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THE PUBLIC CAREER OF JAMES CARROLL NAPIER: BUSINESSMAN,
POLITICIAN, AND CRUSADER FOR RACIAL JUSTICE, 1845-1940

Middle Tennessee State University

D.A.

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THE PUBLIC CAREER OF JAMES CARROLL NAPIER,
BUSINESSMAN, POLITICIAN, AND CRUSADER
FOR RACIAL JUSTICE, 1845-1940

Herbert Leon Clark

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THE PUBLIC CAREER OF JAMES CARROLL NAPIER:
BUSINESSMAN, POLITICIAN, AND CRUSADER
FOR RACIAL JUSTICE, 1845-1940

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ABSTRACT

THE PUBLIC CAREER OF JAMES CARORLL NAPIER, BUSINESSMAN, POLITICIAN, AND CRUSADER FOR RACIAL JUSTICE, 1845-1940

by Herbert L. Clark

The purpose of this study is to establish an accurate and unbiased account of the life of James Carroll Napier, 1845-1940, and to use his life as a model for an analysis of the use of biographies in introductory college level American history courses. Where appropriate, some interpretation of the social, economic, and political forces which affected his development has been made. Brief interpretations of significant personalities and momentous events, which helped to shape the life of Napier, are offered to posit a more accurate and realistic image of the man and his times. Finally, Napier's racial philosophy is analyzed in relationship to Negro thought in general and the changing trends in the larger stream of white American thought. The concluding section of this inquiry constitutes a discussion of various teaching strategies which can be used to incorporate biographical data into the college-level American History Survey Course.

Napier was born a slave on June 9, 1845, in Dickson County, Tennessee. After the family was freed in 1848, they moved to Nashville where his father William operated a livery stable. Between 1859 and 1867, young James Carroll Napier attended, in succession, Wilberforce College and Oberlin College in Ohio and Howard University Law School in Washington, D.C. He made Nashville his home following his graduation from law school. Since there were few opportunities at the time for Negro lawyers, he went to work for the Internal Revenue Service. In 1878, while still a revenue agent, Napier successfully ran for a seat on the Nashville City Council. As a councilman, he wielded a considerable amount of influence in the Davidson County Republican Party and, subsequently, the state party.

By 1910, as a result of his loyalty to the Republican Party, association with black educator, Booker T. Washington, the National Negro Business League, and affiliation with the Anna T. Jeanes Trust Fund, he had emerged as a national Negro leader. Perhaps his greatest personal accomplishment was his appointment by President William Howard Taft to the position of Register of the United States Treasury in 1911. He served as the official bookkeeper of the United States in this post. After two years as Register, Napier resigned when President Woodrow Wilson sanctioned a segregation order which required white

and black employees to use separate rest room facilities in the Treasury Department.

Napier was sixty-eight years of age when he resigned as Register of the Treasury. He returned to Nashville and resumed his law practice, banking and political activities, and civic work. He was instrumental in the founding of Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State College for Negroes and an active supporter of Fisk University and Meharry Medical College. The bank he founded in 1906, now named the Citizen's Savings Bank and Trust Company, was one of the first black banks established in the United States.

James Carroll Napier, like most Negro leaders of his day, embraced a dualistic strain of black nationalism. This strain of Negro nationalism identified the Negro with both his race and America. Napier maintained that Negroes were natural born Americans and should enjoy all the rights and privileges due them under the Constitution of the United States. He espoused conciliation by the Negro in race relations and gradualism in the procurement of Negro civil rights. Napier advanced the indirect approach as the best way for black Americans to achieve racial equality. Thus, he urged Negroes to concentrate on those activities which would change the attitude whites had toward blacks. Blacks could bring about this change, he felt, by displaying a willingness to work hard, demonstrating good morals, obtaining an education, and acquiring property. He believed that, once the Negro had made significant progress in these

areas, white Americans would tender blacks their civil and political rights.

Napier used his public career to implement his racial ideology. His public career was essentially a long crusade to secure the rights and self-improvement of Negroes. To accomplish his racial objectives, he associated himself with institutions and organizations which were devoted to the uplifting and self-improvement of black people. The many groups with which he became affiliated touched almost every need of Negroes.

A variety of primary and secondary sources was used in preparing this study. The James Carroll Napier Papers, which are housed at Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee, constituted the main source. However, such materials as newspapers, court and tax records, Nashville City Council minutes, Tennessee State Department of Education records, the Booker T. Washington Papers, and Napier's correspondence while he was Register of the United States Treasury were also valuable sources of information. Some of the most beneficial scholarly works which were used in this study were August Meier's Negro Thought in America, Rayford Logan's The Betrayal of the Negro, Carter G. Woodson's The Negro Professional Man and the Community, John Hope Franklin's From Slavery to Freedom, Mingo Scott's The Negro in Tennessee Politics and Government Affairs, A. A. Taylor's The Negro in Tennessee, 1865-1880, Stanley J.

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Folmsbee, Robert E. Corlew, and Enoch L. Mitchell's
Tennessee: A Short History, Joseph H. Cartwright's The
Triumph of Jim Crow: Tennessee Race Relations in the
1880's, and Lester Lamon's Black Tennesseans, 1900-1930.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to attempt to establish an accurate and unbiased account of the life of James Carroll Napier, from his birth in 1845 to his death in 1940, and to use his life as a model for an analysis of the use of biographies in introductory college-level American history courses. While interpreting Napier's life, some interpretation of the social, economic, and political forces which affected his development has been necessary. This approach, hopefully, has enabled the writer to posit a clear and realistic image of the man and his times. For similar reasons, the significant personalities and momentous events which helped to shape the life of Napier are analyzed. Finally, an effort is made to develop the relationship of Napier's racial philosophy to Negro thought in general and the changing trends in the larger stream of white American thought. The concluding chapter of this inquiry constitutes a discussion of various teaching strategies which can be used to incorporate biographical data into the college-level American history survey course.

James Carroll Napier, not unlike most educated Negroes of his day, embraced a dualistic strain of Negro

nationalism. This brand of racial ideology stressed identification with both America and the Negro minority. Such a dualistic philosophy was associated with a complex of ideas encompassing racial solidarity, self-help, and economic improvement. Specifically, Napier seemed to have supported Negro self-segregation of black economic and social institutions while at the same time generally working for total integration of Negroes into American society as first class citizens.

James Carroll Napier launched his public career roughly a year after the end of the Reconstruction era in 1877 when the last southern states controlled by Republicans fell to Democratic Party control. As a result of that event, the national Republican Party inaugurated a policy of indifference toward the Negro in the South. The party deemed it more advantageous to abandon the Negro's cause and allow the return of white Democratic rule in the South. By doing so, northern businessmen could win the cooperation of white southerners in exploiting the cheap labor and natural resources of that region.

With the return of Democratic political hegemony to the South and the development of a sectional rapprochement with the North, white southerners wasted little time undermining the civil and political rights black Americans

had secured during the Reconstruction period. The methods used to curtail the rights of Negroes were violence, fraud, intricate registration procedures, and intimidation.

For a brief while during the latter part of the nineteenth century, black Americans and white small farmers, in an effort to enhance their economic and political plight, allied themselves with the "Populist Movement" for the purpose of opposing political leaders and the wealthy who were allied with big business. This alliance helped to retard the movement toward the complete disfranchisement of the Negro. This unprecedented alliance culminated in a final wave of race riots and constitutional disfranchisement. Beginning with Mississippi in 1890 and South Carolina in 1895, all the southern states subsequently incorporated disfranchisement provisions into their constitutions or legal codes.

Meanwhile, chiefly during the 1880's, the southern states enacted "Jim Crow" laws which were designed to segregate the two races in employment, public transportation, restaurants, theatres, parks, schools, and other public facilities. Throughout the South, discrimination in the distribution of school funds was practiced with the black school receiving a disproportionately small share. Usually, segregated facilities were less than equal. The

Negro was almost completely denied justice before the law in the South; the convict-lease system was expanded. Although the Supreme Court had bestowed the right upon Negroes to sit on juries, in reality they could not. Lynching became all too common, claiming a record 235 lives in 1892.

In the economic sector, blacks in the South generally engaged in farming and work requiring little or no skill. Negro sharecroppers were increasingly exploited and intimidated in their economic relationship with whites. Often the Negro sharecropper was forced to remain on the same farm for years as a result of his indebtedness to the farm owner or the local merchant at the end of each planting season. Prejudice and discriminatory practices of most national labor unions and the hostility displayed by white workers prevented most Negroes from becoming members of labor unions in urban areas in both the North and South. The number of Negroes remaining in the skilled trades in the South declined precipitously, while the unskilled Negro in the North had to compete with the immigrants who were replacing them as domestic servants by 1900.

The Negro in the North, however, was slightly better off than his southern counterpart. He enjoyed his political rights, even though the extent to which he exercised his civil rights is questionable. There had never been a

general acceptance of black Americans in the North. In 1865 six northern states gave Negroes the franchise, and four additional states had done so by 1868. Negroes did utilize their political rights advantageously. They secured positions in the state legislatures, city councils, and occupied a few judgeships in some areas of the North.

On the question of civil rights, most states in the North supported the Fourteenth Amendment. Even after the Supreme Court struck down the Civil Rights Act of 1875, several state legislatures enacted legislation forbidding discrimination in places of public accommodation. However, the increasing anti-Negro mood in the North made such legislation ineffective.

That the Negro had the right to be educated was generally accepted and recognized in the North by 1880. Schools were integrated, at least on paper, by 1900. Where integration was achieved, however, Negro teachers were excluded.¹

The atmosphere in the nation at the time was conducive to the increase of prejudice and discrimination. Between 1875 and 1910, a period which roughly corresponds

¹August Meier, Negro Thought in America, 1880-1915: Racial Ideologies in the Age of Booker T. Washington (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1971), pp. 19-23 (hereafter cited as Meier, Negro Thought in America).

with the dates of Napier's public career, Social Darwinism was embraced in the United States as a basic tenet in the social sciences. It gave rise to the laissez-faire sociology of Yale University's William G. Sumner and the racist political science of author John W. Burgess. During this period, it was in vogue for scholars, newspaper editors, Supreme Court Justices, and other prominent citizens to characterize the plight of deprived groups of Americans as adequate proof of their innate inferiority. In addition, Anglo-Saxonism reached extreme form in a variety of disciplines, especially in history. The preservation of white Anglo-Saxon civilization against the encroachment of Indians, Negroes, Orientals, and the new immigrants from southern and eastern Europe became a theme of both popular and scholarly writing.² In such a hostile atmosphere many Negro leaders, including Napier, espoused the ideologies of racial solidarity, self-help, and economic improvement for black Americans as approaches for combating white racism. But, unlike many Negro leaders, Napier never stopped agitating for Negro civil and political rights. He believed that the best approach for achieving these rights was not

²Arthur S. Link and Rembert W. Patrick, ed., Writing Southern History: Essays in Historiography in Honor of Fletcher M. Green (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), p. 298.

through legislation and litigation. This approach, he thought, would be long and tedious and would produce strong opposition from both the North and the South. To him, the best way to achieve Negro rights was through patience and thrift, and through the acquisition of wealth and intelligence.³

³Meier, Negro Thought in America, pp. 23-25; James Carroll Napier speech, "The Negro Problem," 1900, James Carroll Napier Papers, Container 1, Negro Collection, Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee; James Carroll Napier, undated and untitled speech on the "Negro securing his rights," Napier Papers, Container 1, Negro Collection, Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee.

CHAPTER I

FORMATIVE YEARS

James Carroll Napier was born a slave, the eldest child of William Carroll Napier and Jane E. Napier, on June 9, 1845. He was born on one of the plantations of Elias W. Napier, a physician, six miles west of Nashville on Charlotte Road in Davidson County, Tennessee.¹

Elias W. Napier was a descendant of an old and prominent Scottish family. The Napiers were blood relatives of the Stuarts, some of whom became kings of Scotland and Great Britain. The first of the Napier family to come to America was Dr. Patrick Napier. He arrived in Jamestown, Virginia, about 1645 and was later elected to the House of Burgesses.²

The first Napier to enter Dickson County, Tennessee, was Colonel Richard Napier. Born in Washington, North

¹Seventh Census of the United States, 1850--Davidson County, Tennessee (unpublished), Schedule I (hereafter cited as Seventh Census of the United States); Helen Dahnke, "An Old Colored Man," The Tennessean Magazine, Nashville, Tennessee, July 4, 1937, p. 2.

²"J. C. Napier Vertical File," Reference Division, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville.

Carolina, in 1747, he resided in Virginia during the Revolutionary War and was an officer in the Continental Army. He personally recruited and equipped the regiment which he commanded. As a token of appreciation for services rendered, he was offered 1,000 acres of land in Tennessee. Napier came to the Cumberland country in 1791, bringing with him his family, 100 Negroes, and other possessions. He settled first in Nashville but then moved to Dickson County not long thereafter and was established on Barton's Creek by 1800. He and his sons became pioneer settlers and iron manufacturers in Dickson and contiguous counties.³

Dickson County was at the center of the western iron belt--a fact which was to leave a profound effect upon the Napiers and their slaves. This belt of iron ore was approximately fifty miles wide and covered about 5,400 square miles. It encompassed Dickson County as well as part or all of Hickman, Humphreys, Montgomery, Lewis, and Stewart counties.⁴

Colonel Napier had at least five sons. Four of them had a proclivity for the iron industry. One, Richard C.

³Jill Knight Garrett, The River Counties (Published by Jill Knight Garrett, 610 Terraco Drive, Columbia, Tennessee, 1969), pp. 15-16. This volume is located in the Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee, Reference Division.

⁴Robert E. Corlew, History of Dickson County, Tennessee (Nashville: Tennessee Historical Commission, (1956), p. 61 (hereafter cited as Corlew, History of Dickson County).

Napier, who married Charlotte Robertson, the daughter of James Robertson, owned and operated the Carroll furnace on Barton's Creek. Later, after inheriting property from his father-in-law, he owned eighty-six slaves of whom seventy-one were men and boys between the ages of ten and thirty-six, and four of whom were females. By 1830 Richard and his brothers were rivalling Anthony Vanleer and Montgomery Bell, the two largest slaveholders and most successful iron producers in middle Tennessee. Collectively, the brothers owned over 125 slaves who worked primarily in the iron mills.⁵

These bold ironmasters did not confine their operations to the production of pig iron only; they also made kettles, stoves, and similar utensils. Some of the skilled slaves were molders, who shaped the iron into kettles, pots, and pans. Nashville was an outlet for marketing their finished products. They operated an iron store on Union Street in Nashville for that purpose. It was widely held that the Napiers' iron products were "equal in quality to any in commerce."⁶

Dr. Elias W. Napier, one of the four brothers who would enter the iron industry and the paternal grandfather

⁵Dickson County, Tennessee, Will Book A, pp. 101-104, Reference Division, Tennessee State Library and Archives (hereafter cited as Will Book A); Garrett, The River Counties, pp. 15-16.

⁶Corlew, History of Dickson County, pp. 61-62.

of James Carrol Napier,⁷ lived for a number of years in Georgia and came to Dickson County "as a man of moderate means."⁸ He was a physician, having graduated from the medical school of the University of Pennsylvania. By the 1830's he, like his brothers, was enjoying a lucrative business in the iron industry. He was probably more successful as an iron industrialist than his brothers because he was a retired physician with a source of ready cash and because he was an astute businessman. In 1840 he owned seventy-one slaves, fifty of whom worked in the iron forges while ten worked in agriculture. At the time of his death he owned four forges and held 15,500 acres of land. He freed thirty-one of his slaves by the terms of his will at the time of his death. Since Dr. Napier was primarily an iron manufacturer, it was natural that most of the slaves were laboring in the forges instead of in the fields. This was the standard approach followed by most of the big ironmasters in the area.⁹

⁷James Carroll Napier, "Some Negro Members of the Tennessee Legislature During the Reconstruction Period and After," Journal of Negro History 5 (July 1920):117-118 (hereafter cited as Napier, "Negro Members of the Tennessee Legislature").

⁸Robert E. Corlew, "Some Aspects of Slavery in Dickson County, Tennessee," Tennessee Historical Quarterly 10 (1951):359 (hereafter cited as Corlew, "Aspects of Slavery in Dickson County").

⁹Napier, "Negro Members of the Tennessee Legislature," p. 117; Corlew, History of Dickson County, pp. 61-62; Corlew, "Aspects of Slavery in Dickson County," pp. 234-235; Will Book A, p. 107.

James Carroll Napier, his parents, and his two brothers were born on Dr. Napier's plantation. His paternal grandmother, Judy, was Dr. Napier's seamstress and the mother of four sons and a daughter sired by Dr. Napier.¹⁰

Dr. Napier was a benevolent slave master. He possessed solicitude for his slaves and displayed considerable attachment for his progeny. He knew many of his slaves by name, even the young children. He gave his slaves credit for "faithfully aiding" him in making what property and money he had accrued. Moreover, Dr. Napier praised his "yellow female servants" for having served him with "vigilance and fidelity" and for taking care of his "property by day and by night both in Alabama and in Tennessee."¹¹

As mentioned above, Dr. Napier possessed a considerable amount of attachment for his mulatto offspring. "He had these sons to go to school along with the white children."¹² They were given important tasks in the operation of the plantation and iron furnaces. William Carroll Napier, the father of James Carroll Napier, "early in his life, was entrusted with the responsibility of

¹⁰Dahnke, "An Old Colored Man," p. 2; Will Book A, p. 101.

¹¹Will Book A, pp. 101-108.

