places of other notables."[93] These examples demonstrate that physical proximity to distinguished Black Richmonders in death mattered. For Mitchell, these stories were compelling because they illustrated the maintenance of community and social relationships in death. Interment at Woodland, even in a single grave, meant sharing the grounds with respectable members of the community, and thus earning a respectable death.

These reports also demonstrate that not all lots and sections were created equal. Class differences appeared in both advertising and access in the cemetery. Planning and pricing were framed from a sensibility of middle-class respectability. One ad declared, "Some People Look Ahead!, Other People Look Behind!" In language that cut right to the issue, the ad continued, "the former class purchases a lot in a Cemetery before they need it" while the "latter purchases it when death comes and they must pay cash." Another advertisement was even more direct with its rhetoric. "All first-class lots," it emphasized, "are bordered upon a concrete side-walk or a concrete gutter and curb."[94] These advertisements acknowledged that single graves were available "if you wish" and at "reasonable prices," yet they also only offered membership in the Cemetery Corporation "with the right to Voice and Vote" to full lot owners. "We have made it so

[93] "Remains of the Rev. James H. Holmes in Woodland," *RP,* May 18, 1918, [1].
[94] "Some People Look Ahead!," *RP,* December 1, 1917, [6]; "Woodland Cemetery Grounds," *RP,* June 5, 1920, [5].

that the humblest can enter this palatial 'City of the Dead'," one ad defended, but, "On the other hand, you can pay as much as you choose."

Signs of success at the cemetery suggest cost became an even more challenging issue over time for the "humblest" to achieve a respectable death. At five dollars for a single grave, a December 1917 ad implored, "you can afford to be buried at that price."[95] In October of 1918, the *Richmond Planet* reported that an additional twenty-seven acres known as "Lincoln Heights" had been purchased to add to the cemetery grounds. Steady business led to a revised cost structure. Lot prices increased from thirty-five to forty dollars by January of 1919 while options expanded to include half lot sections at the price of twenty-two dollars. By July of 1921, costs had risen higher. Single graves were seven dollars and fifty cents, half lots were twenty-seven dollars, and full lots cost fifty dollars. These changes represent more than a forty percent increase in lot prices and a fifty percent increase in the cost of a single grave. While patronage of the cemetery may have been "steady on the increase," this did not mean that all members of the community had equal access to an assured rest.[96]

Purchasing a choice lot was not the only sign of respectability at Woodland. Improvements such as monuments, curbing, and landscaping added to the value and sacredness of the entire cemetery and demonstrated lot owners' care and honor for their loved ones. No lot owner was more central to the memory that Mitchell crafted of Woodland for the living than Dr. R. E. Jones. Mitchell penned dozens of articles on improvements and updates at Woodland including reports on the lots of prominent citizens. Jones is referenced in nearly all of them. An editorial from Mitchell on May 12, 1917 identified the Jones lot as the site of one of the first

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[95] "You Can Buy A Lot Now," *RP,* June 2, 1917, [7]. "Main Entrance Woodland Cemetery," *RP,* December 8, 1917, [5].
[96] "Lincoln Heights Purchased," *RP,* October 12, 1918, [2]; "It Is A Grave (Yard) Subject…," *RP,* January 4, 1919, [7]; Beautiful Woodland Cemetery," *RP,* July 23, 1921, [2]; "Personals and Briefs," *RP,* July 9, 1921, [4].

reinterments at the cemetery. Mitchell noted that Jones' "mother has already been disinterred and placed there" and that Jones was "preparing plans to make it one of the most attractive spots in the cemetery." An article from April 1918 praised Jones for his "special care" of his lot and the flower beds he planted that drew "large crowds." The following August, Mitchell reported that Dr. Jones had purchased a "beautiful monument," and, in November, Jones held "unique unveiling exercises" at his lot with friends to honor his wife and mother. He had picked the stone himself: Blue Pearl dyed granite. Between the monument and its installation, the improvements cost Dr. Jones five-hundred and eleven dollars. [97] The monument to Jones's mother and wife remains one of the most striking on the landscape of Woodland; his wealth contributed to the lasting memory of his wife and daughter in ways most could not. The current state of his own grave-marker—a modest upright headstone with a crude etching of his name, birthdate, and day of death in 1934 carved into concrete—illustrates the ephemeral nature of Black wealth and the difficulty of turning counter-memories into a lasting part of the broader collective memory. Current efforts to reclaim Woodland and fully restore its memory suggest that process is underway.

