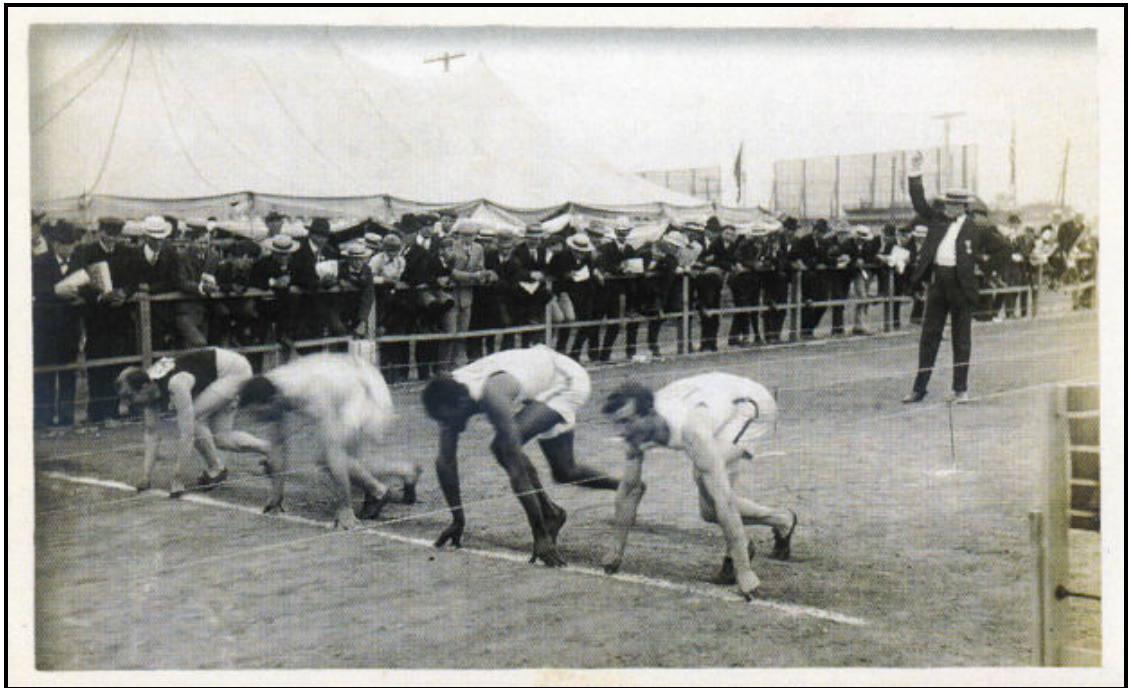


# George Coleman Poage – 1880-1962

## America's First African American Olympic Medalist: A Biography

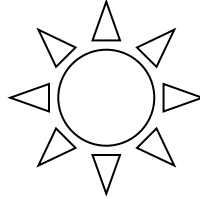
By Bruce L. Mouser



...if I become a member of an organization of  
right to strike against the Government of the  
*George Poage*  
(Signature of employee)

ISBN:

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Cover: Photograph. 60-meter dash. 1904 St. Louis Games, St. Louis, Missouri. Courtesy of Missouri History Museum, St. Louis

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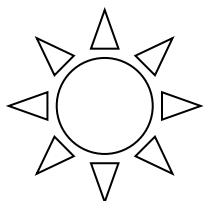
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<http://hutchinscenter.fas.harvard.edu/poage>

## Preface



On 31 August 1904, George Coleman Poage, a sprinter and hurdler for the University of Wisconsin but running in the St. Louis Games for the Milwaukee Athletic Club, placed third in the 400-meter hurdles, a finish that positioned him in sports history as the first African American to obtain a medal in a modern Olympiad. That medal, and the Bronze that Poage won the following day in the 200-meter hurdles, marked the peak of his career as a hurdler and sprinter. In 1904, Poage had encountered a color line that he could not cross. He was a non-European in a sport and in an academic world dominated by whites. Moreover, having obtained a Bachelor of Letters in History from the University of Wisconsin and having taken advanced courses in 1903-1904, Poage certainly could not expect an African American college or institute in America's heartland, all of which were loyal to Booker T. Washington's focus on manual and practical trades, to hire him as a specialist in classical and modern languages and economic history.

Theoretically, Poage could represent the Milwaukee Athletic Club in future competitions; but in the meantime, he needed to earn a living. There was no monetary reward for winning a Bronze, nor were there paid endorsements to carry him through to the next competition. At the turn of the century, track and field was a category of amateur sports that was principally the playground of the world's leisure class, and Poage could not re-

tain his eligibility if he were paid to run. Effectively, Poage's career as a runner ended with the 1904 games and his remarkable achievements within it.

In 1984, Edwin Hill, director of Special Collections at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, and I presented a paper on the La Crosse background of Poage at the annual conference of the North American Society of Sports History. We knew little about Poage when we began our research, except that he was African American and had graduated from La Crosse's only high school and from the University of Wisconsin with a degree in Civic-Historical curriculum. We also knew that he had been a hurdler and sprinter for the University of Wisconsin and then for the Milwaukee Athletic Club, and that he had won bronze medals in two competitions in the 1904 St. Louis Games. Yet in 1984 – eighty years later – his name was still conspicuously absent from the history of American sports. And more remarkable, his name was forgotten in La Crosse where he had spent important and formative years between 1884 and 1899 training to become both a runner and a scholar.

Poage's journey from Hannibal, Missouri, to La Crosse, to Madison and the University of Wisconsin, to his successful run for the Milwaukee Athletic Club, to St. Louis for a promising career as an English grammar, literature, and Latin instructor, and, finally, to Chicago for a rewarding career in the United States Post Office Department is the subject of this study. Poage's history is that of a person who repeatedly attained successes and who in the process butted against a series of color lines and personal career choices that stopped him from making further advancement. Poage might have been able to surmount a few of those, but the circumstances of his youth, his

sexual orientation, and his reliance upon his mother and sister as protectors and advisors led him instead to avoid controversy and to minimize adversity.

This book also aspires to be the history of an African American who came of age in the bleakest years in Post-Civil War history, when it seemed impossible for African Americans to believe that white America was either prepared or willing to guarantee equal opportunity for all of its citizens. Poage was certainly unusual. Class salutatorian and the only African American in a class of twenty-five graduates of La Crosse High School, he came from the lower middle class by virtue of his mother's position as head of household staff at the Jason Clark Easton estate in La Crosse. He was a track star, an attribute that he took with him to the University of Wisconsin where he wrote his senior history thesis on "An Investigation into the Economic Condition of the Negro in the State of Georgia during the period of 1860-1900." Poage became a scholar of classical languages and literature and combined those skills with drama and rhetoric at Charles Sumner High School in St. Louis, Missouri, the most prestigious and progressive African American high school west of the Mississippi River at the turn of the century. Clearly on the fast track to obtain prominence within the nation's African American academic community, he abruptly left teaching and St. Louis. He briefly retreated to the simple life of farming in Minnesota and finally to a comfortable and secure career as a postal clerk in "outgoing [First Class] mail" in the nation's largest mail sorting center in Chicago, Illinois. Poage's story provides a unique window through which to view the challenges associated with an ideal and expected course and an acceptance of what was less than ideal at the turn of the century for an African American who possessed exceptional athletic and intellectual gifts and who also was gay.

Poage's life is presented in seven chapters. Chapter 1, "The Salutatorian," details the differences between Poage's racially-diverse

birthplace in Missouri and the homogeneous and white-dominated place where Poage spent most of his early youth, the circumstances that may have led the Poages to move to La Crosse, and Poage's remarkable success in athletics and academe while attending La Crosse High School. This chapter also looks closely at the origins of Poage's tendencies to rely heavily on a few advisors, to keep secrets, and to avoid controversy. Chapter 2, "The Historian, Track Star, Philomath, Tenor," follows Poage to Madison and the University of Wisconsin, where he gained independence but continued to remain a curiosity within a dominant white culture. In the beginning, he excelled in academic classes and university activities, but that changed when he switched his priorities to sports and became fascinated with the prospect of fame and membership on a team of winners. In Chapter 3, "The 1904 St. Louis Games," Poage ignored the African American-called boycott of the Games and ran for the Milwaukee Athletic Club as its first African American member. While he may have improved his high level of respect and recognition within his white world, he came upon a "colored" wall that shut him out of sports-related employment, and he settled for second-best with an administrative and teaching position within the segregated St. Louis Public School System. Chapter 4, "McKinley and Sumner High Schools," reviews and reveals his successes as a teacher in a period when large towns in America's midlands were coping with a large influx of African Americans from the rural South. These years also were the first ones in which Poage had lived in a separate world composed of only his race. It was in St. Louis where he ultimately abandoned any hope for a career in either sports or teaching. Chapter 5, "Chicago – His Other World," explores how Poage finally came to understand that "the crowd" in which he lived and worked had changed, and its expectations also had changed. He did not look backward, but rather he attempted to reinvent himself as a musician, then as a cook and res-

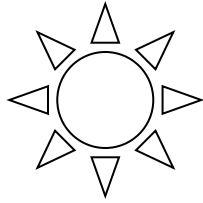
taurateur, and finally as a postal clerk. At each stage, from his birth to his life as a postal clerk, Poage's mother and sister advised and protected him, regardless of their locations. At three intervals – between 1880 and 1899, 1904 and 1913, and 1935 and 1952 – Poage and his mother lived together. He never married. He never lacked his mother's advice, nor, conversely, was he ever free from it.

Throughout the biography are scattered a number of topics that still resonate and/or bring discomfort within America's African American community. Perhaps the most important is the impact upon a person when he/she grows up in a community that differs markedly from that of his own race. In America, then as well as now, racism had long and deeply-seated roots that derived from the Old World and were embedded and changed in the slavery system as it was practiced in America's South. At the beginning of the twentieth century, a majority of white Americans identified their humanity and value according to their countries of origin and entered professions that went with those ethnic and national identifiers. How should an African American have identified himself and how should he have dealt with successes that went beyond what his family, his race, and his dominant world expected? There also were the issues of female dominance in the African American family and the prominent belief – among African Americans as well as whites – that the African American male either needed to be guided and protected, or he, in his "natural state," was violent and irresponsible and needed to be isolated to protect the larger population. Jim Crow, America's *apartheid*, was alive and expanding in 1900, and the opportunities for African American males were shrinking rather than increasing. And there were the issues of escape and sexual preference. Perhaps the impulse to escape to another place prevailed – for whites as well as African Americans – during the period of the Great Migration, but that still left the issue of sexual preference. How did Poage, and many

others in similar circumstances, solve that problem?

And, finally, there is the issue of indecisiveness. He seemed unwilling to accept his choices as sufficient. He retreated from success rather than to fully enjoy or experience it.

## Acknowledgments



In 1959, Julia Davis published *Down Memory Lane*, a book of recollections for the fiftieth anniversary of her and her classmates' graduation from Sumner High School in St. Louis, Missouri. Poage had been one of their teachers, and Davis had reconnected with him while collecting data for the book. Poage, who was retired and living in Chicago in the mid-1950s, was then the custodian of a large volume of family-related memorabilia that he and his mother had collected over more than a half century, with one of the earliest items being an announcement for the wedding of Poage's sister, Lulu Belle, to John Johnson in 1884. His mother also had maintained a scrapbook of newspaper clippings of Poage's athletic and other achievements. The Reverend Lawrence Jenkins, the son of Howard Jenkins Jr and grandnephew of Poage, explained that he occasionally had seen his mother sorting through Poage's boxes, discarding items that had little or no meaning for her. Over time, the volume of memorabilia associated with Poage dwindled, and little remained from his and his mother's original collection. The largest collection of Poage-related data is located currently in Special Collections, Murphy Library, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, in La Crosse, Wisconsin.

While Davis' description of Poage's early life at La Crosse and Madison remains the most complete for those years, her account contains numerous errors, indicating either that Davis had misinterpreted the data or that Poage had remembered his past incorrectly. Poage claimed, for instance, that he was fifteen years old when he graduated from La Crosse High School in 1899, an observable and unexplained error since official records

indicate that he was born in Hannibal, Missouri on 6 November 1880. Less obvious was Poage's boastful claim that the time that he had spent on music and sports while at La Crosse had kept him from overtaking Nellie, his older sister, who graduated from La Crosse's high school in 1897. To her credit, Davis was careful to indicate when her information came directly from Poage and when she had taken it from his scrapbook or from other records in his boxes. A number of Poage's claims were not substantiated from additional sources in this narrative.

I am indebted to many who have helped in this complicated project. Edwin Hill, emeritus Director of Special Collections (SC-UWL) and the first to discover Poage's connection to La Crosse, spent several decades attempting to establish and maintain contact with the Howard Jenkins family, Poage's only known descendants. Had it not been for Hill's determination to remain focused on the Poage story, the collection at Special Collections would still be a distant dream. Anita Doering, senior archivist and archives manager at the La Crosse Public Library (LPLA), Archives and Local History Department, which also has developed a Poage collection, has maintained one of Wisconsin's most professional centers for city- and county-based research. The staff of the La Crosse County Clerk of Deeds (LCCCD) office has given me ready access to that office's records of births, marriages, and deaths. Catherine Jacob, Operations Program Associate at the University of Wisconsin Archives and Records (UWAR) in Madison, and Emily Jaycox, Librarian at Missouri History Museum and Research Center (MoHM), in St. Louis, have been especially helpful in locating records relating to Poage's years in Madison and St. Louis.

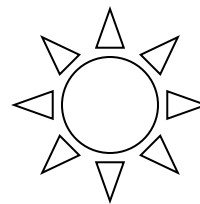
My great thanks also are given to those who read my many attempts to produce an understandable biography of Poage. These include Paul Beck (SC-UWL, Director of Special Collections, Murphy Library), Douglas Bilyeu (La Crosse metalist and sculptor), Steven

Brawley (Director, St. Louis LGBT History Project), George Brooks (emeritus, Indiana University-Bloomington, History), Michael De Yoe (emeritus, Western Wisconsin College, Special Education), Jessie Garcia-Marble (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Journalism, Advertising, and Media Studies), Laura Godden (SC-UWL, Special Collections, Historian and Academic Librarian), Edwin Hill (emeritus, UWL, Special Collections), Catherine Jacob (UWAR, Archives and Records), the Reverend Lawrence Jenkins (Washington, D.C.), Harvey Long (University of Wisconsin-Madison, Library and Information Studies), Robert Mullen (Catalog, Missouri History Museum), Muriel Tillinghast (Coordinator, Outreach, Hubert Harrison-Theodore W. Allen Society), Donald Wright (emeritus, SUNY-Cortland, History), Joan Yeatman (emeritus, UWL, English), Martin Zanger (emeritus, UWL, History), and last, but always first, Nancy Fox Mouser (emeritus, UWL, Sociology).

My greatest thanks goes to the Reverend Lawrence Jenkins, who, at a dinner party following the dedication in August 2016 of a public park in La Crosse in George Coleman Poage's memory, leaned to me and said calmly, "Of course, you know that my uncle was gay." I had believed that to be the case, but in my years of reading and collecting data about Poage, I had found no evidence to permit me to write about it. Without Jenkins' statement, I would not and could not have completed this project.

All errors are my errors.

## Illustrations:



Cover: 1904 St. Louis Games and the Third Olympiad.

<http://collections.mohistory.org/resource/148472.html>

Figure 1: Shoreline at Hannibal. Detail from Birdseye of Hannibal, Missouri, 1869. [public domain]

Figure 2: Lumberyards at Hannibal. Detail from Birdseye of Hannibal, Missouri, 1869.

Figure 3: Birdseye of La Crosse, Wisconsin 1879 (SC-UWL).

Figure 4: Albert Wells Pettibone, Photograph. [SC-UWL]

Figure 5: Cargill-Pettibone House, La Crosse, Wisconsin, circa 1905. [SC-UWL]

Figure 6: George Coleman Poage circa 1884, Photograph. [SC-UWL]

Figure 7: Fire Insurance map, 1300 block of Cass Street, La Crosse, Wisconsin, circa 1906. [public domain]

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Figure 10: La Crosse High School Track Team, 1899. [SC-UWL/LCPA]

Figure 11: Benjamin Butts, Assembly Doorman, circa 1900.

Figure 12: University of Wisconsin, Track Team, 1903. Poage: front row, left. [UWMad]

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Figure 18: George Coleman Poage and the 200-meter low hurdles. [MoHM]

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Figure 22: William McKinley High School, St. Louis, Missouri, circa 1910.

Figure 23: The new Charles Sumner High School, St. Louis, Missouri.

Figure 24: 1919 Chicago Riot, areas covered. [Chicago Tribune]

Figure 25: Poage's Age -- Post Office Form 1544, June 1921. [SC-UWL]

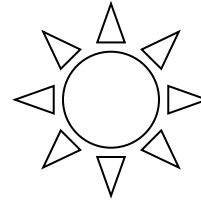
Figure 26: Rosenwald Court Apartments, circa 1932. Planners' drawing.

Figure 27: Club 43, Chicago, Illinois, circa 1920.

Figure 28: Lillian Smith Davenport, 1944. *Billboard*, Ad.

Figure 29: Poster for *Shufflin' Sam from Alabama*.

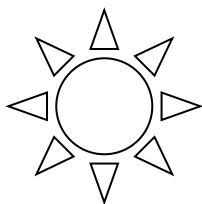
## Abbreviations:



AAU	Amateur Athletic Union
BAA	Boston Athletic Association
IBPOEW	Improved Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the World
IOC	International Olympic Committee
HP	H. J. Hirshheimer Papers, LPLA
LCCCD	La Crosse County Clerk of Deeds, La Crosse, Wisconsin
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender
LPLA	La Crosse Public Library, Archives and Local History Department
MAC	Milwaukee Athletic Club
MoHM	Missouri History Museum, St. Louis, Missouri
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NNLP	National Negro Liberty Party
OGC	Oak Grove Cemetery, La Crosse, Wisconsin
SBF	Strong Black Female
SC-UWL	Special Collections, Murphy Library, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse
SUNY	State University of New York
USO	United Service Organizations
UWAR	University of Wisconsin (Madison) Archives and Records
UWL	University of Wisconsin-La Crosse
UWMad	University of Wisconsin-Madison
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association



## Chapter 1: The Salutatorian.



Many negroes [*sic*] are too severely censured and unjustly dealt with. To say that the federal government cannot protect the negro against such outrages [lynchings and prison work gangs] is to say that it cannot protect its citizens and therefore is not a nation. In politics the line is again drawn and the hatred for each other intensifies. A negro is a republican simply because the white is a democrat. Leaving out all ill feeling, the negro can live and produce products much cheaper than the whites, but both parties stand aloft, the only way being to unite them is, that one party get[s] something the other party wants and consider[s] only the man, not the color....

From George Coleman Poage's Commencement address, "A Civil Phase of the Race Problem," *La Crosse Daily Press*, 24 June 1899, p.1.

George Poage was certainly different from the other students when he entered the classrooms of La Crosse's high school for the first time in the fall of 1895. Or perhaps he wasn't that at all. Poage and his sister Nellie, who would graduate two years before him in 1897, were not the first African Americans to graduate from high school while living in La Crosse. Florence Birney, daughter of John W. Birney, a barber who had invested wisely in land and property development, had attended the city's public schools in the mid-1870s, and she had graduated from La Crosse High School's three-year curriculum in 1879. The Poages, however, were unusual and privileged for the time, especially since not many white students of working age, relative to the size and composition of the city's population, attended La Crosse's public high school either. Still, the Poages were different, and La Crosse's citizens expected Poage and his sister

– attached, as they were, to the mansion of one of Wisconsin's wealthiest and most politically and socially savvy families – to accomplish great things.

Four years later, as salutatorian of his graduating class, Poage addressed his classmates and their parents and friends and spoke of a profound failure in America that had created a "race problem." He forcefully argued that America's and La Crosse's African Americans at the end of that century were losing status and were becoming "citizens legally but not socially."<sup>1</sup> Not an identifiable African American church, social group, or fraternal organization had been listed in La Crosse's 1897 city directory. For Poage, La Crosse's whites were isolating its African Americans and were leaving him, and others of his race, without membership.

Like many African Americans in the upper Midwest, Poage's earliest history begins with his family's migration from a border state where ideas of race and attitudes about separate populations differed in degree from those found in Wisconsin. Missouri had sanctioned slavery before the Civil War, but it was one of four slave-holding states that never left the Union when a flood of secessions began in 1861. In the 1860 presidential election, sixty-eight percent of Missouri's voters had voted for Stephen Douglas, a Democrat who had opposed secession. Battles of the Civil War were fought within Missouri, mainly along the southern Mississippi River and in areas that bordered the states of Arkansas and Tennessee that joined the Confederacy. Missouri was a large state across which one moved when going to California, Oregon, or America's Southwest in the mid- to late-nineteenth century. Slave owners and migrants from Kentucky and the Old South had cleared and occupied the rice and cotton producing lowlands of southeastern Missouri, while Yankees and newly-arriving immigrants from Europe settled primarily in the north-

ernmost quarter and westward from St. Louis toward Kansas City.

The Poages also were migrants, and, like most African Americans from the Midwest, they were moving northward rather than westward. James H. Poage was born a slave in Madison, Monroe County, Missouri, in August 1843, and Anna Coleman (also known as Annie), his wife, was born in October 1853, also in Missouri.<sup>2</sup> Anna claimed to have “freedom papers,” a common document that specified that she had been a slave but had acquired free status before the war began in 1861 or before Missouri’s legislature passed a bill to free that state’s slaves in January 1865.<sup>3</sup> Neither James nor Anna was part of the African American exodus from the South during or immediately following the Civil War. James and Anna married on 18 December 1868 and were living in Paris, Missouri, in 1870 where James worked as a tanner, a common trade that was readily available to African Americans, primarily because whites tended to stay away from occupations that stained their hands. They had a daughter Lillie B. (also known as Lulu Belle) who was born circa 1870.<sup>4</sup> By the time the Poages moved to La Crosse in 1884, they had two additional children: Nellie L., born in circa 1877, and George Coleman, born in Hannibal, Missouri, on 6 November 1880.<sup>5</sup>

In 1880, Hannibal was a bustling town of 11,065 people, of which 1,833 were African Americans or 16.5 percent of the total population. A Mississippi River town, steamboat traffic and river-related businesses still dominated its economy. Several lumber companies had sawmills and storage areas at the river’s edge.<sup>6</sup> Four railroads connected Hannibal to St. Louis, Chicago/Quincy, and points to the west.<sup>7</sup> Employment for African Americans included the usual for the time – laundress, barber/hair dresser, domestic, teamster, coachman, janitor, porter, cook, whitewasher, boarding house operator, and tailor/seamstress – none of which were solely African American professions, unless they were associated with shoe polishing, tanning,

or typesetting. By far, the largest numbers of African American males, however, worked as cooks, crewmen, and roustabouts on steam paddle-wheelers or as day laborers for the lumberyards which happened to be Hannibal’s principal employers.<sup>8</sup> In 1881, James Poage was working as a cook at Hoffheimer’s Oyster and Liquor Depot at 208 Broadway and was living at 705 Church Street in Hannibal.<sup>9</sup> In 1884, and before he moved his family to La Crosse, Poage was working as a porter and was living above John Becker’s fruits, confections, cigars, and tobacco store at 326 Broadway.<sup>10</sup>

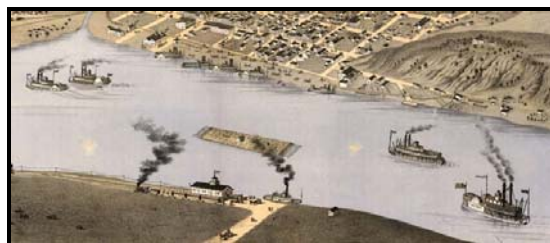


Figure 1: Shoreline at Hannibal, Missouri. Detail from “Birdseye of Hannibal, 1869” [public domain]

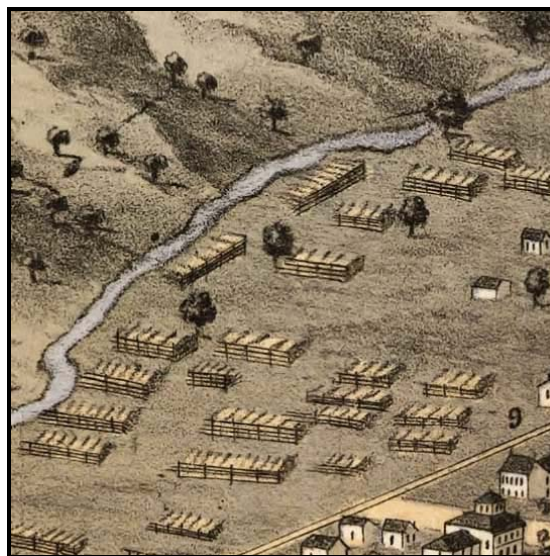


Figure 2: Lumberyards at Hannibal. Detail from “Birdseye of Hannibal, 1869” [public domain]

Hannibal’s African American community in 1884 was energetic and expanding. African Americans had organized five Prince Hall Ma-

sonic lodges, two lodges of the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows, four temples of the United Brothers of Friendship and Sisters of the Mysterious Ten, and eleven temples/palladiums of the Knights of Tabor and Daughters of the Tabernacle. The 1885 city directory listed three African American churches – African Baptist, Christian, and African Methodist Episcopal – a small number considering the size of Hannibal's African American community.<sup>11</sup> Others likely existed but were never listed in city directories. Hannibal had African American schools that dated to 1853 when the first was opened as a common or tuition school in the basement of the African Baptist Church.<sup>12</sup>

The first government supported school opened in 1870 in an African American section of Hannibal known as Douglasville. Douglasville School was in a building of three rooms and six grades; all of its teachers were white. In 1874/75, and after a year when the school was closed and reorganized, Douglasville School reopened under new management, with African American teachers and a new name – Douglass School, likely named after Frederick Douglass, the combative civil rights advocate and best known African American voice of the nineteenth century. Its curriculum covered grades one through eight. In 1878, Douglass School graduated six students, followed by seven in 1880 and three in 1881. In 1883, its curriculum added two more grades, and enrollment increased rapidly enough that the school board decided to build a new school which would have eight rooms, with eleven African American teachers.<sup>13</sup>

Those attributes of community and racial cohesiveness were significantly better than what the Poages faced in La Crosse. While La Crosse's total population in 1880 was larger than that of Hannibal at 14,670 people, its African American residents accounted for fewer than two hundred persons (or about fifty households), with a significant number of heads-of-household working as barbers.<sup>14</sup>

Many single African Americans came to La Crosse for their barber apprenticeships, but few established families there because choices of spouses were meager, and the African American population was too small and too transient to sustain African American enterprises or fraternal organizations.<sup>15</sup> The number that arrived in La Crosse and left it within a year's time was high.<sup>16</sup> Only three or four of La Crosse's African American barbers owned their own shops in any given year, and their daytime customers were exclusively white.

La Crosse also had no equivalent to Hannibal's Douglasville, although a majority of La Crosse's African Americans lived in the city center and near places where they worked. That meant that the alleys and streets of downtown La Crosse were the playgrounds of African American children who, understandably, stood out from the white majority who worked, lived, and shopped in the city center.<sup>17</sup> There was no sense of community, no known African American church, and no known social organization other than a Home Literary Debating Society which sponsored Emancipation Day picnics that occurred each August 1 and 2 in commemoration of Britain's freeing of slaves in the West Indies in 1837, Lincoln's emancipation of slaves within states still in rebellion in 1863, and passage of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth amendments to the American Constitution.<sup>18</sup> Even the newspaper, *The Wisconsin Labor Advocate*, which was owned and edited by George Edwin Taylor, an African American, focused on labor issues and politics and generally ignored news about Wisconsin's African Americans, because racial cohesion did not appear to be a pressing issue for Taylor in 1886-1888.<sup>19</sup>

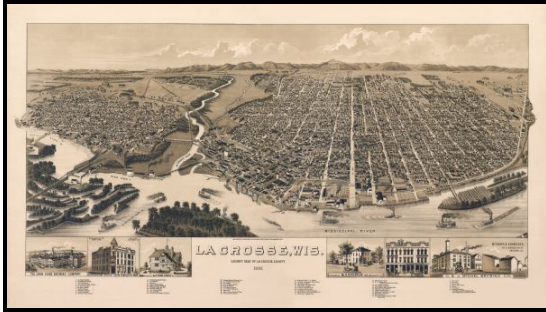


Figure 3: Birdseye of La Crosse, Wisconsin 1879. [ARC]

In fact, there were disadvantages for African Americans migrating to La Crosse in the 1880s. The city was undergoing a transition from a town dominated by lumber, railroads, and riverboats to an economy that emphasized manufacturing of farm equipment, household and church furniture, cigar manufacturing, and beer brewing, and it had become a favored destination for Germans and Norwegians who arrived with investment capital and with skills. Even the occupations of barber, domestic, waiter, porter, and janitor, which had been ascribed to African Americans during and after the Civil War period, were jobs that newly-arrived immigrants wanted to fill and hold.<sup>20</sup>

European immigrants also came to La Crosse from areas where the industrial revolution and labor activism were advanced and where notions of racial and ethnic/linguistic purity were well established. They opposed amalgamation, or mixing of the races. These newcomers also resented the fact that African Americans in La Crosse held jobs by virtue of cultural assignment, that they spoke English, and that they could vote.<sup>21</sup> Those resentments encouraged the development of strategies to keep African Americans separated and away from skilled and factory jobs, on the assumption that there was an endless supply of cheap and underemployed African American labor and that African Americans would demean the status and value of workers.<sup>22</sup> Those were powerful arguments for immigrants that had left one hostile work environment in Europe and had entered another

that was just as difficult or worse and against which they had few natural allies – except for those of their race and their nationality.