¹²Dahnke, "An Old Colored Man," p. 2.

carrying great loads of pig iron to the forges in Nashville and bringing back safely the money received for them."¹³

Dr. Napier died on August 7, 1848, at his residence at White Bluff Forge in Dickson County, Tennessee. The second item of his will asserts that "I hereby emancipate and set at liberty the following named slaves to wit: Judy, my seamstress and her five children to wit, Fanny, William Carroll, James Monroe, Thomas Benton and Andrew Jackson. . . ." The names of James Carroll Napier, his mother, and two younger brothers do not appear in the will. Their emancipation, apparently, ran concurrent with that of the rest of the family members.¹⁴

The slave master was concerned about the material and economic well-being of the freedmen. His will stated that:

I will and bequeath to several of the slaves that I have emancipated certain sums of money which may be found in their possession at my death and I desire my Executors to protect them in the possession and prudent use of the same and all my household and kitchen furniture I give to Judy and her four sons. . . . I also wish the Negroes which I have emancipated to be furnished out of my smokehouse and other places with bacon, corn or meal, sugar, coffee, and salt sufficient to last them for provisions for twelve entire months after. . . .¹⁵

¹³Dahnke, "An Old Colored Man," p. 2.

¹⁴Will Book A, p. 101.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 105.

To further ensure that the former slaves would be able to survive, Dr. Napier willed to his

Faithful seamstress, Judy, and her five children the use and possession of my farm on Richland Creek in Davidson County together with the crops now growing on the same and all the crops are subject to their entire disposition, and they are to enjoy the possessions of said farm until the first day of March next (March 1, 1849) unless they choose to quit the possession of the same sooner and on their leaving said farm. . . . Tom Keys and Ephragm are to select my best wagon and eight of my best mules and gear which my Executors are to place in the possession of those slaves that I have emancipated and remain their property.¹⁶

The will of the deceased iron master did not specifically require the emancipated bondsmen to leave the state, but it did indicate that after March of 1849 he desired them to leave Davidson County. Napier stated that

. . . should any of those Negroes that I have emancipated choose to live in Davidson County or make that their general home then my Executors are to send an officer and take possession of said emancipated slaves and put him or her on the Block in town of Charlotte and hire out for a month until he may quit Davidson County and choose some other place for a home and the money arising from said hire (if any) is to be equally divided among the other slaves that I have emancipated.¹⁷

It can not be determined if Judy's family settled on Richland Creek in Davidson County as stipulated in the will.¹⁸ We do know that in 1848, the same year Dr. Napier's will was executed, Judy and her children purchased a farm in

¹⁶Ibid., p. 107.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 105.

¹⁸Ibid.

Walnut Hill, a suburb of Cincinnati, Ohio. Later, "they concluded to sell the farm at Walnut Hill, trading it for a farm at New Richmond, Ohio." At that juncture two of the sons went to Richmond, Virginia, with their mother, one to St. Louis, Missouri, and another to Nashville. The two brothers who went to Richmond became school teachers. The one who went to Nashville, James Carroll's father, went into the livery business.¹⁹

By 1850, William Carroll Napier and family had arrived in Nashville. At the time, only three cities in Tennessee contained a significant number of free Negroes. Nashville ranked first in the state during the last decade of the ante-bellum period, and Davidson County, in which Nashville is located, ranked first among the state's counties.²⁰

The free Negro class, generally in the South and specifically in Tennessee, was an anomalous group of people. It occupied a status between the whites and slaves and was viewed by most southern whites, according to one historian, as "lazy, thieving, beggarly, filthy and lustful--and, as

¹⁹Napier, "Negro Members of the Tennessee Legislature," pp. 117-118.

²⁰Seventh Census of the United States; J. Merton England, "The Free Negro in Ante-Bellum Tennessee," Journal of Southern History 9 (February 1943):37-38.

easy prey to abolitionist missionaries, a constant plotter against the continuance of slavery."²¹

This class of people experienced a precarious existence; its members were not accepted as equals of whites. Therefore, they sought social outlets within their own class. Their civil and political rights were almost non-existent. In Tennessee, free Negroes had to carry free-papers after 1806. Free-papers were to attest to the fact that they were legally free. They could not testify against whites in a court of law. After 1834 free Negroes could not vote. Their movement within the state was restricted and after 1842 they had to put up a \$500.00 bond for good conduct when permitted to travel outside their county of residence.²²

Although the civil and political rights of the free Negroes were strictly circumscribed, their right to own property and to procure legal protection was substantial. Tennessee's state government enacted several laws which prevented the illegal enslavement of free Negroes. The courts of Tennessee resolved that common knowledge of one's freedom was adequate evidence of a free Negro's claim to freedom.²³

²¹England, "The Free Negro in Ante-Bellum Tennessee," p. 48.

²²Ibid., pp. 50, 55.

²³Ibid., p. 51.

Economically, most of the free Negroes were indigent. Those who were employed found themselves confined to a limited category of occupations such as laborers, washers, domestic servants, blacksmiths, barbers, cooks, livery stable owners, and so forth. The fact that free Negroes were restricted to certain occupational opportunities was due in part to prejudice against them from lower class whites who felt threatened by free Negroes.²⁴

The family of William Carroll Napier did not fit the mold of the typical free Negro family. In fact, the Napiers were materially and economically better off than many whites. Moreover, the fact that the father had received the rudiments of education enhanced his chances of getting gainful employment. Mr. Napier secured employment as an overseer the year he and his family moved to Nashville. By 1855 he had entered the livery stable business from which he derived a good income. His fashionable business was first located at 62 Union Street. By 1878 it had been moved to 44 Church Street. Mr. Napier offered such services as livery, feed stables, rental carriages for all occasions, and specialized in breaking young stock.²⁵

²⁴Ibid., pp. 52-55.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 101-107; Napier, "Negro Members of the Tennessee Legislature," p. 117; Seventh Census of the United States; John T. Campbell, comp., Nashville Business Directory, 1855-1856 (n.p., n.d.), p. 88; August Meier, Negro Thought in America, 1880-1915: Racial Ideologies in the Age of Booker T. Washington (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1971), p. 153; George H. Rogers, comp.,

It appears that the parents of young James Carroll had a dominant influence on his development. They provided a stable home environment and proper discipline for the children which was tempered with love. According to Napier's later recollections of his parents, "they always taught the children that they must be honest and truthful and law abiding."²⁶ Mrs. Jane E. Napier, the mother, apparently was the predominant influence in James Carroll Napier's life. In a letter to his only sister in the waning years of his life, Napier expressed the following thoughts about his mother:

When I think of the care and love and affection she had for her children I realize my utter inability to find words to adequately express my gratitude to her for making me, together with the help of our good father, all that I am or have been or ever will be. When we think of the times when we learned our first prayer from words of her lips with heads bowed on her knee and the influence of her beautiful life on all of our movements we find it impossible to properly express our feelings, our love for her dear saintly memory.²⁷

The parents of James Carroll Napier appeared to have been cognizant of the value of education, if not the mother surely the father, who had received some formal schooling while he was a slave. Available records do not reveal

The Nashville and Edgefield Directory, 1878 (Nashville: Marshall and Bruce, Publishers, 1878), p. 26.

²⁶ Nashville Banner, March 18, 1934, p. 10.

²⁷ James Carroll Napier to his sister, May 12, 1934, James Carroll Napier Papers, Container 1, Negro Collection, Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee (hereafter cited as Napier Papers).

whether young Napier received any formal education prior to 1859. In that year his parents, in collaboration with other free Negro families in Nashville, "had a man named Rufus Conrad come down from Cincinnati, Ohio, to teach their children. . . ." Both free and slave children went to this school.²⁸ Classes began for the children in a small house which stood on North Vine Street (now Seventh Avenue) near Jo Johnston Avenue.²⁹ Years later Napier reflected on his experiences with the school and its abrupt closing:

The school had been opened two or three months when one day, while the class was spelling the word baker, an abrupt knock on the door interrupted the class and then a man entered without waiting to be admitted. He said to the teacher, "What is your name?" The teacher answered, "Rufus Conrad." "Where did you come from?" was the next question. The teacher answered, "From Cincinnati, Ohio." The man said, "I have been authorized by the powers that be in Nashville to send these children home, to close the doors of this school and give you just 24 hours to leave this town." This ended that school.³⁰

Later in life Napier asserted that:

I've looked inside that little building since I've been grown and that morning occurrence seems a long, long time ago, but I'll have to admit I thought hard of Nashville and its people for a long time after that but this feeling had passed away, for I know that after all Nashville and her people have been kind to me.³¹

²⁸Napier, "Negro Members of the Tennessee Legislature," pp. 116-117.

²⁹Nashville Banner, March 18, 1934, p. 10.

³⁰Napier, "Negro Members of the Tennessee Legislature," p. 116.

³¹Dahnke, "An Old Colored Man," p. 2; Nashville Banner, March 18, 1934, p. 10.

There was no law in Tennessee prohibiting educating free Negroes at the time, but it was a common reaction for local and state governments in the South to enact restrictive measures against free Negroes during crisis periods. Thus, the plight of the free Negro was directly related to state and national crises which were connected to the slavery controversy. By 1859 sectional tensions between the North and South over slavery had reached new heights.³²

A week after the closing of the school in 1859, Mr. Napier asked his wife to take James and his other son, Elias, to Ohio. They traveled on a small steamboat called the Winona where they joined a colony of free Negro families which William Napier and his brothers had helped found near Xenia, Ohio, some years earlier. Wilberforce, a school founded for Negroes by the Methodist Episcopal Church was in close proximity to Xenia and offered primary and secondary level work as well as college level curricula. James and Elias matriculated there in 1859.³³

Wilberforce University was founded in 1847 for the expressed purpose of instilling into students "Christian ideas and ethics [which would] enable the young people to

³²England, "The Free Negro in Ante-Bellum Tennessee," p. 55; John Hope Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), pp. 216-217.

³³Dahnke, "An Old Colored Man," p. 2; Nashville Banner, March 18, 1934, p. 10.

take the Christian point of view and look out upon the world with the spirit of sympathy, hope, and faith." Associated with building Christian character was the desire of the institution to imbue each student with a spirit of service.³⁴ Napier received his primary and part of his college preparatory education at Wilberforce University before a fire at the school forced him and Elias to withdraw. The exact length of their stay at the institution is not known. Elias returned to Nashville and entered the livery business with his father whom he later succeeded in the business.

With the exception of Elias, all of the Napier children either attended or completed college. Alonzo, the youngest brother, spent two and one-half years in West Point. His reasons for leaving are not known, but it is clear that he was a good student. He returned to Nashville and became a principal in the public school system. While still a young man, he sustained injuries in a run-away horse accident and later died of tetanus.³⁵ Ida Napier, the only sister and youngest child, received her college training at Fisk University in Nashville and later attended Oberlin College. She became very proficient as a pianist

³⁴Handbook Concerning Wilberforce, Napier Papers, Container 4.

³⁵Nashville Banner, March 18, 1934, p. 10. Evidence suggests that the Wilberforce fire was not connected with the Civil War struggle.

and vocalist. She married Arthur D. Langston, a son of John Mercer Langston, prominent black spokesman and politician from Virginia.³⁶

Meanwhile, perhaps immediately after the fire at Wilberforce, James Carroll Napier enrolled as a junior in the college preparatory department at Oberlin College in 1864. From its inception in 1833, Oberlin espoused radical views on reform, religion, slavery, and education. Its founders believed that students should obtain an education conducive to the development of the total human being, without distinction of sex or color.³⁷

Oberlin was the first institution of higher education in the United States to admit Negroes and women. Approximately 250 Negroes attended Oberlin before the Civil War. During the 1860's, Negroes comprised about three percent of the total enrollment. The Negro population of Oberlin College mingled freely with the white majority. According to John Mercer Langston, who lived in Oberlin and taught at the college, Negro students were received socially as equals in the community and college. They were welcomed by the only church in town, by every part of the

³⁶John Mercer Langston, From the Virginia Plantation to the National Capitol (Hartford, Conn.: American Publishing Co., 1894), p. 525.

³⁷W. E. Bigglestone, Archivist, Oberlin College, to H. L. Clark, June 29, 1977. The letter is in the possession of the author; Langston, From the Virginia Plantation to the National Capitol, p. 98.

college, and by some of the most respected families in town, whether student or resident in Oberlin.³⁸

Napier, a young man of nineteen, entered the Preparatory Department at Oberlin in 1864. The catalogue for that year indicates that he was "pursuing English Studies." That department was "especially designed to prepare students for college, but it was also adapted to meet the needs of those who required a good English education for teaching common school or for general business." English studies and two terms of Latin were required of those students seeking to enter the College Department. For the next two years young Napier would receive a strong dose of the classics, history, composition, religious studies, English grammar, and elocution. He also studied arithmetic and algebra.³⁹

When Napier applied for admittance as a freshman in the fall of 1866, he had to demonstrate proficiency in fourteen different subjects before being admitted. Generally, the examination encompassed questions pertaining to the classics, mathematics, and general history. He

³⁸Langston, From the Virginia Plantation to the National Capitol, pp. 100, 102; Geoffrey Blodgett, "John Mercer Langston and the Case of Edmonia Lewis: Oberlin, 1862," Journal of Negro History 53 (1968):202.

³⁹W. E. Bigglestone, Archivist, Oberlin College, to H. L. Clark, June 29, 1977. The letter is in the possession of the author.

remained in the College Department through his sophomore year. The course of study during his freshman year emphasized the classics, with less emphasis on mathematics and English. The curriculum for his sophomore year included mostly science and mathematics, with less emphasis on the classics and English. The students of Oberlin led a very busy life. Regular religious exercises, numerous classes, study hours, meals, and daily periods of manual work for some students occupied most of their time. It is safe to infer that such exacting, liberal, and religious influences had a significant impact on Napier's life.⁴⁰

Napier was probably a student at Wilberforce from 1859 to 1864 and was at Oberlin from 1864 to 1867. Because of this he missed the scares and excitement experienced by his parents in Nashville. One summer during the war years, however, as he returned to Nashville, Napier experienced a strange incident while boarding a train in Louisville, Kentucky. He related the following story:

A man I knew in Nashville, a new-come Jewish trader in Nashville, came up to me and asked me to hold a satchel for him until he called for it on the train. I went on the car and set the bag down on the seat by me. About half way to Nashville a man came through the car and asked me what I had in my satchel. I explained that I did not know, that I was carrying it for a Nashville man. The stranger seized my bag and when he opened it I learned it was filled with pistols. The Jewish trader

⁴⁰ Ibid.; Robert S. Fletcher, A History of Oberlin College from its Foundation Through the Civil War, vol. 2 (Oberlin, Ohio: Oberlin College Press, 1934), p. 746.

had been using me to smuggle them into Nashville, which was then still in the hands of the Southern army.⁴¹

Napier withdrew from Oberlin in 1867. One can only speculate as to why he dropped out. Whatever the reasons, he returned to Nashville and immediately secured a job as a page in the state senate. This was the first of a train of positions that he held which would provide grooming for his public career. When that session of the legislature adjourned he was appointed by Governor William Brownlow as one of the three County Claims Commissioners for Davidson County. The specific task of the commissioners was to "audit claims against the state for destruction of property by soldiers of the Confederate and Federal armies during the Civil War. They examined claims amounting to millions of dollars, some of which were afterwards paid and others rejected."⁴² The compensation did not include payment for loss of slave property. The experience Napier received as a commissioner enabled him to establish his ability for doing clerical work and performing duties which required a talent for legal details and business.⁴³

The appointment of Napier and other Negroes as County Claims Commissioners may have been politically

⁴¹Dahnke, "An Old Colored Man," p. 2.

⁴²Undated manuscript pertaining to Napier's work as County Claims Commissioner, Napier Papers, Container 2.

⁴³Ibid.; Dahnke, "An Old Colored Man," p. 2.

inspired. In the state at that time the Conservatives and Radicals were trying to attract black votes for the gubernatorial and congressional races of 1867. Therefore, Napier's appointment may have been associated with the Radical's efforts to win the Negro vote and retain control over state government.⁴⁴

Following the completion of Napier's work as County Claims Commissioner, John Mercer Langston, the organizer and Dean of the newly established Howard Law School in Washington, D.C., came to Nashville and induced Napier's parents to send him to that institution to pursue law. Napier had met Langston during his student years at Oberlin. Langston, himself a lawyer, was apparently convinced that Napier had the aptitude to study law.⁴⁵

Mr. Langston was instrumental in getting jobs with the federal government for his law students, thus permitting them to work and study. He made special arrangements for all classes, "except the Sunday morning lecture, to be held in the evening, after five o'clock. Therefore, students could earn fully all means required for their support and education, including all textbooks which they might need."⁴⁶

⁴⁴Mingo Scott, Jr., The Negro in Tennessee Politics and Governmental Affairs, 1865-1965 (Nashville, Tenn.: Rich Printing Co., 1964), p. 30.

⁴⁵Dahnke, "An Old Colored Man," p. 2.

⁴⁶Langston, From the Virginia Plantation to the National Capitol, p. 300.

Napier arrived in Washington on August 15, 1870, and immediately began his work-study program. Initially, he secured an appointment as clerk in the office of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands. By October of 1870, he had passed a civil service examination and was appointed clerk first class in the office of the sixth auditor of the United States Treasury, making him the first Negro to occupy that position.⁴⁷

The work-study plan devised by Mr. Langston for his law students was a true test of their aptitude and fortitude. During the three years embraced by the course of study, the students were exposed to all branches of the law. The lecture, moot court exercises, and the forensic exercises were the main teaching methods utilized by the instructors. The forensic exercises entailed the rendering of dissertations, addresses, and debates extemporaneously. The exercises were held weekly under the direction of Mr. Langston. The objective of the exercises was to prepare the student "for the duties and labors in the office and court house of an attorney and counselor at law and solicitor in chancery."⁴⁸

The moot court provided pupils with the practical experiences concerning courtroom procedure. It included the

⁴⁷"Biographical Notes," Napier Papers, Container 1.

⁴⁸Langston, *From the Virginia Plantation to the National Capitol*, p. 298.

drafting of papers and the management of various kinds of suits involving the rules and principles as well as the application of law, whether civil or criminal. The moot court exercises were held every two weeks. The lecture was also widely used by the faculty of the law department. Mr. Langston was responsible for delivering a series of lectures on professional ethics every Sunday morning during each term from nine to ten o'clock.

