

Historically Speaking

Published by The Afro-American Historical Association of the Niagara Frontier, Inc.

P.O. Box 63

Buffalo NY 14207

www.aahanf.org

Sharon Holley, Madeline Scott, and Sonia L. Walker, Editors

Volume 43 Number 1 Fall - Winter 2019

Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Program

The annual Martin Luther King, Jr. speaker's program will be held at The Buffalo History Museum, 1 Museum Court in Buffalo on Sunday, January 19th at 2:00 pm. Dr. Gretchen Sullivan Sorin will speak on *The Real Green Book*. Dr. Sorin is Director and Distinguished Service Professor at the Cooperstown Graduate Program, a training program for museum curators, educators, and directors that is part of the State University of New York College at Oneonta. She is also a Fellow of the New York Academy of historians.



Dr. Sorin holds a B.A. degree from Rutgers University in American Studies, an M.A. in Museum Studies from the Cooperstown Graduate Program and a Ph.D. from the University at Albany in American history.

Dr. Sorin has more than thirty years of experience in the museum profession working for more than 250 museums as a museum exhibition curator and

education, programming, and interpretive planning and strategic planning consultant. She has served as a guest curator for many exhibitions.

Active in the museum community Dr. Sorin has served on several boards or governing councils of organizations. She is currently the President of the Mid-Atlantic Association of Museums, a New York State Parks Commissioner, and a member of The New York State Records Advisory Board.

Dr. Sorin is the recipient of the Thurgood Marshall Unity Award from the Oneonta NAACP, the Philip Jones National Ephemera Society Fellowship Research Award, the State University of New York Chancellor's Research Award, and the Chancellor's Award for Research and Creative Activities.

Dr. Sorin writes and lectures frequently on museum practice, diversity and inclusion, and African American history. Her books include *Touring Historic Harlem, Four Walks in Northern Manhattan* with architectural historian Andrew Dolkart, *In the Spirit of Martin: The Living Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.* for the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, *Through the Eyes of Others:*

African Americans and Identity in American Art and Case Studies in Cultural Entrepreneurship: How to Create Relevant and Sustainable Institutions. She is co-writer and senior historian working with Steeplechase Films and filmmaker Ric Burns on a documentary film to be shown on PBS entitled, *Driving While Black: African Americans on the Road in the Era of Jim Crow.* She is the author of the soon to be released book which is the basis of the documentary, *Driving While Black: African American Travel and the Road to Civil Rights.* The book will be published by W.W. Norton in February 2020.

43rd Anniversary

CARTER G. WOODSON ESSAY CONTEST

“Why Is It Important for African Americans to Vote in Western New York?”

The 43rd Annual Carter G. Woodson Essay Contest invites students in grades 4-12 to write an original essay on the topic: “**Why Is It Important for African Americans to Vote in Western New York?**” The essays should address some of these questions. Who is eligible to vote in Western New York? What are some of the changes that happened because people voted or did not vote? Are people being responsible citizens when they vote? Should 18 year olds be required to vote? What are some important issues in Western New York? You may also use a summary of interviews with African American voters or elected officials in your essay.

The entry is limited to 200 words or less – TYPEWRITTEN. The essay will be judged on originality and content. Typed essays must be received by Saturday, February 8, 2020 at the Frank E. Merriweather, Jr. Branch Library, 1324 Jefferson Avenue or emailed to AAHANFWoodson@gmail.com. Winning essays will receive cash and certificates. Winners will be asked to read their essay at our awards program in February 2020 at the Merriweather Library. A flyer with more details will be available in December 2019.

Annual Family History Dinner!
Emerson Commons – Thursday, May 7, 2020
Save the Date!



AAVM^{WNY}
AFRICAN AMERICAN
Veterans Monument

**TREMENDOUS PROGRESS MADE ON THE
DEVELOPMENT OF THE FIRST
NATIONAL MONUMENT TO HONOR
AFRICAN AMERICAN VETERANS**

*Announced Veterans Day 2017 by Assemblywoman
Crystal Peoples-Stokes, project continues toward a 2020
completion timeline.*

By Independence Day 2020, Buffalo, NY will be home to the United States' first Monument that honors all African American Veterans. The African American Veterans Monument, to be located at the Buffalo & Erie County Naval and Military Park, will recognize the contributions of African Americans who have served and are currently serving in all five branches of the military, during war and in peace times. African Americans have fought in all 12 of the United States' military conflicts since the country's first, whether they enlisted voluntarily or were drafted.