But there also were differences that were advantages for a young Black family moving from Hannibal to La Crosse in 1884. There were no known legal restrictions to keep African Americans from any particular task. In theory, what mattered for material success in La Crosse was the ability to perform the assigned work, arrive with sufficient assets, and accept manageable risk. African Americans could marry anyone they wanted, except for restrictions regarding certain physical and mental defects. La Crosse's official records contain many interracial marriages.<sup>23</sup> There remained, however, a known and assiduously observed color line that identified specific boarding houses for single and transient African Americans and places in alleys of the city center for African American renters. But that also was the case for Syrians, Irish, and Bohemians (Czechs), especially if they arrived as unmarried males.

Living close to the city center in the mid 1880s meant that African American children were more likely to attend La Crosse's public schools than were whites who lived a distance from schools or who were required by economic necessity to begin work at a young age. White immigrants, in any case, tended to live in ethnic enclaves away from the city center and where ethnic- and linguistic-based churches operated parochial schools to retain group cohesion and provide mutual assistance. La Crosse's public schools were not racially segregated.<sup>24</sup>

Nellie L. was six years old at the time of the Poages' move to La Crosse in 1884, and she attended school as soon as her parents were prepared to send her. The second African American to graduate from La Crosse's high school, Nellie's experience was surely a testament to her mother's determination to secure a better life for her children than might have been available to them had they remained in Missouri.<sup>25</sup> Lulu Belle, in contrast, was fourteen years old when the Poages ar-

rived in La Crosse, and she may have been too ill-prepared in Missouri's segregated schools to compete in La Crosse's school. In any case, Lulu Belle was of marriageable age, and she found a potential spouse, John W. Johnson, who was a coachman at the Jason C. Easton's estate in La Crosse. Lulu Belle Poage and John Johnson were married on 18 December 1884.<sup>26</sup>



Figure 4: Albert Wells Pettibone, Photograph.

Albert Wells Pettibone, a La Crosse businessman who had made his fortune as an owner and operator of lumber mills in La Crosse and Merrill in Wisconsin, Quincy in Illinois, and Hannibal in Missouri may have been largely responsible for the Poage family's move from Hannibal to La Crosse, although there is no substantive evidence from Hannibal's records to support such a claim. Pettibone had migrated from Vermont to La Crosse in 1854, and, once in Wisconsin, he had formed a partnership with Gideon C. Hixon to operate one of the largest and most successful sawmills in La Crosse's lumber-dominated history.<sup>27</sup> During the Civil War years, Pettibone served as mayor of La Crosse for three one-year terms. In 1867, he moved to Hannibal where he managed and jointly owned G. C. Hixon & Company, Hannibal's largest sawmill. When a large part of the Hannibal mill burned in 1882, Pettibone relin-

quished management of his remaining but considerable business interests in Missouri and Illinois to his son, Wilson Boyd Pettibone, and decided to return to La Crosse to enjoy his retirement.<sup>28</sup> In 1883, he purchased a mansion at the corner of Eighth and King streets in La Crosse (then owned by W. W. Cargill, a grain merchant, who was moving to a newly-constructed mansion near the intersection of Cass and Twelfth streets), and Pettibone added a third floor with gables and a mansard roof. Pettibone and his domestic staff moved there in 1884.<sup>29</sup>



Figure 5: Cargill-Pettibone House, 145 South 8<sup>th</sup> Street, La Crosse, Wisconsin, circa 1905.

The Poage family, consisting of James and Anna and their three children (Lulu Belle, Nellie, and George), moved from Hannibal at the same time or shortly after the Pettibone family and its staff moved to La Crosse. For a brief time the Poages lived with the Matthew Schooley family at 1311 Pine Street, but early in 1885 they established residence in "[Jason] Easton's barn" (coach house) which was located in the thirteen hundred block of Cass Street.<sup>30</sup> "Easton's barn," or a dwelling attached to it, also was the likely residence of Lulu Belle and John Johnson after their December 1884 marriage. James Poage found employment with Pettibone as coachman and horse tender. After a year, Poage's family, which had grown to six members after the collapse of Lulu Belle's marriage to Johnson and after the birth of Fred (Freddie) Johnson (Jansen) on 31 August 1885, moved to sepa-

rate quarters at 40/45 King Street and by 1888 to 324 Jay Street in the city center.<sup>31</sup>



Figure 6: George Coleman Poage circa 1884, Photograph.<sup>32</sup> [SC-UWL]

The Poages' first years in La Crosse were difficult if not traumatic for Anna, despite the Poages' likely attachment to the Pettibone Estate. Lulu Belle's marriage to Johnson and the birth of Freddie Jansen/Johnson was perhaps only the beginning. Johnson was listed in La Crosse's city directories only for 1885 and 1886 and was absent from subsequent editions, suggesting that his marriage to Lulu Belle had ended, that he had died, or that he had left La Crosse without her and their child. Lulu Belle, who had retaken her maiden name, died on 10 August 1887, and her son, Freddie Jansen/Johnson, a sickly child who required significant care, died on 31 October 1888, during one of the city's diphtheria epidemics.<sup>33</sup> James, moreover, did not adjust well to the move from Hannibal. Wisconsin's weather was significantly colder than was that of Hannibal, and James developed pulmonary problems. The Pettibone family, however, retained him "as long as he was able to work," and Anna became the family's

primary breadwinner as cook and domestic in the Pettibone household.<sup>34</sup>

Why Pettibone retained Poage during his illness is unclear in sources. Perhaps it was their common connection to Hannibal or to Poage's notoriety as a tenor and excellent singer in La Crosse. Group singing societies were fashionable in the late 1880s, and Poage may have been one of their popular participants. In any case, Pettibone was reestablishing himself in a city that he had left twenty years earlier and whose population had nearly tripled in size from 7,500 to more than 21,000 between 1867 and 1884. Few people knew him, other than those who controlled wealth and those that were aware of his interests in park development. Inviting publicity that might have come from dismissing a worker with a debilitating illness might have been sufficient for Pettibone to have continued Poage's employment. Besides, Anna Poage was then working as cook and domestic servant in the Pettibone mansion.

By the time that James died of tuberculosis on 22 July 1888, at age forty-four, Anna was known among La Crosse's wealthy families as a responsible and trustworthy domestic. Through her connection with the Pettibones, she found employment as cook and then as stewardess in charge of domestics at the Jason C. Easton estate.<sup>35</sup> Easton (b.1823), a financier, farmland manager, and railroad builder, lived in a large mansion at 1305 Cass Street in La Crosse.<sup>36</sup> His son, Lucian Frederick Easton, and Lucian's wife, Mary Losey, lived in a similar-sized mansion at 1327 Cass Street. A lover of fine horses, Jason Easton maintained the city's largest residential stable of racing horses and even taught George Poage to ride. The Easton estate, which occupied nearly all of the thirteen-hundred block between Cass and King streets (Lots 2, 3, and 6), was the largest residential property in La Crosse. It consisted of two mansions, Easton's office that faced Cass Street, a gatehouse, a caretaker's house, four or more buildings that were servants' quarters a huge glass-covered conservatory or greenhouse, a bowling alley,



livery, and Easton's (livery that became the auto) barn.<sup>37</sup>



Figure 7: Fire Insurance map, 1300 block of Cass Street, La Crosse, Wisconsin, circa 1906. [public domain]



Figure 8: Lucian Easton House, 1327 Cass Street, La Crosse, Wisconsin. [photo from LPLA]

Circumstances of the last year of James' life left a lasting imprint on Anna and upon her surviving children. The death of Lulu Belle in August 1887 had been followed in quick step by the deaths of James in July 1888 and Freddie the following November. Within five years of their arrival in La Crosse, Anna had lost her husband, one of her children, and a grandchild, and had been forced to become the family's sole financial support in an environment where she had neither kin nor allies.<sup>38</sup>

The tragedy of James' death was compounded by a rumor that James, who was known locally to be popular with the ladies, had established a liaison with a domestic servant attached to the Easton estate. La Crosse folklore tells of a mixed-race child and identifies James Poage as the child's biological father.<sup>39</sup> The mother's family treated the child badly, and the Poages ignored her, but the rumor persisted. Anna was required to deal with the lasting effects of James' reported philandering – whether valid or not – upon her reputation and upon that of her family. She became protective and focused upon her role as head of the Easton household staff and as an advocate of her children's success. Her response to the scandal was to become a low risk taker and to withdraw from interaction with other African Americans within La Crosse. According to historian Julia Davis, Anna "lived in constant fear" of George's health, "because of his father's illness and death."<sup>40</sup>

George was eight years old and Nellie was ten when their father died, impressionable ages when their characters were taking shape and when they began to form lasting impressions of their mother and father. Nellie later told her daughter, Anne J. Thomas, that her grandmother, Anna, was "proud, dignified and strong in personality."<sup>41</sup> Her grandmother had lived in the households of the "wealthy and cultured," and she had wanted that for her children. She believed that education would lift them "above the crowd."<sup>42</sup> That certainly had happened with John Birney's daughter, Florence, who in 1887 had been the first African American to graduate from La Crosse High School and who had then attended Eastern Colored School, in Louisville, Kentucky, where she later became an instructor.<sup>43</sup> Anna fought the advice of her peers in La Crosse who thought that she should not put "fancy ideas" in her children's heads. She wanted them to have "proper behavior" and the "refined" and "dignified" characteristics of the upper middle class. Like his sister Nellie, George viewed his mother as "a natural

lady.” And he characterized his father, whom he scarcely could have known, as “overbearingly arrogant.”<sup>44</sup> Anna was his refuge, but she also was an impediment that encouraged him to avoid controversy and to treat the outside world as unreliable.

For most of the 1890s, the Poage family maintained a low profile in La Crosse. School records were not retained to indicate how Nellie and George progressed within La Crosse’s public schools, but progress did occur, sufficient to guarantee that both graduated from high school. Essentially, the Poages belonged within a disconnected and exclusive Easton household and as a crucial part of its staff. Nellie and George became occasional caretakers and teachers of the Lucian Easton children – Louise, Sarah, Florence, Margaret, and Jason Clark – all born in the 1890s. Jason Clark would attend Yale University (1914-1918), serve as German language interpreter on General John Pershing’s staff at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, and would become professor of history at the University of West Virginia.<sup>45</sup> The Eastons were intensely involved in community projects (Board of Education, Board of Park Commissioners, Pettibone Park Commission, Home for Friendless Women and Children, American Red Cross, Social Service Society, various medical foundations and associations), and, with so many children and a huge house to attend, Anna Poage came to play an important role in the Easton household.<sup>46</sup>

Anna’s La Crosse activities were unique in the city’s African American history – only a segment of Anna’s worldview. While an important part of the Easton household, Anna continued to maintain ties with friends and family in Missouri and with its segregated and separate African-American world.<sup>47</sup> She set high goals for both of her children, far beyond what La Crosse and its limited promise of integration and acceptance could or would permit. That was not a small problem because, both regionally and nationwide, the status of African Americans was declining rather than improving in the 1890s, and the

specter of a northward creep of racial violence seemed to be growing. For an African American woman, one way to escape that cycle was to attend a teacher-training school and become an elementary-level teacher for a few years. During that time, she would find and marry an ideal and fully-employed husband who would take her away from teaching and permit her to become a “refined” and “dignified” housewife. If finances were sufficient, she would engage herself in community improvements. This was not the model that Mary Easton had set for her four daughters who would have tutors and would attend upper-class boarding schools, but it was one that was available to Anna and Nellie.

That, however, was not to be obtained in La Crosse or Wisconsin where public elementary schools were integrated and where middle-class status and employment would likely remain forever elusive because of Nellie’s race and her servant class background. Upon graduation in 1897, Nellie enrolled in Lincoln Institute, the segregated “State Normal School” located in Jefferson City, Missouri, which emphasized training to become teachers and principals (principal teachers) in Missouri’s African American schools.<sup>48</sup> That was the formula adopted by the Birneys and by many African Americans located in small towns in the upper Midwest where opportunities for education and upward mobility were blocked by a color line and by a scarcity of eligible and acceptable African American spouses.

Anna’s plan for George was different. Jason Easton and his son Lucian had attended Yale University, and, while Yale might have been the ultimate choice for a wealthy white male, the University of Wisconsin in Madison was nearby, and there were others in La Crosse who had attended that university and were interested in Poage’s enrollment there for non-academic reasons. Anna Poage’s belief that education would provide George a gateway to success was based on his accomplishments at La Crosse High School. Like his father, he had a good voice, and he had par-



ticipated in the school's Glee Club.<sup>49</sup> With ready access to the large Easton library, he had become a voracious reader.<sup>50</sup> He also had enrolled in the Ancient-Classical curriculum in high school that was designed to prepare students for the rigors of university study and for careers in which mastery of Greek and Latin languages was essential. That curriculum included courses in American, Ancient and British history, political and physical geography, English composition and grammar, mathematics through plane and solid geometry, botany, physics, literature, four years of Latin, and three years of Greek.<sup>51</sup> George obtained marks of 90 or better in all classes that dealt with language, literature, and classical history and his lowest in American history and political geography. He graduated second in a class of twenty-five students, a class composed of eighteen girls and seven boys.<sup>52</sup> Most of his classmates were sons and daughters of La Crosse's entrepreneurial class. La Crosse's upper class instead employed private tutors or sent their children to residential academies that acted as preparatory schools for elitist institutions on America's East and New England Coasts.



Figure 9: George Coleman Poage Graduation picture, 1903. [public domain]

Poage's academic accomplishments and an enthusiastic recommendation from his principal at La Crosse High School might have gained him entry into the University of Wisconsin, but it was his non-academic talent that interested financial supporters in La Crosse and Madison in 1899. In those years, La Crosse's high school was located at the corner of Main and Eighth streets, surrounded by the Anglican and Methodist churches, Burns Park, the La Crosse Public Library, and the Pettibone estate. It primarily prepared students for local leadership, but a part of its curriculum was geared to higher education. It also gave voice and support to gymnastic sports that were popular at the time which generated public enthusiasm for the principle of tax-supported higher schools. An account written later noted that a group of athletes "discovered" Poage's athletic ability solely by chance – when Poage sprinted "across what is now Burns Park, opposite the old high school."<sup>53</sup>

When that "discovery" occurred is unknown, but Poage's name was absent from an announcement in La Crosse's *Morning Chronicle* on 27 May 1898 about projected winners in a track meet scheduled for the next day between La Crosse High School and Winona High School.<sup>54</sup> A year later, La Crosse's newspapers prominently listed Poage in a similar matchup with Winona, where he won first place in three of fifteen events – the 50-yard dash with a time of 5½ seconds, which matched the Illinois state record and set a new state record for Wisconsin; first in the 100-yard dash with a time of 11 seconds; and first in the 220-yard dash at 24.5 seconds.<sup>55</sup> According to an account in the *La Crosse Daily Press*, the crowd "went wild with enthusiasm."<sup>56</sup> Those track times were spectacular for that era and drew the attention of regional coaches and University of Wisconsin graduates who were always looking for talent to help that university's athletic department and who seemed unconcerned that Poage was competing in sports that tended, at the end of

the nineteenth century, to be racially separated. That interest, alone, however, was not enough to guarantee his success at Madison or pay his tuition and living costs at Madison. Once accepted at the university, Poage worked on an Easton-owned farm near Canby, Minnesota to earn money to supplement what his mother gave him. Jason Easton, then gravely ill, gifted him sufficient funds to pay his shortfall for his first years in Madison.<sup>57</sup>

Whether Poage joined La Crosse's "colored" baseball team, the "Excelsiors," after his graduation from high school is unknown. The Excelsiors were a new and "sandlot" team, sponsored by the *Weidner & Taggart* barbershop. It played its first game against the Golden Gates of Minneapolis at the La Crosse County fairgrounds' stadium on 28 May 1899. That team, also known as the "colored nine," lasted, however, only for the 1899 playing season.<sup>58</sup>



Figure 10: La Crosse High School Track Team, 1899. Poage, second from left in second row. [SC-UWL/LPLA]

Poage also had a temper. On 21 August 1899, George Williams, an African American who had lived in La Crosse for more than thirty years and who worked as a barber at Ashley Shiver's shop at 418 Mill Street, complained to Judge Cameron Baldwin, that on 18 August, Poage had "engaged in fighting in a public place."<sup>59</sup> Williams was the highly-respected brother-in-law of John Birney whom Wisconsin's Governor J. Ross had cho-

sen in 1884 to represent the State of Wisconsin at the World Cotton Exposition in New Orleans. Baldwin issued a warrant for Poage's arrest; and the city's police took him "in custody." Early on 22 August, Poage appeared before Baldwin and pleaded "Not Guilty"; "[w]hereupon for cause shown," Baldwin adjourned the case (*City of La Crosse vs. Geo. Poage*) until later that evening, when he considered it in "[his] office." Baldwin dismissed charge against Poage, however, "on motion [to suppress]."<sup>60</sup>

The reasons for the fight and for the dismissal of charges against Poage were not noted in court records or in La Crosse's newspapers. If Baldwin had found Poage guilty, had fined him, or had remanded him for later trial for what was then considered a minor offense, newspapers would surely have reported the circumstances of the fight and the case. Poage and Williams were well-known in La Crosse. A conviction also would have reflected badly upon the Eastons as Poage's sponsors, and, since it was then less than a month before the beginning of classes at Madison, a conviction or trial might have ended Poage's chances for attending the University of Wisconsin.

Unfortunately, with the exception of the brief description in the Criminal Docket book, official records relating to Poage's arrest and court proceedings in 1899 are no longer extant. It would have been unexpected, however, for an African American to have recommended that a warrant be issued against another African American. Instead, the community likely would have resolved the incident internally and without police and court involvement. In this instance, however, the community had waited for three days before reporting the incident and had selected Williams as its messenger. The likely explanation was that the African American community wanted him away from La Crosse.

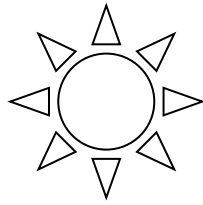
In the meantime, Poage's sister obtained some success for her own career. Of the twenty-one graduates of her 1897-1898 course at Missouri's Lincoln Institute, only

two came from outside the state of Missouri – one from Wisconsin (Nellie) and one from Nebraska. Howard Jenkins of St. Louis, Missouri, was one of Nellie's classmates, and he became her future husband.<sup>61</sup> The mini-courses that Nellie took at Lincoln Institute ranged from algebra, astronomy, botany, chemistry, geometry, grammar, history, Latin, literature, psychology, physics, physiology, rhetoric, trigonometry, and zoology to teaching pedagogy.<sup>62</sup> Her first work assignment was as a teacher and principal of a small African American school in Appleton, Missouri.<sup>63</sup> Two years later, Nellie obtained an appointment as teacher at Lincoln School "for 'coloreds'" in East St. Louis, Illinois. That school provided pedagogical training for students who were expected to become teachers in Illinois' African American elementary schools.<sup>64</sup> Lincoln also was called Lincoln Polytech and eventually included courses on "electricity, plastering, masonry, piano tuning, orchestra, band, cooking, sewing, carpentry, and plumbing."<sup>65</sup>

Essentially, Anna Poage obtained her objective of positioning both Nellie and George to expand beyond the confines of La Crosse and their servant class origins and away from the stigma attached to race and to James' believed indiscretions. Anna was unable to make that transition for herself, but she took that journey vicariously through the successes of her children. Lincoln Institute and Lincoln Polytech provided Nellie with an opportunity to mix, physically as well as socially, with a growing middle class of African Americans in Missouri and Illinois and with Lincoln sisters from important families that frequently appeared in the social columns of regional African American newspapers. Nellie was the guest of Emma Minor – a Lincoln classmate living in Kansas City, Missouri – and Emma's return in 1900 with Nellie to "spend the summer" at the Easton Estate in La Crosse was prominently noted in the Topeka, Kansas *Plaindealer*.<sup>66</sup> In 1903, George listed La Crosse and the Easton office at 1317 Cass Street as his permanent address, the same one he had

used in his application to the university, more than four years earlier.<sup>67</sup>

## Chapter 2: The Historian, Track Star, Philomath, Tenor



[C. J.] Buckwalter and Tommy Taylor of [the University of] Chicago have their work cut out for them in the quarter mile. To win this event the Chicago lads will have to beat out Poage, the dusky Badger, whose fleetness of foot and gameness has been exhibited on more than one occasion. Poage is a horse for work. His performance in the dual meet with Illinois last year was one of the most remarkable exhibitions of speed and endurance ever presented by an athlete.

*Inter Ocean* (Chicago),  
17 February 1903, p.4.

It will seriously cripple Wisconsin on the track were George Poage to leave. He graduated from the civic historical course in June last [1903] and did not intend to return to the university. He was however eligible to complete another year and the management has induced him to come back and work a little each day in the football training quarters. The matter has never been approved by the faculty or athletic council. The expense goes in as necessary expenditure in training.

*Janesville Daily Gazette*,  
24 September 1903, p.3.

[Frederick Jackson] Turner and other faculty members in major midwestern universities had become appalled [in 1903 and 1904] at the enthusiasm with which their students and alumni were supporting college football [and other sports]. During 1905 and 1906 he [Turner] devoted much time and energy to combating the problems posed by the rise of

professional coaches, the emergence of peripatetic athletes, and excessive alumni involvement.

A. G. Bogue, "Not by Bread Alone,"  
p.22.<sup>68</sup>

Poage's five years at the University of Wisconsin were successful, but they did not pass without controversy. While expectations placed on him by his mother and by the university's School of History were high, even greater were those that the university's alumni, the university's student newspaper, and regional sports' writers assigned him as the university's sports' icon. Emotions ran high as faculty and students grappled with the practice of retaining star athletes after they had graduated and with the question of the proper role of the university. Was the university's purpose to prepare students for careers of service or was it to produce winning teams in intercollegiate sports? Who was in charge – the faculty and its committees or the coaches and the university's administrators?

When Poage arrived in Madison in the fall of 1899, he was eighteen years old and was away from his protected base and mother for the first time. Madison was far from the city where he had spent his youth and where he had left his mark as a scholar of the classical period, a singer, and an athlete. La Crosse had only one college, the St. Rose Normal School, and its principal purpose in 1899 was to prepare Franciscan sisters to become teachers in Catholic elementary schools. La Crosse had two business schools – Wisconsin Business University and Keefe's Business College – but both produced clerks and technicians for La Crosse's businesses and industries.<sup>69</sup> With a population of 29,000 at the end of the nineteenth century, La Crosse's population was considerably larger than Madison's 19,000, but Madison was Wisconsin's state capital and the site of Wisconsin's most important and largest school of higher education. It also was the center of a plan – the "Wisconsin

Idea" – for extending the benefits of the university and of higher education to Wisconsin's hinterland.

Size of city alone would have presented a change for Poage, but there also were challenges associated with a higher degree of competition, a respect for classroom performance, and an expectation of excellence that may have been missing in La Crosse. Poage's mother had demanded that perfection, but, through her own actions or lack of them, she also had encouraged Poage to retreat when confronting conflict or criticism and to seek easier and more accommodating paths. While serving as his first and most reliable advisor, she had encouraged him to become independent and had become a constant and welcome refuge whenever he found himself in trouble or under stress. From her vantage, Poage, like his father, was a person who needed the assistance and encouragement of a strong person who would help increase his chances of success and continuing progress. She assumed the role of guide and protector.

Poage's first challenge upon his arrival in Madison involved an unexpected change of course that did not consider his preparation in high school, his high interest in sports and music, or, likely, his own wishes. Despite the specific request from Principal W. R. Hemmenway of La Crosse High School, a classicist, that Poage be admitted into the university's traditional Ancient-Classical course, officials within the university's School of Economics, Political Science, and History assigned him instead to its Civic-Historical course.<sup>70</sup> In 1899, the study of history at Madison was offered in five courses or tracks: Institutional History, Ancient-Classical, Modern-Classical, European, and Civic-Historical. The Civic-Historical course was designed primarily to promote "good citizenship," and it focused on aspects of American history and political science, leading to a Bachelor of Letters degree. That school essentially considered the Civic-Historical course as "antecedent to law and

journalism" or resulting in some form of government service.<sup>71</sup>

Poage likely regarded the change of emphasis from Ancient-Classical to Civic-Historical as a major disappointment, because the differences between careers based in law or journalism and those based in classical studies were great. Moreover, Poage had received his lowest marks in American history while in La Crosse. How and why Poage's course was changed is unknown, but the head of the history section at the school in 1899, and the person most likely responsible for assigning Poage to the Civic-Historical course, was Frederick Jackson Turner, a strong personality who enthusiastically supported the then-popular notion of expanding the university's mission to include the immediate civic needs of the state's hinterland and those of small cities like La Crosse and Portage, where Turner had spent his youth.

In January and February 1895, Turner had taken his "frontier thesis" – and the university's new emphasis on the "Wisconsin Idea" – to La Crosse in the form of a series of lectures that explained the university's role in the state and captured the essence of his views about the importance of rugged individualism in the evolution of America's political democracy and of the American character.<sup>72</sup> Born in Portage, Turner had obtained his doctorate in history from Johns Hopkins University in 1890 and had returned to his home state of Wisconsin and to the University of Wisconsin in that same year. In his doctoral thesis, Turner had focused on the Indian trade in Wisconsin, a trade in which La Crosse had played an important part. Turner was certain of his ideas about the importance of the frontier, and he wanted others to be certain as well. By 1899, Turner was preparing students for the doctorate and was promoting, through his students and his lectures, a view of history that became a major influence in American thought for much of the twentieth century.

Turner may have believed that he was favoring Poage in 1899 when he changed his

enrollment from Ancient-Classical to Civic-Historical. Approximately one hundred students had taken classes in the Ancient-Classical course in 1898, and one hundred thirty had been enrolled in the Civic-Historical course. Turner had expected enrollment in Ancient-Classical to remain steady in 1899 but for it to increase in Civic-Historical by thirty percent to 169.<sup>73</sup> Turner was almost correct. Enrollment in Ancient-Classical declined to eighty and increased in Civic-Historical to 182, an increase of forty percent over those in 1898.<sup>74</sup> There is no evidence to indicate that Poage outwardly complained about his reassignment to the Civic-Historical course. He had accommodated and had accepted the easier and less confrontational path.

Before leaving La Crosse, there was the immediate problem of finding suitable housing and boarding in Madison for a person of Poage's race. In this instance, he arrived with arrangements already made. During his first and second years in Madison, Poage lived with Benjamin (Bennie) and Amy Butts – and their three children (Mildred, Roy, and Leo) – at 633 East Johnson Street.<sup>75</sup> Soldiers belonging to the 5<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin Regiment from Richland Center, Wisconsin, had liberated Butts in 1864 when they occupied his hometown of Petersburg in Virginia. Butts followed the regiment and its commander, Major Cyrus Butt, to Wisconsin and from Richland Center to Madison where Butts became a tobacconist and soon operated a barbershop near Wisconsin's capital building. He became the barber for many state officials, including Governor Cadwallader Washburn (1872-1874) who would have known both Pettibone and Easton as Western Wisconsin's Congressman for five terms. For a time, Butts also was the washroom attendant at the state's capital, an appointment that placed him on the state's payroll as a member of the legislature's staff and gave him high status within Madison's small African American community. When the Wisconsin State Historical Society opened its new headquarters and library in 1890, Butts became the society's lead janitor and its mes-

senger.<sup>76</sup> It was likely at Jason Easton's hand or those of Easton's business and political friends in Madison that Poage found his placement with Butts and his wife. There also is the possibility that Turner became involved in that assignment.



Figure 11: Benjamin Butts. Assembly Doorman, circa 1900.

If there were an African American model for Poage to emulate – or oppose – while in Madison, it likely would have been Benjamin Butts. At the level of his acceptance by Madison's white leadership, Butts was the personification of the genteel and servile African American, someone who had been a slave and had come of age in the decades immediately following the Civil War. He was the doorman at Wisconsin's official state functions and the butler at parties. "His manners were superb."<sup>77</sup> More importantly, he knew his place in Madison and in its social order.

Butts, however, was from another generation, the generation of Poage's mother. Already on his way to adulthood when he was liberated, Butts seemed to have outwardly accepted his station. There were, after all, few viable options in the 1880s and 1890s. But what was said and conveyed to Poage at the dining table during Poage's two-year residence with Butts and his family was perhaps of a very different character. Butts' service as the historical society's lead janitor and its

messenger – and the status those positions represented – may have been attractive to Poage when he first arrived in Madison, but, once he began to obtain successes and status in his own right and became aware of the vibrant character of political and social discourse among African Americans in nearby Chicago or in other cities in America's Upper Midwest, Poage would likely have considered Butts' representations as unacceptable and demeaning for himself and for an African American male of Poage's generation.

As demonstrated in his commencement address in 1899, Poage already knew about the "Race Problem" before he left La Crosse. He knew that the "problem" was becoming worse rather than better and that he, as an anomaly, would need to be on his best behavior in Madison. No fighting. His move to Madison and his introduction to new and controversial ideas in classes and flowing northward from Chicago and southward from St. Paul likely became a transforming point in his thinking about his own status in Madison and in America. The number of African Americans in Chicago and St. Paul was large enough to influence election outcomes and to support African American owned and operated businesses. Most African Americans nationwide were Republicans by virtue of that party's leadership during and following the Civil War.