After completing the course of study, each student had to pass a competency examination totaling one hundred questions and prepare, with the approval of the dean, a dissertation which he would deliver or read on commencement day. Napier successfully completed the rigorous course of study in June of 1872 and graduated with the first class of Negro law students in the United States.⁴⁹

In March of that year he had been admitted to the Bar of the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia "upon the motion of A. G. Riddle," a law professor at Howard University Law School.⁵⁰ He returned to Nashville shortly after graduation and "stood examinations for the Nashville bar. Upon motion of General Thomas Smiley, who had served as an officer in the Confederate Army, he was admitted to

⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 299, 303-304.

⁵⁰"Biographical Notes," Napier Papers, Container 1.

practice law in Tennessee."⁵¹ At twenty-seven years of age Napier was prepared to hang out his shingle and ply his trade.

Black attorneys serving the poorest class of citizens had a hard time making ends meet. Napier explained his plight and his attempt at a solution with the following words: "There was not much opportunity for a Negro lawyer. That is the reason I entered the Internal Revenue Service. Except for the chief post of collector of internal revenue for Tennessee, I held every post in the office--surveyor, bookkeeper, storekeeper, clerk, and inspector of stills."⁵²

The job of internal revenue agent which Napier held from 1872 to 1884 was beset with problems. Many Americans, including Tennesseans, were reluctant to pay their taxes. Furthermore, widespread illicit whiskey making existed and violence often erupted when agents attempted to enforce the law. It was not uncommon for internal revenue agents to be confronted by violence or even meet with death.⁵³ An editorial appearing in the Nashville Daily American expressed what may have been the prevailing sentiment of most Southerners about the internal revenue system. It observed that the internal revenue system had been "fastened

⁵¹Dahnke, "An Old Colored Man," p. 2.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Nashville Daily American, July 7, 1880.

upon this country by the Republican centralizationalists" during the Civil War and perpetuated, in peacetime, over the opposition of "rock bottom" Democrats and others who disliked an oppressive tax.⁵⁴

Undoubtedly, Napier experienced problems with disgruntled taxpayers but they can not be documented. But a slightly different experience of Napier's involving a breach of the color barrier can be documented. He was, according to a newspaper report, "driven out of Murfreesboro as an internal revenue agent for putting up with a white detective, at the leading hotel there." However, some merchants in that city intimated that since Napier was a very courteous official "they would rather have Napier around than some other whom they could mention possessing lighter features."⁵⁵

By the time he assumed the post of revenue agent, Napier could already be identified as a prominent and influential member of the Nashville black community. His own talent, drive, and determination, coupled with the devotion of his parents to the goal of educating their children, had carried young Napier to the top rung of black Nashville society. Napier, however, would not be content

⁵⁴Editorial, Nashville Daily American, January 8, 1885.

⁵⁵Undated newspaper clipping, Napier Papers, Container 1, Scrapbook 1.

with his legal work and the responsibilities of his revenue post. Six years after he accepted his federal appointment, Napier plunged into city politics by running for city council.

CHAPTER II

NEGRO LEADER IN NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

In 1878 Napier perceived the political climate in Nashville to be favorable for the election of a Negro to the city council. He ran for the councilmanic seat in the fourth ward, the only predominantly Negro ward in the city. His opposition in the campaign was Charles H. Saunders, one of the city's most popular young men.¹ Napier was also popular and was labeled by the influential Nashville Daily American to be a "creditable representative of his race."² This political contest generated more interest than other councilmanic races because a Negro had not been elected to the city council since 1868.³

During the campaign Napier pledged that if elected he would work for the staffing of Negro schools with black

¹"Biographical Notes," James Carroll Napier Papers, Container 1, Negro Collection, Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee (hereafter cited as Napier Papers); Nashville Daily American, September 29, 1878.

²Nashville Daily American, September 29, 1878.

³Mingo Scott, Jr., The Negro in Tennessee Politics and Governmental Affairs, 1865-1965 (Nashville, Tenn.: Rich Printing Co., 1964), p. 29; Nashville Daily American, September 29, 1878.

teachers. He believed that white teachers were only interested in the compensation they received for teaching black students and were not concerned about their getting a good education. In addition, Napier maintained that Negro teachers would provide role models for Negro children and, therefore, provide them with an incentive to learn.⁴

Napier won the election by a vote of 246 to 233, a majority of thirteen votes. Therefore, as mentioned above, he became the first Negro to sit in the Nashville City Council since 1868. He, along with other aggressive Negro politicians of the 1870's and 1880's, established the right of Negroes to hold public office in Nashville and the state of Tennessee.⁵

The election was held September 28, 1878. That night Napier left for Washington, D.C., to marry Nettie Langston, the daughter of John Mercer Langston, his former law school mentor at Howard University Law School. Napier had met Nettie during his student life at Oberlin College.⁶ At that time she was not yet twenty-one years old. Their

⁴Joseph H. Cartwright, The Triumph of Jim Crow: Tennessee Race Relations in the 1880's (Knoxville, Tenn.: The University of Tennessee Press, 1976), p. 29 (hereafter cited as Cartwright, Triumph of Jim Crow).

⁵Nashville Daily American, September 29, 1878; Scott, The Negro in Tennessee Politics and Governmental Affairs, 1865-1965, pp. 29, 33.

⁶Nashville Daily American, September 29, 1878.

love had a chance to bud and flower during his years as a law student.

Nettie, the only daughter of John Mercer Langston, graduated from Oberlin College. As a music major she not only was an accomplished musician but she possessed a "rich contralto voice of great power."⁷

They were wedded at six o'clock P.M. on Wednesday, October 2, 1878, at the Congregational Church in Washington, D.C. A local Washington, D.C., newspaper gave the following description of the wedding:

The wedding was celebrated in the presence of an immense audience. The church was completely packed, both upstairs and downstairs, and the doors were blocked up to such an extent that many who desired to get in were compelled to content themselves with a few inches of standing-room on a bench in the hall.

The bride was attired in a white silk dress, garnished with tarlatan and trimmed with roses. Her hair was beautifully dressed with flowers and set off by a trailing veil, hanging gracefully down the back.⁸

The reception was held on College Hill near Howard University where Nettie's father owned a pretentious residence. "The house and grounds were illuminated by festoons of Chinese lanterns, while Weber's band was stationed on one of the porches. There were five hundred

⁷Newspaper clipping on the marriage of Napier to Nettie Langston, Napier Papers, Container 3; John Mercer Langston, From the Virginia Plantation to the National Capitol (Hartford, Conn.: American Publishing Co., 1894), p. 528; resume of Nettie Napier, Oberlin, Ohio, Oberlin College Archives, File 28, Container 183.

⁸Newspaper clipping on the marriage of Napier to Nettie Langston, Napier Papers, Container 3.

invitations issued, half being to white acquaintances, and no person of dark color being included."⁹ The newly married couple received gifts worth thousands of dollars in value.¹⁰

The union between Nettie and Napier would endure almost sixty years. According to the editor of the Nashville Globe, the only Negro newspaper in the city, it embodied the elements of love and honor which are the main ingredients of a successful marriage. Nettie was an ideal spouse for Napier. She had a good education, broad cultural interests, a sympathetic and friendly nature, and an uncommon grace about herself. These attributes were of great benefit to her husband, who was very active in social and public affairs. While her husband pursued his law practice and civic and political interests, Mrs. Napier was very active in church work, social work, and educational matters pertaining to the Negro colleges and schools in Nashville.¹¹

After taking his marital vows in Washington, D.C., in 1878, James Carroll Napier returned to Nashville with his new bride to embark upon his duties as a councilman. In that year Nashville had a population of approximately 44,342

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Langston, From the Virginia Plantation to the National Capitol, p. 527; editorial, Nashville Globe, April 26, 1940; Nashville Tennessean, September 28, 1938, p. 10.

individuals. There were 27,005 whites and 16,337 blacks.¹² Negroes were sparsely spread throughout the city with the exception of being concentrated in the fourth ward. The boundaries of the fourth ward began at the corner of Cherry and Cedar streets, ran north along Cherry Street to Jackson Street, west on Jackson Street to the city limits to Cedar, then east on Cedar Street to the beginning. At the eastern end of the ward was the State Capitol and at the western edge was the Fisk University community.¹³

The economic status and living conditions of most Negroes in Nashville were deplorable. Naturally, the nature of their employment was a determining factor. By 1880 there had emerged three distinct socioeconomic classes in the city. There was a small elite group of light-skinned Negroes which constituted the upper class among Negroes. Many of these families, like the Napiers, were of the better educated descendants of house servants and free Negroes who had received money when emancipated.¹⁴ An observer of the

¹²Alrutheus A. Taylor, The Negro in Tennessee, 1865-1880 (Washington, D.C.: Associated Publishers, Inc., 1941; reprint ed., Spartanburg, S.C.: The Reprint Company, 1974), p. 32 (hereafter cited as Taylor, The Negro in Tennessee).

¹³List of Registered Voters, District 13, Davidson County, Tennessee, State Archives and Manuscript Section; Atlas of the City of Nashville 1880, Index Map published by G. M. Hopkins, 320 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Tennessee State Archives and Manuscript Section.

¹⁴Lester C. Lamon, Black Tennesseans, 1900-1930 (Knoxville, Tenn.: The University of Tennessee Press, 1977), p. 89 (hereafter cited as Lamon, Black Tennesseans).

period gave the following description of the living conditions, manners, and culture of this class:

For with the blessing of freedom and the benefits of education, we find delicacy of sentiment and refined manners steadily growing . . . plantation manners are being supplanted by proper courtesy. The rude, boorish ways of the farm, odd motions, ungainly attitudes, awkward gestures, are giving place to dignity of demeanor. . . .¹⁵

The same observer wrote that the houses of the black elite "did not have barren walls and carpetless floors, but rooms neatly furnished, prints, chromos, engravings gracing the walls, and a stand of books--modern and ancient history."¹⁶

Among this class of Negroes were barbers, merchants, and a few professional men. By the turn of the century this elite group of blacks was giving way to a darker-skinned group of black physicians, dentists, professors, and businessmen who received their education chiefly at Fisk University and Meharry Medical College. Some of the more important businesses owned by members of the black elite were the McKissack family's building and trade business, two Negro banks, two publishing companies, the Hemphill family's printing businesses, three funeral homes, and the Crowder brothers' barber business. Not only was this an enterprising class of Negroes, but it was made up of men

¹⁵Taylor, The Negro in Tennessee, p. 32.

¹⁶Ibid.

who articulated the many grievances which confronted the black community during the early decades of the twentieth century.¹⁷

Below the elite class of Nashville blacks was a moderate size group of Negroes who plied their trade as shoemakers, carpenters, brick masons, plasterers, and blacksmiths. During the 1880's these black artisans outnumbered white mechanics. But, by 1910, as a result of a policy of letting whites into their unions, blacks had been voted out. This class was composed of industrious Negroes who purchased small homes and furnished them comfortably.¹⁸

The overwhelming majority of black Nashvillians were unskilled laborers. A large percentage worked as porters in hotels and sleeping cars, draymen, gardeners, train hands on the railroad, hotel waiters, hod carriers, common laborers on buildings, laborers in factories and elsewhere, street cleaners, and cab drivers. Most members of this class of Negroes lived in poverty. They were ill-housed, ill-fed, and ill-clothed. One observer of the 1880's wrote that in the city of Nashville

¹⁷August Meier, Negro Thought in America, 1880-1915: Racial Ideologies in the Age of Booker T. Washington (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1971), pp. 23-25 (hereafter cited as Meier, Negro Thought in America, 1880-1915).

¹⁸August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, From Plantation to Ghetto (New York: Hill and Wang, 1970), p. 191; Taylor, The Negro in Tennessee, pp. 30-31.

We have examples of sloth and filthiness that can hardly be surpassed in any other city. The lower class of Negroes inhabit what were once stables, old rickety out-houses, small unventilated cabins and hovels. If only sheltered from the rain they seem to be satisfied.¹⁹

He also observed that members of this class lived in crowded conditions "breathing over and over again their poisonous breath, until diseases siezed them and they died."²⁰

The food that Negroes ate was often worse than what they had eaten as slaves. Their diet usually included corn bread and bacon which contained salt, soda, and water. If a black family were better off economically, it often used flour to make wheat bread.²¹

The way Negroes dressed depended largely on their economic status. While the upper class of blacks emulated white style of dress, manners and modes of living, the poorest and the more ignorant of the blacks "were fond of ornamenting themselves and of gaudy colors." According to another observer,

You sometimes see a woman with a red parasol, a green turban, and a yellow dress, or one so poor as to be in rags, yet wearing ear-rings, and a half-a-dozen brass rings on each hand. The black dandy sports a white hat, red necktie, and flowered vest.²²

¹⁹Taylor, The Negro in Tennessee, p. 32.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid., pp. 33-34.

The more reasonable men of the times knew that education would improve the morals of ex-slaves and make them more productive and responsible citizens. Private benevolent agencies and religious denominations responded to the educational needs of Negroes in the state and Nashville, as early as 1863, four years before the General Assembly of Tennessee enacted a public school law. The principal religious denominations of the Mid-west organized the Western Freedmen's Aid Commission in Cincinnati in 1863 for the purpose of providing for the "physical and the mental and moral elevation" of ex-slaves. It confined its work to seven southern states with Tennessee being one of them.²³

The purposes of the Commission's educational work were to provide common school instruction and domestic and industrial training. The former entailed reading, writing, and arithmetic. The latter included teaching women and girls to make clothing articles. Boys were taught some useful trade. Between 1863 and 1865 the Commission hired 123 teachers. A large number of them taught in schools located in Memphis, Chattanooga, Cleveland, Shelbyville, Gallatin, Clarksville, Knoxville, and Nashville. Other teachers were located in schools where the greatest amount of relief was needed.²⁴

²³Ibid., p. 168.

²⁴Ibid., p. 170.

Other church and private benevolent groups were actively providing education for Negroes after the Civil War. Some of them were the American Missionary Association, the Freedmen's Aid Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and the Home Mission Society of the Baptist Church. These societies established schools in Chattanooga, Knoxville, Memphis, Nashville, and in smaller urban centers.²⁵

But it was the Freedmen's Bureau which assumed general control of educating blacks. Established by Congress in April of 1865, it erected, rented, and repaired school buildings. It provided furniture and determined the localities where additional teachers were most needed. The inspector of the Freedmen's schools reported in January, 1866, that Kentucky and Tennessee had 75 schools, 264 teachers, and 14,768 students. The report also indicated that Negroes were supporting many independent schools in Nashville, Knoxville, and Memphis. A year later the number of schools operated for ex-slaves in Tennessee totaled 82 day schools and 23 night schools. There were 122 teachers giving instruction to 6,435 pupils.²⁶

In 1868 the inspector's report included statistics on all types of schools operated by the Freedmen Bureau. There was a grand total of 221 schools which offered

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 170-172.

instruction to 13,145 Negro students. These included 127 day or night schools which employed 140 teachers for 6,172 students. Eight of these schools offered industrial training for 195 pupils while six high schools had 180 pupils enrolled. The ex-slaves owned thirty-seven school buildings and partly or fully supported eighty-one schools.²⁷

In 1869 Nashville's forty-two teachers taught 2,000 students in six freedmen schools. According to the superintendent of education for the Bureau in Tennessee, these schools were as good as any white schools of the same grade level. The superintendent also stated that the state of Tennessee was ahead of other states in legislation as well as in actual organization of a system of public schools for all children.

The General Assembly of Tennessee enacted into law the first public school law which included all children on March 5, 1867. This measure called for a centralized state school system headed by a state superintendent of schools under whom county superintendents would work. State taxes supplemented by local taxes would support the program. In addition, the act required that separate schools should be opened for both races of youths between the ages of six and

²⁷Ibid., pp. 173-175.

twenty, and that the schools should remain open during five months of each school year.²⁸

However, in the election of 1869 the Radicals were replaced in state government by the Democrats. The Democratic legislators argued that the existing school program was too expensive and violated the rights of county governments. Thus, they eradicated the centralized public school concept established by the Radicals and made the counties responsible for establishing schools. Furthermore, the new school law of 1870 left it to the courts and the people of each county to decide if they wanted to tax themselves for educational purposes. That provision had a disastrous impact on Negro education in the state.²⁹

Negroes, their friends, and friends of public education in Tennessee launched a long and intense protest against the law. They argued that the state needed a sound public school system. As a result, the General Assembly passed a new school law in 1873. This statute required that a state superintendent of schools be appointed by the governor, and county superintendents were to be selected by the county courts. The county courts were also made

²⁸Stanley J. Folmsbee, Robert E. Corlew, and Enoch L. Mitchell, Tennessee: A Short History (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1972), p. 413; Taylor, The Negro in Tennessee, p. 178.

²⁹Folmsbee, Corlew, and Mitchell, Tennessee: A Short History, p. 413; Taylor, The Negro in Tennessee, p. 182.

responsible for choosing three school directors from each of the civil districts to assist the county superintendent. A sum of \$2,512,000 was established as a permanent school fund and invoices amounting to six percent interest on the fund would be distributed semi-annually for the support of schools. Poll tax and property tax revenues would also be used for schools. Additional taxes could be levied by the county courts depending on local needs and demands.³⁰

Meanwhile, the city of Nashville, which had started its public school system in 1855, responded to the state school law of 1867. In that year the Belle View Building was purchased and converted into a school for Negroes. In 1878 the school's staff consisted of a principal and eight teachers. The school included grades first through ninth. Two years later, the Belle View School still had eight teachers and an average enrollment of 339 students.³¹

Two additional schools were opened for blacks in 1878. They were the McKee School and the Trimble School. Both were elementary schools. The McKee School contained

³⁰Folmsbee, Corlew, and Mitchell, Tennessee: A Short History, pp. 414-415.