A committee of local African American Veterans, African American historians, Watts Engineering and Uniland Development have led the planning for the African American Veterans Monument with the support and convening of the office of Assemblywoman Crystal Peoples-Stokes.

"I am humbled to work alongside the tireless volunteers whose idea it was to establish the first Monument of its kind right here in Buffalo," said Warren Galloway, Chair of the African American Veterans Monument Committee and Veteran of the US Air Force. "The idea was birthed by the Erie County Chapter of the Links, Incorporated, a passion project envisioned by the late Fern Beavers. Since early 2017, we've laid the groundwork for planning what will be the first Monument of its kind in our country. With ambitious goals such as this timelines fluctuate but we are now on schedule for July 2020 unveiling."

To date, the committee has raised \$1.45 million toward its \$1.6 million goal that will cover incidentals, contingencies and an endowment for long-term repairs and maintenance.

"The community has been very gracious and supportive of this project, recognizing the importance and gravity it represents" said Galloway. "I am confident that our small gap in funding will be closed by the end of 2019."

The design of the African American Veterans Monument is a matrix, serving as both a timeline and map of longitudinal coordinates. Each of the 12 black concrete pillars that will be 10 feet tall, and 3 feet wide, are placed in a chronological sequence, corresponding to the dates that each of the country's 12 military conflicts took place. The matrix's longitudinal coordinates represent the location where the war began. The spacing between the pillars represent peace times between each war.

The tops of the 12 black concrete pillars will illuminate, representing the candles that families would put in their windows as a beacon to guide a soldier home. The light emanating from the top of each pillar will continuously glow as an eternal reminder of the commitments made by African American Veterans. The Monument's design was created by Solid 716.

Construction of the Monument will begin in the spring once the total budget for the project is fundraised. The community can honor a Veteran through the purchase of an engraved brick paver that will line the walkways of the Monument for \$250.

For more information visit aavmwny.org, email info@aavmwny.org or call 716-800-1137.

**Buffalo's Tuskegee Airmen Pilots
By Charles H. Campbell**

Introduction

Much has been written about the Tuskegee Airmen. They have been extendedly, and rightfully, written about in articles, essays, books, and poetry. A number of documentary and commercial films have been produced about their exploits. They are indeed folklore.

This brief paper is an introduction to the Tuskegee Airmen **pilots** who were from Buffalo, New York at the time of their commission as Tuskegee Airmen pilots.

Who are the Tuskegee Airmen?

The first African American pilots in the United States military service started in World War II. They became known as the *Tuskegee Airmen* because they received their primary, basic and advanced pilot training near the city of Tuskegee, Macon County, Alabama.

The term *Tuskegee Airmen* not only applies to the 992 pilots, but also, to more than 14,000 other personnel who served with them in various positions such as: bombardiers, engineers, navigators and maintenance and supply personnel.

The *Tuskegee Airmen Incorporated* organization uses the term DOTA (Documented Original Tuskegee Airmen) to define anyone “man or woman, military or civilian, black or white, officer or enlisted” who served at any of the air bases where the Tuskegee-trained pilots trained or flew between 1941 - 1949.

My interest was to identify and recognize those Tuskegee-trained pilots who were from the Buffalo, New York area. According to the DOTA roster of pilot trained graduates at Tuskegee Army Airfield, three of the pilot graduates were from the Buffalo area: Henry Pollard, Jr., Johnson C. Wells and William S. Powell, Jr. There is a fourth pilot, Robert B. Tresville, Jr.; who, although not a Buffalo resident at the time of his training, had a Buffalo address at the time of his death in WWII.

Henry Pollard, Jr.
(1919 - May 22, 1944)



Henry Pollard, Jr. was born in 1919 in rural Georgia to Henry and Pauline Pollard. In the 1920s the family moved to Buffalo.

Henry graduated from Fosdick-Masten Park High School. He became a local musician playing the saxophone and was a member of Local 533 (Colored Musicians Club).

Henry enlisted in the Army on June 9, 1942 in Buffalo. He was noted as being employed as a musician and/or teacher of music and single with dependents. After serving in the military police in Oswego, New York and attaining the rank of staff sergeant, Henry applied for and was accepted into the Army Air Corp. He trained to become a Tuskegee Airmen Pilot and was commissioned on December 5, 1943.