Nevertheless, many Black Republicans were uncomfortable in that party, with others describing them as "Negrowumps" or Independent Republicans who opposed the national party's move away from equal rights and toward an alliance with the interests of big business. The Negrowumps also opposed the Democrats who continued to champion states' rights and who gave active support to nativist movements that were spreading violence north of the Ohio River. Nearly all editors of African American newspapers were spokesmen for the Republican Party and its agenda. There were a few, such as the editor of *The Broad Ax*, a controversial newspaper that moved its headquarters from Salt Lake

City to Chicago in 1899, that covered the activities of Black Democrats as well as those of Black Republicans, especially the tensions developing between the Stalwarts and the Independents within the Republican ranks.

It is doubtful, however, that Poage, at nineteen years of age, and with a strong background in classical studies and an equally strong interest in baseball, classical sports, and music while in La Crosse, was aware of or even interested in the changing landscape of independent African American politics in 1899. Still, neighboring Illinois, with its large number of African Americans that had migrated into the state during and after the Civil War, had become a hotbed of debate in the 1880s and 1890s that had focused on the issues of equal staffing and equal pay in its public schools, of equal training for its teachers, and of equal access to work. Most of that debate was centered in Chicago, Springfield, East St. Louis, and Cairo, the latter located at the southernmost tip of the state. In Cairo, the African American population was large enough to influence, if not determine, election outcomes at the city and county levels. Except for Milwaukee, there was no comparable city in Wisconsin with an African American population of sufficient size to have an impact on election outcomes.

Poage spent much of his freshman and sophomore years taking required courses in English, history, political science, economics, foreign languages, and mathematics.<sup>78</sup> This was far from the rigors of either La Crosse High School or Lincoln Institute in Missouri where his sister had obtained her post-secondary education. At least for his academic performance, Poage's transition to Madison and to Wisconsin's highly-competitive environment was successful and without any visible sign of incident or trauma. That spoke well for his experience at La Crosse's high school, the preparation he received while attached to the Easton households, and his ability to adjust rapidly to changing circumstances with-

out a dominant family member and advisor by his side.

Poage's academic record in his first two years at Madison was better than average, but he missed the high marks that he had obtained while in La Crosse. His average grade for courses taken in his first year was 86.8, which was excellent. By the second semester of his freshman year, the Athletic Department officially accepted him as the first African American to become a member of its junior track team.<sup>79</sup> He was excused from Military Drill in his second semester with the expectation that his training in the Athletic Department would satisfy that requirement.<sup>80</sup>

In his second year (1900-1901), Poage focused on the acquisition of language that included continued study in English and Latin and added German and French to his language group. He scored his highest marks in German language, which, at the turn of the century, was still broadly spoken in La Crosse. Margaret Easton, daughter of Lucian and Mary Easton who were his mother's employers, later wrote that, as a child, she spoke mainly German and that when she left La Crosse to attend boarding school, she had only "a meager knowledge of English and some of slang."<sup>81</sup> Margaret's younger brother Jason served as General John Pershing's German translator at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. It is likely that Poage spoke more than a smattering of German before he took his German language course at Madison. As with his freshman year, Poage obtained release from military drill. His academic performance improved, and he received high grade marks in all of his classes.<sup>82</sup>

Perhaps of greater importance was Poage's exposure in these years to the teaching methods and theses of two teachers who were prominent figures in Wisconsin's newly-formed and short-lived School of History (1900-1905).<sup>83</sup> William Amasa Scott was a specialist in economics, economic history, and theory, who had obtained his doctorate from Johns Hopkins University in 1892 and had published a study of the bank-driven debt

crisis that had crippled the economies of states at the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>84</sup>

Frederick Jackson Turner was the only professor teaching a survey of American History and was director of the university's School of History. While Scott's primary interest was on the impact of money and the banking industry in American history, Turner's dissertation thesis and lectures focused, unlike Scott, on the impact of a succession of economic frontiers and phases in the development of the American nation and its democratic character.<sup>85</sup>

Unfortunately, Poage's senior essay, "An Investigation into the Economic Condition of the Negro in the State of Georgia during the period of 1860-1900," no longer exists, except a note in Poage's official record that it received a final and barely passing mark of 71. There is little doubt that Turner and Scott saw things differently. Scott was focused on a point of reference, while Turner was using a wide brush to paint a landscape of multiple and conflicting frontiers which made history complicated and indecisive.<sup>86</sup> Poage may have been interested in both of those approaches – or neither of them – and was captured in the tensions between two dominant professors.

By the beginning of his third year (1901-1902), Poage's grades began to slip, but that may have occurred partly as a consequence of shifting to less interesting or to more demanding subjects or to a change in his living arrangement.<sup>87</sup> In 1901, he moved from the Butts' household on E. Johnson to 1108 W. Johnson where he lived with Charles J. and Charles W. Hejda and Louis F. Musil of Manitowoc, Wisconsin, and William E. Selbie and Albert P. Treber of Deadwood, South Dakota.<sup>88</sup> While that location placed him closer to the university's main campus, it separated him from his African American base and identified him more firmly as a student with unique and highly respected athletic skills. In this case, all of his housemates were white and were enrolled in the university's electrical engineering course.

This also was a time when the expectations of the university's athletic program in-



creased significantly. As a full member of the university's track team during his sophomore year, Poage had participated in several competitions and had finished first in track events enough times to become well-known to students and alumni that were interested in everything relating to sports at the university level and to what might improve the university's ranking in the Western Conference. Almost inevitably, Poage's ethnicity became highlighted in regional newspapers. Newspaper accounts described him as the "Colored Sprinter," the "darky," the "crack colored sprinter of the Wisconsin team," the "colored wonder," the "colored athlete," the "colored quarter miler," the "colored lad," the "Dusky star of the Cardinals," and the "Negro."<sup>89</sup> Those were constant reminders that he was an outsider in a region, a university, and a sport that was intended for Wisconsin's white athletes. In his junior year, Poage participated in eight meets, with six of those held outside of Wisconsin. All of that took time away from his classes and his studies.

The surviving data does not indicate if the increasing attention to his race or to his notoriety and fame became a problem. At the amateur and professional levels, sports, such as boxing and baseball, were segregated by race. To a large extent, Poage had enjoyed a middle-class and reasonably race- and status-free life in La Crosse, but that had changed in Madison, where, in time, he became known as "the colored Badger star."<sup>90</sup> While he may have lost the comfort and assistance of an advisor who knew and would keep his secrets, he had gained an independence and recognition and status that were new and that perhaps even he cultivated.<sup>91</sup>

How Turner, who was then head of the School of History, responded to Poage's change in performance, and to his improving status within the university, is unknown. But Turner would have noticed in Poage's junior year that he was missing blocks of classes and that his grades were declining as his popularity in sports and within Wisconsin's student

population improved. His scores in Latin and German were still high, but those earned in history and economics had slipped, in two cases, to 73 and 77.

At the beginning of the 1902-1903 academic year – his senior year – Poage's grades continued to decline, in some cases dramatically, and the university's Athletic Department announced its commitment to "amateurism" in sports, at least at the university level.<sup>92</sup> In the second semester of that year, Poage participated in seven major athletic meets. Four of those were outside of Wisconsin. When he graduated in June 1903, Poage still had a last year of eligibility remaining in collegiate sports, if only a way could be found to make it possible to use it.

In the summer of 1903 Poage became deeply embroiled in a scandal that involved a plan to keep him – a "hold-over" – as a member of the university's track team. After competing for the Milwaukee Athletic Club in the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) competition in Milwaukee in September 1903, the university's "management" convinced Poage to return to the university for a fifth year and to enroll in a sufficient number of classes to retain that eligibility.<sup>93</sup> The Athletic Department arranged for Poage to work at the "football training quarters, rubbing the gridiron candidates and looking after the [department's] properties" as a way to pay for costs associated with Poage's continuation as a student and as a runner.<sup>94</sup> At least in theory, his employment within the Athletic Department had no direct relationship to his athletic talents.

Critics of the university's athletic program and of any hint of scandal that might involve the university, however, saw it differently. One newspaper described Poage's work assignment in 1903-1904 as nothing less than "a 'clever' scheme" to pay athletes to perform after graduation without having to declare it to the university and without placing their status and their financial agreements before appropriate administrative boards and faculty committees. Two other track men were re-

ceiving similar payments, and the athletic department hired several graduated football players to assist in the training of the university's track men and crew men.<sup>95</sup> This stragem was expected to satisfy the popular requirement for amateurism and, at the same time, permit the athletic department to escape necessary and proper university oversight. It also represented the payment of a stipend for athletes who stayed beyond their degrees.

How Turner dealt with this scandal in 1903-1904 is unknown. Poage had completed his coursework for the Bachelor of Letters degree in June 1903 and was enrolled for an additional year, but he failed to submit an application to pursue a Master of Letters degree until 1 October 1903. Of the five history classes taken in 1903-1904, Poage took two classes only for credit and one he never completed. Turner did not tolerate disappointments, and, from his vantage, Turner may have concluded that Poage, an African American, was willingly choosing sports over history.<sup>96</sup>

While achieving fame and university notoriety in one type of competition, Poage also participated and obtained recognition in another. At the end of the nineteenth century, the University of Wisconsin expected all of its students to obtain membership in one or more of the university's sanctioned social and academic groups that it had specifically designed to improve their "mental facilities." Nearly all of those societies and clubs in 1900 were self-limiting with regard to size and membership. The university's 1885 yearbook noted simply – and in keeping with the times – that no university education was complete "without continued practice in the arts of argumentation, elocution and oratory."<sup>97</sup> The educated mind would practice discipline through "the war of words" rather than "the clash of arms."<sup>98</sup> The societies were to serve as training grounds for men and women in public affairs and were nearly as important as classes taken.

Poage participated in the Philomathia Society's "Freshman Blow-Out" in 1899-1900. Partly on the basis of his performance in that competition, but more likely because he had been a member of La Crosse High School's Philomathia Society before his arrival at Madison, the university's society selected him for membership, and he remained a member until his graduation in 1903.<sup>99</sup> The Philomaths were seekers or "lovers" of facts and knowledge. Philomaths also appreciated argumentation and winning, regardless of which side they were defending. In January 1901, Poage defended the negative position in a debate that focused on a topic that would still draw a large audience: "*Resolved, that all church property not used for distinctly religious purposes should be taxed in the same manner as other property.*" The negative and Poage's side carried that debate.<sup>100</sup> At Madison, Philamathia was one of several debating societies that competed at the inter-university and the intra-university levels. If Poage was the only African American on the university's track team, he surely was the only African American member of Madison's Philomathia Society. The Society had eighty-two members in 1902 and sixty-eight in 1903.<sup>101</sup>

Perhaps the single most acknowledged campus-wide event, aside from his victories in sport and debate, occurred when the *Wisconsin State Journal* praised him for his outstanding singing ability. At an assembly of students held in late October 1900, Acting-President R. A. Birge addressed a group of five hundred or more students, and his lecture was "preceded by a musical program consisting of university songs sung by Mr. Po[a]ge, a colored student belonging to the sophomore class."<sup>102</sup> The purpose of Birge's lecture was to ask the university's students to act properly as gentlemen and gentleladies on Halloween which would occur in two days and would turn Madison's State Street into a carnival of fun and potential mayhem. It is doubtful that Poage's singing ability was discovered solely by chance and only after he arrived in Madison.

By Poage's own account, his father had been an acknowledged tenor, and Poage had been a member of La Crosse High School's Glee Club. Poage may also have belonged to the university's Choral Union, but no records regarding membership have survived for that group.

Poage's interest in music was longstanding. La Crosse, even before he left it in 1899, was a center of the choral music movement that was popular in the Upper Midwest, especially in German and Norwegian speaking communities in Wisconsin. There were six singing societies in La Crosse at the turn of the century – *Lyra*, *Orpheus*, *Fidelia*, *Maermucher*, *Männerchor*, and *Versammlung Frohsinn*.<sup>103</sup> La Crosse also was the home for three German language newspapers – *Patriot für Wahrheit und recht*, *La Crosse Volksfreund*, and *Der Nord Stern*. It was not surprising that Poage excelled in music and in his German courses. The Easton children in La Crosse spoke German better than they spoke English, perhaps because of the ethnicity of their nannies and tutors.

But even more important than Poage's accomplishments in music were his athletic achievements. In his four years of eligibility at the university, Poage produced track times that were impressive and set new records for the university.<sup>104</sup> The *Badger Yearbooks* list meets and times for those trackmen winning first place, but those lists are incomplete and often inconsistent. Anna Poage, his mother, kept a scrapbook of clippings from newspapers, and historian Davis used it in her re-

search for *Down Memory Lane*. Unfortunately, that scrapbook is misplaced or no longer exists. The following charts contain Poage's successes and are drawn from data found in the university's yearbooks, Davis' *Down Memory Lane*, and reports printed in the *Inter Ocean*, a prominent and widely-read Chicago newspaper that followed Midwestern sports in detail.<sup>105</sup>



Figure 12: University of Wisconsin, Track Team, 1903. Poage: front row, left. [UWMad]



Figure 13: University of Wisconsin, Track Team, 1904. Poage: back row, third from right. [UWMad]

### Intracollegiate Meets

Place	Date	Type	Track event and Poage's place and times
Madison <sup>106</sup>	17/10/1900	freshman/sophomore	2 <sup>nd</sup> – 100-yard dash
Madison <sup>107</sup>	26/1/1901	1 <sup>st</sup> Indoor	1 <sup>st</sup> – 35-yard dash - 4¾ seconds 1 <sup>st</sup> – 440-yard run - 59¾ seconds
Madison <sup>108</sup>	29/2/1901	2 <sup>nd</sup> Indoor	2 <sup>nd</sup> – 35-yard dash

			2 <sup>nd</sup> – 440-yard run
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### Intercollegiate Meets

Place	Date	Wisconsin v.	Track event and Poage's place and time
Madison, WI <sup>109</sup>	17/5/1901	U of Illinois	1 <sup>st</sup> – 440-yard run - 50½ seconds
Chicago, IL <sup>110</sup>	25/5/1901	U of Chicago	1 <sup>st</sup> – 440-yard run - 53½ seconds
Chicago, IL <sup>111</sup>	1/6/1901	Western Intercollegiate Field Meet - Big Ten	3 <sup>rd</sup> – 440-yard run
Madison, WI <sup>112</sup>	1902	U of Chicago	1 <sup>st</sup> – 220-yard hurdle - 26½ seconds 1 <sup>st</sup> – 440-yard dash - 52¾ seconds
Chicago, IL <sup>113</sup>	15/2/1902	U of Chicago	1 <sup>st</sup> – 440-yard dash - 54½ seconds
South Bend, IN <sup>114</sup>	1/3/1902	Notre Dame	2 <sup>nd</sup> – 40-yard dash 2 <sup>nd</sup> – 220-yard dash 2 <sup>nd</sup> – 440-yard dash
Champaign, IL <sup>115</sup>	16/5/1902	U of Illinois	1 <sup>st</sup> – 100-yard dash – 10 seconds 1 <sup>st</sup> – 220-yard dash – 21½ seconds 1 <sup>st</sup> – 440-yard dash – 49½ seconds
Minneapolis, MN <sup>116</sup>	22/5/1902	Intercollegiate League	1 <sup>st</sup> – Quarter mile – 52 seconds 1 <sup>st</sup> – 220-yard dash – 22½ seconds
Chicago, IL <sup>117</sup>	21/2/1903	U of Chicago	2 <sup>nd</sup> – 35-yard dash 2 <sup>nd</sup> – 440-yard dash
Madison <sup>118</sup>	28/2/1903	Home indoor	2 <sup>nd</sup> – 35-yard dash 1 <sup>st</sup> – 35-yard hurdle - 4½ seconds
Madison <sup>119</sup>	14/3/1903	U of Chicago	1 <sup>st</sup> – 35-yard dash - 4½ seconds 1 <sup>st</sup> – 40-yard high hurdle - 5½ seconds 2 <sup>nd</sup> – 440-yard run
Beloit, WI <sup>120</sup>	4/5/1903	Beloit	2 <sup>nd</sup> – 100-yard dash 1 <sup>st</sup> – 220-yard low hurdles – 27 seconds 3 <sup>rd</sup> – 220-yard high hurdles 1 <sup>st</sup> – 220-yard dash - 22¾ seconds
Champaign, IL <sup>121</sup>	15/5/1903	U of Illinois	1 <sup>st</sup> – 440-yard dash - 51 seconds 1 <sup>st</sup> – 220-yard hurdle - 25½ seconds 1 <sup>st</sup> – 100-yard dash - 10½ seconds
Madison <sup>122</sup>	23/5/1903	U of Chicago	1 <sup>st</sup> – 440-yard dash - 52¾ seconds 1 <sup>st</sup> – 220-yard hurdle - 26½ seconds 3 <sup>rd</sup> – 100-yard dash
Chicago, IL <sup>123</sup>	30/5/1903	Western Intercollegiate Meet – 12 colleges	3 <sup>rd</sup> – 440-yard dash 1 <sup>st</sup> – 220-yard hurdles - 26½ seconds
Chicago, IL <sup>124</sup>	20/2/1904	U of Chicago	1 <sup>st</sup> – 440-yard dash - 56½ seconds
Madison, WI <sup>125</sup>	12/3/1904	U of Chicago	2 <sup>nd</sup> – 440-yard run

Madison, WI <sup>126</sup>	14/5/1904	U of Chicago	2 <sup>nd</sup> – 200 yard dash
Madison, WI <sup>127</sup>	21/5/1904	U of Illinois	1 <sup>st</sup> – 100-yard dash - 10½ seconds 1 <sup>st</sup> – 440-yard run - 54¾ seconds 1 <sup>st</sup> – 220-yard hurdles – 27 seconds
Madison, WI <sup>128</sup>	23/5/1904	U of Chicago	1 <sup>st</sup> – 220-yard hurdles - 26½ seconds 1 <sup>st</sup> – 440-yard dash - 52¾ seconds 3 <sup>rd</sup> – 100-yard dash
Chicago, IL <sup>129</sup>	4/6/1904	Intercollegiate Conference Big Ten	1 <sup>st</sup> – 440-yard dash – 50½ seconds 1 <sup>st</sup> – 220-yard high hurdles – 25 seconds
Beloit, WI <sup>130</sup>	1904	Beloit	1 <sup>st</sup> – 220-yard dash – 22¾ seconds 1 <sup>st</sup> – 440-yard dash – 52 seconds 1 <sup>st</sup> – low hurdles – 27 seconds
Champaign, IL <sup>131</sup>	1904	U of Illinois	1 <sup>st</sup> – 100-yard dash – 10 seconds 1 <sup>st</sup> – 220-yard dash – 21½ seconds 1 <sup>st</sup> – 440-yard dash – 49¾ seconds

Poage's association with Milwaukee's "all-white" Athletic Club (MAC) began in 1903, even before Poage received his Bachelor's of Letters degree from the university. According to historian Davis, the Milwaukee Club approached Poage directly in 1903 with an offer of membership – the first for an African American – and an invitation to run for the club. By that date, the official games of the Third Olympiad were already being scheduled to coincide with the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, and the Milwaukee Athletic Club was constructing a team of winners and champions from America's Midwestern universities. The offer of membership was postponed, however, until after Poage had finished his coursework in 1903.<sup>132</sup> In the meantime, Poage ran for the Milwaukee Club in a competition of the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) in March 1903 and in The Scottish Games at Milwaukee on 9 August 1903.<sup>133</sup> At the National Junior AAU Championships which were held in Milwaukee on 10 September 1903, Poage again ran for the Milwaukee Club and not for the University of Wisconsin. The principal clubs that participated in the AAU meet were the Milwaukee Athletic Club, the University of Wisconsin, the University of Chicago, the Central YMCA of Chicago, the

Greater New York Irish Athletic Association, the First Regiment Athletic Association of Chicago, the Montreal Amateur Athletic Association, and the New York Athletic Club. In this meet, Poage won first in the 220-yard low hurdles, an empty victory since he was that event's only contestant. He placed second in the high jump, but there was no third contestant. And he placed second in the 100-yard dash.<sup>134</sup>

While Poage may have enjoyed a race-free life in his classes and in his social organizations at Madison, he was never free of reminders that he was an African American. From 1899 to 1904, Poage lived in a protected world, not that different from the one that had characterized his circumstances in La Crosse. He was the exception, however, and had been given a status that would not be extended to other African Americans in Madison or Wisconsin. Because of his athletic achievements, he became the university's and the state's single and best known African American. His mother, sister, and Benjamin and Amy Butts, however, kept the issue of race at the forefront. Working and living within a large and separated African American community in East St. Louis, Nellie was insisting that Anna leave La Crosse and Wisconsin

and join her in Illinois where Anna could enjoy her life as a member of a vibrant and progressive African American community. And, once George was well situated in Madison, Butts became the personification of the submissive African American male, far from Anna's image for George or for George himself. Most of their lives were governed by racial identification, and the chasm between whites and African Americans at the national and regional levels in 1904 was widening rather than shrinking.

The university, and Milwaukee to a lesser degree, was perhaps the first of Poage's personal interactions with white Americans who seemed obsessed with the issues of race, segregation and scientific racism – the "Race Problem." This was his introduction to a small African American population living in segregated housing, whether by choice or the decisions made by whites who controlled the use of land. He obviously knew that he was the anomaly in La Crosse where he was different from the rest of the student body – "the crowd." By 1904, however, that crowd had changed, and it had become much larger. He knew that he had come from a domestic servant class, though his mother had taught him that he could rise above his handicaps and challenges. She had not set that goal for Nellie, but Lincoln Institute in Jefferson City would significantly improve Nellie's station within Missouri's growing middle-class African American community. Madison, however, was not Jefferson City, and the University of Wisconsin was not Lincoln Institute. George was Anna's and Madison's star, but neither his experiences in Madison nor the university would separate him from his African American roots.

Whether Poage had discovered his sexual orientation before he moved from La Crosse to Madison in 1899 or from Madison to St. Louis, Missouri in 1904 is unclear in the sources. Assuming, however, that he knew that he was gay before he left La Crosse, it is likely – but not certain – that his mother, his sister, and perhaps even Mary Easton also

knew. While in La Crosse, Poage had lived within a household dominated by women, and women were his models. The Easton males were involved in family-operated businesses – farm management, registered animal breeding, railroads, and banking – none of which provided career entry opportunities accessible to Poage because of his race and his social class. The Eastons, after all, were businessmen, and they could ill afford to risk their own status and fortunes by placing Poage in a visible position of leadership in a world and within a "crowd" in which African Americans were farmhands and coachmen and whites were managers. Benjamin Butts provided no model, at least none that would be acceptable to a graduate of the University of Wisconsin. When confronted by difficulties or challenges, the Poage women were his refuge, and they remained Poage's principal advisors and his confidants.

## Chapter 3: The 1904 St. Louis Games – The Third Olympiad

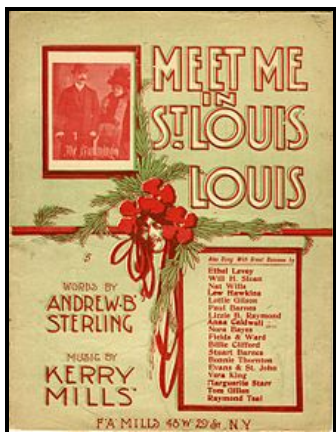
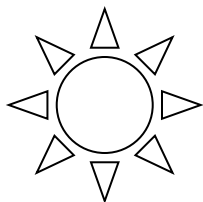


Figure 14: Music cover.

♪ Meet me in St. Louis, Louis,  
Meet me at the Fair  
Don't tell me the lights are shining  
Anyplace but there  
We will dance the "Hoochie-Koochie"  
I will be your "Tootsie-Wootsie"  
If you will meet me in St. Louis, Louis,  
Meet me at the Fair.

The Chorus  
from "Meet me in St. Louis, Louis" -  
1904<sup>135</sup>

I had a presentiment [intuitive feeling]  
that the [Third] Olympiad would match  
the mediocrity of the town [St. Louis].<sup>136</sup>

Pierre de Coubertin,  
Founder and President of the Interna-  
tional Olympic Committee - 1904

The "crowd" in which Poage was compet-  
ing changed and became larger and his chal-  
lenges more complicated – and at the same  
time more freeing – when he joined the Mil-  
waukee Athletic Club and agreed to become

the first African American to participate in a modern Olympiad, the St. Louis Games of 1904. Except for an ongoing war between Imperial Russia and Japan and the growing specter of racial violence that was spreading in America's Upper Midwest, white-dominated America was in a mood to celebrate. Most of the nation's entrepreneurial class had recovered financially from the Panic of 1893 and seemed to be satisfied with the results of the nation's "splendid" war with Spain and its suppression of the Philippine independence movement. By 1904, however, America's boundaries had changed, and she had become an imperial power with colonial possessions and imperial ambitions. With that expansion came a "white man's burden" to spread America's civilization to her brown "brothers" in the Philippines and her browner brothers in Cuba and Puerto Rico.

But more important for most white Americans, at least for those in America's Upper Midwest, was the fact that the hero of the Spanish-American war, Theodore Roosevelt, was America's president in 1904, and America's Midwest had not had a party since Chicago hosted the Columbian Exposition in 1893. Americans were ready to travel, take an excursion, and spend money. Trains and inter-urban railroads crisscrossed the nation's heartland, and travel was easy and inexpensive. Railroad companies regularly offered special fares for trains carrying passengers to and from vacation sites. The destination of choice for many in the Summer of 1904 was St. Louis and the Louisiana Purchase Exposition.



Figure 15: Chicago World's Fair, 1893. Photograph.

Perhaps Poage's participation in the Games and his introduction to a world of legally-defined racial separation – on a scale that he had only imagined while studying in Madison – was the point in time when his blackness or *negritude* obtained a special meaning. He had read about it and heard about it from his mother and sister, and he even had written about it in his senior college thesis, but he had not yet experienced or felt the full impact of apartness that it demanded. The white world would applaud his decision to ignore a call to boycott the Fair and its Games, but whites also would applaud the Fair's separate bleachers, its separate exhibits for African Americans, and its separate housing and boarding facilities for the few African Americans that would attend the Exposition. But they also might question whether Poage should participate in Games that had not yet been separated by race. For some, Poage was a hero who took his status and name-recognition as "the colored sprinter" from Madison to St. Louis, but he was still operating within a white dominated world, and he was risking the possibility – by "resisting" the appeals of African American leaders to boycott the Games – of becoming an outcast in the world of his own race.<sup>137</sup> Or, Poage may have considered his participation as his chance to make a statement about the then-existing trend to divide all sports – boxing, football, and baseball – by race.

Trade fairs, which had been a tradition in Europe since Medieval times, were occasions when towns encouraged merchants to show their manufactures in large displays that drew sellers and buyers from distant places. Musicians and artists provided entertainment, and athletes participated in games that included archery, kickball, hammer-throwing, jousting, horseshoes, and wrestling. The Great London Exposition of 1862 changed that model by transforming trade fairs into grand events where organizers demonstrated the wonders of the industrial revolution with exhibits of massive machines. Fairs and their magnificent buildings grew in size and cost as cities and nations used them to flaunt their countries' scientific successes and discoveries. That tradition of displaying machines continued for the next four decades and, in large part, ended with the age of imperial expansion and the St. Louis Fair in 1904.

Occurring simultaneously with the great fairs was a revival of the Olympic Games. The Games of the First Olympiad were held in Athens, Greece in April 1896 and occurred over a period of nine tightly-packed days. In the beginning of the revived games, athletes competed against athletes, with little or secondary weight given to national status. Organizers used seven venues in the events, all either within Athens or near to it. Two hundred forty-one athletes of fourteen nationalities competed in events. With the exception of seventeen athletes from Australia, Chile, Egypt, and the United States, all of the contestants were Europeans. Fourteen Americans, then either students of Harvard or Princeton or members of Boston's Athletic Association (BAA), competed in only three sports, winning eleven Golds, seven Silvers, and two Bronzes.





Figure 16: *Paris de l'exposition universelle, 1900*. Birdseye.

The Second Olympiad occurred in Paris at the same time as the “1900 Exposition Universelle,” and debate and controversy plagued the Second Olympiad from the start. Baron (Pierre) de Coubertin, the chairman of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), reluctantly surrendered administration of the Paris Games to the *Exposition’s* planners who spread the sanctioned games over a period of more than five months, which meant that the games became incidental to the *Exposition Universelle* and not separate from it. Nine hundred seventy-five men and twenty-two women participated in events, with fully a third of those coming from the United States.<sup>138</sup> The Americans made it a national competition by overwhelming the Games with their presence. The French organizers, moreover, transformed the Paris Games into a French competition and added and deleted events as they wished. Competitors were confused. Pierre de Coubertin, who had wanted the Games to produce continuity and enthusiasm for a select list of international sports, was dismayed with the events and outcomes and later commented, “It’s a miracle that the Olympic Movement survived that celebration.”<sup>139</sup>

Even though the Americans who competed in 1896 in Athens had recommended that the revived Games remain forever in Athens, de Coubertin insisted that there be an international rotation of venues, and, since so many Americans had traveled to Paris in

1900, the IOC considered New York City and Philadelphia, and, finally, Chicago, Illinois for the 1904 Games. Chicago seemed to be an ideal location. As host of the “Columbia Exposition of 1893,” it had demonstrated that it could manage and accommodate large crowds, and it appeared eager to permit the International Committee to handle the competitions. Chicago also was not hosting a great fair in 1904, which meant that the Games would stand alone and would, according to de Coubertin and the IOC, receive the international and singular attention that had been missing in the Paris Games.