While external challenges no doubt put pressure on the ability of the community to continue to ensure a respectable death at Woodland, little evidence exists to support the narrative that Mitchell's own struggles were the source of the cemetery's demise. Woodland was reported sold to the Atlantic Finance Corporation by the court appointed receiver, J. Thomas Hewin, in an article for the *Richmond Planet* on October 5, 1929. Within a month, the stock market crashed causing a deep economic depression that exacerbated the struggles of Richmond's Black

[97] "Grand Opening," *Richmond Planet,* May 12, 1917, [1]; "Woodland Cemetery," *Richmond Planet,* April 6, 1918; "The New Cemetery," *Richmond Planet,* August 31, 1918, [2]; "A Unique Unveiling," *Richmond Planet,* November 16, 1918, [2]; J. Henry Brown Monuments. 1917-1918. "Order Books, 1899-1920. Accession 23985, 24142, Business Records Collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA, 274.

community and shook the confidence of Richmond's "Black Wall Street." And yet, interments continued and Black Richmonders remained committed to the proper honoring of their dead at Woodland. While there are virtually no existing records of accounts and burials from Mitchell's management of Woodland, a complete Interment Ledger—a "Record of Burials in Woodland Cemetery from Sept 1, 1929" through 1942—offers insight into the nature and number of burials at Woodland in the decade after its sale. The ledger indicates that Woodland saw more than 4,200 burials between 1929 and 1942. The ledger offers a useful measuring stick of Mitchell's vision of middle-class respectability and cooperative enterprise through lot purchases when comparing burials in single graves with interments in private lots. While there were some year-to-year fluctuations, no more than 24 percent of interments in any single year were conducted in private lots while roughly seventy one percent of all burials during this time frame were in single graves.[98] It is unclear how representative these numbers are of burials in the first decade after Woodland's opening, but total interments suggest Woodland remained an important space for the community in trying times.

Files from Repton and Woodland's court appointed receiver, J. Thomas Hewin, offer one of the strongest refutations from the archives of the notion that Mitchell's vision at Woodland collapsed with his bank. A prominent Black lawyer and local leader, Hewin represented Mitchell in his trial for bank fraud and served as chairman of community meetings for stockholders and depositors of the Mechanics Savings Bank. In these roles, Hewin had gained a front row seat from which to view the unfolding drama of Mitchell's affairs and assess the state and viability of his business ventures. A lot certificate signed by Hewin in his own name in January 1928 for the

[98] "Woodland Cemetery Under New Management," *RP*, October 5, 1929, [8]. See Appendix I for quantitative accounting of the Woodland Interment Ledger compiled from "Record of Burials in Woodland Cemetery, from September 1st, 1929," Evergreen and Woodland Cemetery Files, Library of Virginia, Collection #52003, Box 11, Folder 1.

purchase of six full consecutive lots with a notarized typed note on the back certifying that the lots were "bought by me at the listed price of $250…while I was acting as Receiver of the said cemetery" is a powerful symbol that the counter-memory Mitchell had constructed of Woodland as a respectable resting place for a dignified death in the era of Jim Crow lived on in the memory of the community.[99]

"He thought it essential to rescue black history and set the record straight."

In an editorial discussing plans for the impending unveiling exercises of the monument "in memory of the late Col. Thomas M. Crump," the chairman of the unveiling committee, John Mitchell, Jr., praised the living as well as the dead. Thomas Crump was a "useful citizen and broad humanitarian, gifted in mind and generous in heart." He was a blacksmith in the carriage and wagon shop of Funeral Director, A.D. Price; a clerk and bookkeeper for Mitchell's *Richmond Planet;* Vice President of Mitchell's Mechanics Savings Bank; Secretary Manager of the Southern Aid Society of Virginia; Colonel and Grandkeeper of Records and Seal of the Grand Lodge, Knights of Pythias of Virginia; a founder of Planet Lodge No. 23, Knights of Pythias; and a leader at the Second Baptist Church. Yet, Mitchell also took time to praise the living for their commitment to honoring Crump's memory. Mitchell explained that the "idea of erecting a monument to perpetuate the memory of their devoted Pythian comrade" emerged from their belief that Crump's devotion to the community deserved "more than passing attention and respect to his memory and honor." The grand stone marker ensured that people would remember

[99] "Depositors and Stockholders of the Mechanics Savings Bank Hold Monster Mass Meeting at the City Auditorium," *RP*, July 29, 1922, [2]. Hewin's record can be found in "Lot Certificates," Evergreen and Woodland Cemeteries Records, 1893-2016. Accession 52003. Box 47, Folder 1. Cemetery Record Collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA.

Crump long after they were gone; a feat "which his many friends and the entire race may well feel proud."[100]

Members of the Brigade Staff of the Uniform Rank, Knights of Pythias led a "spectacular parade" once more from the Pythian Castle on 3rd Street, through Jackson Ward, up 5th Street through the community of Highland Park, to Magnolia Street and the cemetery entrance. Those who paused there for a moment to view the grounds might have caught a glimpse of Mitchell's fusing of the monument and the space of the cemetery. "On high ground and in sight of the magnificent granite gate double entrance, rests the beautiful memorial to be seen from the roadway."[101] The Crump monument, along with its records of his accomplishments, viewable both in and outside of the cemetery, would stand as permanent evidence on Richmond's landscape of the achievements of Black Richmonders in the early twentieth century.