Second Lieutenant Pollard was initially sent to North Africa and later reassigned to Italy. On May 22, 1944, he died instantly in a plane crash in the “line of duty” of a non-battle related incident during the war.

Henry Pollard Jr. is buried in the Sicily-Rome American Cemetery and Memorial near Rome, Italy.



Johnson C. Wells
(1920 – September 28, 1943)



Johnson C. Wells was born in rural Alabama in 1920. By 1925 he along with parents Charles (stepfather) and (Bobbie) Campbell and, two older brothers Marvin and Melvin, had migrated to Buffalo, New York

Wells graduated from Public School #6 and Hutchinson Central High School before attending West Virginia State College. At age 22 he enlisted in the US Army Air Corp. Wells graduated from Tuskegee Flight Training on June 30, 1943 and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant. Wells died September 28, 1943 in the “line of duty” of a non-battle related incident near Selfridge Field, Michigan, during a routine training flight when his plane crash landed. Survivors included

his mother, two brothers, and a wife Esther. He is buried in Forest Lawn Cemetery, Buffalo New York.



William S. Powell, Jr.
(June 23, 1925 – April 15, 1996)



William S. Powell, Jr. was born June 23, 1925 in Lockport, New York to William and Alice Powell. His parents moved to Eggertsville (Amherst) when he was very young. Powell graduated from Amherst High School and attended the University of Buffalo for several years before enlisting into the Army Air

Corp. He graduated from Tuskegee Pilot training and was commissioned as a Flight Officer on April 15, 1945. When his military tour of duty was complete Powell returned to Buffalo, completing a Bachelor’s degree in 1950 and a Master’s degree in 1953 both from UB. His

Master's research thesis was on youthful criminal offenders.

In 1955, Powell became the first African American Federal Probation Officer in the District of Columbia. In 1966, he was appointed Director of Federal Probation in Buffalo, the first African American to be appointed to that position. He held this position until retirement. William Powell died on April 15, 1996 at age 70 and is buried in the Cold Spring Cemetery in Lockport, New York.

Robert B. Tresville, Jr.
(May 9, 1921 - June 24, 1944)



Robert B. Tresville, Jr. was born On May 9, 1921 to Robert and Irma Tresville in Bay City, Texas. His father had a 35-year career as an army officer and band leader.

Tresville graduated with honors from high school in 1938 and entered Pennsylvania State College. After his first year at Penn State, he received an appointment to attend the Army Military Academy at West Point . While at West Point, Tresville applied for pilot training and graduated from Tuskegee flight training on December 13, 1942. He then returned to West Point where he was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the US army. He was only the seventh African American to graduate from West Point.

Tresville was appointed a fighter squadron commander and promoted to captain in December 1943, the same month that his squadron was deployed to Europe. On June 24, 1944, Tresville was leading a very low flying mission over the Mediterranean Sea when, due to a navigation error, his plane slid off course and he was unable to make the correction. The plane plunged into the sea and his body was never recovered. His death is recorded as a "non-hostile crash, missing in action, lost at sea". Robert Bernard Tresville, Jr. is memorialized at Tablets of the Missing, Sicily-Rome American Cemetery and Memorial.

Tresville's Buffalo Connection

At the time of Tresville's death, he was married to the former Vivian Louise Murphy of Buffalo, NY. Her

parents were Benjamin and Edith Murphy of 50 Lyth Street in Buffalo. Tresville and Murphy met when both were competing in tennis competitions in New York City and Lincoln University (Pennsylvania). They were married on January 25, 1943, one week after Tresville graduated from West Point. From their union they had a daughter whom Tresville never saw. At the time of Tresville's death his legal address was 50 Lyth Street, Buffalo, NY.

After Captain Tresville's death both his mother, Irma Tresville and his wife, Vivian Tresville each claimed to be the main beneficiary of his life insurance policy. The Veterans Administration sided with the mother and began monthly payments; the wife sued. After a lengthy litigation of 8 years and a trial in Federal Court, the case was settled. The settlement: his wife, Mrs. Vivian Tresville (who had now remarried) would receive two-thirds of the money and the mother, Mrs. Irma Tresville would receive the remaining third.

In conclusion, the Buffalo region had four Tuskegee Airmen Pilots: three at the time of their enlistment and commission, and one through marriage and change of legal residency. I hope this paper provides some basic information about the Tuskegee Airmen Pilots from the Niagara Frontier.