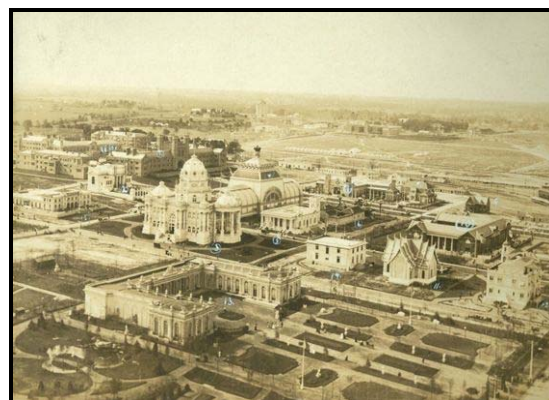


Figure 17: Photograph, Louisiana Purchase Exposition, St. Louis Fair, 1904.

The immediate problem with Chicago, however, was that it was located half a world away from most of those athletes that had competed in Athens and Paris at their own expense and without sponsorships. For Europeans, competing in the Chicago Games involved at least a month or more of round-trip travel across the Atlantic Ocean and a long train ride from New York City. To travel that far was expensive and involved extensive and time-consuming planning, making it nearly impossible for athletes without private or national sponsors to compete. A second problem emerged when planners involved in the “Louisiana Purchase Exposition,” which was scheduled to occur in St. Louis at the same time, began to organize their own set of games and to campaign for moving the Third

Olympiad from Chicago to St. Louis where the IOC-sanctioned Games would occur concurrently with St. Louis' Fair.

Much of the back-room maneuvering to move the Games from Chicago to St. Louis was done without de Coubertin's active participation, and when he learned of its details, it was already decided. The Games would move to St. Louis.<sup>140</sup> As with the Paris Games, the IOC became observers, having lost control to local organizers. Most European athletes were confused by the lack of organization in America's Midlands. Because of extended delays in communication with planners, most Europeans decided to ignore what organizers were billing as the Third Olympiad.

While most of the IOC-sanctioned events took place in six days between 29 August and 3 September, other athletic competitions organized by St. Louis' planners stretched out for nearly five months as a way to maximize the numbers of visitors coming to St. Louis. Only twelve countries sent contestants to St. Louis. Six hundred thirty athletes took part in the Games, and 523 of those came from the United States who won a combined total of 239 Golds, Silvers, and Bronzes. Nearly all of the American athletes were competing for athletic clubs or universities. There was no unified American team. At the end of each day during the sanctioned competitions, newspapers issued "club honors," tallying and ranking clubs according to that day's events. In numerous events, there were only Americans competing. Neither Britain nor France sent athletes or teams, nor did Harvard, Yale, the University of Pennsylvania, Columbia, Dartmouth, Georgetown, Amherst, the University of Michigan, the University of Wisconsin, or the University of Minnesota. Countries sending athletes were Germany, Greece, Hungary, Canada, and Australia. Athletes from Zululand, Transvaal, and Cuba, were either working at the Fair and its exhibits or paid their own costs.<sup>141</sup> For many observers, however, the Games became little more than a competition between "East" and "West," which, in this case, referred to clubs and uni-

versities located on either side of a line drawn at the westernmost border of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

But there was another and more personal problem facing Poage. By participating in the St. Louis Games for the Milwaukee Athletic Club, Poage was stepping into a world that he neither knew nor fully appreciated. America's fairs were different from those being held in Europe. While continuing to showcase local products and the industries of their regions, they also reflected the attitudes of white Americans about race at the end of the century. Whether the Fair was being held in New Orleans (1885), Chicago (1893), Nashville (1897), Omaha (1898), Buffalo (1901) or St. Louis (1904), there were mandatory "colored" exhibits which generally included a reconstruction of a sleepy and peaceful plantation with African Americans picking cotton and singing "Negro Spirituals." The Southern School of History was in vogue, and it was describing plantation life as a natural and beneficial condition that had been upset by a civil and colonial war that had been thrust upon the South to transform the South into an economic dependency of the North. The South would produce cotton, and the factories of the North would transform it into cloth that it would then sell to southern consumers. That school of history also implied that Reconstruction and Radical Republicans, not slavery, had created the nation's "Negro Problem."<sup>142</sup>

The notion of a "natural" condition of the African American male – and female – also was in vogue. Scholars were studying and giving legitimacy to "Scientific" racism at the university level, supposedly to prove that white Americans were a separate and superior race.<sup>143</sup> They concluded that African Americans were better dancers, singers, piano players, and vaudeville actors and actresses, and as naturally suited as barbers, domestic servants, cooks, waiters, and doormen. But they were not good managers and could not expect to own businesses that required capital. Nor should they expect to become members

of country clubs or fraternal organizations, unless those were designed specifically for African Americans. They certainly could not serve as officers in the regular military, because that would be unacceptable to white troops and would be dangerous and counter-productive in any case. Their natural condition was to drink too much, to gamble too much, to be irresponsible regarding family obligations, and to be sexual predators. They should be separated. African American women, in contrast, were strong and defenders of the family and of morality.<sup>144</sup> In effect, African Americans were different. The Supreme Court's 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision essentially accepted that reasoning and ruled that it was constitutional for separate accommodations and services to be provided for African Americans, as long as they were equal to those available for whites.

Separate and equal were important issues in St. Louis in 1904. That city, and its sister city of East St. Louis in Illinois, had large African American populations led by internal coalitions of leaders and bosses who accepted separateness because it supplied them and their constituents with jobs, schools, and general improvements in return for votes and support at election times. It was an issue both of shared governance and of shared rewards or shared political plunder. The bosses of St. Louis' and East St. Louis' African American populations ruled over their wards and districts much like white bosses ruled over theirs. As long as bosses and their arrangements with businesses remained within African American districts, and, as long as they maintained order and discipline within their precincts and their ranks, they possessed license to do as they wanted.<sup>145</sup>

What some African Americans in St. Louis wanted in 1903 and 1904, however, was equal access to work and to the rewards that were expected to come to those who built the Fair's displays and the hotels and restaurants that would need to be built or refurbished for the Fair's expected multitude of

visitors. Except for the remodeling of the Douglass Hotel and the building of a new and model high school for African Americans in South St. Louis, few benefits flowed to African Americans. White workers and their unions kept African Americans from worksites. And they constructed separate and inferior bleachers for African American spectators. African Americans in both St. Louis and East St. Louis formed committees and offered their advice and services, hoping that the Exposition's planners would present a more balanced image of the African American experience, but the fair's planners ignored all or most of their efforts.<sup>146</sup> In response, African American leaders called for a boycott of the Fair and the Games.

Whether Poage was aware of the intense controversy within the African American community that related to the St. Louis Fair, its Games, and the issue of "race" before he arrived in St. Louis in 1904 is uncertain.<sup>147</sup> That changed quickly. If he arrived as a part of a group of athletes from the Milwaukee Athletic Club – the University of Wisconsin did not participate in the 1904 Games – he would have faced the immediate problem of segregated housing. No record is known about his place of residence during the IOC-sanctioned Games, but he and Joseph Stadler, the only African American athletes participating in the Games, may have stayed at the Douglass Hotel, located at the corner of Lawton and Beaumont streets. The most embarrassing and most racially offensive events at the Games, however, took place during the Anthropology Days when organizers pitted so-called "uncivilized tribes" (Ainus, Patagonians, Pygmies, Filipinos, and Sioux – all of whom had been recruited from the Fair's exhibits) against each other in their own special set of contests. Organizers designed those contests to show that, while these groups might have natural athletic abilities, those attributes were inferior to those of whites. Poage, Stadler, and two runners from Zululand in South Africa, obviously, were anomalies. One

of the “uncivilized” contests was mud throwing. When de Coubertin, who did not attend the Games, learned of these special contests, his response was quick, biting, and more than a bit condescending.<sup>148</sup>

In no place but America would one have dared to place such events on a program, but to Americans everything is permissible, their youthful exuberance calling certainly for the indulgence of the Ancient Greek ancestors, if, by chance, they found themselves among the amused [*sic*] spectators.

Poage competed in only four contests in 1904. In the 400-meter dash, thirteen runners left together, and at 68 (75 yards) meters H. C. Groman, of the University of Chicago but running for the Chicago Athletic Association, took the lead, with Poage running in second place. Harry Hillman, running for the New York Athletic Club, was third. At the turn, Hillman, “putting on a hard sprint,” took the lead. At 196 meters (215 yards), Poage began to “fall behind.”<sup>149</sup> Joseph Fleming of the Missouri Athletic Club and Frank Waller, of the University of Wisconsin but running for the Chicago Athletic Club, followed Hillman, with five runners then in contending position. Hillman, Waller, and Groman, in that order, crossed the finish line, with Hillman establishing a new Olympic record for that event at 49½ seconds.<sup>150</sup> In the 60-meter dash, there were twelve contestants, but Poage, who was expected to medal, failed to qualify in his heat. Archibald Hahn of the University of Michigan (then running for the Milwaukee Athletic Club) won that event.<sup>151</sup>

On 31 August, Poage entered the 400-meter high hurdles (42 inches high). Hillman won that race, but Hillman and the second place winner, Frank Waller, had miscalculated the difference between the American yard and the international meter, and both had gotten off to a bad start. Even so, Poage came in third in that contest, winning a bronze medal in the process and becoming the first

African American to medal in a modern Olympiad. On 1 September, Poage entered the 200-meter low hurdles (30 inches high). Hillman of the New York club also won that contest, with Frank Castleman, running for the Greater New York Irish Athletic Club, taking the Silver, and Poage coming in third for the Bronze.<sup>152</sup>

Everyone competing in the St. Louis Games surely knew that they were participating in an unusual set of competitions. The Games had assumed an American, carnival, and less professional character, with clubs or universities rather than individuals accepting honors. And there were strange events, aside from those that took place during “Anthropology Days.” George Eyser won three Golds, “despite his wooden leg.”<sup>153</sup> Lentauw, running for Zululand and described by historian Lucas as a “Kaffir” or non-believer, was chased by a dog for two miles during the Marathon, and he still finished ninth in the event. Two runners were injured when a car “rolled down a hill” and onto the track.<sup>154</sup> The managers of Thomas Hicks of Boston, who eventually was declared Marathon winner, had given him a “concoction of strychnine and egg whites” to improve his performance and had paced him with two cars – one before him and one after him – with the second carrying reporters and photographers.<sup>155</sup> Roads for the Marathon event were “inches deep in dust, and every time an auto passed it raised enough dust to obscure the vision of the runners and choke them.”<sup>156</sup> Felix Carvajal from Cuba stopped “whenever he came to a crowd [along the road]” and practiced his broken English. Carvajal even stopped at an orchard, “ate several [apples],” and took a brief nap, and he was still able to finish fourth in the event.<sup>157</sup> Fred Lorz, a self-described jokester, was the first to arrive at the finish line and failed to mention that he had ridden in a car for eleven of the marathon’s twenty-six mile course. Alice Roosevelt, the daughter of President Theodore Roosevelt, was preparing to place the Gold around Lorz’s neck when he admitted his folly.<sup>158</sup>

Whether Poage considered the Games and his participation in them as the peak of his career as a runner and hurdler and whether he believed that employment as a coach was a possible reward for his success are unknowns. Whether he gave the events his best efforts also is unknown. In any case, Poage did not return to Milwaukee or Madison after competing on 2 September, but, instead, remained in St. Louis/East St. Louis, with his mother and his sister. It was the first time that the Poages had lived together since Nellie left La Crosse in 1897 and George moved from La Crosse to Madison in 1899.



Figure 18: George Coleman Poage and the 200-meter low hurdles. [MoHM]

At the same time that most of the nation's newspapers were focused on the Games and the Fair, St. Louis and her sister city of East St. Louis were hosts for something other than sports or entertainment. It was the presidential election season, and two national political parties held their conventions in St. Louis. The National Democrat Party, meeting from 6 to 9 July, selected Judge Alton Parker of the State of New York, "the candidate without known opinions or convictions," to lead that party's ticket in the upcoming presidential election.<sup>159</sup> A few weeks earlier, the National Republican Party met in Chicago and chose Theodore Roosevelt, the sitting president after the assassination of William McKinley, as that party's standard-bearer.

Another political party, the National Negro Liberty Party (NNLP), also held its convention in St. Louis. A new party, it met in the ballroom of St. Louis' Douglass Hotel. Only

300 delegates from thirty states were confirmed and seated on the first day of the convention.<sup>160</sup> Nearly all were either Independent Republicans ("Negrowumps") who were dissatisfied or disappointed with the Roosevelt-led branch of the Republican Party, or were Democrats. This new party demanded that the federal government and the national Republican and Democrat parties take firm stands against racial violence then spreading throughout the nation. Poage had said essentially the same thing in his address to his graduating class in 1899. But, in addition, the new party championed long-standing plans to grant pensions as reparation to African Americans who had once been slaves.<sup>161</sup> The new party's leadership had discussed those issues with President Roosevelt, but Roosevelt had publically ridiculed any plan for granting pensions or reparations to ex-slaves.

The standard-bearer or candidate of the National Negro Liberty Party was William T. Scott, a former Democrat whose businesses and political interests were centered in East St. Louis in 1904. Three years earlier, Scott had formed a committee to assist the planners of the St. Louis Fair in designing meaningful and relevant exhibits of African American life, but planners had ignored his committee and his ideas. Scott also had been president of the National Negro Democratic League, the Negro bureau within the National Democratic Party, from 1890 to 1892. By 1904, however, Scott had bolted the Democrats and had joined the NNLP.<sup>162</sup>

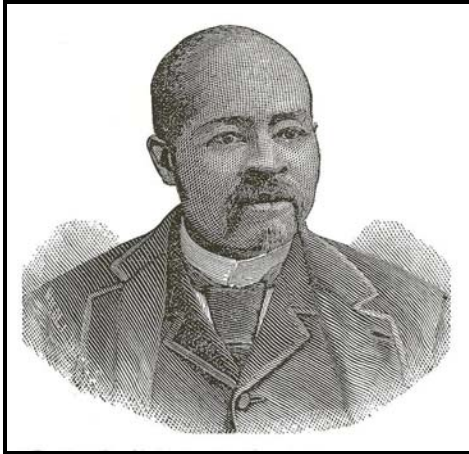


Figure 19: William Thomas Scott, of Cairo and East St. Louis. [public domain]

Based upon his location in East St. Louis and his reputation as a popular speaker, Scott became the party's temporary convention chairman when it convened in the ballroom of the Douglass Hotel. Scott was a maneuverer who knew how to convince a convention to do what he wanted. Three hundred delegates had been confirmed on the convention's first day, but many more than that number voted when it came time to select a permanent convention chairman and the party's standard-bearer. It was not surprising that the convention selected Scott as its candidate for the nation's highest office.<sup>163</sup>

Many Independent Republicans left the convention and the new party in dismay, claiming that Scott, who operated taverns, gambling halls, and rooming houses in East St. Louis, had stolen the nomination by filling the Douglass' ball room with his friends from St. Louis and East St. Louis. The African American newspapers, nearly all of which were loyal to the Republican Party, claimed that Scott and the new party were nothing less than pawns of the National Democrat Party and were planning to split the African American vote and guarantee the election of Democrats. According to Scott, some of his former friends reminded the police at Belleville, the county seat of St. Clair County, that Scott had failed to pay a fine for having allowed a group of prostitutes to operate within one of his tav-

erns, and authorities rearrested him and remanded him to the Belleville jail. That quickly ended Scott's run for the office of President of the United States.<sup>164</sup>



Figure 20: George Edwin Taylor, 1904. [public domain]

But what must have attracted the undivided attention of Anna Poage, was the name and history of the person selected to replace Scott as NNLP's standard-bearer. Like George Poage, George Edwin Taylor had spent his youth in La Crosse, Wisconsin. Taylor had arrived in 1865, nearly twenty years earlier than the Poages – a ten-year-old orphan and a casualty of the Civil War's western campaign along the Mississippi River. In Taylor's case, La Crosse's court system fostered him to an African American farmer who lived near La Crosse.<sup>165</sup> Like Benjamin Butts, this farmer had been a slave when a Union detachment, commanded in this instance by General Cadwallader Washburn of La Crosse, occupied his hometown in Tennessee. He had followed his liberators when they returned to Wisconsin.

Luckily for Taylor, his foster-father was a political activist and was well-known in La Crosse for his association with General and then Governor Washburn and for his active role in La Crosse's short-lived farmer/workingman's party, the precursor to the Wisconsin Union Labor Party. He had encouraged Taylor to study. At the age of twenty, Taylor left the farm and enrolled in Wayland University in Beaver Dam, Wisconsin where he re-



mained for two years.<sup>166</sup> He then returned to La Crosse and became involved in local politics and worker and populist movements that were becoming fashionable in Wisconsin in the mid-1880s. Among those was the Wisconsin Union Labor Party. Taylor was editor and owner of La Crosse's only African American newspaper, *The Wisconsin Labor Advocate*, published between 1886 and 1888 and the official voice of the state's Union Labor Party.<sup>167</sup> It would have been nearly impossible for Anna not to have heard of Taylor's involvement in local politics during the remaining five troubled years of Taylor's residence in La Crosse and Wisconsin.

Taylor was a gifted writer and orator. In his *Labor Advocate*, Taylor called for the creation of a department of labor, a simplification of laws, mandatory arbitration between labor and management, an end to child labor, a ten-hour workday, direct election of public officials, and a graduated income tax. But Taylor also called for strict regulation of foreign labor and for government ownership of banks, railroads, and means of production.

When the editor of the *Commercial Advertiser*, a rival labor newspaper in La Crosse, described Taylor in 1887 as "a descendent of the cannibal race," the Poages were reasonably well-established in La Crosse. They certainly would have known Taylor or about him. Taylor response to the racial slur was humorous, reckless, and perhaps dangerous, especially for La Crosse's small African American community:<sup>168</sup>

We have but three causes for regrets, not that the color of our skin is black, not that we do not receive a liberal patronage from the people of La Crosse and vicinity, and not that the *Commercial Advertiser* will hurt our business, but because the editorial fraternity of Wisconsin is scourged by the "it" that writes the *Commercial Advertiser*, because the businessmen of La Crosse will be humbugged to some extent by this "it" and because this same "it," is a disgrace, not only to the editori-

al fraternity, but also to the noble race he represents. Though you are only an "it" Jacob, you have our regrets, and when you want to write on cannibalism again, come over and borrow our encyclopedia so that you can get your article charged with a little common sense. You are externally white, but God only knows the color of your heart, while our surface is black the inside can be no worse.<sup>169</sup>

Taylor left La Crosse and Wisconsin in 1889 or 1890 and resurfaced in Oskaloosa, Iowa, as a recruiter for Iowa's Republican Party. Taylor rose rapidly within the ranks of Iowa's African American Republicans, and, in 1892, the state party sent him to the National Republican Party convention in Minneapolis as an observer and as a participant in an African American caucus of Independent Republicans that was to be led by Frederick Douglass.

Three African Americans – Douglass, Charles Ferguson, and Taylor – carried the recommendation of the African American caucus to the national platform committee which refused to add meaningful language to the anti-lynching plank of the party's platform. Taylor bolted the Republican Party and wrote a fiery "National Appeal" that condemned the national party. Taylor declared himself a Democrat and campaigned for Grover Cleveland in that election cycle. Taylor became the president of the National Negro Democratic League from 1900 to 1904, the same position held by Scott between 1890 and 1892.

When leaders of the National Negro Liberty Party approached him with an offer to become that party's standard-bearer in the 1904 election, Taylor, who had become disillusioned with the promises of Democrats, accepted.<sup>170</sup> Taylor campaigned vigorously during the summer and fall, but his campaign was plagued with problems from the start. The NNLP had promised two hundred speakers to support Taylor, but few offered their services, and Taylor carried the campaign mainly by himself. In most states, the only

way that one could vote for the NNLP and for Taylor was by writing his name on the ballot. Not a single African American newspaper supported his candidacy. Roosevelt won the election in a landslide.



Figure 21: National Negro Liberty Party, Campaign Poster, 1904.

On the night before the 1904 election, Taylor granted an interview with a correspondent for the *New York Sun*. Taylor was disappointed with the election, but he also was reflective about the status of educated and successful African Americans in American society:<sup>171</sup>

Any ignorant foreigner can come to this country and he has an even chance with the white man, but 'the nigger must be kept down.' He's all right so long as he's a laborer; but let him get a little education, a little money, a little success in his community, and he's all wrong. White folks whom he has passed industriously, financially, will say:

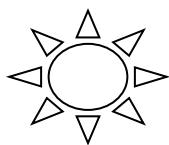
That nigger begins to think he's better than white people. He ought to be kept down....

Booker Washington and his plans are good enough in their way, but they will never secure the redemption of the negro race. The negro must do that himself at the polls. When the negro by an independent party organization proves and secures his equality at the polls, then perhaps there will not be so much talk about 'keeping the nigger down.'

Poage could have returned to his white world in Madison or Milwaukee after competing in the 1904 Games and should have been able to find meaningful employment, but, like Taylor, he knew that he would eventually encounter a color line that he could not cross. If he remained in his white world, he would be seen as too well-educated and would be "kept down." Instead, he followed a suggestion given him either during the official Games or soon after they ended, that he should "stay in the [St. Louis] area" as a member of his own kind.<sup>172</sup> Within a few days of the end of the IOC-sanctioned portion of the Games, officials of the St. Louis Board of Education offered Poage the position of principal or head teacher of the newly-constructed and racially-segregated William McKinley High School, and Poage accepted the appointment.



## Chapter 4: McKinley and Sumner High Schools



Poage never received the acclaim he might have received in a different time and setting. With his speed he might have become a professional football star. With his knowledge he might have become a noted professor or author. He was recognized by some in his later years; occasionally he was asked to attend a sports affair, but ... he usually turned down the offer.

Becht, "George Poage," 54.

When Poage accepted his appointment with the faculty of the St. Louis Public School District, he surely knew that leaving Wisconsin meant that he had made a decision to join the segregated world of his race. He must have known that he would be participating in a unique and progressive experiment in African American education and that educational policies governing Black schools were intensely controversial even within the African American community. Some community members were adamant that schools and the students they served would need to be separated from whites because, otherwise, whites would control both the schools and the students. Others supported the notion that separate schools were inevitable and necessary, even though they were inherently unequal.<sup>173</sup>

Nellie Poage, with whom Poage lived after his participation in the Games, was in her fourth year of teaching at "Lincoln School (Colored)" in East St. Louis and was at the center of the debate on black education, having completed the Normal Curriculum at Lincoln Institute in June 1898.<sup>174</sup> Her first assignment had been as a teacher/principal of a small school in Appleton, Missouri, where she had remained for three years. In 1901, how-

ever, Nellie received the appointment at Lincoln School (which became Lincoln High School). It employed five teachers in 1901; it was the largest school for African American children in East St. Louis.<sup>175</sup>

While Nellie secured her position as a master teacher at Lincoln School, George Poage was completing his coursework at the University of Wisconsin which had included only two courses in Pedagogy (teaching theory and practice). Poage clearly ignored that deficiency when he accepted his appointment as the first principal of a new experimental and segregated high school.<sup>176</sup> McKinley High School had been showcased during the 1904 World's Fair as an example of St. Louis' innovative and progressive approach to education and to school building design. Its appearance was grand, and its size alone indicated that St. Louis' Board of Education expected McKinley to serve a large and increasingly educated African American population. But the Board also expected McKinley and its teachers to adhere closely to Booker T. Washington's focus on manual training that would lead directly to jobs for African Americans. That focus was not in keeping with Poage's training in Wisconsin which, like that of W.E.B. DuBois, had emphasized theory, research, and classical studies.

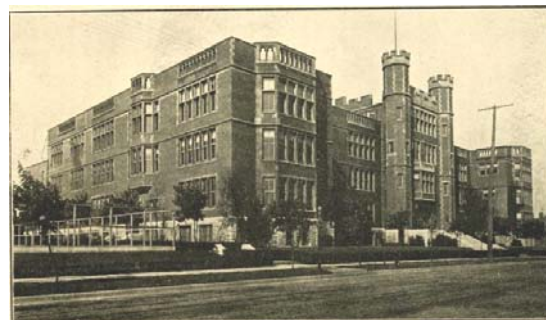


Figure 22: William McKinley High School, St. Louis, Missouri, circa 1910.

Surely those offering this appointment to Poage, and he in accepting it, knew that he was twenty-four years of age, that he had no experience as either a teacher or an administrator, and that he was hardly St. Louis' best

choice to become the principal of a new school with a new faculty. Notwithstanding those reservations, Poage had accepted the appointment, perhaps against his better judgment but also as an expression of an extraordinary and unrealistic self-confidence that he could overcome whatever obstacles he encountered. The more likely explanation is that school administrators were using Poage's celebrity from the Games to serve the interests of the St. Louis Board and to counteract criticism for having built such a large high school for African Americans in South St. Louis. In his defense and perhaps to prepare him for his role as principal of McKinley, Poage made arrangements to take classes in pedagogy at Michigan State Normal School in East Lansing, Michigan in the summer of 1905.<sup>177</sup> In any case, the enrollment level for McKinley students was kept low in its first year of operation.

Before the end of that first year, however, the St. Louis board reconsidered his appointment and offered Poage an assignment as teacher of English, English Literature, and Latin at Charles Sumner High School, St. Louis' premier African American school. That assignment came close to Poage's initial plan to take the Ancient-Classical course at Madison, rather than the applied Civic-Historical course that others (including Turner) thought more important and more useful for Wisconsin and its residents. In 1905, Sumner was recruiting superior teachers for a special mission in teacher and college preparation, in effect deviating even further from the prevailing and popular trend that African Americans should be taught industrial trades rather than waste their time and tax payers' support in pre-collegiate courses that did not produce jobs for African Americans. From the beginning, a common complaint within the African American community focused on the different requirements for teachers in Missouri's public high schools. To remove that difference and lift the level of preparation for Missouri's African American teachers, the Board in 1890 established a Normal Department at Sumner

to prepare female students to teach in the city's segregated schools.

Of the 130 students graduating from Sumner in 1894, thirty-three had taken the Normal Course. Three of Sumner's graduates in 1896 obtained admission to the University of Michigan, and one each to Oberlin College and Howard University. By 1900, those numbers had more than doubled, and financial support per student in black high schools had increased to \$55, nearly the same as the \$60 expended per student in St. Louis' white high schools.<sup>178</sup> In that same year, 224 girls and fifty-four boys graduated from Sumner, with eighty percent of the girls becoming teachers in St. Louis' elementary schools. Many of the remaining became teachers in schools outside of St. Louis. Only five of the male graduates became teachers, but eighteen became government clerks and six enrolled in universities.<sup>179</sup>

Those successes were sufficient to encourage the Board to authorize the building of a new school – located at 4268 West Cottage Avenue and built on the model used for McKinley High School. The new Sumner High School opened in 1910 and remained the center of quality African American education in St. Louis. In 1903, St. Louis' Board raised requirements for student admission to Sumner and increased expectations for its teachers. "Sumner was considered one of the finest black high schools in the country," and, with that reputation, "it was able to attract many fine teachers."<sup>180</sup> Poage was among the first hired in this new drive to improve Sumner's teacher core.



Figure 23: The new Charles Sumner High School in St. Louis, Missouri.

Poage joined a faculty at Sumner that was, in many ways, superior to that in any of St. Louis' white schools. For more than a decade, Sumner had been dominated by the presence and influence of Peter Humphries Clark who had moved to St. Louis in 1888 from his position as Principal of the State Normal and Industrial School in Huntsville, Alabama, and who would play a prominent role in Missouri's politics for the next quarter of a century.<sup>181</sup> Born in 1829 in Cincinnati, Ohio, Clark was already fifty-nine years old when he became a teacher at Sumner. He had been an abolitionist before the Civil War and was among the first African Americans to declare himself a socialist. His writings on education and politics placed him at the forefront of intellectual thought for the second half of the nineteenth century. A leader among black Democrats, Clark became president of the National Negro Democratic League, the Negro Bureau within the National Democratic Party, in 1888.<sup>182</sup> In 1890, in a poll conducted by the Indianapolis *Freeman*, respondents selected him as one of the ten "greatest Negroes who ever lived."<sup>183</sup> He was a Unitarian when most blacks were Baptists or Methodists, and a labor activist, while at the same time maintaining his membership among America's emerging black elite. He was a free-thinker wherever he lived and worked.