³¹W. W. Clayton, Clayton History of Davidson County, Tennessee (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott and Company, 1878), pp. 249-250; George H. Rogers, comp., The Nashville Edgefield Directory, 1878 (Nashville: Marshall and Bruce, Publishers, 1878), p. 400 (hereafter cited as Nashville City Directory).

grades first through third and the Trimble School included grades first through fourth.³²

Blacks of Nashville, and Napier, must have known that their hope for improving Negro education hinged, to a degree, upon their political power. Constituting about a third of the city's population during the Reconstruction period, they played a significant role in Nashville politics. According to James Carroll Napier,

Nashville city government during the days of reconstruction had among its membership perhaps one-third colored members. These men were not of the same calibre as the colored members of the legislature. They were picked up in different wards by their friends. They were chosen for their popularity rather than for fitness for the work before them.³³

During most of the 1870's, Negroes were aligned with the political machine of Thomas A. Kercheval. Kercheval, a white Republican, had represented the predominantly black fourth ward as councilman from 1868 to 1872. In 1878, the year Napier began his first term as a councilman, Kercheval was serving his fifth year as Mayor of Nashville.³⁴

³²Nashville City Directory, p. 402.

³³James Carroll Napier, "Some Negro Members of the Tennessee Legislature During the Reconstruction Period and After," Journal of Negro History 5 (July 1920):115 (hereafter cited as Napier, "Negro Members of the Tennessee Legislature").

³⁴King's Nashville City Directory, 1868 (Nashville: n.p., 1868), p. 50; King's Nashville City Directory, 1870 (Nashville: King, Marshall and Bruce, Publishers, 1870), p. 40; Nashville City Directory, 1872 (Nashville: Wheeler, Marshall, Publishers, 1872), p. 70; Nashville City Directory, 1873, p. 70; Nashville City Directory, 1874, p. 62;

Meanwhile, as a councilman Napier was now in a position to influence policies and programs which would bring about the improvement of the living conditions of blacks in Nashville. Napier was elected to the Nashville City Council four times between 1878 and 1885. Nashville was under a decentralized ward system of government during his first three terms as councilman and a centralized ward system during his last term. Under the decentralized ward system, a councilman was elected by the voters of the ward he represented. But the centralized ward system required all councilmen to be elected by a city-wide vote. The centralized ward system was established in 1883 with the advent of the "Reform Movement."³⁵

The minutes of the Common Council suggest that Napier acquitted himself well during his seven years in the council. He displayed political wisdom and proficiency as a councilman. He was essentially one of the builders of the city of Nashville. He supported and sponsored numerous

Nashville City Directory, 1875, p. 60; J. H. Bruce, comp., Nashville Edgefield Directory, 1876 (Nashville: Wheeler, Marshall and Bruce, Publishers, 1876), p. 369; George H. Rogers, comp., Nashville Edgefield Directory, 1877 (Nashville: Marshall and Bruce, Publishers, 1877), p. 346; Cartwright, Triumph of Jim Crow, p. 123.

³⁵ James C. Napier to Jacob McGavock Dickinson, April 14, 1909, Dickinson Papers, Manuscript Division, Tennessee State Library and Archives; Helen Dahnke, "An Old Colored Man," The Tennessean Magazine, Nashville, Tennessee, July 4, 1937, p. 2; Cartwright, Triumph of Jim Crow, pp. 121-125.

bills and resolutions for the benefit of the people of Nashville in general and for the Negro in particular. His proposals covered a wide spectrum of city needs, such as general construction and repairs for the physical maintenance of city streets and buildings, establishing an annual budget, issuing bonds for funding purposes, establishing laws and rules for governing the council, providing schools and fire protection and sanitation for the city, and electing administrative officials.³⁶

Napier also sponsored ordinances which benefitted blacks in particular. He was especially interested in Negro education. He was convinced that education would not only improve the Negro's ability to earn a better living, but it would improve his morals, mental faculties, and character. Once the Negro had improved significantly in the above areas, he believed white Americans would tender the race its full civil and political rights.³⁷

In 1878 there were three schools for Negro children in Nashville. They were all staffed with white teachers and administrators. Napier believed that Negroes should

³⁶Minutes, Common Council, County Court Clerk, Nashville, Tennessee (1875-1883; 1883-1886) (hereafter cited as Minutes, Common Council).

³⁷James Carroll Napier, undated and untitled speech pertaining to the Negro securing his rights, Napier Papers, Container 1.

occupy these positions.³⁸ In an attempt to rectify the problem, he sponsored a "resolution requesting the Board of Education to employ colored teachers for the public schools of the city." The resolution was adopted.³⁹

As reflected by the minutes of the council, the city was continuously confronted with the problem of not having a sufficient amount of space to accommodate its black students. In October of 1879, Napier submitted a resolution to remedy the lingering problem. His resolution provided for the appointment of a special joint committee to act in conjunction with the Board of Education for the purpose of taking steps to erect school buildings for the accommodation of the colored children of the city. The resolution was adopted and he was selected as one of the three committee members. By 1883 Meigs, in east Nashville, and Pearl, in north Nashville, had been completed. Moreover, in 1884, the council adopted a Napier sponsored resolution which established the ninth grade for Negroes at Pearl School.⁴⁰

That same year Napier offered a resolution directing the Board of Public works and Affairs, the chief administrative organ under the reform government, to make

³⁸Nashville City Directory, 1878, pp. 402-403; Cartwright, Triumph of Jim Crow, p. 136.

³⁹Minutes, Common Council (1875-1883), p. 314.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 226, 327, 377, 538, 637; Joel Davis, comp., Nashville Directory, 1884 (Nashville: Marshall and Bruce, Publisher, 1884), p. 19.

future appointments in the police and other departments, "irrespective of political affiliation, religious inclination, race, color, or previous condition."⁴¹ The resolution was adopted. Napier's attempt to secure the appointment of Negroes to the city's police force was vetoed by the Mayor; however, the reform government did appoint the first black firemen to the city's fire department. Consequently, the first all Negro fire unit, Stockell Company Number 4, was established. Over the years the company won much deserved recognition for its service in fire fighting for the city of Nashville.⁴²

Nashville was governed by a reform charter during Napier's last term in the city council. The reform movement, which was associated with municipal reform nationwide, began in the spring of 1883 and terminated with the defeat of the reform ticket two years later. Its paramount objective was to cleanse Nashville's city government by replacing the old ward political system, led by political bosses, with a centralized government run by businessmen employing strict business principles.⁴³ Moreover, the

⁴¹Minutes, Common Council (1875-1886), p. 74; Nashville Daily American, March 1, 1884; Cartwright, Triumph of Jim Crow, p. 121.

⁴²Cartwright, Triumph of Jim Crow, p. 121.

⁴³Ibid., p. 119.

reformers were hoping "to improve city service, reduce taxes, and place more power in the hands of the council."⁴⁴

In general, the proponents of the reform movement were businessmen, professional groups, and property owners. The two most outstanding reformers were Arthur S. Colyar, editor of the Nashville American newspaper and leader of the Citizen's Reform Association, and Jacob McGavock Dickinson, a young Nashville attorney and drafter of the reform charter.⁴⁵

The charter, which was accepted by the state legislature, provided that the principal officials of the city government would be a Mayor, a City Council, and a Board of Public Works and Affairs. The mayor, who was given a two year term of office, had the power to veto bills which could be overridden by a majority vote of the City Council. He had no power to fill vacancies which occurred on the Board of Public Works, or to suspend or remove any city officers. He did have the power to make temporary appointments to fill vacancies.⁴⁶

The Board of Public Works and Affairs was to be elected by the City Council. The members were to serve staggered terms--one member to serve for two years, one for

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 121.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 119.

⁴⁶Nashville Daily American, October 13, 1883.

four years, and another for six years. The salary of the Board was to be fixed by the Council. The Board was to have sole power of employing department heads and other city employees.⁴⁷

The Council was to be the principal organ of the reform government. Its special powers were to select members to serve on the Board of Public Works and to initiate impeachment proceedings against the mayor and other city officials. Councilmen received no remuneration for their service. Initially, the five councilmen polling the highest number of votes were to serve a four year term. The remainder would serve a two year term. Biennially, following the second election, five councilmen were to be elected.⁴⁸

Once the reform charter had been accepted by the state legislature, the Citizen's Reform Association selected a ticket. C. Hooper Phillips, a leading businessman of Nashville, was the candidate for mayor. Eight white businessmen and two Negroes were candidates for the City Council. The eight businessmen reflected the central objective of the reform movement and the appearance of the two Negroes on the ticket represented the desire of the

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid.

reformers to wrest the substantial black vote from the incumbent Republican machine of Mayor Thomas Kercheval.⁴⁹

Napier and Charles Gowdy were the two Negroes on the reform ticket. At twenty-nine years of age, Gowdy was a former drayman who was serving a third term as constable. According to one source, he was reputed to have been very popular and influential with his race, and highly respected by the whites for his integrity and conservative views.⁵⁰

At thirty-nine years of age, Napier was also held in high esteem by both white and black residents of Nashville. By joining the reform movement he broke with the Republican administration of Kercheval to which he had given yeoman service since 1878. In fact, Kercheval had written a letter to President Garfield in 1881 endorsing Napier for the job of Postmaster of Nashville.⁵¹

Napier's decision to join the reform movement must have been difficult. Being an alert politician he must have known blacks would lose a degree of political influence under a government which called for centralized councilmanic elections and more appointive officials. Moreover, he knew that if he joined the reform movement he would be abandoning the local Republicans in favor of a reform movement led by

⁴⁹Cartwright, Triumph of Jim Crow, p. 124.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid.; Thomas A. Kercheval to President James A. Garfield, April 2, 1881, Napier Papers, Container 1.

local Democrats who were affiliated with a party unsympathetic to the concerns of blacks.⁵²

Apparently, Napier's decision to link up with the reformers was shaped by a number of factors; the black community of Nashville had accumulated a train of grievances against the Kercheval regime. For example, several Negroes were shot in the back while trying to escape from the police for committing petty offenses, and no investigations were initiated. He also supported the reform movement because its platform espoused the improvement of the police force and the city police court. In addition, Napier was aware of the economic advantages which would be derived by his people if they supported a reform movement led by businessmen. He hoped that blacks would receive more jobs, and pay less taxes, under the reform government. Possibly the most significant reason why Napier backed the reform movement was because he believed the liberal spirit of the reformers provided an excellent opportunity for the improvement of race relations between black and white citizens of the city. He hoped that the reform movement would usher in a period which would lead to greater political and civil liberties for both races.⁵³ Thus, by supporting the reform movement,

⁵²Cartwright, Triumph of Jim Crow, p. 124; Scott, The Negro in Tennessee Politics and Governmental Affairs, 1865-1965, p. 58.

⁵³Cartwright, Triumph of Jim Crow, p. 125; Nashville Daily American, October 11, 1883.

Napier was being true to his life's motives which were "not only undertaken to labor for the upbuilding of the Negro but for the welfare and upbuilding of all . . . people."⁵⁴

In the bi-racial and non-partisan campaign that followed, Napier told Negro audiences that the reform movement would result in better schools for blacks and a greater voice in determining the policies adopted by the city government than they had experienced under the Kercheval administration. Colyar utilized his newspaper to win black voters from the Kercheval camp. Negroes were asked to join with white reformers in order that good government would be realized in Nashville. His approach was to appeal to the desire of Negroes to be recognized as responsible citizens. He reminded Negro voters that the impending election offered them the opportunity to prove their capacity for citizenship.⁵⁵

The Citizen Reform ticket was elected over the opposition in a close election. The average candidate of the reform ticket polled slightly over 4,000 votes while the average candidate of the Kercheval ticket polled slightly less than 4,000 votes. Napier and Gowdy accumulated 4,049 and 4,200 votes, respectively. They polled less votes than all of the reform candidates. The two Negroes, however,

⁵⁴"Biographical Notes," Napier Papers, Container 1.

⁵⁵Nashville Daily American, September 29, October 3, and October 11, 1883.

received more votes from the predominantly black fourth ward than any of the candidates on either ticket, including the candidates for mayor.⁵⁶

Since Napier was not among the five councilmen to poll the greatest number of votes in the election, he was up for reelection in 1885. He was the only Negro on the reform ticket in that year. The Citizen's Reform Association was revived for the campaign of 1885. Andrew W. Wills, a white Republican businessman and a former officer in the Union Army, headed the reform ticket while Kercheval, again, was the opposing mayoralty candidate.⁵⁷

During the campaign, Napier "made a scorching review of the Kercheval administration" and appealed to the Negroes of the city for their support of the reform ticket.⁵⁸ He promised that if reelected he would continue to work to improve the streets and the sewage system. He asserted that "he believed the matter of health was the most important feature of the future of the city." He pledged that the "system of public school education and building of public schools until every child, white and black, has a seat, would also claim his attention."⁵⁹

⁵⁶Ibid., October 12, 1883.

⁵⁷Ibid.; Cartwright, Triumph of Jim Crow, p. 131.

⁵⁸Nashville Daily American, October 8, 1885.

⁵⁹Ibid., October 4, 1885.

Election day proved to be a debacle for the reform party. An analysis of the election returns revealed that, with one exception, the entire reform ticket lost, including Napier. Kercheval polled 4,095 votes to Wills' 3,595. On the average, the councilmanic candidates on the reform ticket polled 3,679 votes to 3,760 votes for the opposition.

Napier received 3,038 votes in the election. This was the smallest number of votes cast for any candidate on either ticket. While he ran slightly ahead of all reform candidates in the fourth ward, he ran as much as 1,269 votes behind the top vote-getter. Napier had received 339 votes in the fourth ward in the election of 1883. In the election of 1885 he polled only 289 votes. These statistics indicate that Napier lost some black support between elections, even though some of his most outstanding accomplishments in the council were made during those years.⁶⁰

The reform party did not win solid support from the predominantly black fourth ward. A comparison of the election returns of 1883 and 1885 revealed that the Kercheval ticket polled more votes than the reform party in the fourth ward in both elections. Thus, if the fourth ward reflects how most Negroes voted in the city, Kercheval retained considerable support from Negroes in Nashville.⁶¹

⁶⁰Ibid., October 12, 1883, and October 9, 1885; Cartwright, Triumph of Jim Crow, p. 130.

⁶¹Cartwright, Triumph of Jim Crow, p. 137.

The Nashville Daily American attributed the defeat of Wills to the "failure of the Democrats to support him." Moreover, the Daily American asserted that those Democrats who did not support Wills "looked beyond the non-partisan platform and saw things which persuaded them that the contest was merely a scramble for power between Republicans, and would have nothing to do with it." The Daily American argued that these Democrats "perceived a bitter, internecine warfare in the Republican ranks and would aid neither faction." They believed that the reform movement had "lowered its dignity and imperiled its usefulness by entrusting its administration to Republicans rather than Democrats, and these quiet, but intense Democrats, preferred to withhold their support from the compromise."⁶² Other observers reasoned that the few gains achieved by Negroes during the reform movement had, according to one historian, alienated many whites, who registered their protest by not voting in 1885.⁶³

As a result of the reform movement, the Negroes of Nashville derived tangible gains. They were awarded city contracts, were recipients of more city jobs, obtained a Negro fire company, and secured the expansion and improvement of school facilities. Napier was directly responsible

⁶²Nashville Daily American, October 9, 1885.

⁶³Cartwright, Triumph of Jim Crow, p. 137.

for the three last named benefits.⁶⁴ Despite Napier's defeat as a councilman, he regarded the reform movement "as the salvation of Nashville and its taxpayers." He maintained that "it did more to unite and bring together the better classes of white and colored people than anything that [had] occurred since the Civil War."⁶⁵

A year before Napier was elected to his first term on the city council, the last federal troops were removed from the South and white rule re-instituted in all the ex-confederate South. Negroes found that they were without any effective protection of their civil and political rights.⁶⁶ Increasingly, as disfranchisement grew and office holding declined after 1877 in the nation and after the 1880's in Tennessee, Negroes became disillusioned with politics and placed more emphasis on racial solidarity, self-help, and economic improvement as better ways to combat white racism.⁶⁷

Napier, however, did not subscribe to the philosophy calling for deemphasizing Negro political activity. He believed that politics was the vehicle to be used by Negroes

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 136.

⁶⁵James C. Napier to Jacob McGavock Dickinson, April 14, 1909, Dickinson Papers, Manuscript Division, Tennessee State Library and Archives.

⁶⁶Meier, Negro Thought in America, 1880-1915, p. 19.

⁶⁷Ibid., pp. 24-25; Cartwright, Triumph of Jim Crow, p. 243.

to obtain their political and civil rights. On one occasion he asserted that

. . . some men tell us [Negroes] that if [we] would only keep out of politics all the ills and troubles that [we] suffer will disappear. . . . This demand is a most unjust and unnatural one. . . . To ask that we do this is like asking a man to surrender his weapon in the very presence of his foe.⁶⁸

He urged Negroes not to relinquish their hold on politics nor "any other element that constitutes citizenship in this country." He argued that "it takes all of these things to make the white man what he wants to be and the good citizen he should be. And the colored brother need never hope to reach the same high goal . . . eliminating or cutting off any of these requisites."⁶⁹

A year before Napier lost his bid for a fifth term on the council, he was removed from a federal post. In 1884 he lost his appointment as revenue agent when Democrat Grover Cleveland was elected president.⁷⁰ As a result of these events, Napier devoted himself to establishing a law practice. The extent of his law practice can not be determined. However, in a commencement speech to the graduating class of Central Tennessee College in Nashville,

⁶⁸James Carroll Napier, speech, "Making A Man," 1900, Napier Papers, Container 1.

⁶⁹James Carroll Napier, speech, "The Negro Problem," 1900, Napier Papers, Container 1.

⁷⁰Dahnke, "An Old Colored Man," p. 2.

he optimistically stated that the emergence of civil, corporation, and constitutional law would "soon open a class of practice to Negro lawyers that will be more desirable and lucrative than the criminal cases to which we have hitherto been almost exclusively confined."⁷¹ To be sure, he also handled cases involving divorce and child abandonment and administered small estates.⁷² Furthermore, his work "entailed real estate matters, the drawing up of papers for insurance, loans, and rents for his own people."⁷³ In addition, he was retained as the attorney of Negro businessmen and institutions of Nashville.