Reference Sources

Books

Black Knights: The story of the Tuskegee Airmen
Lynn M. Homan and Thomas Reilly

Tuskegee Airmen: Questions and Answers for Students and Teachers
Daniel Haulman

Newspapers

The Buffalo News
Buffalo Courier-Express
The California Eagle
Lockport Union-Sun & Journal
The Pittsburg Courier
St. Louis Post-Dispatch

Web and Other Sources

Ancestry.org: 1920, 1930 & 1940 Census
Tuskegee.org
HonorStates.org

Findagrave.com
Wikipedia
William Powell's Funeral Program

**African American Servicemen Who Resided in
the City Of Buffalo, New York, and Gave the
Ultimate Sacrifice While Serving In Vietnam.**

Compiled by Patrick B. Kavanaugh

<u>US Army</u>	<u>Date of Death</u>
James E. Andrews	7/3/1968
Judge Burroughs, Jr	8/8/1966
Theodore R. Chambley	10/16/1965
Roosevelt G. Dockery	2/4/1970
Leon T. Duncan	6/7/1969
James W. Hill, Jr.	5/11/1968
Sanford L. Jackson, Jr.	8/15/1966
George A. Johnson, Jr.	2/9/1970
Robert H. LaGrand	1/29/1966
Henry Madison, Jr.	2/27/1969
James R. Mathis	3/2/1968
Thomas W. Mitchell	12/2/1967
Willie Lee Page	6/6/1967
Jesse J. Pearson	11/7/1967
Weldon H. Young	11/20/1966

<u>US Marine Corps</u>	<u>Date of Death</u>
Clarence B. Cunningham	10/24/1968
James G. McCoy	7/2/1967
Larry A. Miles	3/28/1969
Cary Neal	12/28/1966
Dennis Lee Scott	12/27/1967
Elliott Simmons, Jr.	8/7/1966
Lawrence Stewart	12/15/1967

<u>US Navy</u>	<u>Date of Death</u>
James W. Thomas	1/29/1969

Support Local Theater!

PAUL ROBERSON THEATRE AT THE AFRICAN
AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER
350 Masten Avenue Buffalo, New York 14209
www.aacbuffalo.org

Two Trains Running - Nov. 15 – Dec. 8, 2019

Jump - Jan. 17 – Feb. 9, 2020

The Dance on Widows Run - Mar. 13 – Apr. 5, 2020

Bubbling Brown Sugar - May 1 – May 24, 2020

In Memoriam – Shirley Louise Harrington

The Afro-American Historical Association of the Niagara Frontier celebrates the memory of our founding board member. Her biography and picture are courtesy of The Uncrowned Community Builders.

<https://www.uncrownedcommunitybuilders.com/person/shirley-louise-harrington>



Rev. Shirley Louise Harrington was born in Buffalo, New York and attended School 47, Masten Park High School and the University at Buffalo where she earned her PhD degree. She also attended Colgate Rochester Divinity where she earned a Master's Degree in Theology.

Shirley has been active in the community for many years. She belonged to the following organizations: NAACP, Negro Business and Professional Women's Club and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

During her career in education, she taught at Clinton Jr. High School, Woodlawn Junior High School, and the Martin Luther King Elementary School. She held the position of Assistant Director at the State University Educational Opportunity Center; director of the Education Department at the Buffalo Urban League; Executive Assistant to the Director at BUILD Halfway House and the New York State Labor Department. She ran a successful day care center for many years.

Shirley was a founder and member of the Afro-American Historical Association of the Niagara Frontier Inc. and the Black Educators Association.

Afro-American Historical Association
P.O. Box 63
Buffalo, NY 14207-0063

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Buffalo, NY
Permit No. 4839

Afro-American Association of the Niagara Frontier, Inc.

P. O. Box 63

Buffalo, New York 14207

Please use the form below and join the team that's preserving and promoting the history of African Americans in New York.

NAME: _____ Date _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE _____ ZIP: _____

Email: _____

Check Membership Type: _____ Golden \$200 _____ Heritage \$100

_____ Active (\$50) _____ Associate \$25

_____ Student - grade & high school (\$15)

Contribution to Endowment Fund (list amount) _____

Note: Membership of \$50 or more entitles the member to a one year Subscription to the Journal Afro-Americans in New York Life & History