Another exceptional scholar, researcher, and teacher was Edward Alexander Bouchet, a Connecticut-born Yankee, who had obtained his doctorate from Yale University in 1876, the first black person to obtain a doctorate from an American university. Bouchet's father had been a janitor at Yale, and his mother had been a laundress to Yale's students. Despite his considerable accomplishments, Bouchet was unable to secure a university and research-focused position in his field of physics, and he spent his career teaching chemistry and physics at the high school level. For twenty-six years he taught at the Institute for Colored Youth in Philadelphia, a school established for African Americans by

the Society of Friends. In 1902, that school ended its college-preparatory curriculum and, in keeping with Booker T. Washington's philosophy, changed its focus to industrial arts. Bouchet taught at Sumner in its college preparatory program for only one year, 1902-1903, after which he remained in St. Louis as the U. S. Inspector of Customs at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition and as the business manager for Provident Hospital, which opened for African Americans in 1909.<sup>184</sup>

Another scientist who taught at Sumner was Charles Henry Turner, a specialist in comparative psychology and animal behavior, who obtained a doctorate from the University of Chicago in 1907. Like Bouchet, Turner was unable to obtain a teaching position at the university level. He also was locked out of African American colleges because he focused primarily on research rather than applied manual education of the sort Booker T. Washington supported and funded. He taught at Sumner High School from 1908 until his retirement in 1922.<sup>185</sup>

There were additional issues of social class and places of origin of which Poage may have been only vaguely aware. That vagueness would have vanished quickly when he took his first steps into McKinley High School and its classrooms in 1904. African Americans who lived and worked in Midwestern urban industrial centers before the end of the nineteenth century had firmly established themselves as leaders in associations and businesses. Now, a steady and growing influx of African Americans migrating northwards from the rural South confronted them. The newcomers acted differently. They dressed differently and spoke differently. They brought different churches, associations, and lifestyles with them. Different music and different memories of slavery. Ragtime. Jazz. They disregarded the norms of northern African Americans in public places. The differences between recent arrivals and old timers were so significant that St. Louis' *Palladium* and Chicago's *Broad Ax* and *Defender* frequently

published articles that were nothing less than descriptions of acceptable and unacceptable social and public behavior.<sup>186</sup> While Poage may not have qualified as a newcomer, his background in La Crosse and Madison did not fit the description of an old timer either.

Despite these issues, and with his strong preparation in language at a major Midwestern university, Poage was assigned to teach a course requirement in "The English Sentence" (later entitled "Elementary Composition") within a faculty of seven instructors that included Frank L. Williams (Principal, 1908-1928), J. M. Langston, William Henry Huffman, Elmer C. Campbell, Frank J. Roberson, and Andrew J. Gossin. Williams taught "Theory and Practice in Teaching," and had obtained an A. B. at Berea College in 1889, would obtain an A. M. degree at Cincinnati University in 1907, and would complete course work for his doctorate. Langston had been a lawyer in Ohio before teaching "Elements of Psychology" at Sumner and later was a professor at Howard University. Huffman taught both "Physics" and "Physical Geography" at Sumner. He had obtained an A. B. from Denison University in 1895, had been a principal in Indianapolis from 1899 to 1902 before he joined Sumner's staff. Campbell, with an A. B. from Howard University, taught Chemistry and Zoology. Roberson taught "Art." Gossin's specialties were English grammar, penmanship, and bookkeeping.<sup>187</sup>

Sumner's curriculum was divided into three tracks – manual training and domestic service; normal (teacher training); and college preparation. Of the 387 enrolled in 1905, a majority were females. More than half of those were enrolled in the Normal or teacher training curriculum that took one and half years to complete. No men were admitted into the Normal Course.<sup>188</sup> Poage taught English literature and Latin and was responsible for preparing students in debate (the Forum Literary Society), in public speaking (rhetoric), and in dramatic and musical productions. In 1911, he was primarily responsible for establishing an actors' organization called the Red

Domino Dramatic Club, likely named after a popular society of the same name at the University of Wisconsin. He also assisted the school's athletic department, "helping Sumner [to] excel in sports."<sup>189</sup>

From Poage's arrival in St. Louis in 1904, accommodations were not a significant problem. In 1905, Poage was claiming a permanent residence with Nellie and his mother at 1524 Bond Avenue in East St. Louis, but he also stayed, often for a week or a month at a time, at the renovated Douglass Hotel in St. Louis.<sup>190</sup> By 1907, the Poages were living at 2222 Bond Avenue.<sup>191</sup> That arrangement ended in 1908 or 1909 when Poage established his own residence at 2645 Lawton Avenue in St. Louis, near the new Sumner High School and in that part of St. Louis that was commonly called "The Ville." His mother joined him there in 1909. In 1910, his sister Nellie and Howard Jenkins, a classmate who had been teaching at a segregated school for Cherokee Freedmen in Muskogee, Oklahoma, married and moved to Denver, Colorado, where Jenkins obtained employment with the U. S. Post Office Department. Poage's mother remained with him at his Lawton Avenue address until 1912 when she joined Nellie in Denver.<sup>192</sup> At that time, Poage moved to 4275 Cote Brillante Avenue, within walking distance of Sumner High School.<sup>193</sup>

Poage's life in St. Louis, however, was not completely consumed by his role of teacher. In 1905, he was the guest of St. Louis' Informal Dames Society at one of its semi-annual parties, along with bachelors Campbell, Roberson, and Langston who were teachers at Sumner, with John Vashon, also a bachelor, and with Homer G. Phillips, a young lawyer with a promising future in St. Louis.<sup>194</sup> Nor did Poage neglect to use his athletic talents. For the 1910 Fourth of July, Poage, along with many others, managed track events in St. Louis' parks.<sup>195</sup> Poage also was a baseball fan, and the St. Louis Giants, a new but powerful team in the Negro National League, had taken the Vanderventer Lot II field as their home field. Vanderventer Lot II was within easy walking

distance of Poage's residence on Cote Brilante.

In the summer of 1914, and then thirty-three years old, Poage's immediate world and his future as a teacher abruptly ended. Earlier in that year, Poage had written to his mother, who was then living with Nellie in Denver, and had complained that students at Sumner were spreading harmful rumors about him.<sup>196</sup> These rumors centered on allegations that Poage and two other male teachers at Sumner High School were meeting with female pupils in "cafes." These cafes offered "ragtime" and "jazz" as well as food and drinks.

Parents understandably were concerned because St. Louis and Missouri had been the national center of ragtime, a genre of music that many disparaged as "coon songs" and that were enormously popular in St. Louis and on America's college campuses. It seemed that the country had gone "ragtime wild." Music teachers and professional musicians declared ragtime an "outrage," but that did not stop it from invading New York's Broadway and its Metropolitan Opera House.<sup>197</sup> Few parents at Sumner, especially those who associated ragtime with emotions and nostalgic memories of the South and of slavery, were interested in producing daughters or sons that might succeed in vaudeville or in musical or acting careers. Sumner produced teachers and civil servants. Moreover, Poage in 1914 was twice the age of his students, and fraternization between teachers and students represented a major breach of accepted moral behavior for unmarried male teachers.<sup>198</sup>

According to a report that appeared in *The St. Louis Star and Times*, Benjamin Blewett, Superintendent of St. Louis' schools, met with Poage, Jesse Gerald Tyler, and Benjamin F. Mosby, late in April 1914 and "at his request," and interviewed numerous pupils regarding the allegations. Blewett told the *Star's* reporter that he had "gone into this matter thoroughly" and had concluded that the pupils had given "contradictory" state-

ments and that he "was not inclined to put much faith in them." In effect, Blewett gave credence to the words of those accused and considered the allegations against them as a "frame-up." Dr. J. P. Harper, a contentious member of St. Louis' Board of Education, however, was not satisfied with Blewett's conclusions: "If these teachers are found guilty we will clean house. Nothing will be kept from the public."<sup>199</sup>

A month later, a committee consisting of parents and of "The Ville's" leaders who remained upset that Sumner High School, through the direction of Gerald Tyler, was emphasizing music in its curriculum, brought formal complaints against Poage, Tyler, and Mosby, in which they questioned their "moral character." The Board of Education scheduled a public meeting where the complainants could state their concerns and where Poage, Tyler, and Mosby could respond. More than twenty people gave testimony at that meeting, indicating that the substance of their complaints was common knowledge within St. Louis' Sumner community. In this instance, Tyler and Mosby were present and defended themselves sufficiently. With Blewett's continuing support, they remained on staff for the following year. Poage, however, deserted the field even before the battle was joined. He delivered a letter of resignation to Principal Frank L. Williams one hour before the meeting, and he left St. Louis and Missouri, without waiting for a decision of the Board, which, when faced with Poage's unexpected resignation and departure, deferred making a decision until a later date.<sup>200</sup>

The substance and details of the testimony given by the twenty or so witnesses and the content of Poage's letter are contained in the executive records of the board.<sup>201</sup> The account of the meeting which appeared in *The St. Louis Argus*, however, was revealing:<sup>202</sup>

#### **Resigns Under Charges**

George C. Poage, until last Thursday night a teacher in the Sumner High

School, has left the city for parts unknown, according to reliable information, after having tendered his resignation late Tuesday afternoon to Prof. Frank L. Williams, principal of the school, and the Board of Education. Mr. Poage was one of three teachers against whom charges had been filed before the board involving their moral character. The hearing was set for 7 o'clock Tuesday evening [21 July 1914]. 'Tis said the resignation was handed to Prof. Williams about 6 o'clock, before the meeting began, but no intimation of the fact was made at the hearing.

When consulted by phone, Professor Williams refused either to deny or affirm that he had received Mr. Poage's resignation, stating he had no statement to make at this time.

Mr. Gerald Tyler and Mr. Ben H. Mosby are the other teachers involved.

It is said the committee in charge of the hearing made a very strong case. Some of the most damaging testimony was introduced, and a startling condition of affairs was disclosed. Several of the witnesses have been interviewed.

About twenty persons were present and testified in the case. Substantial business and professional men and women were among those who appeared, and the board [members] were told frankly of the conditions and the widespread reports in the community. No definite action was taken by the board Tuesday night, as the hearing was not completed. When this is finished the case will be disposed of.

Attorneys Geo. L. Vaughn and Homer G. Phillips represented the committee of citizens. - *The Argus*."

Poage's decision to abandon a career in education was an understandable response, and perhaps, in his case, an expected one. In the first instance, he was alone in St. Louis, and his principal sources of support and advice at the time were in Denver. He had risen from humble background and had achieved recognition in sports and teaching. His students liked him, and he was eager to assist in

Sumner's athletic, dramatic, and choral programs. But that adulation may have been shallow. In his case, and from his extensive sport's perspective and experience, Poage might have considered it simply as an issue of winning or losing. When his students, their parents, and some of "The Ville's" leaders turned against him, Poage assumed that he had lost the event – as in track – and that it was time to leave the field to the winners.

There may have been other, and equally possible reasons, however, for his sudden resignation. He later told historian Davis that he had left St. Louis and teaching because of poor health. That may have been true, because Poage's mother had indicated that she was often concerned about Poage's health, especially in light of his father's death from tuberculosis in 1888.<sup>203</sup> Or Poage may have resigned because he had become dissatisfied with his profession at Sumner High School and with the accusations that had been brought against him. He surely knew that neither Superintendent Blewett nor Principal Williams considered the complaints against him as more than rumors. There was no scandal that would follow him or ruin his further chances for meaningful employment as a teacher. Or Poage may have decided to follow a career in music rather than in teaching or the classics. Within four months of his resignation from Sumner High School, Poage appeared as a featured vocalist in a testimonial concert for pianist Gertrude Jackson at Chicago's Institutional Church.<sup>204</sup> In effect, Poage may have used the accusations against him as an excuse or reason to change his profession.

Resignation from teaching was not a sufficient resolution for his co-defendants, however. Tyler, whose wife was a native of St. Louis, was the brother of Ralph W. Tyler, a respected Washington, D.C. war-time journalist whom President Theodore Roosevelt appointed auditor of the United States Navy. Tyler had graduated from Oberlin College in 1904, and, trained as a pianist and vocalist, he had joined the faculty of the Washington Conservatory of Music in 1904 as head of its

piano department.<sup>205</sup> In 1905, Tyler was director of choral groups at M Street High School in Washington.<sup>206</sup> He married Ray Campbell of St. Louis in December 1909 and, about the same time, moved from Washington, D.C., to Kansas City, Missouri, where he became the Supervisor of Music for that city's African American schools and taught music at Kansas City's segregated Lincoln High School.<sup>207</sup> In July 1911, he received his appointment as Supervisor/Director of Music for African American schools in the City of St. Louis, a position he held for nearly a decade.<sup>208</sup> He taught at Charles Sumner High School from 1911. Rumors circulated early in 1913 that the music conservatory of Washington D.C. was attempting to recruit Tyler and that his decision to remain in St. Louis was based largely on the issue of salary.<sup>209</sup> In effect, Tyler survived the accusations because he had a history of successes and a supportive family that he could call upon in his defense. Tyler also was successful in the public arena. He was considered one of the fathers of ragtime and jazz, and he encouraged experimentation at Sumner with the creation of several orchestras, four bands, and "several choirs and glee clubs."<sup>210</sup> He was an accomplished performer, often at Institutional Church in Chicago which hosted that city's famous Choral Study Club concerts at the beginning of the twentieth century. Tyler became the music composer of "Ships that Pass in the Night," "Magnificat," "Syrian Lullaby," "Dirge for a Soldier," and "Heart O'Fancy," all songs that became popular in the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>211</sup>

Ben/Benjamin F. Mosby had a similar history and a comparable basis of support. A native of Carlinville, Illinois, Mosby had graduated from the University of Illinois in 1908 and had taught English, history, and athletics and had been assistant principal at Sumner High School in Cairo, Illinois, before moving to St. Louis where his brother operated a drugstore.<sup>212</sup> Hired as a substitute teacher in the summer of 1912, he subsequently joined Sumner's staff where he taught the course

"Government and Politics in the United States."<sup>213</sup> He remained on Sumner's staff through 1916, even though the *Argus's* editor, J. Eugene Mitchell, continued to print provocative articles about Mosby's and Tyler's involvements in the "affair at Sumner." The school board had ruled that it "had been unable to substantiate rumors" against either of them.<sup>214</sup>

Mosby refused, however, to accept the board's decision to retain him as settling his disagreement with the *Argus* and its editor. Instead, Mosby filed a suit of \$5,000 in actual and \$5,000 in punitive damages against Mitchell, the *Argus*, and the lawyers Vaughn and Phillips, who had represented the original complainants. Mosby was "represented by [Missouri's] Ex-Lieutenant Governor Chas. P. Johnson" and two other attorneys.<sup>215</sup> Mosby asserted that an article published in the *Argus* on 18 September 1914 and that claimed to be an accurate account of the July board meeting had "reflected [negatively] on his moral character."<sup>216</sup> The jury in Judge Leo S. Rassieur's Circuit Court, in a trial that lasted for several days, decided against Mosby's claim of punitive damages but ruled in his favor for actual damages and awarded him a verdict of "1 cent damages."<sup>217</sup> According to the report in the *Indianapolis Freeman*, the verdict was considered "a victory for the defendants."<sup>218</sup> In May 1915, Mitchell and Mosby encountered each other in Jones Drugstore, and Mosby, according to Mitchell's account of the incident, was "incensed at the *Argus* because we [had] dared to tell the truth about the bad influences at Sumner." Mosby threatened to harm the newspaper and Mitchell if his name appeared again in the *Argus*. Later that same day, Mosby's brother appeared at the *Argus* office and demanded to speak with Mitchell. He warned Mitchell "to let this High School matter drop where it is."<sup>219</sup>

Three weeks later, on 4 June, Mitchell wrote a scathing editorial that he published on the newspaper's front page:<sup>220</sup>

### **“What Will the School Board Do?”**

... Nearly every day inquiries concerning the matter are received at the Argus office. According to the information received, there is a deep conviction in the community that the usefulness of certain teachers [Mosby and Tyler] has long since been outlived, and the inquiry is made as to why the school authorities continue to retain them in the face of conditions. An effort to fix the responsibility will doubtless be made [at the ballot box and against certain Board members] unless the matter is handled promptly and rightly.

The thing that is most puzzling to the people, according to the statements made, is that the matter has been twisted about and an attempt has been made [by the Board and by Sumner's Principal] to construe the efforts to change conditions [at the school] as an attack on the school. It is very clear, they state, that Sumner High School has not been attacked; but the bad conditions spoken of relate to the retention of certain teachers who are fully identified so far as the people are concerned. According to these persons there is no reflection on any other teacher at the school save those involved. St. Louis has a very high regard, as a whole, for the teaching force in its schools and especially at the Sumner, but they assert there is no reason to retain there teachers who are unfit and whom the whole community recognizes and designates as such....

A week later, Mitchell continued his attack.<sup>221</sup>

### **“Mosby & Tyler Re-appointed”**

At the meeting of the Board of Education of the City of St. Louis Tuesday night, Ben. H. Mosby and Gerald Tyler were re-appointed as teachers in the St. Louis schools. Principal Williams and Supt. Ben Blewitt are both insistent on the retention of the men and Superintendent Blewitt recommended them for appointment and they were confirmed by the Board.

The school is in the same condition now that it was before the action Tuesday night. The men are just as unfit now as they have ever been and conditions are as much a menace to the well being of the school children as ever. This action changes the situation not one whit nor will it lessen the determination on the part of the citizens to change them. Our cause is just and our trust is in God. This action will gain recruits and the battle will roll on with increasing fierceness until victory perches on the banner of right....

Poage had been correct. It had been and had become a serious issue, and he had wisely left St. Louis and Missouri before he became entangled in other allegations. Tyler and Mosby had local and influential families that they could bring to their defense, but Poage's family was in Denver.

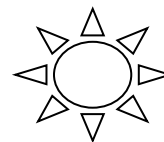
Mosby served in the U. S. Army as a First Lieutenant during World War I.<sup>222</sup> When that war ended, he did not return to Sumner but, instead, remained in St. Louis and became an organizer and recruiter for Kappa Alpha Psi, a black fraternity that had been founded at Indiana University in 1911. He became a member of its national Board of Directors in 1920 and its Grand Historian in 1933.<sup>223</sup>

How or where Poage spent the four years following his resignation from Sumner and departure from St. Louis is unclear in sources. He later told historian Davis that he had gone to Minnesota where he worked on a farm until the end of the First World War.<sup>224</sup> Documents indicate, however, that he was in Chicago late in 1914 and early in 1915, and was still or again in Chicago in 1918 when he registered for the military draft. During his college years at Madison, he had regularly worked on a farm near Canby in western Minnesota, and perhaps that was his refuge after he left St. Louis. He also claimed that he purchased a farm that he sold in the early 1920s.<sup>225</sup> None of that could be verified in the current research.



By September 1918, Poage was working as a restaurant cook in Chicago.<sup>226</sup> In the meantime, nineteen years had passed since La Crosse's Board of Education had honored him as the salutatorian of his high school graduating class, and he had lost nearly everything that he had gained in the interim. He was thirty-seven years old, with little to show for it.

## Chapter 5: Chicago -- His Other World



In a sense, Chicago was a world apart – in time, space, and temperament – from the one that Poage had left behind in St. Louis. And certainly it was a world away from the status and social life that he had enjoyed for a decade. By September 1918, when he was required to register in the third phase of the First World War's draft, he had been in Chicago long enough to have reconnected with friends and to have found employment at Brambles Restaurant at 1045 Wilson Avenue and housing at 117 East 37<sup>th</sup> Place, the latter in the middle of Chicago's Black Belt and in a section of the city known as Bronzeville. His place of residence was within walking distance of State Street and its popular Stateway Park, one of Chicago's largest baseball fields that had opened in 1890 with a seating capacity for 15,000 spectators. His residence also was centrally situated in Chicago's cabaret district, with the Pleasure Inn located at 505 East 31<sup>st</sup> Street, the Club de Lisa at 5516 South State Street, and the Cabin Inn at 3119 Cottage Grove.

Among Poage's acquaintances in Chicago was Hugh Buchanan, a well-established and recognized tenor and "Lyric Baritone" who was known to host house guests from Russia and England and who lived with his mother in a stately apartment at 6553 South Langley Avenue, on the southern edge of Chicago's Black Belt.<sup>227</sup> Buchanan, who was later listed among "Chicago's best musical talents," also traveled in a circuit of musical venues, including Denver in 1911, and had appeared in Chicago's Oakland Music Hall in 1913 as a featured artist in "Frank P. George's Danabegay."<sup>228</sup> In 1914, Buchanan was expected to tour Russia, but the Great War began, and he

was still in Chicago in December 1914 when he – along with Poage – performed in a testimonial concert for pianist Gertrude Jackson at Chicago's Institutional Church.<sup>229</sup> According to a review published in the *Indianapolis Freeman*, Buchanan “gave topical ditties and George C. Poage was a pleasing but weak tenor whose voice disqualified in falsetto.”<sup>230</sup> That critique, however critical, was not sufficient to keep Poage from appearing in concert with Buchanan a month later, with three additional concerts in March and April 1915.<sup>231</sup> But whether or how long Poage remained in Chicago after the April concert with Buchanan and pianist T. Thomas Taylor and after his introduction to Chicago's musical world is unclear in sources.

In another sense, however, Poage was part of a migration of African American workers from rural America to the towns and factories of urban and industrial America. This differed significantly from the migration that began during and immediately after the Civil War when freed slaves of all ages had flocked to cities – mainly in the South – in a desperate search for work, food, and shelter. For several decades the national government, mainly through the lasting support of the Radical Republicans, had supplied the ex-slaves with those essential needs, but that ended when the Republican Party changed its leadership and its focus to support commerce and when the U. S. Supreme Court ended that era of assistance with the *Civil Rights Cases* ruling in 1883 and the *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling in 1896. In the meantime, small communities of African Americans had collected in many of America's northern and Midwestern cities where they obtained menial employment as barbers, domestic servants, doormen, janitors, day workers, horse tenders and so forth. The Poages of La Crosse belonged to that migration group.

But there also were exceptions. The small town of Brooklyn in Illinois had been founded by African Americans, and they controlled all of its political apparatus and nearly all of its businesses.<sup>232</sup> The African American popula-

tion of Cairo, also in Illinois, was large enough to affect significantly and even determine election outcomes, and the Republican Party maintained its control of that city only so long as African Americans obtained rewards for their votes and recognition of their power at the ballot box.<sup>233</sup> In St. Louis and East St. Louis, African Americans policed their own sections of those cities, giving them, in the process, the ability to develop and maintain communities of educators, artists, lawyers, doctors, and journalists of their own race.<sup>234</sup> That had eventually led to Poage's appointment as principal of a newly-built high school for African Americans and then to his assignment to Sumner High School.

A somewhat similar transition had occurred in Chicago. At the turn of the century, economists considered Chicago as America's second largest and its second most important city and viewed it as the gateway to the West, a center of the nation's industry and its transportation. Like La Crosse and Milwaukee, Chicago attracted Europeans who came in large numbers with industrial skills and experiences that new industries needed. This was different from St. Louis which was a small town with an emerging industrial base that just became bigger.

In effect, Chicago was an attractive place for an African American who was well educated, had investment capital or came with skills in high demand, or who simply was looking for a better place to settle and conduct business, whatever that might be. Some were doctors, lawyers, politicians, journalists, or newspaper owners and editors. Other newcomers invested in businesses that appealed more directly to the working class and to its immediate needs – taverns, gambling halls, rooming houses and hotels, restaurants, and cabarets. Those businesses also attracted prostitutes, pimps, gamblers, and con-artists. The Black Belt was the “tenderloin district,” and it attracted everything, even whites from North Chicago who traveled there for the shows and the excitement.

Poage, no doubt, was attracted to the excitement, but he also must have been attracted to the anonymity that Chicago's size permitted. Whether it had been in La Crosse, in Madison, or in St. Louis, there was always someone who knew him and was watching and judging him for his actions. He was an African American and was famous, and those were labels that essentially kept him from escaping to a private place.

Chicago provided Poage with a place of refuge. For whatever reasons, he did not seek or obtain employment as a teacher or a substitute teacher, and he did not choose to engage in sports, other than to join the Chicago Athletic Club which was known to be "a cruising space for gay men."<sup>235</sup> Instead, he found meaningful work as a cook, then as a restaurateur, and finally, in 1924, as a postal clerk. Perhaps the aging process was catching up with him, and when, at age forty-four, he applied for a position of clerk in outgoing mails. He simply was looking for a stable place to settle and remain.<sup>236</sup>

On the same day the Great War began in Europe, Poage handed his letter of resignation to the principal of Sumner High School in St. Louis. That date, 28 July 1914, also had marked both the end of Poage's career in teaching and a dramatic increase in migration of African Americans who were looking for work in America's rapidly industrializing upper Midwest. For the most part, white Americans watched the European war from afar and remained neutral, claiming that it was a war between monarchs and an extension of that continent's wars of imperial expansion. Americans managed to profit handsomely from it, however, by supplying their friends in Europe – England, Russia, and France – with massive supplies of weapons and food. The growth of food and industrial production, especially with respect to weapons, drew African American workers in increasing numbers to Chicago, with many settling in Bronzeville and that part of Chicago known as the Black Belt and close to the city's south-side stockyards.

When America joined the war in April 1917, the nation was ill-prepared to fight it. The U. S. Army, commanded by General John Pershing, was much too small and numbering little more than 300,000, counting both the regular army and the National Guards. When the war ended on 11 November 1919, more than 3,900,000 Americans had served in the military.<sup>237</sup> To reach that number, the nation instituted a draft for the first time since the Civil War and administered it in three phases. The first, conducted on 5 June 1917, registered all men born between 6 June 1886 and 5 June 1896. The second registration occurred on 5 June 1918 and included all males reaching the age of twenty-one since the last registration. The third and final registration occurred on 12 September 1918 when all men born between 11 September 1872 and 12 September 1900 were added to the draft rolls.<sup>238</sup> Poage, at the age of thirty-eight, registered in the third phase. Nearly twenty percent of those registering in the first phase were drafted and inducted into military service.

Removing that many men from the nation's workforce created friction. That was particularly the case in the food processing industry where African Americans competed for bottom level jobs that normally might have gone to newly-arrived Eastern-Europeans, or the Irish who opposed the war since it involved an alliance with Britain. The confluence of these contesting interests and their gangs occurred on 27 July 1919 when an African American, who was swimming at Chicago's 29<sup>th</sup> Street beach, accidentally ventured across an understood line that separated the white and "colored" beaches, and white swimmers pelted him with rocks. When the police arrived and the dead swimmer's friends identified those that had thrown the rocks, the police refused to arrest anyone. Rumors quickly spread through the African American and mainly Irish communities, and the ruffians and gangs on both sides prepared to defend their territories.<sup>239</sup>

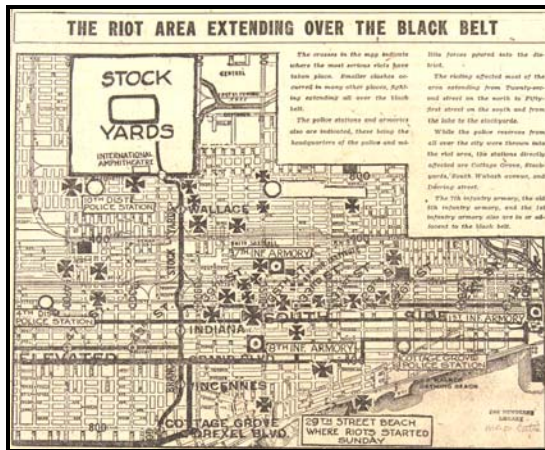


Figure 24: 1919 Chicago Riot, areas covered. Chicago Tribune [Newberry Library]

When the rioting ended on 3 August 1918, fifteen whites and twenty-three African Americans had died, and rioters had destroyed hundreds of houses and businesses.<sup>240</sup> Most of Chicago's 1919 riot occurred within the Black Belt and was centered along State Street, within blocks of Poage's residence. Whether Poage was in the Black Belt when the rioting began, or whether he removed himself from that section of Chicago and from the metropolitan area, and whether he spent most of the years between 1920 and 1924 in Chicago or elsewhere is unclear in the sources. Perhaps Poage wanted it to be unclear and beyond the watchful eyes of mentors. But his successes in Chicago-based concerts in 1914 and 1915 suggest that he did not need to spend those years alone. Historian Davis wrote that his mother joined him in Chicago after he sold his farm in Minnesota, although current research has found nothing to confirm that report. In early 1924, Poage was a cook at the H & H Automat at 116 North Dearborn Street and lived at 318 W. Ontario Street.<sup>241</sup>

That changed in May 1924 when the Chicago Office of the Post Office Department advertised for temporary or substitute clerks. The offered pay rate was 60¢ per hour (equivalent of about \$8.00 in today's val-

ue).<sup>242</sup> Perhaps Poage's mother, who had been living in Denver and with Nellie whose husband also was an employee of the Post Office Department, had encouraged Poage to apply for that job. In any case, he submitted his application and was accepted as a substitute, probationary clerk in outgoing mails on 24 June 1924 (see figure 26).

Poage's managers at the Post Office soon recognized his abilities and lifted him to full-time clerk status in December 1924, with an annual salary of \$1400, and then to \$1700 in January 1925 (a 21% increase), to \$1800 in 1926, to \$1900 in 1927, and to \$2100 in 1929.<sup>243</sup> If there was a problem with his application with the Post Office Department, it was that he had not been entirely truthful with respect to his reported "date of birth." In 1918, during the third phase of the draft registration, he had correctly given his birth year as 1880, but the one that he submitted to the Post Office was 1884, in effect shaving four years from his correct age. Whether that was a deliberate decision is perhaps a moot point, but Poage continued to cite the 6 November 1884 date until the error was discovered during the Second World War and became a significant and time consuming problem for the Post Office Department to eventually resolve.<sup>244</sup>

POST OFFICE SERVICE Form 1544 JUNE, 1921		Poage, George C.	
AVERAGE 5-23-24 Date of Examination 6-13-24 Entered Register 39 Age 11-6-84 Date of Birth JUN 11 1924 Date Approved 13475 Nomination No. JUN 23 1924 Date of Appointment SEVENTH Initials Dist. Sec'y J. V. S.		JUN 27 1924 Date Appointed UEC 3 1924 Clerk, \$4.00; 12-28-24 Probationary JAN 1 - 1925 \$7.00; JAN 1 1926 \$1.00; JAN 1 1927 \$1.00; JAN 1 1928 \$2.00; JAN 1 1929 \$2.00;	

Figure 25: Poage's Age -- Post Office Form 1544, June 1921.