The memorial to Crump is a fitting way to end because it captures Mitchell's vision for Woodland at its beginning: an alternative space for counter-memories of Black struggles, triumphs, perseverance, and resistance. The Crump monument demonstrates that respectability was not just about the life of the dead, it was also about the actions of the living. The fifteen hundred dollars raised to erect the monument illustrates Crump's status in society, yet it also reveals the importance of community in Black mourning and remembrance. For Crump's funeral and the monument unveiling, Black Richmonders traversed, and claimed as their own, public and sacred as well as white and Black space. Their movements, stone markers, writings, speeches, and stories in his honor were performances; counter-memories that defied society's attempts to

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[100] For quotes on Crump see "Crump Monument is Unveiled Here in Woodland," *RP*, October 11, 1919, [1] and the Crump Monument at Woodland. For background on Crump's life see Crump Monument at Woodland and "Mr. Thomas M. Crump, Secretary Manager, Southern Aid Society of Virginia, Inc. Passes Away. Funeral at Second Baptist Church," *RP*, August 10, 1918, [1], "Crump Monument Is Unveiled…," *RP,* [1]. For Mitchell's comments, see "Crump Monument," *RP*, October 4, 1919, [2] and "Unveiling of the Monument to Col. Thomas M. Crump," *RP,* September 27, 1919, [1].

[101] "Crump Monument is Unveiled…," *RP,* [1].

silence, remove, segregate, and eliminate them. Woodland Cemetery provided them an alternative space to locate and perform these memories.

In her biography of Mitchell, *Race Man: The Rise and Fall of the "Fighting Editor" John Mitchell, Jr,* Ann Field Alexander acknowledges his concern for memory. Mitchell was "afraid that some future historian would miss the fact that African Americans served on the Richmond City Council in the 1890s and that the sons and daughters of slaves operated banks, insurance companies, hotels, and stores in Jackson Ward." Alexander argues that Mitchell "thought it essential to rescue black history and set the record straight." Though it goes almost unmentioned in her book, it would be hard to find a better description for what Woodland Cemetery was meant by Mitchell to be. Woodland was a business that connected a network of other businesses that generated wealth in Richmond's Black Community. Woodland was created as an alternative space for Black people to enjoy in life and rest with dignity in death. Every funeral procession, memorial exercise, and commemoration; every story of grand funerals, reinterments, and improvements to the grounds; every spoken eulogy, prayer, and remembrance; and every gravestone, monument, and marker was part of the making of a counter-memory on the grand stage of Mitchell's cemetery. It was and remains a site "to rescue black history and set the record straight."[102] This will be one of Mitchell's most enduring legacies: of that he can "rest assured."

[102] Alexander, *Race Man,* 208.

APPENDIX I.

Table 1. Woodland Interment Ledger: 1929-1942. Total Number of Burials by Section.
"Record of Burials in Woodland Cemetery, from September 1st, 1929." Number of Burials by Section. Compiled from Ledger in Evergreen and Woodland Cemetery Files, Library of Virginia, Collection #52003 Box 11, Folder 1

Sept XX-Aug XX	Babies Graves	Single "D"	Single "AA"	Single "BB"	Single "I"	Single "Y"	Single "Z"	Single "A"	Private Lots	Total
1929-30	91	--	30	55	53	14	--	--	76	319
1930-31	89	--	39	69	50	4	--	--	73	324
1931-32	43	--	91	22	43	6	--	--	69	274
1932-33	49	--	130	7	23	13	--	--	56	278
1933-34	36	--	94	11	16	26	--	--	78	261
1934-35	33	--	6	56	29	8	48	--	75	255
1935-36	54	--	1	94	67	12	66	--	88	382
1936-37	69	9	0	103	58	12	59	4	79	393
1937-38	57	49	52	23	3	6	83	2	91	366
1938-39	50	57	13	23	3	5	100	--	84	335
1939-40	63	80	8	26	1	--	127	--	86	391
1940-41	67	65	2	22	3	--	102	--	82	343
1941-42	42	70	0	16	2	--	96	--	75	301
Total	743	330	466	527	351	106	681	6	1012	4222

Table 2. Woodland Interment Ledger: 1929-1942. Total Number of Burials by Section. Summary.
"Record of Burials in Woodland Cemetery, from September 1st, 1929."
Compiled from Ledger in Evergreen and Woodland Cemetery Files, Library of Virginia, Collection #52003 Box 11, Folder 1

Sept XX-Aug XX	Single Graves Total	Private Lots Total	Total (Excluding Babies Graves)	Percentage of Single Graves to Total	Percentage of Private Lots to Total
1929-30	152	76	228	66.6%	33.4%
1930-31	162	73	235	68.9%	31.1%
1931-32	162	69	231	70.1%	29.9%
1932-33	173	56	229	75.5%	24.5%
1933-34	147	78	225	65.3%	34.7%
1934-35	147	75	222	66.2%	33.8%
1935-36	240	88	328	73.2%	26.8%
1936-37	245	79	324	75.6%	24.4%
1937-38	218	91	309	70.6%	29.4%
1938-39	201	84	285	70.5%	29.5%
1939-40	242	86	328	73.8%	26.2%
1940-41	194	82	276	70.3%	29.7%
1941-42	184	75	259	71%	29%
Total	2467	1012	3479	70.9%	29.1%

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