Napier combined real estate business with his law practice. This was a common practice among Negro lawyers since they generally made little money at law. According to Davidson County's Tax Schedule, Napier did not start accumulating real property until 1892. In that year he owned two lots which were valued at \$250.00 each. Twenty years later his real estate holdings had increased to fifteen parcels, with a value of \$23,300.00. At the time of his

⁷¹James Carroll Napier, untitled and undated speech to graduates at Central Tennessee College, Napier Papers, Container 1.

⁷²Carter G. Woodson, The Negro Professional Man and the Community with Special Emphasis on the Physician and the Lawyer (New York: Johnson Reprint, 1970; reprint ed. 1934), pp. 192-193.

⁷³Carter G. Woodson, The Mis-Education of the Negro (New York: A.M.S. Press, 1972; reprint ed. 1933), p. 77.

death in 1940, he owned seventeen pieces of rental property and held jointly, with others, three pieces of real estate on which he had a two-thirds interest. The assessed value of his real estate was \$43,016.66.⁷⁴

In addition to his legal and real estate activities, Napier found time to conceive and initiate the establishing of a bank in 1903. He observed that

. . . during this time the need for a bank for Negroes presented itself. Out of my own savings I could lend small amounts at anytime. There was no ready credit source for the average poor Negro. Negro workmen often had difficulty finding a creditor for even as small an amount as \$5 or \$10. It was from my experience as a lawyer and lending from my own savings that I had the idea of organizing the One Cent Savings Bank, the first Negro bank in Tennessee.⁷⁵

Napier called a meeting of a group of prominent Negro professional and businessmen on November 5, 1903, for the purpose of organizing a bank. The meeting was held in Napier Court, a three story office building erected by him. Aside from Napier, Richard H. Boyd and Preston Taylor were the most prominent men at the meeting. Boyd was an ex-slave from Texas who had taught himself how to read and write. He attended Bishop's College in Texas and was subsequently ordained as a minister. He arrived in Nashville in 1896 where he founded and managed the National Baptist Publishing

⁷⁴Index to Warranty Deeds, Davidson County, Tennessee (Book N, Roll L), pp. 31-32; Unprocessed Tax Schedule, Davidson County, Tennessee, Inside, LZ (1892); Inside, L-R (1939-1940).

⁷⁵Dahnke, "An Old Colored Man," p. 2.

Board which was the nation's first and largest all-Negro publishing house. Preston Taylor was also a former slave. He earned his freedom by working as a water boy in the Union Army and attended Bible College in Kentucky before coming to Nashville. He helped to build the Big Sandy Railroad. Later, he established Greenwood Park and Cemetery and opened a funeral home in Nashville.⁷⁶

The assembly of men elected Napier as chairman. They fixed shares at five dollars (a figure deemed to be within the reach of the average Negro), made charter members of those persons who contributed not less than one hundred dollars to the capital stock, and made Napier custodian of the funds received. Nine of the men present at the initial meeting qualified for the status of charter members, including, of course, Napier. Napier, in fact, expressed his willingness to raise the one hundred dollars he contributed to one thousand if the occasion demanded it.⁷⁷

At the meeting of November 12, 1904, the charter members appointed two committees--one to draft a charter and the other to draw up regulations and bylaws. They adopted

⁷⁶"J. C. Napier Vertical File," Nashville, Tennessee, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Reference Division. This source has a duplicate copy of the original minutes of that first organizational meeting; William Waller, ed., Nashville: 1900-1910 (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1972), p. 24; Nashville Tennessean, February 9, 1970.

⁷⁷"J. C. Napier Vertical File," Nashville, Tennessee, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Reference Division.

as the name of the institution the "One-Cent Savings Bank." The name was selected to indicate that as little as a penny would be sufficient to open an account.⁷⁸

Napier's role in creating the bank was crucial. He conceived the idea, called the first meeting, chaired the organizational meetings, and contributed his expertise in the drafting of the charter. Moreover, he, with the consent of his wife, "made a solemn vow that before he would see the depositors, large or small, lose one penny in the institution he would be willing to surrender his own private fortune to them."⁷⁹

The founding of the One-Cent Savings Bank was related to the prevailing strain of Negro thought in America. At the turn of the century, most Negro spokesmen stressed self-help, racial solidarity, and economic improvement. The founders perceived the mission of the bank to be that of teaching frugality to its customers as well as inculcating racial pride and confidence. Napier maintained that the institution would teach Negroes that saving helped the black

⁷⁸Ibid.; Report of the sixth and ninth annual stockholders meetings of the One-Cent Savings Bank and Trust Company published in the Nashville Globe, January 14, 1910, and January 17, 1913; Nashville Daily American, January 17, 1904.

⁷⁹Report of the fifth annual stockholders meeting of the One-Cent Savings Bank and Trust Company published in the Nashville Globe, January 22, 1909.

businessman while it would bring personal gain to depositors.⁸⁰

The first officers of the One-Cent Savings Bank were R. H. Boyd, president, J. W. Bostick, vice-president, C. N. Langston, teller, J. C. Napier, cashier, and Preston Taylor, chairman of the Executive Board. Napier remained cashier from the bank's inception to his death in 1940, but received no salary for his work while serving in that position. The One-Cent Savings Bank opened for business on January 16, 1904. On opening day, 145 patrons deposited \$6,392.86. Six years later deposits totalled \$35,914.15. Thirty-five years after its founding, the institution's deposits totalled \$209,942.85.⁸¹

The slow growth of the bank can be attributed to the fact that its promoters did not win the complete confidence of the black community. In the president's annual address to the stockholders in 1909, Dr. Boyd alluded to that

⁸⁰Lester Crawford Lamon, "Negroes in Tennessee, 1900-1930" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1971), p. 228 (hereafter cited as Lamon, "Negroes in Tennessee").

⁸¹Lamon, "Negroes in Tennessee," p. 229; report of the condition of the Citizens Savings Bank and Trust Company, published in the Nashville Globe, January 12, 1940; Dahnke, "An Old Colored Man," p. 2; report of the ninth annual stockholders meeting of the One-Cent Savings Bank and Trust Company published in the Nashville Globe, January 17, 1913; Lester Lamon, Black Tennesseans, 1900-1930 (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1977), pp. 185-186.

problem. He observed that the bank did not "handle ten per cent of the bankable money and circulating finances of the Negroes of Nashville." He asserted that, "if the Negroes of Nashville and vicinity had the confidence that they should have in each other and had the amount of race pride that they should possess, the bank would be handling" millions instead of thousands of dollars a year.⁸²

Moreover, loan opportunities were encumbered by the "slow rise in paid-in capital stock." The original sixteen stockholders paid in \$1,600.00. By 1910 the total had increased to only \$4,290.00, despite the fact that the initial capitalization was \$25,000.00. Since capitalization was small, the bank could not handle many large accounts such as those of Fisk University, Meharry Medical School, and the various Negro publishing houses because the size of the loans required by these institutions would limit the bank's overall capacity to make loans.⁸³

Although the bank paid the maximum legal dividends each year, its surplus and undivided profits increased slowly. That the surplus and undivided profits rose slowly unquestionably can partly be attributed to the conservative loan and investment practices of the bank's

⁸²Report of the sixth annual stockholders meeting of the One-Cent Savings Bank and Trust Company published in the Nashville Globe, January 22, 1909.

⁸³Lamon, "Negroes in Tennessee," pp. 229-230.

officers. Statements made by Dr. Boyd and Napier at the fifth annual stockholders meeting of 1909 verify the fact.

Dr. Boyd stated that:

. . . Our cashier and executive committee have been careful to avoid any appearance of plunging in their financial dealings, and therefore, have failed possibly in realizing as large profits as they might have realized, but they have at all times made careful investigation and dealt only in giltedged securities.⁸⁴

Gilt-edged securities denotes that the bank invested mostly in railroad stock rather than real estate since the former was more liquid during economic depressed times than the latter.⁸⁵ On the same occasion, Napier expressed regrets that "the poeple who had been refused loans from time to time, because of the insufficiency of collateral that was offered had to be denied loans." He asserted that "he felt it a duty incumbent upon him to safeguard their deposits."⁸⁶ On the other hand, this kind of conservatism enabled the institution to remain solvent during the Great Depression of the 1930's and meet its responsibilities to its depositors.

The bank was reorganized in 1920, changing its name to the Citizens Savings Bank and Trust Company. The capitalization was increased to \$50,000.00 that year. Despite the slow growth of the bank, which is still

⁸⁴Report of the sixth annual stockholders meeting of the One-Cent Savings Bank and Trust Company published in the Nashville Globe, January 22, 1909.

⁸⁵Lamon, "Negroes in Tennessee," p. 228.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 228, 230-231.

operating today, it was a source of racial pride and a needed institution from which Negroes could secure loans.⁸⁷

While Napier pursued his law practice, real estate business, and banking interest, he remained a leader in the civic affairs of Nashville. He not only gave his time, influence, and energy to the causes he supported but he also gave his money. He was particularly interested in organizations and programs which were concerned with Negro uplift and self-improvement.⁸⁸

In 1914 he was elected president of the most important Negro organization in Nashville--the Nashville Board of Trade. The Board of Trade had been started in 1912 to supplant the inactive Nashville branch of the National Negro Business League. It addressed itself to increasing employment opportunities for blacks, improvement in education, sanitary housing, business development, public order, and library facilities.

During the first year of its existence, the Board, in collaboration with other civic action groups, procured the first municipal park for Negroes and sponsored an open-air carnival in the Negro business district designed to induce Negro entrepreneurs to clean up their business and

⁸⁷Ibid.; Dahnke, "An Old Colored Man," p. 2; report of the sixth annual stockholders meeting of the One-Cent Savings Bank and Trust Company published in the Nashville Globe, January 22, 1909.

⁸⁸Editorial, Nashville Globe, April 26, 1940, p. 11.

stimulate trade. Later, the Board provided relief for victims of the Cumberland River flood of 1913, hired a Negro nurse to provide service to black patients in the city hospital, and embarked on a project of improving the water supply at Knowles School, a black elementary school.⁸⁹

Napier was also an ardent supporter of Bethlehem Center, the Community Chest, and the Negro Division of the Young Men's Christian Association. Bethlehem Center was a training and recreational facility for Afro-Americans that received strong support from Napier. He also served as chairman of fund-raising drives for the YMCA and the Community Chest.⁹⁰

Napier never retired from his chosen profession or from civic affairs. A few years before his death he was appointed to the Nashville Housing Authority by Mayor Thomas L. Cummings. As a member of that agency, he espoused better housing for Nashvillians in general and Negroes in particular. At the time of his death he was crusading for the appointment of a Negro to the school board of Nashville.⁹¹

⁸⁹"Biographical Notes," Napier Papers, Container 1; Minutes, Common Council (Book 98), p. 453.

⁹⁰"Biographical Notes," Napier Papers, Container 1.

⁹¹Nashville Globe, January 12, 1940, and April 26, 1940, p. 11; Nashville Tennessean, April 22, 1940, editorial.

Despite his many achievements and honors as a politician, businessman, and civic leader in Nashville, Napier's activities extended well beyond the limits of Tennessee's capital city. He was more than a municipal leader. As a prominent black Republican, he came to hold a position of considerable influence in state party circles, especially in the late nineteenth century. Napier's aim was to resist those elements within the party of Abraham Lincoln that pressed for the reduction of the role of blacks within the party and the advancement of concern on the part of the Tennessee Republican Party for the status of the Negro in society.

CHAPTER III

NEGRO LEADER IN THE STATE OF TENNESSEE

The Civil War was over in Tennessee after the Battle of Nashville in December of 1864, and early in January of the following year a Radical oligarchy in the state selected Republican leader William Gannaway Brownlow as governor. An old line pre-war Whig, Methodist preacher, and newspaper publisher from east Tennessee, the parson assumed office shortly after March 4, when Andrew Johnson, for nearly three years the Lincoln-appointed Military Governor of the State, became vice-president under Abraham Lincoln. No friend of the Negro, Brownlow nevertheless readily perceived that, if blacks were enfranchised by his party, his chance for continued political success would be enhanced tremendously. Consequently, early in his first term he began to advocate enfranchisement for blacks.

Purely and simply an opportunist, Brownlow in 1865 had criticized Negroes for their "idleness," and predicted that "the Negroes, like the Indian tribes, will gradually become extinct--having no owners to care for them, and no one owning property in them, they will cease to increase in

numbers. . . ."¹ But, fifteen months later, when speaking before a northern audience in Philadelphia, he told a cheering audience that Tennessee blacks had shown "phenomenal" progress and "greater aptitude for learning and intelligence than was expected."² Upon his return he began to insist upon black suffrage and told his Radical supporters that such was necessary to prevent disgruntled Rebels from beginning another Civil War. Therefore, largely at Brownlow's insistence, a law enfranchising black males was written into the statutes early in 1867.³

Unexpectedly, some of the most serious opposition to black suffrage came from Brownlow's section of east Tennessee. A Knoxville editor, for example, commented,

Among the bitterest opponents for the Negro in Tennessee are the intensely radical loyalists of the mountain district--the men who have been in our armies. . . . In Middle and West Tennessee the largest and wealthiest planters of the old slaveholding population have more cordially cooperated with . . . Bureau officials than the people of East Tennessee.⁴

¹Quoted in Stanley J. Folmsbee, Robert E. Corlew, and Enoch L. Mitchell, History of Tennessee, vol. 2 (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, Inc., 1960), p. 113.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

Indeed, had it not been for the support of legislators from the middle Tennessee counties, the measure could not have been passed.⁵

Encouraged by his friends, Brownlow announced as a candidate for a second term and was opposed by Emerson Etheridge, of Dresden, who was supported by the Conservative wing of the Republican Party. The incumbent governor was too feeble to endure the rigors of the hustings, but was represented ably on the campaign trail by supporters. Horace Maynard of Knoxville was especially effective in campaigning among blacks and did not confine his activities entirely to east Tennessee. William Stokes and Samuel M. Arnell were among other Radical leaders who stumped for Brownlow. Picnics were staged at major centers where there were black concentrations of population in an effort to instruct freedmen on how to vote. Brownlow was elected by a vote of about 74,000 to 22,500, apparently with the support of the black voters.⁶

For two years after Brownlow's second election, Ku Klux Klan activity was reported widely in Tennessee. Armed and disguised men, according to a legislative report, were creating "a perfect reign of terror" in many of the counties of west and middle Tennessee. "Such men were

⁵Ibid., pp. 114-115.

⁶Ibid.

robbing poor Negroes . . . , taking them out of their houses at night, hanging, shooting, and whipping them in a most cruel manner, and driving them from their houses. . . ."7

Consequently, two comprehensive measures were enacted by the state legislature. The first reestablished the state militia and gave Brownlow authority to declare martial law in any county where the officials declared that the peace could not be maintained through ordinary avenues. The second, "An Act to Preserve the Public Peace," came to be known as the Ku Klux Klan Act, and provided severe penalties for people who "unite with, associate with, promote or encourage, any secret organization of persons that shall prowl through the country or towns . . . by day or night, disguised or otherwise, for the purpose of disturbing the peace." Such persons were to be fined a minimum of \$500, imprisoned for not less than five years, and "rendered infamous."⁸

In the meantime, the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands--commonly called the "Freedmen's Bureau"--was established in Tennessee. General Clinton B. Fisk was named assistant commissioner in charge of a district embracing Kentucky and Tennessee, with headquarters at Nashville. Fisk announced at the beginning that his

⁷Ibid., pp. 122-123.

⁸Ibid.

principal task was not to provide material resources at no cost, but to help people provide for themselves.⁹ "Do not expect us to do all, nor half, but put your shoulders to the wheel and for yourselves," he told a group of blacks soon after his arrival in Nashville.¹⁰

Brownlow resigned as governor on February 25, 1869, to succeed United States Senator David T. Patterson, and he was replaced by DeWitt Clinton Senter, the Lieutenant Governor and Speaker of the Senate. Senter did much to reestablish peaceful government in the Volunteer State, and he opened the way for the return of the Democrats to power. He was challenged in the following autumn when he announced for a full gubernatorial term by General William B. Stokes, a Radical Congressman and friend of Brownlow. Stokes favored a gradual return of the ex-Confederates to the ballot box--probably by a two-thirds vote of the legislature--but Senter ordered registrars in the various counties to register any person who made application, regardless of his proclivities during the recent war. The result was that Senter won by a vote of 110,000 to 65,000, and soon the former Confederates controlled the legislature. They immediately made plans for a constitutional convention in the following year, and delegates assembled to revise the

⁹Ibid., pp. 114-115.

¹⁰Ibid.

fundamental law on January 10, 1870. Black leaders who had believed they were making considerable progress now were told by some Radicals that they would be reenslaved or at least have voting and other basic rights stripped from them by the former Confederates.¹¹

In all of these matters, young James Carroll Napier took a keen interest. Only twenty-five years of age at the time, he already was respected among black leaders in Nashville and the surrounding counties. Consequently, it is not to be thought strange that when, on January 2, 1870, a large conclave of blacks assembled in convention in Nashville, he should be among them.¹²

Black leaders in middle Tennessee had been led to fear the return of the former Confederates to power, as mentioned earlier. They, of course, had no way of knowing what was in store for them and the war-torn country as a whole. They had been harrassed by members of the Ku Klux Klan, as mentioned earlier, and they longed for a measure of security which was evident in the lives of whites. They had come to place confidence in the efficacy of the federal government and they were aware of the establishment of

¹¹Nashville Union and American, January 2, 1870.

¹²Alrutheus Ambush Taylor, The Negro in Tennessee, 1865-1880 (Washington, D.C.: Associated Publishers, Inc., 1941; reprint ed., Spartanburg, S.C.: The Reprint Company, 1974), p. 79.