By whatever measure, Poage did not become wealthy by working for the Post Office. But he did obtain respect and acceptance. He

joined the leftist-led National Alliance of Postal Workers, but he never sought or accepted a leadership role within it.<sup>245</sup> Poage had learned to be a low risk taker, and he liked his privacy. It was his mother's way of dealing with controversy, and it had become his as well. Besides, the early 1930s were not good years for creating problems for the Post Office Department. Factories were closing, and having low-paying work at the Post Office was significantly better than having no work at all. Poage's position with the Post Office actually improved, and in the mid to late 1930s, the Post Office transferred him to its facilities in the Sears, Roebuck and Co.'s offices as a supervisor in its outgoing mails.<sup>246</sup> Sears, Roebuck and Co. in the late 1930s and early 1940s was the nation's largest mail order business and, with Europe again engaged in a great war, Sears was considered a vital part of the nation's welfare and its defense.



Figure 26: Rosenwald Court Apartments, circa 1932. Planners' drawing.

There also were rewards for maintaining a low profile. In 1935, he obtained a new apartment in the exclusive Rosenwald Court Apartments, apartment 2A, at 4627 South Wabash Avenue, and he and his mother remained there until her death in 1952 and his in 1962.<sup>247</sup> The Rosenwald complex, with its 421 new and "elegant" apartments, was the brainchild of Julius Rosenwald, one of the owners of Sears, Roebuck and Company. His Rosenwald Fund donated millions of dollars to support education for African Americans in the rural South. One of his projects in Chicago

was the Rosenwald Apartments which opened in 1930 as affordable housing that could be obtained for \$62.27 per month. Built in the modern Art Deco style, it was exclusive with respect to those people given the privilege to live there, and, in the 1930s and 1940s, it became the fashionable residence for Chicago's African American musicians and artists.<sup>248</sup> Rosenwald, one of America's wealthiest businessmen, also was a personal friend of Booker T. Washington and served on the board of Tuskegee Institute until his death in 1932.

Despite his remarkable success in the Post Office Department, Poage told historian Davis that the most surprising and most personally satisfying event during his time in Chicago and while working at the Sears, Roebuck and Co.'s offices came in May 1942 when he received a request from A. K. VanTine, personnel manager for the Dravo Corporation of Pittsburgh (PA), to join Dravo as assistant personnel manager for "Negro workers" at its shipbuilding facility at Wilmington, Delaware. Dravo was receiving huge orders for warships, troop carriers, and regular freight crafts, and that required workers which could be obtained from the rural South. This position was being offered at the recommendation of Richard (Dick) Kemp of Pittsburgh, Vice President of Dravo, who also had been a member of Wisconsin's football team in 1903 and, like Poage, had been a trainer for the university's football squad in 1904 or 1905.<sup>249</sup> Poage visited Dravo's Wilmington shipyard and considered the appointment, but he eventually decided to remain with the Post Office Department. That decision was made primarily because regulations of the Department would not permit a "leave of absence" to a private company even during wartime without significant risk to his seniority, his grade, and possibly his pension and post-war employment with the Post Office Department. Poage turned down Dravo's offer.<sup>250</sup>

There also were two events involving the University of Wisconsin that Poage thought

important, and that validated, in a sense, his successes and his mother's sacrifices while he was a student at the university. The first came in 1948, when his 1903 graduating class was planning its 45<sup>th</sup> Reunion. The Reunion's announcement arrived with a number of friendly notes from colleagues and members of Wisconsin's 1903 track team. He certainly had not been forgotten at Madison.<sup>251</sup> The second, and perhaps the more important in Poage's estimation, was a request from that university's president, E. B. Fred, for Poage to represent the university at the Silver Anniversary meeting of the Black Elks Department of Education, an arm of the Improved Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the World (IBPOEW), which was scheduled to hold its convention in Chicago in 1950. That fraternal organization and voluntary association had a membership of nearly 400,000 African Americans. Unfortunately, Poage was unable to attend that meeting.<sup>252</sup>

While Poage considered President Fred's request as special recognition, official university records indicate instead that the IBPOEW had requested that someone represent the university at a parade of scholars that would occur on the convention's first day and that Fred had found it difficult to locate an African American alumnus that was still living in Chicago who might represent the university. Poage was the university's first choice, but he was not the university's only option. Once someone – other than Poage – was found who could attend the convention, the matter was quickly dropped in Madison.<sup>253</sup>

But apparently there may have been unforeseen consequences from President Fred's request. For whatever reason, Poage received an administratively-approved pay increase from \$3670 per annum to \$3970 per annum and a clerk grade increase from Grade 11 to Grade 14. The Department's "Notification of Personnel Action" indicated that those significant changes would take effect on 1 November 1949, and the notification was signed personally by the Assistant Superintendent of Mails. The explanation for this sudden and

unexpected change of status and salary was only that Poage had been "at least 15 years in top automatic grade."<sup>254</sup>

Poage certainly was not friendless or lonely while living in Chicago. His mother lived with him after he moved to the Rosenwald Apartment, and his telephone address book from the 1940s included the names of a wide variety of acquaintances. That list included the names and telephone numbers, and occasionally the mailing addresses, for 117 persons and listed venues that he apparently frequented or used. Among the latter were Mac's Snack Bar at 1160 S. Vincennes, John Chico's Service at 4732 S. Parkway, Tip Top Livery (a taxi service), Club 43 (an experimental Jazz center and nightclub) at 3417 W. Roosevelt, Martins Corner (a dance club and popular venue for all-star shows and group singing contests) at 1900 W. Lake, and Ralph's Club (a Blues center popular in the 1940s and 1950s) at 3159 S. Wabash.<sup>255</sup> Some of the names in his address book were of older women who may have been his mother's friends.



Figure 27: Club 43, Chicago, Illinois, circa 1920

But Poage's address book also contained the names of persons who had acquired a degree of fame and celebrity in Chicago and in the upper Midwest.<sup>256</sup> Many were residents in Rosenwald Apartments. Adolph Angelus was an actor, singer, former railroad chef, and stage director who occasionally performed in minstrel shows at Chicago's Pythian Hall. He was well-known in Chicago and eventually moved to Los Angeles where he became a

successful chef and dinner host for Hollywood's entertainment stars.<sup>257</sup> Art Bowen was a person of Poage's mother's generation who had been a cartoonist for the *New York Journal* and the *Chicago Herald* and was famous for his cartoon series, "Want Ads." Bowen had studied at the Chicago Art Institute and became known for his vaudeville performances where he was the "clever" "cartoonist who sings."<sup>258</sup>

Musicians, however, were numerous in his life. Joseph Bentonetti (a.k.a. Joe Benton) was an Italian immigrant from Milan who was interested in grand opera, and a highly respected tenor who sang for the Chicago City Grand Opera in 1934-1935 and for the Metropolitan Opera in New York in 1938.<sup>259</sup> Lillian Henry was a violinist, and she and her husband, Robert, regularly performed on a circuit of musical talent.<sup>260</sup> George Jensen, on the other hand, was a highly-regarded pianist and trumpet player. He was Wynton Marsalis' teacher as well as Paula A. Crider's. He left Chicago in 1952 to play for the New Orleans Symphony Orchestra.<sup>261</sup> T. Thomas Taylor, a baritone, was the director of Chicago's Choral Study Club, a sixty-member choral group that was active mainly in the 1910s and 1920s and that preformed in robes. Taylor sought to demonstrate to white audiences – and to African American newcomers – that African Americans, in large choral groups and with powerful and well-trained voices, were capable of singing classical music as well as Negro Spirituals or music that was an accepted part of vaudeville performances.<sup>262</sup> Theo Taylor was a gifted song composer and pianist who became the pastor of the Glen Oak Interdenominational Chapel in St. Petersburg, Florida.<sup>263</sup> In contrast to Taylor was Clarence Love and his all-girl orchestra of fourteen "beautiful swingsters" – The Darlings of Rhythm.<sup>264</sup> And even more in contrast was Pearl Pachaco who was assistant director of the Mildred Haessler Ballet.<sup>265</sup>

Among Poage's friends who were associated with sports was Mrs. Birdie Brooks, the

wife of Brooks Ulysses Lawrence who played for the Cincinnati Redlegs as a pitcher in the mid 1950s.<sup>266</sup> Robert Clark of San Francisco was a trackman who specialized in the broad or long jump, leaping 23 feet and 11¾ inches in 1936.<sup>267</sup> John Donaldson was a pitcher from Sedalia, Missouri, who played for the All Nations of Des Moines, Iowa, the White Sox of Los Angeles, and the Chicago Giants.<sup>268</sup> Another pitcher, a southpaw, was Ed Hamilton who played for the Homestead Grays.<sup>269</sup> Still another pitcher was "Circus John" Chico who had pitched for the Tenderized Hams of Kokomo, Indiana.<sup>270</sup> Mrs. E. M. Jones was the widow/wife of EM (pronounced as "em") Jones, a golfer and a journalist. Poage's address book also included the name and address of Emil Breitkreutz. Born in Wausau, Wisconsin, Breitkreutz had been a member of Wisconsin's track team when Poage also was a member and had run for the Milwaukee Athletic Club in the 1904 St. Louis Olympics, winning a Bronze in the 800-meter finals. Breitkreutz also had been a prominent player on Wisconsin's basketball team. Breitkreutz then completed a master's degree at the University of Southern California and, at twenty-four years of age, became that university's head basketball coach in 1907.

Poage's friends who were educators included Julia Davis, his former student from Sumner High School who taught in St. Louis schools from 1913 to 1961. In St. Louis, Davis became best known for her large collection of African American history and literature as it related to settlers in St. Louis. Another was Alice Bowles who, like Davis, had been one of Poage's students. Bowles taught in St. Louis, in her case for forty-two years.<sup>271</sup> Oneida Cockrell was the National President of Phi Delta Kappa, the sorority of the National Association of Black Teachers. Cockrell mobilized workers during the Second World War.<sup>272</sup> Eugene Clark, however, was President of Miner Teachers College which was located in Washington, D.C.<sup>273</sup>

Poage had only a few political and organizationally influential friends. Among them were A. F. Grymes, a lawyer.<sup>274</sup> Another was L. H. Lightner of Denver, Colorado, who was Supreme Commander of the American Woodmen Association.<sup>275</sup> Jesse Meadows was a member of the Postal Office 400 Club and a working colleague.<sup>276</sup> Gonzales Motts, a member of the family that had owned Bronzeville's Pekin Theater, was active in the NAACP, and that certainly was political.<sup>277</sup>

Perhaps the most colorful and eclectic of Poage's friends, however, was Lillian Davenport. Like Poage, Lillian had grown up in La Crosse, Wisconsin. She was born in December 1895 to parents who had migrated from Atlanta, Georgia. Her father, Joseph Smith, was no longer in the household when Lillian was born, and her mother, Emma, was left with three children. Emma's mother lived with her, however, and she and her mother ran a successful and selective catering business out of their home – they served only La Crosse's best families. In August 1887, both Emma and her mother were among the planners of La Crosse's Emancipation Day celebrations that included a picnic and a grand ball in the evening.<sup>278</sup> Considering the size of La Crosse's African American population at the beginning of the twentieth century, it is likely that Anna Poage, who remained in La Crosse until 1904, and George Poage, who left it for Madison in 1899, knew Emma Smith, her mother, and Lillian.

Lillian graduated from La Crosse High School in 1913 and became a talented pianist and vocalist who mainly operated in the South and in the resort towns of the Upper Midwest (Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, and Illinois) during the summer months. Lillian made her entry into the region's musical scene in 1920 as the musical director of "Bowman's Cotton Blossoms," a song and dance group that was popular in the vaudeville circuit.<sup>279</sup> Lillian also was a superb saxophone player and was described as someone who was able to play every instrument in an orchestra. She was a persistent and deter-

mined self-promoter, and she frequently sent letters to Bob Hayes who managed the "Here and There" column in *The Chicago Defender*. She and Hayes became frequent correspondents, with Hayes once describing her as "everybody's pal, the one and only Lillian Davenport."<sup>280</sup>

For much of the 1920s and 1930s, Davenport was pianist and musical director for other performers, such as Clara Smith who recorded for Columbia Records and for Margaret Johnson (the Margaret Johnson Trio) who specialized in "The Blues" genre of music.<sup>281</sup> She was the pianist, music arranger, and directress for "Shufflin' Sam from Alabam," "Dark Town Bazaar," and "Shake yo' Feet," all vaudeville companies that enjoyed great success.<sup>282</sup> In that period, she was expanding her talents and directed orchestras attached to vaudeville productions at the Witwer Hotel in Kalamazoo and at the Dunbar Theater in Detroit.<sup>283</sup> At times, Lillian became the straight half in comedy and musical routines, among them "Davenport (Jed) and Davenport," "Churchill (John) and Davenport," and "Turner and Davenport."<sup>284</sup> Editor Hayes described the "Turner and Davenport" team as "one of the greatest musical acts that ever stepped before the footlights."<sup>285</sup> *The Billboard* in 1944 described her as a pianist and a "hot singer" and as the piano music arranger for *Beaucoup de Jazz*.<sup>286</sup>





Figure 28: Lillian Smith Davenport, 1944. Billboard Ad.

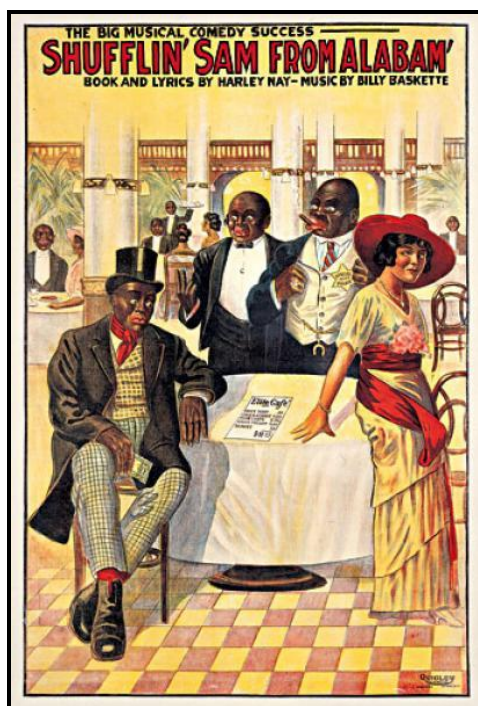


Figure 29: Poster for *Shufflin' Sam from Alabam*.

And there was little reason to doubt that Lillian also traded husbands or partners -- often. She took her name from Jed Davenport, but in 1929 she was billed in the press as Lillian Davenport Kearney and in 1933 as Lillian Davenport Gans, but generally she was known in the press and in the vaudeville and entertainment business as simply Lillian Davenport.<sup>287</sup> When she celebrated her mother's eightieth birthday in La Crosse in 1940, her

stage partner was William Weldon, a recognized trumpet player.<sup>288</sup> A year later, when she was working in Mauston, Wisconsin, it was Al Coleman, an older and popular "mimetic comedian" who told funny stories.<sup>289</sup>

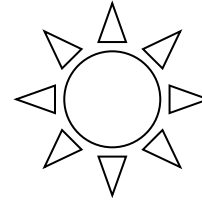
Poage tracked Davenport's moves within Chicago, with her name appearing in three places in his address book. Perhaps it was her vaudeville connection that kept Poage interested in her career, but it also may have been her connection to La Crosse and its changes that maintained his interest. She visited La Crosse often and brought him news about the town where he had spent his youth.

Lillian generally avoided controversy, especially if it involved the "Negro Problem." But in late 1941, while working in Mauston, and while visiting her mother in La Crosse, she noticed that La Crosse businesses and its numerous taverns and restaurants had posted signs in their windows that read "No Colored Trade Solicited." She reported that to Wisconsin's NAACP which notified Wisconsin's Attorney General who ordered those signs promptly removed.<sup>290</sup> What Davenport failed to report, however, was that La Crosse officials, at that time, were debating whether African American soldiers and white American soldiers that were training separately and occasionally together at nearby Fort McCoy could use La Crosse's single USO at the same time or whether separate USOs would need to be provided. That problem was partly resolved when the military built separate USOs at Camp McCoy and bussed "Liberty Belles" from La Crosse and neighboring towns to Fort McCoy for dances. The signs came down, but La Crosse's taverns regularly refused service to non-white soldiers for the duration of the war.

Davenport may have avoided controversy, but she made certain, through her frequent correspondence with her friends at *The Chicago Defender*, that everyone knew where and with whom she was working and where and how she could be contacted for employment opportunities. It was the way that she

operated her business. Lillian died in Chicago on 28 September 1964 and was buried in La Crosse's Oak Grove Cemetery, alongside the members of her La Crosse family.<sup>291</sup>

## Chapter 6: Conclusions and Author's note



When the Second World War ended in 1945, Poage was sixty-five years old, and he was not yet ready to retire. Nor, perhaps, could he retire. He had accumulated twenty-one years of service in the Post Office, but the official requirement for retirement was sixty-five years of age or thirty years of service, otherwise the Post Office Department would have assessed him a penalty for having retired with less than that. And Poage's official records with the Department still listed his birth year as 1884 instead of 1880, indicating that he had four more years before he would reach the normal retirement age. The Department had discovered that discrepancy but had not yet resolved it in its records. Poage remained with the Post Office, perhaps because a change in the official record might have had an impact on his housing and his lifestyle and might have led to probing and unwelcome questions about his past. Moreover, he had become the caretaker for his mother, who in 1945 was ninety-one years of age.

What Poage wanted, in contrast to Lillian Davenport, was anonymity rather than notoriety or attention, and he had found it as a postal clerk in outgoing mail (First Class) in the U. S. Post Office Department. While he was a member of one of the nation's most radical and worker-oriented labor unions, he avoided any role within it that might call his loyalty and his history into question. He was a low risk taker. He shared his secrets with his mother, his sister, and obviously with his best friends, but his name never appeared in *The*

*Chicago Defender* after the five references to concerts in which he had participated in 1914 and 1915. That was no minor accomplishment because the *Defender's* staff diligently reported every social gathering and local event in Bronzeville – often in excruciating detail – and included the names of everyone who attended or might have attended. That practice sold newspapers and was good for business, especially in self-contained communities where newspapers included gossip as well as news. *The Chicago Defender* did not disappoint its readers.

Most remarkable was the fact that a large number of those listed in Poage's address book were mentioned several or many times in *The Defender*, yet there were only five instances when Poage's name appeared in the same article as any of those named persons. His mother lived with Poage, and she was never mentioned in *The Defender*. There was no obituary for either Poage or his mother. Poage's sister Nellie was mentioned several times, but those were included only as a part of COLORADO NEWS and contained no reference to her relationship with Poage or with their mother.

There is no evidence, other than the recollection of family members that he was gay, that provide information on Poage's sexuality while he lived in Chicago. Nor is there indication that he attended any of the venues that hosted gay events or that were frequented by Chicago's large gay community. But, given the hostile atmosphere faced by gay and lesbian Americans during the "Lavender Scare" of the 1950s, his avoidance of public affirmations of his sexuality are perhaps not surprising.<sup>292</sup>

Perhaps he believed his only option was to become asexual? He was still young at forty-five years when he became a postal clerk in Chicago, but he was fifty-five when his mother joined him in 1935. She had been his advisor, his protector, and the keeper of his secrets, and he had no option but to become her caretaker.

Poage had numerous professions that he could have followed when he graduated from the University of Wisconsin in 1903 and when he won his bronze medals in 1904. Surely a public high school in Wisconsin or Illinois would have hired him as a coach. But, somehow, either by choice or by accident, that choice slipped past him, and once it was gone, he apparently made no determined attempt to recapture it. Or, he could have become a historian. As a student of Frederick Jackson Turner, he might have become one of America's accomplished historians. But, perhaps he was intimidated by Turner and by Turner's displeasure with his performance in his junior and senior years and wanted, even then, to avoid the attention, the notoriety, and the solitude that that degree of greatness might bring with it. He tried his hand as a professional singer, but that profession contained significant risks and guaranteed an uneven income that could disappear too easily. In effect, Poage had several options, but what he wanted most was security and the chance to become a member of "the crowd" rather than its leader.

Poage was faced with numerous obstacles that made employment with the Post Office Department, when it finally came, seem so appealing. Money had always been an impediment, as had his membership in the domestic servant class. Even among African Americans that attended a university, he was the anomaly who paid for his own tuition and his own expenses, without a guaranteed support base to rescue him. At the turn of the century, higher education for African Americans was rare and a luxury. Whether it was Jim Crow or Booker T. Washington, there was always someone or a law or a policy that forced him to follow certain paths. Jim Crow told him that there were paths that he could not take, while Washington showed him a path and told him to take it, especially if Washington was controlling the purse. His sexual preference seems to have become a family secret, perhaps an embarrassment, and something

that could be overcome by closing it in a closet and by keeping it there.

If Poage wanted to have peace of mind and acceptance, he needed to identify those things that would and could not change and develop coping skills to deal with those as a member rather than a leader of the crowd. With roots in the domestic servant class, his achievements in the white world were significant and impressive. But once Poage crossed into the African American world, the crowd changed, as did its requirements. He was no longer the anomaly, but the risk increased that he might become little more than that. He was not retained as principal of McKinley High School, but he left Sumner High School with his reputation still intact. He never returned to teaching. His ventures into farming and the restaurant and entertainment businesses did not bring him success. At forty-three years of age, he found satisfaction and anonymous membership as a successful postal clerk in outgoing mails.

Almost nothing is known about Poage's activities after the Second World War. His mother, Anna Poage, died on 20 July 1952, and he submitted his request for retirement on 29 September 1953 and retired effective 30 November 1953. Poage died in the Cook County Hospital on 11 April 1962. The medical cause of death was recorded as Primary Bronchopneumonia. Poage was buried in an unmarked grave in Lincoln Cemetery in Worth, Illinois. There was no obituary. He craved anonymity in his life, and he obtained it in his death and in his burial.

The mystery of Poage's life is amplified, at least for this reader, by the near absence of writings about him. Julia Davis and June Becht wrote brief accounts of his life as a teacher and a runner, but neither thought it important to mention the 1914 accusations or his sexual orientation. Poage's nephew, Howard Jenkins Jr., who played a role in the Supreme Court case of *Brown v the Board of Education of Topeka* in 1954 and who President John F. Kennedy appointed to the Na-

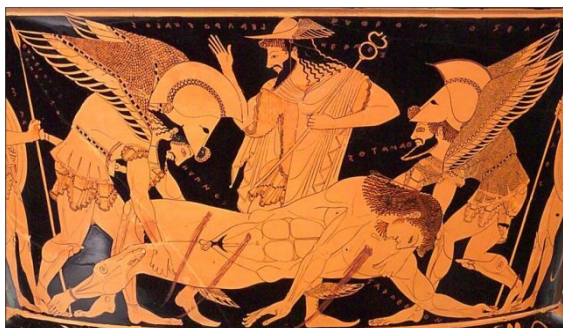
tional Labor Relations Board in 1963, surely had the ability to write something about his uncle. Poage, after all, was the first African American to win a medal in a modern Olympiad. None of his closest friends wrote anything about him. He avoided the press. He taught a course on "The English Sentence," but he wrote nothing that has survived, other than an excerpt from his 1899 commencement address.

Equally mysterious are the repeated references to La Crosse, Wisconsin, and the varying parts that La Crosse played in Poage's history. He had lived in La Crosse from ages four to eighteen and achieved much in that white world, but it seemed that his and his mother's objectives were to free him from it, especially after his arrest for "fighting in a public place" in 1899. His father, sister, and nephew were buried in La Crosse, but there is no suggestion that he ever returned to visit their gravesites. When he was resigned to ignore the boycott of the St. Louis Exposition and its Games, La Crosse resurfaced in the guise of the candidate of the National Negro Liberty Party, George Edwin Taylor. And, finally, while in Chicago, Poage reconnected with Lillian Davenport who was born in La Crosse, had graduated from La Crosse High School, and had escaped it through vaudeville, only to be buried in La Crosse next to her family members.

In 2015, a stone was placed on Poage's gravesite, and on it were inscribed the words: "Of matchless swiftness; but of silent pace." Poage had chosen those words to appear alongside his graduation picture in *The Badger for 1904*. At first glance, they seem to refer to his success as an athlete at La Crosse High School and at the University of Wisconsin. Poage, however, had expected, when he enrolled at the University of Wisconsin, to become a scholar in Ancient-Classical studies, and he certainly knew that those words, which were a fragment taken from Homer's *Illiad*, Book XVI, had nothing to do with track or with his record as a sprinter. Nor did they have any attachment to the course of study

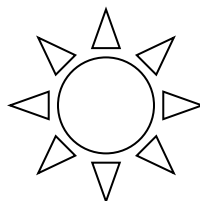
that he had been required to follow in Wisconsin's School of History. They were taken from a longer and poetic passage that described the sweetness of sleep, refuge, and escape that came to Sarpedon, the son of Zeus and heroic warrior and ruler of Lycia on the southern Anatolian coast, when, fighting for Troy in the Trojan War, he was mortally wounded:

Then Sleep and Death, two twins of winged race,  
Of matchless swiftness, but of silent pace,  
Received Sarpedon, at the god's command,  
And in a moment reach'd the Lycian land;  
The corpse amidst his weeping friends they laid,  
Where endless honours wait the sacred shade.



Poage, who had taught a course in English Literature while at Sumner High School, likely would have preferred the longer passage.

## Chapter 7: A Postscript.



When I began the process of organizing data for Poage's biography, I had already concluded that I would find little about Poage's private life, because Poage and the Jenkins family had wanted it to remain essentially unreported. Historian Davis had written nothing about Poage's sexual orientation, yet she had been one of his students and was in St. Louis when the accusations regarding his moral conduct was under review in 1914 and had shaken Sumner High School and "The Ville." Editor Mitchell of the *Saint Louis Argus* had continued to write about those accusations for much of 1915, and there had been a legal action against Mitchell and a juried trial that ruled in favor of the litigant – but not by much. But more importantly, Davis had identified Poage as a superior teacher to include in her book, *Down Memory Lane*.

Davis interviewed Poage and his mother in the early-1950s and seemed to have been satisfied with Poage's and his mother's explanation that he had left St. Louis and Sumner High School in 1914 "because his health demanded that he give up the job."<sup>293</sup> Or, perhaps she accepted the premise that Mitchell's continued attack on Mosby and Tyler had been an attempt to harm Sumner High School and its principal and St. Louis' superintendent of schools, both of whom had decided that rumors alone were insufficient to merit their dismissals. My first thought when reading Davis' account was that Davis was a willing participant in a conspiracy of silence or possibly of disinformation.

When Edwin Hill and I were researching for our conference paper about Poage, twenty years had passed since Poage's death and

since Davis had written her memories of Sumner High School. We asked Howard Jenkins Jr., Poage's nephew and keeper of the Poage/Jenkins family record, about the scrapbooks or books that Davis mentioned in her writing. Jenkins claimed that there were no boxes of memorabilia, and perhaps he was correct. Twenty years had passed and others had removed enough from the boxes so that there were no longer boxes.

As an Africanist, I often had found it necessary to consult oral traditions and family histories in my research, and I knew that Africans considered family history to be a private and highly-prized possession that needed to be safeguarded. They welcomed my curiosity and were interested in my conclusions – and occasionally to the point of offering to correct them – but they did not embrace full disclosure because their history was personal and had occasionally been used to harm them. As an Africanist who also was interested in the history of African American settlement along the Upper Mississippi River, I was surprised to find that African Americans in La Crosse or in Denver were not that different from Africans in Africa. They were intrigued that I was interested, and they believed that their stories needed to be told to the greater public, but they questioned my motives because their history was private and full disclosure might invite criticism and possible censure.

Attempting to write biography without, at the same time, trying to understand the motives and inner insecurities of the subject is a difficult task. Remaining true to evidence is crucial, but therein also remains the problem of making a judgment about the accuracy of evidence and opinions of those who produced them. I would like to write that Poage and his mother were prideful and that both thought that Poage had failed to reach his potential. He thought that he was the master of his fate, but his fate, certainly with respect to his 1899 arrest for "fighting in public place," was determined by others. He graduated second in his high school class which he must have considered as unacceptable. He turned away

from Frederick Jackson Turner and focused on sports and was self-confident enough to believe that Turner would give him a passing mark on his senior thesis. He thought that he could become the principal teacher of a high school when he had never taught a class. His short-lived musical career in Chicago was reviewed in two well-respected African American newspapers, but that, apparently, was not good enough. And, finally, he must have known that the games of the Third Olympiad were a farce and that there was no future for him in sports. He did not put in the effort. But, I also cannot say any of that.

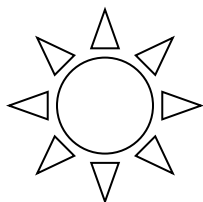
As I sorted through and took notes about Poage's life in St. Louis and Chicago, I was expecting – hoping – to find a secreted history of *rendezvouses* or of a concealed life. I was looking for a single reference that would open a path to that undisclosed world. I found nothing.

Finally, and with trepidation, I asked the Reverend Lawrence Jenkins whether Poage had mannerism or practices that might have identified him as gay. Jenkins' answer in January 2017 addressed the issue directly:

Our G[eorge] C[oleman] P[oage] had to hide his intellect and his academic accomplishments as much as he had to hide his sexual orientation. The racist society in which he lived had no room for either. The miracle of his survival under those conditions is what stands out for me. ....[Poage] was a refined and distinguished gentleman. There are no stories or rumors to the contrary.



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La Crosse County Clerk, 400 Fourth Street North, La Crosse, Wisconsin.

La Crosse Public Library, Archives Room, 800 Main Street, La Crosse, Wisconsin.

Missouri History Museum, 5700 Lindell Blvd., St. Louis, Missouri.

Oak Grove Cemetery, 407 La Crosse Street, La Crosse, Wisconsin.

University of Arkansas, Special Collections, The University Libraries, The University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas.

University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, Special Collections, Murphy Library, 1631 Pine Street, La Crosse, Wisconsin.

University of Wisconsin-Madison, UW Archives and Records, Steenbock Library, 550 Babcock Drive, Madison, Wisconsin.

## Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> "Graduating Class of '99," *La Crosse Morning Chronicle*, 24 June 1899, p.1.

<sup>2</sup> For Anna Coleman's birth date, see 1900 U. S. Census, Wisconsin, La Crosse, Ward 16, District 83, sheet 8B, and for address of 1317 Cass Street in La Crosse. In 1850, nearly a fifth of Monroe County's population was slave (*The Monroe County Appeal* [MO], 13 August 1931). It is likely that James Poage had belonged to either James or Thomas Poage who owned ten slaves in 1850, for a value of \$4,000. For Monroe County's Poage settlement, see Michael J. O'Brien and Teresita Majewski, "Wealth and Status in the Upper South Socioeconomic System of Northeastern Missouri," *Historical Archaeology* 23 (1989), 72.

<sup>3</sup> Birth records for this family are unreliable, as was the case with most of that generation of African Americans. There had been no reason or legal requirement to keep accurate dates recorded. Both James and Lulu Belle reported their birth day to be 15 September. The obituary for James Poage (*La Crosse Republican and Leader*, 23 July 1888) listed him as forty years old in 1888. A day later, the newspaper corrected it to forty-four years and eleven months. For James and Annie Poage, see Ken Marks and Lisa Marks, *Hannibal Missouri: A Brief History* (Charleston: The History Press, 2011), 169.

<sup>4</sup> For marriage, see Missouri, Marriage Records, Monroe County, 1869, p.47. For the Poages in Paris, Missouri, see 1870 U. S. Census, Missouri, Monroe, Series M593, roll 793, page 603. Lulu Belle's burial record indicates that she was born on 15 September 1867 and that she died on 10 August 1887. There also may have been a fourth child born in Missouri. Page 601 of the 1870 Census for Paris, Missouri, in a household numbered 23, lists an African American one year old child named Kate Poage. James and Anna Poage were the only African American Poages living in Paris in 1870.

<sup>5</sup> For George Poage's birth date, see U. S. World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918, Illinois, Chicago City, 05, card P; and U. S. World War II Draft Registration Cards (Ancestry.com). There is an unexplained note in 1900 U. S. Census, Wisconsin, La Crosse, Ward 16, District 83, sheet 8B, that Anna Poage was the mother of eight children and that only two were still living in 1900. *Bulletin of Lincoln University, Alumni Number* 8.2 (December 1930), 16, listed Nellie as "Nellie N. Poague" rather than as "Nellie L. Poage."

<sup>6</sup> *Hannibal [Missouri] City Directory...1885-1886* (Hannibal: np, 1885), 35 (note: Hannibal's city directories are online at <http://rc.hannibal.lib.mo.us/>). Three of these – Badger State Lumber Co., Empire Lumber Co., and North Western Lumber Co. – were outlets for lumber processed from Wisconsin. Only one mill was operating in Hannibal in 1885 – Hannibal Saw Mill Co.

- <sup>7</sup> *Hannibal City Directory 1885-1886*, 36, listed the Hannibal & St. Joseph R.R.; Missouri Pacific & Wabash R.R.; St. Louis, Hannibal & Keokuk R.R.; Chicago, Burlington & Quincy R.R.
- <sup>8</sup> *Hannibal City Directory 1885-1886*, *passim*.
- <sup>9</sup> *Hannibal City Directory 1881-1882*, 77, 111, 175.
- <sup>10</sup> *Hannibal City Directory 1885-1886*, 49, 174, 236.
- <sup>11</sup> *Hannibal City Directory 1885-1886*, 33, 37.
- <sup>12</sup> J. Hurley and Roberta Hagood, "Douglasville: A Venerable Old School," *Hannibal Courier-Post* (no date available), found in clipping file, Hannibal Free Public Library, Hannibal, Missouri.
- <sup>13</sup> J. Hurley and Roberta Hagood, "Douglass School: A First Class High School," *Hannibal Courier-Post* (Hannibal library's clipping file); Mary Lynne Pfaff, "Douglass Students excel in Scholarship, Sports," *Hannibal Courier-Post*, 25 August 1988.
- <sup>14</sup> For a detailed analysis of settlement patterns in La Crosse, see Bruce L. Mouser, *Black La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1850-1906: Settlers, Entrepreneurs, & Exodusters*, Occasional Papers Series No. 1 (La Crosse: La Crosse County Historical Society, 2002). See, *ibid*, 99-100, for the number of barbers identified in La Crosse between 1850 and 1906. Mouser, *Black La Crosse*, is available online at <http://murphylibrary.uwlax.edu/digital/lacrosse/BlackLaCrosse/>.
- <sup>15</sup> Mouser, *Black La Crosse*, 66-67, 101, 108; Augusta Levy, "Reminiscences of Pioneer Days in La Crosse Wisconsin" (typescript, La Crosse Public Library, La Crosse, Wisconsin, n/d).
- <sup>16</sup> Mouser, *Black La Crosse*, 94-97.
- <sup>17</sup> Mouser, *Black La Crosse*, 103-05.
- <sup>18</sup> *Wisconsin Labor Advocate*, 6 August 1887, p.1.
- <sup>19</sup> See Mouser, *Black La Crosse*, 131-36, for a detailed description of the *Wisconsin Labor Advocate*. This newspaper is online at <http://genealogybank.com> and [http://digitalcollections.uwlax.edu/jsp/RcWebBrowse.jsp?browse\\_layout=GRID&browse\\_start=0&browse\\_items=48&browse\\_sort=Title&browse\\_show\\_facets=true&browse\\_facet\\_sort=ALPHANUMERIC&browse\\_cid=8a9fa504-904e-4826-8e54-f678d34e05eb](http://digitalcollections.uwlax.edu/jsp/RcWebBrowse.jsp?browse_layout=GRID&browse_start=0&browse_items=48&browse_sort=Title&browse_show_facets=true&browse_facet_sort=ALPHANUMERIC&browse_cid=8a9fa504-904e-4826-8e54-f678d34e05eb). For Taylor, see Bruce L. Mouser, *For Labor, Race, and Liberty: George Edwin Taylor, His Historic run for the White House, and the Making of Independent African American Politics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), *passim*.
- <sup>20</sup> *Bunn & Philippi's La Crosse City Directory, 1884-5* (La Crosse: Bunn & Philippi, 1885), 291. See also Eric J. Mörser, *Hinterland Dreams: The Political Economy of a Midwestern City* (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011) for the competition between immigrants and African Americans after the Civil War.
- <sup>21</sup> "Christian Traugott Ficker's Advice to Emigrants," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 25 (1941-42), 456-75.
- <sup>22</sup> Richard Current, *The History of Wisconsin: The Civil War Era, 1848-1873* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1976), 389-91; Leslie Schwalm, *Emancipation's Diaspora: Race and Reconstruction in the Upper Midwest* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 5, 74-76.
- <sup>23</sup> Mouser, *Black La Crosse*, 67, and *passim*.
- <sup>24</sup> Mouser, *Black La Crosse*, 94.
- <sup>25</sup> *La Crosse Chronicle*, 3 June 1897, p.3.
- <sup>26</sup> According to La Crosse County Clerk of Deeds (hereafter LCCCD), Marriage Registrations, vol.3, p.302, and *La Crosse Daily Republican and Leader*, 19 December 1884, p.4, Lulu Belle Poage and John W. Johnson were married on 18 December 1884 at the Poage residence located on Pine Street between Eleventh and Twelfth streets, following the "Methodist Episcopal service" and officiated by the Reverend G. W. Case. According to the La Crosse city directory, the only African American family living in that hundred block of Pine Street in 1884 was that of Matthew and Anna Schooley. The Schooleys had no children. See also Mouser, *Black La Crosse*, 32-33.
- <sup>27</sup> "A. W. Pettibone called by Death," *La Crosse Tribune*, 2 August 1915, p.1.
- <sup>28</sup> *Biographical History of La Crosse, Monroe and Juneau Counties, Wisconsin* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1892), 139. See also *The Quincy Daily Journal*, Quincy IL, 23 September 1899, p.2, for more on the Pettibone family in Hannibal. Marks and Marks, *Hannibal*, 81, noted that Pettibone in La Crosse had partnered with G. C. Hixon and that they built the firm of G. C. Hixon & Co., in Hannibal into a thriving business between 1867 and 1882 when it burned, "just as the company had begun reaching 24 million feet of lumber production per year." When A.W. Pettibone moved back to La Crosse, he left his son Wilson Boyd Pettibone to manage a redesigned Hannibal Sawmill Company which became Hannibal's largest employer. For Hannibal reports, see *Hannibal City Directory 1783-74*, 43; *Hannibal City Directory 1879-80*, 166; *Hannibal City Directory 1885-1886*, 35.
- <sup>29</sup> *La Crosse Tribune*, 14 December 2009. For Cargill in La Crosse, see Wayne G. Broel Jr., *Cargill: Trading the World's Grain* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1992).
- <sup>30</sup> *Urban Publishing Co's La Crosse City Directory 1885-1886* (La Crosse: Urban Publishing Co., 1885), 271. According to Myer Katz, *Echoes of Our Past* (La Crosse: Inland Printing), 167, Easton also started the Hillview Stock Farm, then near the city's fairgrounds, "where he bred hundreds of fine animals." According to <http://archives.lacrosselibrary.org/blog/a-century-of-growing-in-the-city/>, the stock farm was located near what is now North 24<sup>th</sup> Street and occupied the land bordered by La Crosse Street on the south, the marsh on the north, and Myrick Park on the west. After Easton's death, the land became the Hillview Addition and was divided for residential housing. For Hillview Stock Farm, see also "Hillview Place ready for sale," *La Crosse Tribune*, 15 June 1908, p.4.
- <sup>31</sup> John Johnson was listed only in La Crosse's city directories for 1885 and 1886. There is no surviving edition for 1887. The burial record for Lulu Belle John-

- son lists her only as Lulu Poage. Oak Grove Cemetery, La Crosse, Wisconsin (hereafter OGC), Burial Record, lists Fred as Fred Jansen (?Johnson) and not as Fred Poage.
- <sup>32</sup> According to <http://www.cargill-pettibone.com/history.html>, this photograph was taken in the Cargill- Pettibone house. It was common, however, for photographers to have staging sets for such photographs.
- <sup>33</sup> OGC, Record of Burial, 1888; LCCCD, Death Registration, vol.1, p.290. OGC, Plot Record, lists only three burials in lot 1546, section 34 – Lulu Poage, James Poage, and Fred Jansen.
- <sup>34</sup> *La Crosse Republican and Leader*, 23 July 1888.
- <sup>35</sup> *La Crosse Republican and Leader*, 23 July 1888; *ibid*, 24 July 1888; Pat Dorn, "Looking Back," *Wisconsin Alumni* (July/August 1988), 23.
- <sup>36</sup> For more on Jason C. Easton, see Katz, *Echoes of our Past*, 166-169. There was no Thirteenth Street between Cass and King streets. See also "Stories about the men who helped build city," *La Crosse Tribune*, 21 December 1930, p.11.
- <sup>37</sup> Katz, *Echoes of our Past*, 167. Katz claimed that Jason Easton had grown more than 3,000 varieties of grapes. See also "City was empire hub," *La Crosse Tribune*, 21 December 1980, p.12.
- <sup>38</sup> OGC, Burial Record of Burial, No. 1888. Anna Poage was recorded in 1900 U. S. Census, Wisconsin, La Crosse, Ward 16, District 83, sheet 8B, as living at 1317 Cass Street, where Jason Easton maintained his office.
- <sup>39</sup> See SC-UWL, "Information from Ralph DuPae," 20 December 1996, in Poage, George, Vertical File. The SC-UWL staff thoroughly researched this rumor and found no corroborating evidence to support it.
- <sup>40</sup> Julia Davis, *Down Memory Lane* (St. Louis: for Phyllis Wheatley Branch Young Women's Christian Association, 1959), 11.
- <sup>41</sup> SC-UWL, Poage File, Letter, Anne Thomas to Edwin Hill, 29 April 1992. See also Tamara Beaubouef-Lafontant, *Behind the Mask of the Strong Black Woman: Voice and the Embodiment of a Costly Performance* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009), 6-7, 16-18. Beaubouef-Lafontant claims, 6-7, that both white and African American societies perceive African American women as strong and force them to adopt a "surface" behavior of being strong. They must act strong to be strong. Beaubouef-Lafontant also suggests, 16-17, that acting strong gives the African American woman permission to separate herself from "the crowd" and yet remain a part of it. It was a way to "rise above the socially orchestrated unfairness" placed upon them as mothers and as family leaders and protectors.
- <sup>42</sup> SC-UWL, Poage File, Letter, Anne Thomas to Edwin Hill, 29 April 1992.
- <sup>43</sup> *History of La Crosse County, Wisconsin* (Chicago: Western Historical Company, 1881), 521; Mouser, *Black La Crosse*, 11, note 16.
- <sup>44</sup> SC-UWL, Poage File, Letter, Thomas to Hill, 29 April 1992.
- <sup>45</sup> Katz, *Echoes of our Past*, 167. The Easton Estate was in two parts. One part consisted of Jason Easton's residence at 1305 Cass Street, while the other, occupied by Lucian Easton and his wife Mary Losey (daughter of Joseph Losey, "after whom Losey Boulevard is named"), was located at 1327 Cass Street. Jason Easton maintained an office at 1317 Cass, which was given as Anna Poage's residence in the 1900 U. S. Census and as the permanent residence of George Poage in 1903. Margaret Easton, the daughter of Lucian and Mary Easton, claimed ("Miss Easton, Member of Pioneer Family, Dies," *La Crosse Tribune*, 26 December 1962, p.1) that she had learned French from a resident nurse and that she was conversant in German by the age of three or four. For Jason Clark Easton (Jr.), see <http://findingaids.lib.wvu.edu/w/wvcguide/browse/137.html>, accessed 12 January 2017.
- <sup>46</sup> Katz, *Echoes of our Past*, 168. The *La Crosse City Directory, 1900* (La Crosse: Philippi, 1900), 385, listed Anna Poage's residence at 1327 Cass which was the residence of Lucian Easton. It is likely that the houses at 1305, 1317 and 1327 were all connected by an underground tunnel.
- <sup>47</sup> Mrs. Lucy Reggs Poage (Pogue, Poge, Poag and wife of Andrew A. Poage) was listed as a domestic in Hannibal as late as 1903. See *Hannibal City Directory, 1903* (Quincy: Hachman, 1903), 271, with an address at 310 Hill Street. In 1901, Andrew A. Poage, Arthur A. Poage, Horace E. Poage, and Robert D. Poage lived at 219 S. 7<sup>th</sup> Street (*Hannibal City Directory, 1901* [Quincy: Hachman & Carter, 1901], 229).
- <sup>48</sup> *St. Louis Republic*, 18 June 1898, p.1.
- <sup>49</sup> June Wuest Becht, "George Poage: Clearing Hurdles at the 1904 Olympics," *Gateway History* 24:4 (1995), 56-58; Davis, *Down Memory Lane*, 11-12; *Belleville News Democrat*, 22 August 1902, p.1; *Freeman*, 26 December 1914.
- <sup>50</sup> Davis, *Down Memory Lane*, 11.
- <sup>51</sup> SC-UWL, Poage File, La Crosse High School Record,
- |                             |                   |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| Required for all courses:   | %                 |
| Political Geography         | 80                |
| Physical Geography          | 94                |
| U. S. History               | 82                |
| English Grammar/composition | 90                |
| Arithmetic                  | 97                |
| Algebra                     | 96                |
| Plane Geometry              | 89                |
| Solid Geometry              | 91                |
| Ancient Classical Course:   |                   |
| Ancient History             | 91                |
| English History             | 93                |
| Latin, Elementary Book      | 86                |
| Grammar                     | 86 through course |
| Prose Composition           | 91                |
| Caesar, 4 books             | [91]              |
| Cicero, 7 orations          | 90                |
| Virgil, 6 books             | 90                |



- |                    |                   |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| Greek, Grammar     | 88 through course |
| Xenophon, 4 books  | 92                |
| Homer, 3 books     | 86                |
| Prose Compositions | 90                |
| Extra Studies:     |                   |
| Botany             | 92                |
| Elementary Physics | 89                |
| Senior Physics     | 91                |
| English Literature | 86                |
- <sup>52</sup> *La Crosse Daily Republican and Leader*, 23 June 1899.
- <sup>53</sup> *La Crosse Leader Press*, 18 June 1913, p.3.
- <sup>54</sup> *La Crosse Morning Chronicle*, 27 May 1898, p.3.
- <sup>55</sup> *Winona Daily Republican*, 29 May 1899, p.3; *La Crosse Daily Republican and Leader*, 27 May 1899; Davis, *Down Memory Lane*, 12.
- <sup>56</sup> *La Crosse Daily Press*, 29 May 1899, p.1, for slightly different times.
- <sup>57</sup> Davis, *Down Memory Lane*, 12.
- <sup>58</sup> La Crosse Public Library, Archives, Hirshheimer Papers, Box 2, Folder 33, 1899; *La Crosse Chronicle*, 5 May 1899, p.1; *ibid*, 12 May 1899; *ibid*, 16 May 1899, p.1.
- <sup>59</sup> SC-UWL, La Crosse County, City of La Crosse, Police Justice Court, Criminal Docket 1898-1901, 264; *La Crosse City Directory*, 1900, 427, 483.
- <sup>60</sup> SC-UWL, La Crosse County, City of La Crosse, Police Justice Court, Criminal Docket 1898-1901, 264.
- <sup>61</sup> *The Appeal* (Minneapolis), 25 June 1898, p.3; *St. Louis Republic*, 18 June 1898, p.1. See *La Crosse Republican-Leader*, 9 June 1898, for Lincoln Institute commencement announcement.
- <sup>62</sup> List of courses taken by Poage provided in letter, Ithaca Bryant to Bruce Mouser, 7 November 2011.
- <sup>63</sup> *Fair Play* (Fort Scott, Kansas), 28 April 1899, p.2. According to *Fifty-First Report of the Public Schools of the State of Missouri for the School Year ending June 30, 1900*, "Report of Negro Schools," (Jefferson City: Tribune Printing, 1901), 83, Nellie received an annual salary of \$200, and the school enrolled only twenty-six students through the eighth grade.
- <sup>64</sup> *St. Louis Republic*, 18 June 1901, p.3. See also *Belle-ville News Democrat*, 22 August 1902, p.1, and *St. Louis Republic*, 3 June 1903, p.15, for Nellie at Lincoln School.
- <sup>65</sup> The Bottomland Explorer Archive: ESLARP's Social History Project: <http://www.eslarp.uiuc.edu/ibex/archive/nunes/timeline/18631890.htm> (accessed 29 November 2012).
- <sup>66</sup> *Plaindealer* (Topeka, Kansas), 11 May 1900, p.2, and 25 May 1900, p.4. Anna Poage in 1900 gave her address in La Crosse as 1327 Cass Street, the residence of Lucian and Mary Easton. The *La Crosse City Directory*, 1900 (La Crosse: L. P. Philippi, 1900), 385, listed Anna as a laundress.
- <sup>67</sup> SC-UWL, Poage file, "Registration for Graduate School," University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin, dated 1 October 1903. Poage listed his Madison address as 231 W. Gilman.
- <sup>68</sup> Allen G. Bogue, "'Not by Bread Alone': the Emergence of the Wisconsin Idea and the Departure of Frederick Jackson Turner," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 86.1 (Autumn 2002), 22.
- <sup>69</sup> *La Crosse City Directory*, 1897, 30.
- <sup>70</sup> SC-UWL, Poage File, Undergraduate Transcript for George Coleman Poage, Registrar's Office, University of Wisconsin. In Poage's application for admission to the university, dated 18 September 1899, the principal of La Crosse High School recommended that Poage be admitted to the Ancient-Classical course at Madison. For a description of the Civic-Historical course see *Catalogue of the University of Wisconsin for 1899-1900* (Madison: the University, 1900), 139. For Hemmenway, the classicist and graduate of Bowdoin College in Maine, see "Appreciation of W. R. Hemmenway," *La Crosse Tribune*, 22 June 1914.
- <sup>71</sup> [https://history.wisc.edu/catalogue\\_archive.htm](https://history.wisc.edu/catalogue_archive.htm), accessed 29 November 2016.
- <sup>72</sup> "Movement from Europe," *La Crosse Daily Republican and Leader*, 28 January 1895, p.4; "Missouri Compromise," *ibid*, 11 February 1895, p.4; "Prof. Turner's Lecture," *La Crosse Sunday Press*, 17 February 1895, p.1; "Reign of Old Hickory," *La Crosse Daily Republican and Leader*, 18 February 1895, p.4.
- <sup>73</sup> *The Wisconsin Alumni Magazine* 1.3 (December 1899), 117 (<http://digital.library.wisc.edu/117.dl/UW.v1i3>, accessed 30 November 2016).
- <sup>74</sup> *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine* 2.2 (November 1900), 82.
- <sup>75</sup> *Students' Manual of the University of Wisconsin for 1899-1900*, p.186 (<http://www.digicoll.library.wisc.edu>).
- <sup>76</sup> *Madison, Wisconsin: City Directory [for] 1900-1* (Madison: Angell & Hastreiter, 1900), p.482. For Butts, also see "One Man's Journey from Slavery to Madison Business Owner to State Assembly Staff Member" (<http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Content.aspx?dsNav=N:4294963828-4294963805&dsRecordDetails=R:CS325>).
- <sup>77</sup> <http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Content.aspx?dsNav=N:4294963828-4294963805&dsRecordDetails=R:CS325>.
- <sup>78</sup> SC-UWL, Poage File, Undergraduate Transcript for George Coleman Poage, Registrar's Office, University of Wisconsin.
- <sup>79</sup> See SC-UWL, Poage File, Registrar's Office, University of Wisconsin, Memoranda attached to Undergraduate Transcript for George Coleman Poage, "2<sup>nd</sup> Sem[es]t[er] 1900. Excused from Military Drill as a member of track team."
- <sup>80</sup> SC-UWL, Poage File, Registrar's Office, University of Wisconsin, Undergraduate Transcript for George Coleman Poage.
- |                                     |                    |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Course                              | %                  |
| [ <b>Freshman Year</b> , 1899-1900] |                    |
| English                             | 87                 |
| Latin                               | 86                 |
| History                             | 87                 |
| Mathematics                         | 86                 |
| Gymnastics                          | G [no explanation] |
| Military Drill                      | 100                |
| History                             | 90                 |

- |                |           |
|----------------|-----------|
| History        | 88        |
| English        | 89        |
| Latin          | 86        |
| Trigonometry   | 83        |
| Gymnastics     | Exc[used] |
| Military Drill | Exc[used] |
- <sup>81</sup> "Miss Easton ... dies," *La Crosse Tribune*, 26 December 1926, p.1.
- <sup>82</sup> SC-UWL, Poage File, Registrar's Office, University of Wisconsin, Undergraduate Transcript for George Coleman Poage.
- Course %
- [**Sophomore Year**, 1900-1901]
- |                |       |
|----------------|-------|
| Economics      | 77    |
| English        | 93    |
| French         | 93    |
| German         | 93    |
| History        | 82    |
| Latin          | 92    |
| Gymnastics     | 85    |
| Military Drill | 95    |
| Pol. Science   | 91    |
| History        | 87    |
| Latin          | 90    |
| "              | 91    |
| French         | 90    |
| German         | 93    |
| English        | 86    |
| Drill          | Exc.d |
- <sup>83</sup> A separate "School of History" existed between 1900 and 1903, when it became a part of the College of Letters and Sciences.
- <sup>84</sup> William Amasa Scott, *The Repudiation of State Debts* (New York: T. Y. Crowell & Co., 1893).
- <sup>85</sup> For Scott and Turner and descriptions of courses they taught, see *Catalogue(s) of the University of Wisconsin* for 1899, 1900, 1901, 1902, 1903 (available online at <http://books.google.com>).
- <sup>86</sup> See Eric Mörser, *Hinterland Dreams: The Political Economy of a Midwestern City* (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), ix-xi, for a discussion of Turner's thesis as it applies to La Crosse, Wisconsin.
- <sup>87</sup> SC-UWL, Poage File, Registrar's Office, University of Wisconsin, Undergraduate Transcript for George Coleman Poage.
- Course %
- [**Junior Year**, 1901-1902]
- |           |    |
|-----------|----|
| History   | 88 |
| Economics | 73 |
| Physics   | 79 |
| Latin     | 90 |
| History   | 86 |
| Latin     | 83 |
| German    | 80 |
| History   | 84 |
| "         | 77 |
| Physics   | 77 |
- <sup>88</sup> *Madison, Wisconsin: City Directory 1902* (Madison: G. R. Angell & Co., 1902), p.586.
- <sup>89</sup> *Janesville Daily Gazette*, 24 September 1903, p.2; *The Minneapolis Journal*, 24 September 1903, p.16; *Saint Paul Globe*, 24 September 1903, p.5; *Inter Ocean*, 9 August 1903, p.32, and 5 June 1904, p.4.
- <sup>90</sup> *Inter Ocean*, 16 May 1903, p.4.
- <sup>91</sup> See Ellis, *The Badger from 1904*, "Hell is Paved with Good Intentions," p.400, for Poage's boast that he intended to run the quarter mile in 48 seconds.
- <sup>92</sup> SC-UWL, Poage File, Registrar's Office, University of Wisconsin, Undergraduate Transcript for George Coleman Poage.
- Course %
- [**Senior Year**, 1902-1903]
- |                  |                    |
|------------------|--------------------|
| History          | G [no explanation] |
| Polit. Sci.      | 93                 |
| Mathematics      | [none]             |
| Latin            | 78                 |
| Psychology       | Psd                |
| Pedagogy         | 83                 |
| Latin            | 75                 |
| History          | 85                 |
| "                | P[as]s[e]d         |
| Polit. Science   | 84                 |
| Pedagogy         | 72                 |
| Mathematics      | Psd                |
| Thesis (History) | 71                 |
- [**Summer School**, 1903]
- |                  |    |
|------------------|----|
| Qual. Geom[etry] | 83 |
| Am[erican] Lit   | 86 |
- <sup>93</sup> SC-UWL, Poage File, Registrar's Office, University of Wisconsin, Graduate Transcript for George Coleman Poage.
- Course:
- [**Graduate Studies**, 1903-1904]
- |                   |                  |
|-------------------|------------------|
| History           | 84               |
| " "               | Cr[edit]         |
| " "               | Cr               |
| Political Science | 96               |
| History           | 75               |
| " "               | Inc[omplete] [*] |
| Political Science | 83               |
| " "               | 85               |
- <sup>94</sup> *Minneapolis Journal*, 24 September 1903, p.16.
- <sup>95</sup> *Janesville Daily Gazette*, 24 September 1903, p.2; *The Minneapolis Journal*, 24 September 1903, p.16; *Saint Paul Globe*, 24 September 1903, p.5; Dorn, "Looking Back," *Wisconsin Alumni* (July/August 1988), 22. See also John Sayle Watterson, *College Football: History, Spectacle, Controversy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2000), 84-85, for Turner's criticisms of Wisconsin's retention of athletes after they had graduated.
- <sup>96</sup> LPLA, George C. Poage File, UW Graduate Department. For another disappointment, see UWAR, Nathaniel Jerome Frederick, "Forty Eighth Commencement, Thursday, June 20, 1901"; *ibid*, Frederick, Application to Graduate Department, 26 September 1900. Frederick, an African American graduate with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Ancient-Classical studies from Claflin College of Orange-