Reconstruction governments in the states of the South--indeed, in all the states of the former Confederacy except Tennessee. Therefore, they met in convention on January 2, 1870, to give expression to their fears and to call for aid from the federal government for fear that some or many of their newly gained rights should be taken from them.¹³

The group began its meeting by paying homage to the memory of Abraham Lincoln. Then they turned to speeches by various leaders in which they strongly protested against their treatment at the hands of the Rebel Party which was in power and control of the state. They urged Congress to place Tennessee under military rule comparable to the Reconstruction governments of the rest of the Confederacy, and urged that strict laws be enforced to suppress the Klan. "Our treatment at the hands of the Rebel Party now in power is unchristian, inhuman, and beyond toleration," they wrote in a petition addressed to Congress and to members of the state legislature. Blacks had no protection under the laws of the state. Many were "murdered or driven from their homes and families without the least cause or provocation," and they could find no "security for their lives." Blacks only desired "to remain peaceful and law abiding citizens having malice toward none but charity for all," they wrote,

¹³Ibid., pp. 80-82.

and they desired "to see peace and good will prevail toward all men throughout the state." But their "overtures for peace have been spurned, and in return our people . . . are killed and driven from their homes." The only remedy, leaders concluded in the petition, was for Congress to place all of the state under a Reconstruction Government with federal troops present to enforce the law.¹⁴

The question arose among the group as to how best to get copies of the petition into the hands of the Tennessee delegation in Washington. They then decided that Napier, a handsome, aggressive, and able young black leader, was the proper person to carry the petition to the national center of government. Therefore, Napier was provided with two dozen copies of the resolution and directed to place one in the hands of each Congressman and each United States Senator from Tennessee.¹⁵

Meanwhile, to the chagrin of the Negro, the decade of the 1870's began with conservative Democrats in control of state politics. Factionalized Democrats not infrequently disputed among themselves--to such an extent, for example, that in 1883 a Republican candidate for governor was elected--but usually they were able to close ranks to such an extent that they could control the governor's office and

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

the legislature. The Republican Party, centered almost entirely in east Tennessee and in a few counties along the portion of the Tennessee River which separates middle Tennessee from west Tennessee, was consigned to minority status, although leaders did control most of the federal patronage because their party dominated the White House throughout most of Napier's active political life.¹⁶

Blacks, of course, began the decade with strong affection for the Republican Party. They looked to Lincoln and Johnson as national leaders who had accomplished the Emancipation Proclamation and the Thirteenth Amendment, and they looked to Brownlow as the Tennessee governor who had provided them with the ballot three years before the matter was written into the federal Constitution. In the Negro Convention of January 2, 1870, for example, black leaders drafted a resolution in which they stated that there were "but two political parties in this country, one Republican and the other Democrat, and we recognize in the Republican party all of those elements essential to good government." On the other hand, they perceived the Democratic Party as "hostile to the interest of the colored people."¹⁷

¹⁶Joseph H. Cartwright, The Triumph of Jim Crow: Tennessee Race Relations in the 1880's (Knoxville, Tenn.: The University of Tennessee Press, 1976), pp. 63-65 (hereafter cited as Cartwright, Triumph of Jim Crow).

¹⁷Ibid.

By the following year (1871), there were some rumblings of discontent in Negro Republican ranks, and by 1874 discordant notes were becoming audible. Many blacks had patiently expected political appointments and, when they did not come in the proportion for which they had hoped, they called another Negro Convention, to meet in Nashville in April of 1874. One black leader stated that the Republican Party in Tennessee had gotten all it had gained in the state through Negro support, but now it contributed to making their freedom "a delusion and a mockery" by denying them positions of authority and material gain for which they had hoped. The editor of the Republican Banner admitted that Republican leaders wished only for blacks to continue to be political "hewers of wood and drawers of water."¹⁸

By the late 1870's and early 1880's, black defections from the Republican Party were widely reported. Two meetings of black Republican bolters were held in Nashville in August, 1880. Leaders of the first, convening on August 16, organized a "Hancock and English Club" (Winfield Scott Hancock and W. H. English were the Democratic nominees for president and vice president) and proclaimed their intention of deserting the Republican Party. One week later, 250 blacks and several dozen white

¹⁸Republican Banner, April 29, 1870.

Democrats convened in Nashville and made further preparations for state-wide organization.¹⁹ At the second meeting, several blacks and whites made speeches--one black was quoted stating that Negroes should begin to look after themselves and not follow blindly the lead of Republicans. One black leader in west Tennessee testified later that his blind following of the Republican Party had gotten him into so much trouble that he "got in the state penitentiary."²⁰

Beginning at about the same time was a concerted effort on the part of both state and national Democratic leaders to win Negro support. In 1881, for example, Hamilton H. Chalmers, Chief Justice of the Mississippi Supreme Court, writing in the North American Review, pleaded with southern whites to use all efforts to win the Negro into the Democratic Party. "The deep devotion of the Negro to the Republican party and his belief that his own salvation depended upon its success has in the past enabled thieves and scoundrels to plunder in the name of Republicanism,"²¹ he wrote. Democratic journals in Tennessee began to address blacks with a greater degree of respect, and state politicians did likewise. The Nashville Daily American, for example, wrote of the great

¹⁹Nashville Daily American, August 17 and 24, 1880.

²⁰Paris Post-Intelligencer, September 14, 1880.

²¹Nashville Daily American, September 17, 1882.

"improvement" in blacks during the fifteen years following slavery, and referred to them as some of the "most intelligent blacks of the South." Asserting that the Republican Party had given blacks nothing in return for years of loyalty, the editor urged them to be "bound by laws of self-preservation" and "draw nearer to the political majority of the state." Negroes "need not fear a sequestration of their rights,"²² he wrote. Later that year, the editor gave considerable publicity to a statement by C. C. Bennett, Davidson County Negro leader, who wrote, "I am sorry to say that under the past and present situation the Negro's political prosperity is despiring [sic]. . . . For ten years he has been made the political tool of that Republican Party without being recognized by it as fit for anything but to vote." Blacks made up "seven-tenths of the entire Republican party," Bennett wrote, but leaders of that party did not see in the Negro "enough honesty and intelligence to invite him into their councils."²³ Early in the following year, black Republican dissidents met in Nashville to complain that, while "two-thirds of the Republican party of Tennessee was composed of Negroes who

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid., October 9, 1882.

did the bulk of the work," still it was the white Republican leaders who "monopolized the offices."²⁴

It is true that the party periodically championed the Negro's cause between 1870 and 1910, but it made few, if any, long sustained efforts to ameliorate the plight of Negroes. The above period is significant because it encompassed the most active and productive years of Napier's career as a political personality in the state. In spite of Republican efforts to restrict Negro participation in party affairs to voting for white candidates, Napier succeeded in using the party to ascend to a leadership position.²⁵

From 1878 to 1910, his public career was enmeshed with the state Republican Party. Available evidence does not indicate the year he joined the party or the extent of his activities in the party prior to 1878, but by that date he had assumed a leadership position in the Davidson County Republican organization. As a result of his accomplishments in the Nashville City Council, he subsequently wielded vast influence and had a large following among blacks in the county.²⁶

²⁴Ibid.; Nashville Daily American, January 16, 1883.

²⁵Cartwright, Triumph of Jim Crow, pp. 67; 76, 91.

²⁶Nashville Daily American, September 29, 1878; newspaper clippings from The Peoples Advocate, October 1, 1898, Napier Papers, Container 3; Nashville Globe, August 19, 1910.

The pragmatic Napier joined the Republican Party because he believed that a political party "must be judged not by what it proposes to do but by what its adherents actually accomplish when in office"; it was the only party, he said, that had passed laws assuring black people of civil rights. Napier especially admired the achievements and policies of the Republican Party in Washington. He was impressed with the enactment of tariff laws by the Republican Party which protected the working class people of the "United States against the cheaper labor of the outside world," the financial legislation which enabled the "wage earner to always receive a full dollar," thus protecting his savings and investments, and legislation which reduced working hours, ameliorated working conditions, required inspection and sanitary conditions in industry, and liability coverage. Furthermore, he was pleased that the Republican Party was providing Negroes with jobs in government. He observed that "it is gratifying to anyone to pass through the corridors of any of the nine executive departments in Washington, and to find . . . our young men and women . . . in all the bureaus."²⁷

Between 1878 and 1888, Napier's major role as a Republican was to advocate party harmony. He did this even

²⁷James Carroll Napier, undated speech, "The Agriculture Laborer," Napier Papers, Container 2.

when Negroes harbored numerous and legitimate grievances pertaining to nominations, patronage, and civil rights. Apparently, during the period in question, he was willing to acquiesce to conservative political forces since Negro office-holding in the state was at an all time high. Between 1875 and 1885, fifteen Negroes were elected to the state legislature. A much larger number served as magistrates, justices of the peace, and constables. Although the total number of Negroes occupying public positions in the state had declined to seventeen by 1900, Negro office-holding had almost disappeared in other southern states.²⁸

Negroes were able to attain more elective and appointive positions during this period because the Bourbon Democrats courted the Negro for his vote in an attempt to weaken the southern industrialist faction of the party. In the wake of this stiff competition for black votes, Republicans adopted a more conciliatory policy toward Negroes. Republicans were also willing to make concessions to the Negro because the Democrats were divided over the state debt question. They saw an opportunity to win the gubernatorial contest of 1880 and, perhaps, a majority in

²⁸Letters related to Napier's fight against "Lily Whitism," 1900, Napier Papers, Container 2; Mingo Scott, Jr., The Negro in Tennessee Politics and Governmental Affairs, 1865-1965 (Nashville, Tenn.: Rich Printing Co., 1964), pp. 42-43, 59.

the state legislature. Subsequently, they did win the governor's chair but received only a strong minority in the General Assembly. Republican legislators, however, were successful in procuring appropriations for the education of Negro teachers and an act providing stiffer penalties against law officers who were remiss in protecting a prisoner in their custody against mob violence.²⁹

By 1888 the political fortune of Negro Tennesseans grew bleaker and bleaker. In the words of one scholar of this period, "when the Negro did not internalize the white value system of education, work habits, and property ownership, without seeking political equality, white benign paternalism toward blacks participating in politics slowly changed to overt hostility."³⁰ This changing attitude was reflected, in part, by the ascendancy of the "Lily White" wing of the Republican Party of Tennessee. Its adherents espoused and worked to purge blacks from the deliberations of the Republican Party. Its proponents believed that by focusing on economic issues and removing blacks from the party councils more conservative white businessmen would be attracted to the party. The changing attitude towards blacks was also reflected in the restrictive registration laws enacted by the Democratic controlled General Assembly

²⁹Cartwright, Triumph of Jim Crow, pp. 73-75, 253.

³⁰Ibid., p. 255.

in 1889 and 1890. The act of 1889 provided that registrars were to close registration twenty days before election day, and a second law provided for secret balloting.³¹ This law stipulated that "no aid was to be given any voter unless he was blind; then he could be helped only by one of the election officials."³² The law of 1890 provided that each voter should present a poll tax receipt before he could vote.³³

All this legislation was opposed by the Republicans, but to no avail. This legislation was harmful to the Negro and, thus, the state Republican Party. Specifically, it succeeded in reducing the number of Negro voters significantly, thus making it more difficult for Republicans of both races to win elective offices.³⁴

While many Negro leaders in the state were capitulating to white supremists, Napier's enthusiasm for politics never abated. With the ascendancy of the "Lily White" faction of the Republican Party, he did not acquiesce

³¹Cartwright, Triumph of Jim Crow, p. 98; letters related to Napier's fight against "Lily Whitism," 1900, Napier Papers, Container 2.

³²Verton M. Queener, "The East Tennessee Republicans and State and Nation," Tennessee Historical Quarterly 2 (1943):115-116 (hereafter cited as Queener, "East Tennessee Republicans"):99-128.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Cartwright, Triumph of Jim Crow, p. 242; Queener, "East Tennessee Republicans," pp. 115-116.

as he had done during the mid-1880's. In 1888 he launched a campaign to crush the "Lily White" faction.³⁵

By 1888 the "Lily White" faction had begun to make regular challenges to the right of blacks to participate in the deliberations of the state Republican Party. At the Davidson County Convention of 1888, a confrontation erupted between black and white delegates over the nomination of candidates for the General Assembly. Members of the "Lily White" wing offered a ticket which included only one Negro. Negroes wanted at least two blacks on the ticket. When the Negro delegates refused to accept the one place on the ticket, the "Lily Whites" attempted to nominate a full Negro ticket knowing that white voters would not support a ticket made up of all blacks. But black delegates detected their strategy and endeavored to nominate a ticket consisting of half blacks.³⁶

Napier took an unequivocal stand against the "Lily White" element. With impressive backing from some of his fellow black delegates, he "demanded recognition of Negroes on the party ticket."³⁷ The problem of nominees for the state legislature was eventually resolved. A committee

³⁵Cartwright, Triumph of Jim Crow, p. 252; letters related to Napier's fight against "Lily Whitism," 1900, Napier Papers, Container 2.

³⁶Cartwright, Triumph of Jim Crow, pp. 93-94.

³⁷Ibid.

selected the nominees for the legislature. The ticket recommended by the committee included one Negro and six white men who were members of the "Lily White" faction. While other Negroes acquiesced, Napier and his followers vowed not to support any white candidates who were associated with the "Lily White" club. After the convention these Negroes announced that they would work to do all they could to defeat the ticket.³⁸

Napier was still fighting an uphill struggle against "Lily White" Republicans in 1900. By that date it had metamorphosed from a grassroots crusade to a state-wide movement, thus creating a split in the party. This was the trend throughout the South. As the name suggests, the "Lily White" faction was an all white group and the other faction was a mixed or bi-racial group. It was given the name "Black and Tan." The "Lily White" Republicans strove to diminish the role of blacks in party affairs, arguing that this would attract more white Southerners to the party and break the hold of the Democratic Party on the loyalties of the vast majority of whites in the region. Defeat of the "Black and Tan" faction would also give the "Lily White" group control of federal patronage appointments.³⁹

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Elbert Lee Tatum, The Changed Political Thought of the Negro, 1915-1940 (New York: Exposition Press, 1951), pp. 84-85; letters related to Napier's fight against "Lily Whitism," 1900, Napier Papers, Container 1.

In Tennessee, by 1900, Walter P. Brownlow, then National Committeeman for the State and Congressman from the First District in east Tennessee, was the representative of the "Lily White" faction, while H. Clay Evans, Chattanooga businessman and gubernatorial candidate in 1894, represented the "Black and Tan" wing.⁴⁰

In that year each faction attempted to elect a slate of state delegates which would support their candidates to the National Republican Convention. Napier was at the center of this struggle on both the local and state levels. He had been picked by Evans and his followers as a candidate for delegate-at-large to the Republican National Convention. In an effort to secure that position, he wrote letters to black county Republican leaders encouraging them to elect an Evans delegation to the county convention that would support his candidacy for delegate-at-large to the National Convention.⁴¹ In one letter he observed that, in 1896, for the first time in the history of the state Republican Party, the Negro was not represented by one or more delegates to the National Convention. As a result, he argued, "we, in Tennessee have been more completely ignored in the distribution of public patronage than in any other state in

⁴⁰Letters related to Napier's fight against "Lily Whitism," 1900, Napier Papers, Container 1.

⁴¹Nashville Daily American, April 4, 1900.

the entire Union."⁴² He intimated that it would happen again in 1900 if Brownlow's faction, which had not placed a Negro on its ticket, were successful in electing a majority of county delegates to the state convention. He stated that the time had come for the Negro voter to decide whether he will give a "manly, patriotic, and independent vote to those who are willing to advance him or be unduly influenced to support those who have shown their determination to suppress and keep him in the background." "I for one," he wrote, "proposed to do all in my power to elevate the faction which recognizes my manhood."⁴³ He urged black county Republican leaders to do all in their power, when they held their county convention, to elect an Evans delegation to the state convention "who will help elect me to the National Convention."⁴⁴

Napier's role in the factional struggle for delegates was crucial in Nashville's sixth ward. As chairman of that ward, he was responsible for appointing "a fair and square set of men to hold the election for county delegates in his ward and to see that only qualified voters cast ballots on election day."⁴⁵

⁴²Letters related to Napier's fight against "Lily Whitism," 1900, Napier Papers, Container 1.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Nashville Daily American, April 4, 1900.

Following the election for county delegates, each wing of the state Republican Party accused the other of unfair election practices in various wards and districts throughout the state. Consequently, Brownlow established a Contest Committee, which was composed of his followers. This committee was to decide which delegates were legally elected to the county Republican convention. The Contest Committee met in Nashville on April 1, 1900, to conduct its inquiry into the many wards and districts where the election of county delegates was being contested by the two factions.⁴⁶

Since the election for county delegates in the sixth ward of Nashville was one of the many being contested by the two factions, it was necessary for Napier to appear before the Contest Committee to answer questions. At the hearing Brownlow's attorney asked Napier if he had challenged the Brownlow men in his ward. Napier's reply was "Yes, I did require them all to state their places of residence." Napier stated that since he was chairman of the sixth ward he wanted to make sure only qualified voters cast a ballot. The lawyer then asked if Brownlow's faction were represented on the Board of Judges and Clerks. Napier said they were

⁴⁶Ibid.

not represented because they neglected to submit the names of their candidates after he had asked them.⁴⁷

Napier also appeared before the Contest Committee as one of the three lawyers for the Evans faction. He told the committee that his faction wanted fair treatment and justice. He demanded that a stenographer be brought in to take the evidence. Furthermore, he requested that the Evans side be given two of the five seats on the committee.⁴⁸

At the conclusion of its hearing, the Contest Committee rejected Napier's attempts to secure seats on the committee for Evans' followers. But his delegation from Nashville's Sixth Ward, including himself, was granted seats in the Davidson County Republican Convention.⁴⁹

The Davidson County Convention convened on April 2, 1900. Brownlow and his followers controlled the assembly. Subsequently, Evans' followers became disenchanted when they were not allowed the opportunity to show their numerical strength. This precipitated a split in the convention. Each side, meeting only ten feet apart in the courthouse, endorsed its own ticket and chose separate delegations to the state Republican convention. As a result, the split set

⁴⁷Nashville Daily American, April 1, 1900.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Nashville Daily American, April 3, 1900.

the stage for another direct confrontation of the two wings at the state Republican convention.⁵⁰

The Republican State Convention met in Nashville approximately three weeks later. Brownlow not only had the machinery of the party in his control, but he outmaneuvered Evans at every turn in the contest. When his side refused to permit Evans' wing to give a minority report which would have disclosed the number of state delegates it had, Evans and his followers, including Napier, bolted the convention. Later, they held a separate convention. As a result, two sets of delegates went to the National Republican Convention, and two full slates of candidates for state offices were placed in the field against the Democrats.⁵¹

After the bolting of the convention by Evans and his followers, a Brownlow spokesman asserted that, since they controlled the regular party organization, they would be seated by the National Republican Committee. Meanwhile, Evans' men were saying that their side would be seated because "they had a majority of the legally elected delegates, but were not permitted to show their strength."⁵²

Subsequently, the National Republican Committee resolved the factional differences by seating some from both

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Nashville Daily American, April 21, 1900.

⁵²Ibid.

delegates. Evans' delegates from the third, fifth, sixth, and tenth districts were seated. Brownlow's followers received the remaining seats. Napier lost his bid for delegate-at-large to a Brownlow supporter.⁵³

This defeat did not induce Napier to abandon his fight against the "Lily White" wing of the state Republican Party. Consequently, however, his unrelenting struggle against "Lily Whitism" brought about his ouster from the Republican Executive Committee in 1910. He was replaced by an adherent of the "Lily White" faction.⁵⁴ In reaction to his removal from the committee, the Nashville Globe, the city's only black newspaper, observed that

Mr. Napier has been faithful and true to the Republican party. He has responded to every call and has fought for the cause he loved against all odds. But despite all this he was dropped from the Executive Committee which leaves the Negro in Tennessee without any representation on the committee whatsoever.⁵⁵

Napier did not abandon the state Republican Party after his removal from the Executive Committee. Available evidence indicates that his role in party affairs was considerably diminished after 1910, but he remained a loyal party adherent. Moreover, he remained steadfast in his

⁵³Nashville Daily American, August 6, 1900; National Republican Party, Proceedings of the Twelfth Republican National Convention (Philadelphia, Pa., 1900), p. 76.

⁵⁴Nashville Globe, August 19, 1910.

⁵⁵Ibid.

belief that the Republican Party offered the Negro the best opportunity to achieve his political and civil rights.⁵⁶

Napier had been one of the most active and loyal members of the state Republican Party for thirty-two years before the inexorable force of white supremacy precipitated his decline in political power and influence. Therefore, he was a deserving recipient of the numerous political positions he received from the Republican Party of Tennessee. He was frequently selected delegate to the Republican county and state conventions. He was three times elected to the National Republican Convention, once as the representative of the Sixth Congressional District and two times state delegate-at-large. This was one of the highest honors that the Republicans of the state could bestow on a fellow party member. In 1882 he was elected to serve on the most powerful organ of the state Republican Party--the Executive Committee. He remained at that position until he was replaced in 1910. As a member of the Executive Committee, he was an integral part of the decision making process which helped determine the direction of the Republican Party in Tennessee. Furthermore, he served a

⁵⁶Nashville Globe, August 19, 1910; R. C. Grant, comp., Colored Directory of Tennessee: Biographical Statistics, 1926-1927 (Nashville, Tennessee: by the author, 1927), p. 16.

considerable period as its chairman and six years as its secretary.⁵⁷

Excluding the times he was nominated to canvass for Nashville councilman, Napier was nominated three times by Republicans for elective office.⁵⁸ In 1882 he was a candidate for the state legislature. His pronouncement at the opening of the campaign left no doubt about his loyalty to party principles and his stance on the most volatile issue of the day. He "expressed his pleasure at being on a ticket nominated by such a large, enthusiastic and harmonious county convention. He was for the . . . payment of all public and private debts. He exhorted them to stand by the ticket and present a solid front in November."⁵⁹ Napier lost his bid for the legislature, but his enthusiasm for politics was undimmed. He was nominated by fellow Republicans to make the canvass for Circuit Court Clerk of Davidson County in 1882. He polled fewer votes than any

⁵⁷Newspaper clippings from The People's Advocate, October 1, 1898, Napier Papers, Container 3; Nashville Globe, August 19, 1900; National Republican Party, Proceedings of the Ninth Republican Convention (Chicago, Ill., 1888), p. 64; National Republican Party, Proceedings of the Tenth Republican National Convention (Minneapolis, Minn., 1892), p. 109; National Republican Party, Proceedings of the Thirteenth Republican National Convention (Minneapolis, Minn., 1904), p. 102.

⁵⁸Newspaper clipping from The People's Advocate, October, 1898, Napier Papers, Container 3.

⁵⁹Nashville Daily American, October 11, 1882.

contestant in the field. In Nashville's fourth ward, 140 Negroes were registered but Napier received only 38 votes.⁶⁰

Napier made his last race for an elective office in 1898. He was unanimously nominated as candidate for Congress by Republicans of the Sixth Congressional District. The canvass for the congressional race offered a formidable challenge to Napier because the tide of white supremacy was eliminating Negroes from the political arena and he had to surmount a large Democratic majority in the district.⁶¹

Napier's nomination for Congress evoked The People's Advocate, a Nashville newspaper, to give the following description of his political career: "His splendid record as a Republican and his strict attention to the varied interests of his constituents, has done much to make him deservedly popular among the masses." In addition, it stated that as a result of Napier's "untiring labor in the Republican ranks . . . and his long career as a public man he has equipped himself for any office in the gift of the people."⁶²

Napier's nomination evoked a very different reaction from the Nashville Daily American, the mouthpiece of the Democratic Party. It declared that the nomination of Napier

⁶⁰Nashville Daily American, August 9, 1890.

⁶¹Newspaper clippings from The People's Advocate, October 1, 1878, Napier Papers, Container 3.

⁶²Ibid.

for Congress reflected the trend of the Republican Party in Tennessee. Later in the same article, the newspaper stated that since this is the "white man's country" a Negro should not have been nominated to run for election in the most populous, wealthiest, and most important congressional district in the state.⁶³

The reaction of the Memphis Scimitar to Napier's nomination for Congress was that the Republican did it "for the lack of sense." The newspaper also expressed serious doubt if the white Republicans of the district would vote for Napier. "White men," it further stated, "will not vote to put any Negro in a public office of importance."⁶⁴

On election day Napier ran well behind the Democratic candidate. His Democratic opponent polled 11,537 votes to Napier's 2,088, a 9,440 majority. The Prohibition candidate received only 1,009 votes. Napier's bid for a seat in the United States Congress was the last elective office he would seek. He did, however, seek one other public office--Register of the United States Treasury in 1910.⁶⁵

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Nashville Daily American, November 9, 1898; letters related to Napier's efforts to become Register of the Treasury, March, 1910, Napier Papers, Container 1.

CHAPTER IV

NATIONAL NEGRO LEADER

Napier sought the position of Register of the Treasury at a time when Negro leaders were deemphasizing politics as an avenue for improving the condition of blacks in American society. The tendency of black Americans to emphasize political activity during encouraging times and to deemphasize it during times of discouragement can be traced to the era following the Revolutionary War. Negro thought, that is, pronouncements of articulate Negro leaders, shifted twice after that era--once in the 1850's and again in the 1870's.

These transitions saw the Negro gradually adopt philosophies of self-help, racial solidarity, and economic improvement as approaches for combating white racism instead of political agitation. While these shifts reflected the development of Negro nationalism, each of them symbolized a temporary acceptance of defeat on the civil and political fronts. But this did not mean that Negroes had given up their quest for first class citizenship. Total integration

into the American society was always paramount in Negro thought.¹

Nevertheless, following the adoption of the Federal Constitution in 1789, a sense of loyalty to and identification with his ethnic group began to develop among blacks. This sense of racial solidarity is sometimes referred to as Negro nationalism, although it did not necessarily involve a demand for an independent state. Its emergence, maturation, and survival can be attributed, according to one scholar, to the "disparity between American ideal and practice, on the one hand, and the discriminatory treatment accorded Negroes on the other."² As a result of this hiatus, Negro thought in the United States has been characterized by a wide spectrum of racial philosophies. At one extreme there have been Negroes who adhered to the philosophy of total integration, while at the other extreme there have been those who advocated total withdrawal. In between those two ideological extremes there was a great variety of dualistic philosophies which generally recognized

¹August Meier, Negro Thought in America, 1880-1915: Racial Ideologies in the Age of Booker T. Washington (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1971), pp. 23-25 (hereafter cited as Meier, Negro Thought in America, 1880-1915); E. U. Essien-Udom, Black Nationalism: A Search for an Identity in America (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1962), p. 36.

²Meier, Negro Thought in America, 1880-1915, pp. 23-25.

the Negro as an American citizen while emphasizing his independence as a racial group. Negroes occupying this point on the spectrum have called for the eschewing of social equality while insisting on political and economic equality. They also endorsed philosophies of self-help and economic cooperation as well as ideas of all-Negro communities, or an all-Negro state.³

The ascendancy of Booker T. Washington, President of Tuskegee Institute in the years from 1895 to 1915 as the most influential black spokesman in the country, brought the long developing ideologies of racial solidarity, self-help and economic improvement to a peak. The increase of prejudice and discrimination in the nation from the 1870's on and the abandonment of Negroes by the North forced them to become more self-sufficient. Not only did Washington embrace the dominant themes of Negro nationalism but, according to historian August Meier, he "transmuted the laissez-faire individualism of the Gilded Age into the key for racial salvation."⁴ He stressed immediate improvement of Negroes from a material point of view through the agency of industrial education. He encouraged Negroes to remain in

³Ibid.

⁴August Meier, The Emergence of Negro Nationalism (Indianapolis, Indiana: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1952), pp. 103-104 (hereafter cited as Meier, Emergence of Negro Nationalism).

the South and cooperate with the "best of white men" but to depend mostly on their own efforts to improve their economic and material conditions. While he was a leading exponent of philosophies of self-help and economic improvement, Washington also emphasized the ideologies of racial pride and racial unity. Therefore, he urged Negroes to worship Negro heroes and support Negro businessmen. He saw this as being essential for the development of a strong and respected race. Washington did not advocate immediate equality of civil and political rights for Negroes. He believed that, through industrial education and advancements in business, accompanied by thrift, industry, and Christian character, the Negro would prove his capabilities to the white man and, thus, gradually achieve a better status in American society.⁵

By the time of Booker T. Washington's death in 1915, Negro migration from the South to the North was accelerating. This marked the beginning of the "Great Migration" which would reach its zenith in the early 1920's. The general cause of this exodus was economic. Floods in the South and the disaster wrought by the boll weevil to cotton fields applied a devastating blow to the economy of some southern states. In addition, a decline in farm income

⁵Ibid.

drove down black wages, which were already at subsistence level. Therefore, Negroes were impelled to leave the South for greener pastures. One of the attracting forces in the North was the busy wartime industries which were being fed by the demand for goods by the allied powers in Europe. The fact that the flow of European immigrants had been stemmed by World War I and the subsequent entrance of the United States in the war vastly increased the employability of the Negro.⁶

The "Great Migration" and the First World War were overlapping pivotal events in Negro history. The "Great Migration" created compact Negro ghettos in the cities of the North. The subsequent concentration of Negroes not only established racial communities which could be economically exploited by Negro businessmen and professionals but it also had far-reaching political ramifications. Since Negroes were free to vote in the northern cities, they soon learned that politicians fear and respect voters. Thus, they began to pressure elected officials into meeting some of their demands. Negro communities began to elect Negro officials to various kinds of public offices. Employing "bloc"

⁶Elbert L. Tatum, The Changed Political Thought of the Negro, 1915-1940 (New York: Exposition Press, 1951), p. 55 (hereafter cited as Tatum, Changed Political Thought); Norman E. W. Hodges, Black History, Monarch College Outlines (New York: Monarch Press, 1917), p. 176.

voting, by the 1920's Negroes were winning local, state, and even national offices.⁷

The entrance of the United States in the First World War raised the expectations of black Americans. Negro soldiers had served in European countries where they were shown considerably more decency than in the United States. They were appreciated for their individual worth. In the United States they bought war bonds and took the Wilsonian war aim of defending democracy literally. Furthermore, with the increased wages they were receiving and better jobs which they were securing, large numbers were able to acquire a college education. All of the above forces interacted to produce the "New Negro."⁸

The "Old Negro" existed before World War I. He has been described by one scholar as a "pathetic personality compounded by docility." In short, he was half a man. But in the five year period between 1914 and 1919 a "New Negro" began to appear. The old plantation and small-town paternalistic Negro was replaced by the impersonal, industrialized, and urbanized "New Negro." While the conception varied, it was widely held that the "New Negro"

⁷Meier, Emergence of Negro Nationalism, pp. 108-109; Tatum, Changed Political Thought, pp. 157-159, 179.

⁸Hodges, Black History, pp. 177-178.

had more self-respect, was better educated, and was more insistent in demanding full citizenship.⁹

With the emergence of the "New Negro," the previous pattern in Negro thought of emphasizing immediate integration and political activity during optimistic periods and deemphasizing them in pessimistic times was terminated forever. Thereafter, with the help of such protest groups as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Urban League, compounded with the voting strength of the Negro in the North, black Americans would persistently pursue total and immediate integration by means of political activism and protest.¹⁰

This period described above encompassed the years 1877 to 1919. Within this time span, the last ten years of the nineteenth and the first two decades of the twentieth centuries have been identified by some historians as the lowest point in the struggle of black Americans for full citizenship. James Carroll Napier emerged as a national Negro leader during these very years. His rise to national prominence can be attributed to his appointment to the Board of Trustees of the Anna T. Jeanes Fund, assignment as

⁹Robert H. Brisbane, The Black Vanguard: Origins of the Negro Social Revolution, 1900-1960 (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: The Judson Press, 1970), pp. 73-74.

¹⁰Meier, Emergence of Negro Nationalism, pp. 108-109.

Register of the United States Treasury, and association with Booker T. Washington and the National Negro Business League.¹¹

Napier had met Booker T. Washington in 1891. Although he was approximately fourteen years Washington's senior, a close and enduring friendship developed between the two men.¹² Undoubtedly, the fact that they embraced the same conservative and accommodating racial philosophy was a contributing factor to their long-lasting friendship.¹³

Washington once stated that:

I have been associated with him [Napier] for twenty years. I have been with him in the North and in the South. I have worked with him in conventions, and I have talked with him in private in my home and in his home. During all the years I have known him I have never heard Mr. Napier express a narrow or bitter thought toward the white race. On the contrary he has

¹¹Rayford W. Logan, The Betrayal of the Negro from Rutherford B. Hayes to Woodrow Wilson (London: Collier-MacMillan, Ltd., 1969), p. 11 (hereafter cited as Logan, Betrayal of the Negro); "Biographical Notes," James Carroll Napier Papers, Container 1, Negro Collection, Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee (hereafter cited as Napier Papers).

¹²Booker T. Washington, My Larger Education: Being a Chapter from My Experience (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Page and Co., 1911; reprint ed., Miami, Florida: Mnemosyne Publishing, Inc., 1969), p. 65 (hereafter cited as Washington, My Larger Education); Booker T. Washington, The Story of My Life and Work (Napierville, Ill.: J. C. Nichols and Co., 1900), p. 32 (hereafter cited as Washington, The Story of My Life).

¹³Louis R. Harlan, ed., The Booker T. Washington Papers, 1895-1898, vol. 4 (Urbana, Ill.: Urbana University of Illinois, 1972), pp. 453-454.

shown himself anxious to give publicity to the best deeds of the white people rather than the worst.¹⁴

Napier reciprocated Washington's laudatory remarks when he credited Washington with doing more than "any man" to cultivate better relations between ex-slaves and ex-masters after emancipation. He stated that Washington:

. . . realized . . . that there could never be any real progress in either, when two races dwelt in one land ready always to fly at the throat of each other. Contrary to the judgment of his friends, in opposition to what almost all the leaders of his race advised, he commenced his work of reconciliation of the relations of the two races in the South. In this work he stood alone. It was repugnant not only to friends and leaders, but a large majority of the rank and file of the race thought he had inaugurated a movement that would result in further oppression, deprivation of rights, and a loss of opportunities that might otherwise advance them.¹⁵

Basically, Washington and Napier were accommodationists. Specifically, they espoused conciliation by the Negro in race relations and gradualism in the procurement of Negro civil rights. This accommodating theme was coupled with a dualistic strain of black nationalism which identified the Negro with both America and the Negro group. Negroes of this school of black nationalism maintained that black people were natural born Americans and

¹⁴Washington, My Larger Education, p. 65.

¹⁵"President's First Annual Address to the National Negro Business League," 1917, Napier Papers, Container 1.

should enjoy all the rights and privileges due them under the Constitution of the United States.¹⁶

Negro leaders of this ideological strand were divided on the best approach to be used in working for racial equality. One school believed that Negroes should concentrate their efforts on the legislative and legal fronts. The proponents of this school argued that, since the white man had traditionally shown respect for the law and court decisions, favorable legislation and court rulings would be the best way to combat racial segregation and discrimination.¹⁷

In contrast, men like Washington and Napier advanced an indirect approach as the best way to achieve racial equality for black Americans. The adherents of this school argued that the legislative and legal approach to secure Negro civil and political rights would only antagonize white southerners and mitigate chances of winning full citizenship. Moreover, they reasoned that, even if blacks were successful in securing victories on the legislative and legal fronts, it would be an exercise in futility since the

¹⁶Meier, Negro Thought in America, pp. 100-103; undated and untitled speech pertaining to the Negro securing his rights, Napier Papers, Container 1.