- burg, South Carolina, had enrolled in Wisconsin's Master of Arts program in 1900. Turner apparently considered the Claflin College degree inadequate, and Frederick graduated on 20 June 1901 with another Bachelor of Arts degree, this time from the University of Wisconsin.<sup>96</sup>
- <sup>97</sup> University of Wisconsin, *Badger Yearbook for 1885*, 73-74.
- <sup>98</sup> Ibid, 76.
- <sup>99</sup> For Philomathia at La Crosse High School, see La Crosse High School, *High School News*, December 1901, p.10.
- <sup>100</sup> *The Daily Cardinal*, 12 January 1901, p.4.
- <sup>101</sup> The problem associated with these numbers relates to the fact that Badger Yearbooks were produced by Junior class students that were inconsistent in what they included and how they counted the years. For Freshman Blow-out, see Ralph Ellis (ed), *The Badger for 1904*, p.104.
- <sup>102</sup> "Birge Speaks at Convocation," *Wisconsin State Journal*, 28 October 1900, p.1. I am indebted to Harvey D. Long, University of Wisconsin-Madison, who drew this article to my attention.
- <sup>103</sup> Nathan Hansen, "La Crosse has long, complex relationship with newcomers," *La Crosse Tribune*, 8 February 2016, p.10. See also Chris Nudd, "Singing Societies were Popular," *La Crosse Tribune*, 20 April 1969, p.3.
- <sup>104</sup> Likely, the most complete record of Poage's track achievements is found in Davis, *Down Memory Lane*, 12-13. See also *Badger Yearbook for 1905*, 166.
- <sup>105</sup> In many instances, the events and times listed in Davis, *Down Memory Lane*, 12-14, in Ocania Chalk, *Black College Sport* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1976), 290-293, and in *Badger* yearbooks cannot be reconciled. Accounts in newspapers also lacked agreement. The University of Wisconsin did not record events and times in its official records. The times for events as listed below are only a best attempt to reconcile times.
- <sup>106</sup> John Bartow Patrick (ed), *The 1902 Badger* (Madison: for the Junior Class, 1902), p.370; *Inter Ocean*, 17 October 1900, p.8.
- <sup>107</sup> Patrick, *The 1902 Badger*, p.370.
- <sup>108</sup> Patrick, *The 1902 Badger*, p.370.
- <sup>109</sup> Richard Hollen (ed), *The Badger for 1903* (Madison: for the Junior Class, 1903), p.332. *Inter Ocean*, 17 May 1901, p.4, described Poage as "very fast."
- <sup>110</sup> Hollen, *The Badger for 1903*, p.332.
- <sup>111</sup> Hollen, *The Badger for 1903*, p.331.
- <sup>112</sup> Davis, *Down Memory Lane*, 12.
- <sup>113</sup> Hollen, *The Badger for 1903*, p.333.
- <sup>114</sup> Hollen, *The Badger for 1903*, p.333 *Inter Ocean*, 2 March 1902, p.45.
- <sup>115</sup> Moffatt, *The Badger for 1905*, p.166; *Inter Ocean*, 17 May 1902, p.4.
- <sup>116</sup> *Inter Ocean*, 23 May 1902, p.5.
- <sup>117</sup> Ellis, *The Badger for 1904*, p.378.
- <sup>118</sup> Ellis, *The Badger for 1904*, p.379.
- <sup>119</sup> Ellis, *The Badger for 1904*, p.378 *Inter Ocean*, 15 March 1903, p.5.
- <sup>120</sup> Moffatt, *The Badger for 1905*, p.180; *Inter Ocean*, 5 May 1903, p.3.
- <sup>121</sup> Moffatt, *The Badger for 1905*, p.180; *Decatur Herald* (IL), 16 May 1903, p.1; *Inter Ocean*, 16 May 1903, p.4.
- <sup>122</sup> Moffatt, *The Badger for 1905*, p.182; *Saint Paul Globe*, 24 May 1903, p.14; *Inter Ocean*, 24 May 1903, p.10.
- <sup>123</sup> Moffatt, *The Badger for 1905*, p.179; Davis, *Down Memory Lane*, 13; *Inter Ocean*, 31 May 1903, p.11.
- <sup>124</sup> Moffatt, *The Badger for 1905*, p.181.
- <sup>125</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>126</sup> Peter Schram (ed), *The Badger for 1906* (Madison: for the Junior Class, 1906), p.390. *Inter Ocean*, 15 May 1904, p.19, described this meet as a "crushing defeat" for the University of Wisconsin team.
- <sup>127</sup> *Argus-Leader* (Sioux Falls), 23 May 1904, p.2.
- <sup>128</sup> Moffatt, *The Badger for 1905*, p.182; *Inter Ocean*, 24 May 1903, p.10.
- <sup>129</sup> Davis, *Down Memory Lane*, 13. According to *Daily Review* (Decatur IL), 5 June 1904, p.4, this was an IAA meet that occurred in Chicago, and Poage's time in the 440-yard dash was 50% seconds. See also *Inter Ocean*, 5 June 1904, p.17, for the same times.
- <sup>130</sup> Davis, *Down Memory Lane*, 13.
- <sup>131</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>132</sup> Ibid, 12.
- <sup>133</sup> *Inter Ocean*, 8 March 1903, p.5; *ibid*, 9 August 1903, 32.
- <sup>134</sup> *Inter Ocean*, 5 September 1903, p.14, and *ibid*, 11 September 1903, p.13; *Cleveland Leader*, 11 September 1903, p.2; *Springfield (IL) Republican*, 11 September 1903, p.3; *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), 11 September 1903, p.10.
- <sup>135</sup> William B Johnson, *All that Glitters is not Gold* (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1972), 120.
- <sup>136</sup> As quoted in Evan Andrews, "8 Unusual Facts About the 1904 St. Louis Olympics" (August 2014) ([www.history.com/news/8-unusual-facts-about-the-1904-st-louis-olympics](http://www.history.com/news/8-unusual-facts-about-the-1904-st-louis-olympics)), accessed 16 October 2016).
- <sup>137</sup> Charles J.P. Lucas, *The Olympic Games of 1904* (St. Louis: Woodward & Tiernan, 1905), *passim*. For personal appeals to Poage to boycott the Games, see [http://www.oxfordaasc.com/public/features/archive/0712/photo\\_essay.jsp?page=1](http://www.oxfordaasc.com/public/features/archive/0712/photo_essay.jsp?page=1), accessed 30 December 2016.
- <sup>138</sup> Lucas *Olympic Games*, 13.
- <sup>139</sup> As quoted in Kristine Toohey, *The Olympic Games: A Social Science Perspective* (Trowbridge: Cromwell Press, 2007), 274.
- <sup>140</sup> "Olympic Games Transferred from Chicago to St. Louis," *Chicago Tribune*, 12 February 1903, p.7.
- <sup>141</sup> Lucas, *Olympic Games*, 16-18.
- <sup>142</sup> Bruce L. Mouser, *Black Gambler's World of Liquor, Vice, and Presidential Politics: William Thomas Scott of Illinois* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2014), 79-80. See Tim A. Ryan, *Calls and Responses: The American Novel of Slavery since Gone With the Wind* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Uni-

- versity Press, 2008), 13-18 and passim, for more on the Southern school of history and the writings of Ulrich B. Phillips.
- <sup>143</sup> Ryan, *Calls and Responses*, passim.
- <sup>144</sup> Mouser, *Black Gambler's World*, 93-94.
- <sup>145</sup> Mouser, *Black Gambler's World*, 89-90; Charles L. Lumpkins, "Black East St. Louis: Politics and Economy in a Border City, 1860-1945," Phd. Thesis, Pennsylvania State University, 2006, 19; Charles L. Lumpkins, *American Pogrom: The East St. Louis Riots and Black Politics* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2008), 12-13.
- <sup>146</sup> Mouser, *Black Gambler's World*, 88; Don D. Parizo and Nancy J. Fowler, *Anthropology Goes to the Fair: The 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 255; *Illinois State Journal* (Springfield), 11 April 1901, p.2
- <sup>147</sup> For personal appeals to Poage, see [http://www.oxfordaasc.com/public/features/archive/0712/photo\\_essay.jsp?page=1](http://www.oxfordaasc.com/public/features/archive/0712/photo_essay.jsp?page=1), accessed 30 December 2016.
- <sup>148</sup> As quoted in Mouser, *Black Gambler's World*, 93.
- <sup>149</sup> Lucas, *Olympic Games*, 25.
- <sup>150</sup> Lucas, *Olympic Games*, 27.
- <sup>151</sup> Dorn, "Looking Back," 22; Becht, "George Poage," 56-58; *Fort Worth Star-Telegraph*, 29 August 1904, p.8.
- <sup>152</sup> Becht, "George Poage," 56-58, 78-79.
- <sup>153</sup> Karen Abbott, "The 1904 Olympic Marathon may have been the Strangest Ever," *The Smithsonian Magazine*, 7 August 2012 (at [www.smithsonianmag.com/history/the-1904-olympic-marathon-may-have-been-the-strangest-ever-14910747/](http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/the-1904-olympic-marathon-may-have-been-the-strangest-ever-14910747/), accessed 1 January 2017).
- <sup>154</sup> Lucas, *Olympic Games*, 57-59;
- <sup>155</sup> Abbott, "1904 Olympic Marathon."
- <sup>156</sup> Lucas, *Olympic Games*, 59-60, 62.
- <sup>157</sup> Alan J. Gould, "Inside Stuff on the Olympics," *San Diego Union*, 18 May 1928, p.21.
- <sup>158</sup> Abbott, "1904 Olympic Marathon."
- <sup>159</sup> *Palestine Daily Herald* (TX), 23 April 1904, p.2.
- <sup>160</sup> Mouser, *Labor, Race, and Liberty*, 109; Bobby Watson, "Black Phalanx: The National Liberty Party of 1904" (MS 00-10, Series VI – Law and Politics, A-B, box 1, file 12, University of Arkansas Library), 5-6.
- <sup>161</sup> Mouser, *Labor, Race, and Liberty*, 109-111, 198n12; Watson, "Black Phalanx," 5-6.
- <sup>162</sup> For Scott, see Mouser, *Black Gambler's World*, 70-71, 83.
- <sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 92-93.
- <sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 100-101.
- <sup>165</sup> Bruce L. Mouser, "Taylor and Smith: Benevolent Fosterage," *Past, Present & Future: The Magazine of the La Crosse County Historical Society* 32.1 (August 2010), 1-3.
- <sup>166</sup> Bruce L. Mouser, "George Edwin Taylor and Wayland: Leaving his Mark," *Greetings, Wayland Academy Annual* (July 2010), 15-19. Wayland began as a university and had extravagant dreams of becoming the equivalent of the Brown University of the upper Midwest. Wayland was the President of Brown University.
- <sup>167</sup> Mouser, *Black Gambler's World*, 71-72. For a more detailed treatment of Taylor's life in Wisconsin, see Mouser, *For Labor, Race, and Liberty*, 14-56.
- <sup>168</sup> *Wisconsin Labor Advocate*, 2 July 1887, p.4.
- <sup>169</sup> As quoted in *Wisconsin Labor Advocate*, 2 July 1887, p.4.
- <sup>170</sup> For Taylor's selection as the candidate of the National Negro Liberty Party and the 1904 Presidential campaign, see Mouser, *For Labor, Race, and Liberty*, 107-134.
- <sup>171</sup> *New York Sun*, 20 November 1904, sec.3, p.7; reprinted in Mouser, *Labor, Race, and Liberty*, 155-158.
- <sup>172</sup> Becht, "George Poage," 56-58.
- <sup>173</sup> Elinor Mondale Gersman, "The Development of Public Education for Blacks in Nineteenth Century St. Louis, Missouri," *Journal of Negro Education* 41.1 (Winter 1972), 43.
- <sup>174</sup> *Belleville News Democrat*, 22 August 1902, p.1.
- <sup>175</sup> *St. Louis Republic*, 18 June 1901, p.3. Nell and Howard Jenkins of St. Louis married in 1910, and they moved to Denver, Colorado, where Jenkins had obtained a position in the U. S. Post Office Department as a letter carrier (U. S. Census for 1910, Colorado, Denver, Series T624, Roll 116, page 185).<sup>175</sup>
- <sup>176</sup> Becht, "George Poage," 54.
- <sup>177</sup> *Year Book of the Michigan State Normal School for 1905-1906*, 226.
- <sup>178</sup> Gersman, "Public Education," 43.
- <sup>179</sup> Gersman, "Public Education," 44.
- <sup>180</sup> Gersman, "Public Education," 44.
- <sup>181</sup> The most complete biography of Clark is Nikki M. Taylor, *America's First Black Socialist: The Radical Life of Peter H. Clark* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2013).
- <sup>182</sup> Lawrence Grossman, *Democratic Party and the Negro: Northern and National Politics, 1868-92* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976), 81; *New York Times*, 27 July 1888; Mouser, *Black Gambler's World*, 69-70.
- <sup>183</sup> *Freeman*, 20 September 1890, p.4.
- <sup>184</sup> "Edward A. Bouchet, Ph.D.," *Negro History Bulletin* 31 (December 1968) ([http://www.rackham.umich.edu/student\\_life/diversity/community/bouchet/Biography/](http://www.rackham.umich.edu/student_life/diversity/community/bouchet/Biography/), accessed 18 December 2011). Yale University and Howard University established a Bouchet Graduate Honor Society in 2008.
- <sup>185</sup> <http://psychology.okstate.edu/museum/turner/turnerbio.html>, accessed 18 December 2011. Turner published more than seventy scientific reports. See also Charles I. Abramson, "A Study in Inspiration: Charles Henry Turner (1867-1923) and the Investigation of Insect Behavior," *Annual Review of Entomology* 54 (2009), 343-359.
- <sup>186</sup> Wallace D. Best, *Passionately Human, No less Divine: Religion and Culture in Black Chicago* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 37-38. For a simi-



- lar response, see Robert M. Marovich, *A City called Heaven: Chicago and the Birth of Gospel Music* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 14-15.
- <sup>187</sup> Board of Education, *Annual Report of the Board of Education of the City of St. Louis, Mo....1909* (St. Louis: Nixon-Jones, 1910), 72-74. See also National Education Association of the United States, *Yearbook and List of Active Members of the National Education Association* (Winona: for the Association, 1904), 171-174.
- <sup>188</sup> Board of Education, *Annual Report of the Board of Education of the City of St. Louis, Mo.... 1904* (St. Louis: Nixon-Jones, 1905), 228, 234-35.
- <sup>189</sup> Davis, *Down Memory Lane*, 15-16. For the Red Domino Club, see Ralph Ellis (ed), *Badger Yearbook for 1904*, p.285.
- <sup>190</sup> *Gould's East St. Louis Directory for 1906* (St. Louis: Gould Directory Co., 1906), p.301.
- <sup>191</sup> *Gould's East St. Louis Directory for 1907* (St. Louis: Gould Directory Co., 1907), p.312.
- <sup>192</sup> *Gould's St. Louis Directory for 1909*, p.1636; *Gould's St. Louis Directory for 1911*, p.1580. In "Honorable Howard Jenkins, Jr – Mr. NLRB" ([www.law.du.edu/Jenkins/Chapter5.htm](http://www.law.du.edu/Jenkins/Chapter5.htm)) the author states that Howard Jenkins had a grandfather, Charles F. Holmes, who was a practicing dentist in Denver.
- <sup>193</sup> For Poage at Cote Brillante, see *Gould's St. Louis Directory for 1913*, p.1681. For a detailed description of racial tensions that came to the Elleardsville (shortened to "the Ville") District of St. Louis (Lawton Avenue and Cote Brillante Avenue) as a result of African American migration, especially including teachers, see Lawrence O. Christensen, "Black St. Louis: A Study of Race Relations 1865-1916," PhD thesis, University of Missouri, 1972, 133-159.
- <sup>194</sup> *St. Louis Palladium*, 9 December 1905, p.5.
- <sup>195</sup> "Athletic Meets to form a part of Sane Fourth," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 1 July 1910, p.2.
- <sup>196</sup> The Reverend Lawrence Jenkins, the great grandson of Anna Poage, recalls reading that letter, but the letter no longer exists or has been displaced.
- <sup>197</sup> Henry T. Sampson, *Blacks in Blackface: A Sourcebook on Early Black Musical Shows* (Toronto: The Scarecrow Press, 2014), 236-237.
- <sup>198</sup> "Blewett Probes Charges Against Negro Teachers," *The St. Louis Star and Times*, 1 June 1914, p.1.
- <sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>200</sup> "Resigns Under Charges," *The Kansas City Sun*, 1 August 1914, p.1, as reprinted from the *St. Louis Argus*. Lawyers representing the parents were George L. Vaughn and Homer Gilliam Phillips.
- <sup>201</sup> The records of the St. Louis Board of Education are held by the Missouri History Museum in St. Louis. Unfortunately, they have not been catalogued and remain essentially inaccessible.
- <sup>202</sup> *Ibid.* No copies of the *Argus* that cover the two weeks before or after this meeting have survived. According to Board of Education of the City of St. Louis, *Official Proceedings, Printed Record*, vol. 21 for July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1914 to June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1915 (St. Louis: n/p, 1915), 209, John Pinkett was appointed as Poage's replacement on 22 July 1914.
- <sup>203</sup> Davis, *Down Memory Lane*, 15.
- <sup>204</sup> *Indianapolis Freeman*, 26 December 1914, p.5.
- <sup>205</sup> For Tyler at Oberlin, see *Broad Ax*, 11 June 1921, p.1; *Cleveland Gazette*, Cleveland, 24 March 1900, p.3; *Washington Bee*, Washington, 8 June 1910, p.5. For Tyler at Washington's Conservatory of Music, see *The Colored American*, Washington, D.C., 3 September 1904, p.7; *ibid.*, 10 September 1904, p.7.
- <sup>206</sup> *The Washington Post*, 11 June 1905, p.13.
- <sup>207</sup> *Washington Bee*, 8 April 1911, p. 5; *ibid.*, 8 January 1910, p.8; *Broad Ax*, 2 December 1911, p.1; *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 29 December 1909, p.4.
- <sup>208</sup> *Washington Bee*, 1 July 1911, p.1; *Broad Ax*, 20 November 1920, p.3; *The Tulsa Star*, 6 March 1920, p.8.
- <sup>209</sup> *Freeman*, 25 January 1913, p.1.
- <sup>210</sup> William Howland Kenney, *Jazz on the River* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 97-99.
- <sup>211</sup> *Broad Ax*, 18 November 1911, p.1; 2 December 1911, p.1. For the Choral Study Club, see Ellistine Perkins Holly, "Black Concert Music in Chicago, 1890 to the 1930s," *Black Music Research Journal* 10.1 (Spring 1990), 141-149. For music composed by Taylor, see Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans: A History* (New York: Norton and Company, 1997), 190.
- <sup>212</sup> John McMurray Lansden, *A History of the City of Cairo, Illinois* (Chicago: R.R. Donnelly & Sons, 1910), 152.
- <sup>213</sup> Board of Education, *Annual Report of the Board of Education of the City of St. Louis, Mo....1911-1912* (St. Louis: Nixon-Jones, 1912), 62, 97.
- <sup>214</sup> *Official Report, Saint Louis (Mo.) Board of Education* (no pp/pp, 1916), 946; "Citizens Discuss Bad Conditions at Sumner High," *The Argus*, 7 May 1915, p.1; "Negro Teacher Gets Cent; Verdict Against Paper," *The Indianapolis Freeman*, 8 May 1915, p.8.
- <sup>215</sup> "Sues for \$10,000 Gets One Cent," *The Argus*, 30 April 1915, p.1.
- <sup>216</sup> *The Indianapolis Freeman*, 8 May 1915, p.8.
- <sup>217</sup> "Sues for \$10,000 Gets One Cent," *The Argus*, 30 April 1915, p.1. In email, Kathy Grillo (Records Manager, Circuit Clerk's Office, Civil Courts Building, St. Louis, Missouri) to Mouser, 26 January 2017, Grillo indicated that the file for case no. 94744-A was missing: "It is entirely possible that it was hidden by previous clerks in this office."
- <sup>218</sup> *The Indianapolis Freeman*, 8 May 1915, p.8.
- <sup>219</sup> "B. H. Mosby and Brother Threaten Argus Editor," *The Argus*, 14 May 1915, p.1.
- <sup>220</sup> "What Will the School Board Do?" *The Argus*, 4 June 1915, p.1. Also see <https://archive.org/details/stlouisargus> for digital copies of issues of *The Argus* that have survived.
- <sup>221</sup> "Mosby & Tyler Re-appointed," *The Argus*, 18 June 1915, p.1.
- <sup>222</sup> Emmett Jay Scott, *Scott's Official History of the American Negro in the World War* (New York: Underwood & Underwood, 1919), 478.

- <sup>223</sup> William L. Crump, *The Story of Kappa Alpha Psi* (Washington, D.C.: for Kappa Alpha Psi, 1967), 46.
- <sup>224</sup> Davis, *Down Memory Lane*, 16. According to Davis, Anna Poage had kept a scrapbook and had collected a large assortment of memorabilia and records about George Poage. Davis had access to that collection. Unfortunately, most of that collection is missing.
- <sup>225</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>226</sup> United States World War I, Registration Cards, 1917-1918, Illinois, Chicago City no.5: C-Q. (accessed 20 October 2016, <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33SQ-G1WR-6DZ?i=5158&wc=9FCZ-SP6%3A928312901%2C928559501%3Fcc%3D1968530&cc=1968530>).
- <sup>227</sup> *Broad Ax*, 22 October 1910, p.3; *ibid*, 17 October 1914, p.2; *ibid*, 14 November 1914, p.6.
- <sup>228</sup> *Indianapolis Freeman*, 7 October 1911, p.8; *ibid*, 23 May 1913, p.5; *Broad Ax*, 10 July 1910, p.2.
- <sup>229</sup> *Broad Ax*, 7 March 1914. For a brief but thoughtful review of the mission and progressive activities of the Institutional Church, see Best, *Passionately Human*, 120-133.
- <sup>230</sup> *Indianapolis Freeman*, 26 December 1914, p.5.
- <sup>231</sup> *The Chicago Defender*, 23 January 1915, p.3; *ibid*, 20 March 1915, p.6; *ibid*, 3 April 1915, p.6; *ibid*, 24 April 1915, p.6; *Indianapolis Freeman*, 24 April 1915, p.8.
- <sup>232</sup> For Brooklyn, see Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua, *America's First Black Town, Brooklyn, Illinois, 1830-1915* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 130-131, 180.
- <sup>233</sup> Mouser, *Black Gambler's World*, 62-63, 82-83.
- <sup>234</sup> *Ibid*, 89-90; Lumpkin, *Black East St. Louis*, 5.
- <sup>235</sup> [www.blog.chicagohistory.org/index.php/2011/03/caricature-of-ade-and-wells-1912/](http://www.blog.chicagohistory.org/index.php/2011/03/caricature-of-ade-and-wells-1912/) accessed 8 January 2017.
- <sup>236</sup> Despite the suggestion in Davis' *Down Memory Lane* (p.16) that Poage had lived in Minnesota for five years until the end of the Great War, the evidence shows instead and conclusively that he was in Chicago in December 1914 and early in 1915 and again in September 1918 in time to register for the draft.
- <sup>237</sup> Jennifer D. Keene, *World War I* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2006), 33-34. See Gerald E. Shenk, "Work or Fight!": *Race, Gender, and the Draft in World War One* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 49-81, for special problems and exemptions in Illinois' rural and urban areas.
- <sup>238</sup> Carol McGinnes, *Michigan Genealogy, Sources & Resources* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 2005), 81-82.
- <sup>239</sup> John M. Hagendorn, "Race not Space: A Revisionist History of Gangs in Chicago," *Journal of African American History* 91.2 (Spring 2006), 194-198.
- <sup>240</sup> *Ibid*.
- <sup>241</sup> In SC-UWL, Poage File, Post Office Department, Record of Employ (card), no date or form number.
- <sup>242</sup> In SC-UWL, Poage File, Post Office Department, Post Office Service, form 1544 (June 1921), for Poage, George C.
- <sup>243</sup> *Ibid*.
- <sup>244</sup> *Ibid*. See also Poage's oath to "not engage in a strike against the Government of the United States," in SC-UWL, Poage file. Becht, "George Poage," noted that Poage had given his birth year as 1882 when he completed the employment form for the St. Louis Board of Education in 1905.
- <sup>245</sup> "Request for Report on Loyalty Data," Civil Service Commission, Standard Form 84 (August 1947), in SC-UWL, Poage file.
- <sup>246</sup> U. S., World War II Draft Registration Cards (Ancestry.com).
- <sup>247</sup> For his residence on South Wabash Avenue, see "Loyalty Data for Poage, George Coleman," dated 3 November 1947; "Request for retirement annuity from US Post Office Department," dated 29 September 1953; "Medical Certificate of Death for George Coleman Poage," dated 11 April 1962, in SC-UWL, Poage file. Emily Clark of the Chicago Historical Society (letter, Emily Clark to Edwin Hill, 15 May 1990, in SC-UWL, Poage file), however, noted that a Geo. C. Poage had a telephone and address number at 823 Townsend in 1927 and 1928.
- <sup>248</sup> Patrick Sisson, "Renovation of Historic Rosenwald Courts Apartments to Begin" (<http://www.Chicago.curbed.com/2015/1/5/10005862/rosenwald-court-renovation-gets-green-light>), accessed 20 October 2016).
- <sup>249</sup> John Moffatt (ed), *The Badger for 1905*, p.186; *The Badger for 1907*, p.427; Davis, *Down Memory Lane*, 16.
- <sup>250</sup> Davis, *Down Memory Lane*, 16.
- <sup>251</sup> Davis, *Down Memory Lane*, 16-17.
- <sup>252</sup> *Ibid*, 17.
- <sup>253</sup> Letters, Huaston to Office of the President, 26 April 1950; Fred to Poage, 19 May 1950; and Poage to Bradford, 5 June 1950, UWAR, Poage File.
- <sup>254</sup> US Post Office Department, Form P.O. 50, Notification of Personnel Action, 31 October 1949, in SC-UWL, Poage File. The relative value of \$3970 in 2015 dollars is \$40,000.
- <sup>255</sup> For Ralph's Club, see Bill Greensmith, Mark Camarigg, Mike Rowe (eds), *Blues Unlimited: Essential Interviews from the Original Blues Magazine* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 7.
- <sup>256</sup> Poage's address book is now in the possession of the Reverend Lawrence Jenkins, Poage's grandnephew. A photocopy is on file at SC-UWL.
- <sup>257</sup> *Jet* 15 (21 February 1952), p.46; *Ibid* 17 (12 November 1959); *St. Louis Argus*, 24 December 1915.
- <sup>258</sup> *Daily Register-Gazette* (Rockford, IL), 20 April 1916, p.4; *Evansville Courier and Press* (IN), 26 January 1916, p.4; *Philadelphia Enquirer*, 13 October 1912, p.15; *Cartoons Magazine* 11.2 (February 1917), p.286.
- <sup>259</sup> *The Deseret News* (Salt Lake City, UT), 18 July 1936, p.7.

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- <sup>260</sup> *Nashua Telegraph* (NH), 8 December 1953, p.18; *ibid.*, 15 May 1950, p.5.
- <sup>261</sup> *The Spokesman-Review* (Spokane WA), 20 January 1986, p.22.
- <sup>262</sup> *Broad Ax*, 27 November 1909, p.1.
- <sup>263</sup> *The Evening Independent* (St. Petersburg, FL), 17 June 1940, p.5.
- <sup>264</sup> *The Chicago Defender*, 15 April 1944, p.8. See also Sherrie Tucker, "Nobody's Sweethearts: Gender, Race, Jazz and the Darlings of Rhythm," *American Music* 16.3 (Autumn, 1998), 255-288.
- <sup>265</sup> *The Chicago Defender*, 11 February 1961, p.15.
- <sup>266</sup> *Lexington Herald* (KY), 30 March 1957, p.7.
- <sup>267</sup> *The Sunday Morning Star* (Wilmington DL), 16 August 1936, p.27.
- <sup>268</sup> *The Chicago Defender*, 9 June 1943, p.16.
- <sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*, 17 May 1941, p.22.
- <sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 April 1944, p.9.
- <sup>271</sup> *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 29 March 1978, p.17.
- <sup>272</sup> *The Afro-American*, 13 January 1940, p.7.
- <sup>273</sup> *The Afro-American*, 20 November 1948, p.11.
- <sup>274</sup> *The Chicago Defender*, 19 April 1958, p.18.
- <sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*, 21 August 1937, p.6.
- <sup>276</sup> *Ibid.*, 4 August 1962, p.13.
- <sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*, 12 November 1938, p.15.
- <sup>278</sup> *Wisconsin Labor Advocate*, 6 August 1887, p.1.
- <sup>279</sup> La Crosse High School, *The 1913 Booster Annual* (La Crosse: np, nd), 26; *The Chicago Defender*, 20 November 1920, p.7.
- <sup>280</sup> *The Chicago Defender*, 4 May 1940, p.21.
- <sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*, 28 June 1924, p.8; 6 March 1926, p.6.
- <sup>282</sup> For a review of "Downtown Bazaar," see Sampson, *Blacks in Blackface*, 459.
- <sup>283</sup> *The Chicago Defender*, 2 June 1923, p.6; *ibid.*, 23 February 1924, p.6.
- <sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*, 8 May 1933, p.5; *ibid.*, 8 February 1936, p.9. For Churchill, a yodler, see *ibid.*, 19 July 1941, p.21. For Jed Davenport, "one of the best Memphis harmonica players" and Lillian's first husband, see Robert Santelli (ed), *The Big Book of Blues* (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), 111.
- <sup>285</sup> *The Chicago Defender*, 8 February 1936, p.9.
- <sup>286</sup> *The Billboard*, 5 February 1944, 47, 434.
- <sup>287</sup> *The Chicago Defender*, 20 June 1933, p.5; *ibid.*, 21 September 1929, p.6. See also *The Billboard*, 1943 *Music Year Book*, 147, 163; D. Antoinette Handy, *Black Women in American Bands and Orchestras* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), 119n, 159, 221; *Indianapolis Recorder*, 14 August 1943.
- <sup>288</sup> *The Chicago Defender*, 19 July 1941, p.21.
- <sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*, 14 February 1942, p.21; *Cambridge Tribune*, 9 November 1905, p.7.
- <sup>290</sup> *The Chicago Defender*, 28 February 1942, p.4; *The Pittsburgh Courier* (PA), 28 February 1942, p.18.
- <sup>291</sup> Mouser, *Black La Crosse*, 41.
- <sup>292</sup> David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: the Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004), 194-5.
- <sup>293</sup> Davis, *Down Memory Lane*, 15.