¹⁷Earl E. Thorpe, The Mind of the Negro: An Intellectual History of Afro-Americans (Baton Rouge: Ortilieb Press, 1961), pp. 378-379; Meier, Negro Thought in America, p. 103; undated and untitled speech pertaining to the Negro securing his rights, Napier Papers, Container 1.

attitude of white southerners would not change. Thus, this school urged Negroes to concentrate on those activities which would change the attitude of whites toward Negroes. This could be accomplished, they felt, through industry, education, good morals, and the acquisition of property. Napier and Washington were exponents of this school of thought.¹⁸

Although Washington and Napier embraced the same racial philosophy and preached the identical accommodationist theme, they did not completely agree on all the key Negro issues of the day. While they generally were in accord on Negro social and economic aspirations, they differed on the questions of black political activity and educational needs. These differences, however, stemmed from approach rather than philosophy. Both Washington and Napier denied any desire for social equality for the Negro. In his famous address at the Atlanta Exposition in 1895, Washington asserted that "in all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the five fingers."¹⁹ Napier expressed the same sentiment in his first address as President of the National Negro Business League in 1916. He stated that "the black man is satisfied with his own associates. He wishes

¹⁸Meier, Negro Thought in America, pp. 101-110; undated and untitled speech pertaining to the Negro securing his rights, Napier Papers, Container 1.

¹⁹Meier, Negro Thought in America, p. 100.

to break in on the social relations of no man. . . ."20 The two men also advocated the same method for improving the economic status of the Negro. They advised the Negro to stay in the South and cooperate with the "best white men." Furthermore, they urged blacks to rely mostly on themselves for economic advancement. To them, the best way to accomplish Negro economic advancement was for blacks to enter business, be thrifty, and be industrious. They reasoned that once the Negro had acquired a higher economic and material status his position in American society would improve. This concept was based on the premise that no race can be long denied its constitutional rights if it is industrious and prosperous.²¹

Washington believed that black economic progress could be accomplished through industrial education. Although he saw the merits of higher education, he held that practical education should be acquired first in a people's rise to civilization. On the other hand, Napier maintained that both kinds of education should be attained by the Negro immediately. Both mechanical and higher education, he believed, would prepare black Americans for "all the duties

²⁰"President's Annual Address to the National Negro Business League," 1917, Napier Papers, Container 1.

²¹Meier, Negro Thought in America, pp. 100-103; Meier, Emergence of Negro Nationalism, p. 104; undated and untitled speech pertaining to the Negro securing his rights, Napier Papers, Container 1.

and responsibilities of life."²² Napier felt that the unending strife between those who favored higher education and those who advocated industrial education was unfortunate. He asserted that "both are honestly striving for the same end."²³

The most significant difference in the racial philosophy of the two men was in the area of politics. Again, the difference stemmed from approach rather than philosophy. Washington seldom made public statements in support of the political rights of Negroes. When he did they were ambiguous and vague. Apparently, he chose this approach to guarantee continued financial support from white northern philanthropists for his program at Tuskegee. However, he was politically active behind the scene. He used his money and influence to prevent disfranchisement and other forms of discrimination. In addition, he fought "Lily Whitism" within the Republican Party and helped to get Negroes out to the polls for the "Grand Old Party." During the administration of Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft, he was frequently consulted when Negroes were being considered for federal appointive positions.²⁴

²²Meier, Negro Thought in America, p. 105; undated and untitled speech pertaining to the Negro securing his rights, Napier Papers, Container 1.

²³Untitled and undated speech pertaining to the Negro securing his rights, Napier Papers, Container 1.

²⁴Meier, Negro Thought in America, pp. 101-104, 110-112.

Unlike Washington, Napier was always overt and unequivocal about his desire for Negroes to retain those political rights they had and to secure more of those they did not have. This conviction induced him to observe that "it takes all these things [political rights] to make the white man what he wants to be and the good citizen he should be. And the colored brother need never hope to reach the same high goal by going across lots, eliminating or cutting off any of these requisites."²⁵ In spite of the differences which existed between Washington and Napier, Napier was a staunch supporter of Washington. This fact is unequivocally made in a letter to Washington in 1913. After attending two lectures delivered by a leading critic of Washington, William Edward B. Dubois, Napier observed that, while Dubois displayed rare erudition during each of the one hour lectures, "he failed utterly to offer a single word of advice or counsel touching the practical side of the life which these young people will soon have to face. . . . He simply showed learning. One of your speeches," he wrote, "of an hour's length would result in

²⁵Undated speech, "The Negro Problem," Napier Papers, Container 1.

greater benefit to the race and to all who might hear it than a whole month of such recitals would bring."²⁶

One manifestation of Washington's philosophy was the Tuskegee educator's founding of the National Negro Business League in 1900. It was specifically founded to encourage Negro business enterprise and in general to implement his racial philosophy. Napier was a major cog in the organization from its inception. He assisted in its founding and became one of Washington's chief spokesmen for the League. Subsequently, he became Chairman of the Executive Board, principle organizer for Tennessee, and finally national President. He succeeded Washington as President of the League in 1916. At that time the organization was the largest and most influential advocate of black self-reliance and self-help in the United States. It consisted of some 300 local branches.²⁷

Napier delivered his first annual address as President of the National Negro Business League in 1917 at the organization's eighteenth convention held in Chattanooga, Tennessee. After a brief, laudable review of the legacy and

²⁶James Carroll Napier to Washington, April 1, 1913, Booker T. Washington Papers, Principal's Office Correspondence, Library of Congress, Container 483.

²⁷Meier, Emergence of Negro Nationalism, p. 105; untitled speech delivered before the South Carolina branch of the National Business League in 1910, "Biographical Notes," "President's Annual Address to the National Business League," Napier Papers, Container 1; Washington, The Story of My Life, pp. 190-195.

significance of Booker T. Washington, Napier urged League members "not to let dissension or selfish ambition creep in and disturb its harmonious work or impair its usefulness."²⁸ Later in the speech he expressed great concern about one of the most important issues of the day, which was Negro migration from the South. He urged the League and southern whites to collaborate in an effort to stem the tide of the ever-growing exodus of Negroes from the South. He stated that "it hurts us. It hurts our business. It hurts the white man; it hurts his business."

As to the causes of this migration, Napier believed that:

. . . Moblaw, the "Jim Crow" system, poor housing, poor and short-term schools, inadequate education, disfranchisement and a general abbreviation of citizenship are the things with which none of us are satisfied in this Southland. Discrimination and humiliation are thrust upon us at all times and on every hand. Although the laws provide for it under no conditions do we receive the same treatment or the same accommodations for our money as our white fellow citizens. These conditions, as well as present temporary high wages in the North, that have lured some of us away from our homes are the things that are driving the colored people out of the South.²⁹

In an attempt to foster the continual growth of the League, Napier invited the Pullmen porters, barbers, photographers, and "every Negro engaged in any business of

²⁸"President's First Annual Address to the National Negro Business League," 1917, Napier Papers, Container 1.

²⁹Ibid.

whatever character, from the humble bootblack to the most important professional man to affiliate with the League." He concluded his address by recommending that a period known as "Founders Hour or Period" be set aside at each annual meeting in honor of Booker T. Washington.³⁰

Available evidence indicates that Napier made a strong and progressive president of the League. He was able to keep the organization intact and viable during the First World War. Although his administration continued, Washington's twofold policy of encouraging individual Negroes to establish businesses and "educating the race out of the tradition that only the white man is qualified to engage in trade" the League also carried out a nation-wide advertising campaign in an effort to increase the Negro businessman's sense of pride and also to stimulate business.³¹

Napier served three years as President of the League. He was succeeded in 1919 by Dr. Robert R. Moton, a friend of Booker T. Washington and Washington's successor as principal of Tuskegee. In that same year, Napier was elected the Honorary President of the League. He retained this status with the League until his death in 1940.³²

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid.

³²Southern Workman 46 (1917):532, 40 (1916):542, 48(1919):425, 46 (1917):540 (The Press of the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, Hampton, Va.), Napier Papers, Container 2.

Just as Booker T. Washington had been responsible for Napier's association with the National Negro Business League, he was instrumental in procuring Napier's appointment to the Board of Trustees of the Anna T. Jeanes Fund in 1908. The fund was named in honor of its benefactor, Miss Anna T. Jeanes, a Philadelphia Quaker, who established a one million dollar trust fund in 1907 for the purpose of providing rudimentary schools for southern Negroes.³³ In more specific terms, the deed of trust stipulated that the income from the fund be used in "assisting and maintaining, in the Southern United States, community, country, and rural schools for the class of Negroes to whom the small rural and community schools are available." She designated Booker T. Washington and Hollis Burke Frissell, principal of Hampton Institute in Virginia, to "administer and manage the trust fund." They were also given the authority to appoint the fund's trustees.³⁴

After the necessary formalities had been completed, the deed of trust was signed by Miss Jeanes on the twenty-second of April, 1907. The certificate of incorporation was dated November 20, 1907, and the first meeting of the Incorporation of the Negro Rural School Fund was held in New York on the twenty-ninth of February, 1908. Some of the

³³Washington, The Story of My Life, pp. 190-194.

³⁴Copy of the Certificate of Incorporation, Napier Papers, Container 2.

more prominent members of the first board besides Washington and Napier were Secretary of War, William H. Taft, George Peabody, a Massachusetts financier, and Andrew Carnegie, internationally known industrialist and philanthropist.³⁵

The Board subsequently concluded that its objective was that of encouraging and cooperating with the established educational authorities in the southern states and not that of usurping or relieving them of the leadership role they should play in educating their citizens. Moreover, it resolved that its work should be to provide leadership and to stimulate greater efforts in Negro rural education. Thus, it adopted a program which entailed the appointment of teachers to do industrial work in rural schools, of special teachers to do extension work using central schools as their base of operations, and of county agents to improve rural homes and schools. The Board would also take steps to create public sentiment for better Negro schools.³⁶

In addition to serving as a trustee, Napier later became an Executive Committee member and vice-chairman, but available evidence does not disclose the extent of his influence in securing funds for rural education in his native Tennessee. During the first year of its operation, 1908-1909, the fund did not appropriate any money for use in

³⁵ Ibid.; Minutes of the First Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Anna T. Jeanes Fund, Napier Papers, Container 2.

³⁶ Nashville Banner, June 10, 1938.

Tennessee. Between 1909 and 1926, however, Tennessee received \$75,965. Of the sixteen states receiving financial support from the fund during this period, eight received more and seven received less financial assistance than Tennessee. By 1926 the Jeanes Fund was operating in twenty-eight Tennessee counties. Thirteen thousand one hundred eleven teachers were at work in seven hundred fourteen schools. Those teachers visited 5,277 schools and made 2,998 home visits. Their work entailed improving schools and home conditions, and raising the standard of living among the people with whom they worked.³⁷

Napier's leadership role soon brought him offers from presidents to enter government service. In 1908 President Theodore Roosevelt offered Napier the post of Consul to Bahia, Brazil, which he declined. In 1910 President William Howard Taft tendered him the position of Minister Resident and Consul of Liberia, which he also declined because he desired a position in the Treasury Department. A year later, President Taft offered him the office of Register of the Treasury of the United States, which he accepted. Napier's appointment to the office

³⁷Darlene L. Hutson, "The Jeanes Supervisory Program in Tennessee" (unpublished Ed.D. dissertation, University of Tennessee, 1964), pp. 183, 196-199; Tennessee State Department of Education, Report of Amounts Appropriated by and Through the Jeanes Fund, 1908-1926, Manuscript Division, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Container 418.

hinged upon at least three considerations. First, he had proven himself to be a loyal, responsible, and hard working Republican. Second, President Taft was convinced by black leaders that a Negro must be appointed to a conspicuous federal office if the Republican Party wanted to retain the Negro vote. Third, Napier had the endorsement of his friend, Booker T. Washington. Only two blacks had held that position before him. It was one of the highest posts held by a Negro in the federal government during the period 1900-1913.³⁸

As Register of the United States Treasury, Napier was practically the official bookkeeper of the United States. The Congressional Act which created the office stipulated the duties of the Register to be that of keeping all the accounts of receipts and expenditures of the public money, of all debts due to or from the United States, to record all warrants for the receipt or payment of monies at the Treasury, and to transmit to the Secretary of the

³⁸Helen Dahnke, "An Old Colored Man," The Tennessean Magazine, Nashville, Tennessee, July 4, 1937, p. 2; newspaper clippings pertaining to Napier's appointment as Register of the United States Treasury, Napier Papers, Container 1; newspaper clipping, "Napier Leaves Treasury Job," Napier Papers, Container 3; Meier, Negro Thought in America, p. 113; untitled and undated newspaper clipping pertaining to Napier's appointment to the Register of the Treasury post, U.S. Department of the Treasury, Bureau of the Public Debt, Washington, D.C., 20226. The Bureau houses all the internal and external correspondence signed by Napier, including copies of the 1911, 1912, and 1913 Reports of the Register of the Treasury.

Treasury copies of the certificates of account balances. In addition, the office required that he perform any duties "as may be prescribed by the Secretary of the Treasury." This included countersigning all United States currency and submitting an annual report to the Secretary of the Treasury of the business transacted by his office at the end of each fiscal year.³⁹

A staff of seventy-three assisted Napier in carrying out his duties as Register. There was an Assistant Register, a chief for the Division of Loans and one for the Division of Notes, Coupons and Currency, fifty clerks, twelve expert money counters, one messenger, two assistant managers, and five laborers.⁴⁰

A perusal of Napier's correspondence indicates that his duties were varied. The majority of his correspondence concerned requests of information by his superior, the Secretary of the Treasury. But a large portion were letters from citizens requesting copies of the Register's Annual Report, information pertaining to the government's policy of replacing mutilated money, and facts relative to the status of bonds purchased by deceased relatives.⁴¹

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Report on the Office of the Register of the Treasury, Napier Papers, Container 4.

⁴¹Ibid.

As Register of the United States Treasury, Napier continued his unrelenting crusade to secure Negro rights and to promote their self-improvement. Pursuing a project that he had begun in 1908, he endeavored to obtain for Negroes their full share of federal funds due them under the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890. While the Act of 1862 provided for the endowment and maintenance of at least one college in states with segregated systems of higher education, black schools were not aided.⁴² The Act of 1890, however, required that no money be paid to any state for the maintenance of a college "where a distinction of race or color is made in the admission of students," unless separate colleges existed for white and black students and the funds were equitably divided.⁴³

Taking advantage of his position as Register of the Treasury, he obtained funds to conduct an investigation pertaining to the use and distribution of funds received by institutions of higher education in the South. By April 13, 1912, he had completed his investigation. Thus, he testified before the House Committee on Agriculture to promote the passage of the Page Bill. This Bill was designed to eliminate discrimination against the Negro in

⁴²Logan, Betrayal of the Negro, p. 367.

⁴³Ibid., p. 368.

the allocation of federal money to land-grant colleges in the South.⁴⁴

In his opening remarks to the Committee, he asserted that:

We Negroes as a class are anxious to grow into a common citizenship in this country. We aspire to be not ornaments, not puppets set up to look at, but useful, law abiding, industrious and productive citizens. As such, we are trying to grow into the usefulness that will be approved by the entire country, and we only ask the assistance that all others have.⁴⁵

Later in his testimony, after explaining the provisions of the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890, Napier alleged that "although the law ought to be executed to the letter, there is not a state in the Union where the black man is getting his due under the law."⁴⁶ He declared that:

I wish I could get the ear of some authority that would see that we simply get what the law provides for us. I have gone to the Commissioner of Education, and when I placed this matter before him he simply said, "well, we are doing the best we can," and unable to explain why we are not getting what we ought to have and justify themselves in the course that they are pursuing except to say "we are doing the best we can."⁴⁷

Before he finished testifying, Napier proposed an amendment to the Bill which provided that none of the federal money to land-grant colleges be "appropriated or

⁴⁴Charles D. Hilles to J. C. Napier, October 24, 1911, "Page Bill, H.R. 23581," Napier Papers, Container 1.

⁴⁵Hearing before the Committee on Agriculture, House Report, 62nd Congress, 2nd Session on H.R. 23581, p. 73, Napier Papers, Container 1.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 74.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 76.

paid out in states where discriminations are made on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude, unless provision is made for equal, although separate, accommodations for all classes of people. When you give us this amendment," he said, "we believe that justice will come to us." The amendment offered by Napier was rejected by the Committee and, subsequently, the Page Bill met the same fate after nearly a score of amendments had been tacked to it in both the House of Representatives and the Senate.⁴⁸

Napier's promotion of the passage of the Page Bill was associated with his efforts to get the state of Tennessee to establish the Tennessee Agriculture and Industrial State College for Negroes. He played a leading role in the drive to get Tennessee A. & I. established. In 1908 he obtained a meeting with President Brown Ayers of the University of Tennessee. The rationale of the meeting was to determine how the University was expending its Morrill funds. Following this meeting, he traveled to Washington, D.C., and repeated his appeal for equitable distribution of funds before a national meeting of state superintendents.⁴⁹ In 1909 he collaborated with black leaders of Nashville and representatives from each of the congressional districts of

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 73.

⁴⁹Lester C. Lamon, Black Tennesseans, 1900-1930 (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1977), pp. 95-96 (hereafter cited as Lamon, Black Tennesseans).

the state, excluding the third, to organize the Tennessee Normal, Agricultural and Mechanical Association. The two-fold purpose of the organization was to lobby for a state normal school for Negroes and to work toward obtaining for black Tennesseans their fair share of the Morrill funds.⁵⁰

Moreover, between April of 1910 and July of 1911, Napier twice appeared before Davidson County's fiscal body to encourage that body to issue bonds for raising local funds for establishing a normal school. Each time, bond appropriations were passed totaling \$80,000. The efforts of Napier and others bore fruit in 1911 when Nashville was selected by the state legislature as the site of the Agricultural and Industrial Normal School. William Jasper Hale, a mulatto and elementary school principal in Hamilton County, was given the job as principal of the school.⁵¹

In 1913 Napier experienced another victory as a result of his indefatigable efforts to help his race. The state legislature enacted a law which enabled Tennessee A. & I. to receive its equitable share of federal funds as stipulated in the Morrill Act of 1890. These funds amounted to \$12,000 annually or approximately one-fourth of the total funds available to Tennessee.⁵²

⁵⁰Nashville Globe, January 22, 1909; Lamon, Black Tennesseans, p. 95.

⁵¹Lamon, Black Tennesseans, pp. 100-101.

⁵²Ibid., pp. 96-104.

Meanwhile, the year following his appointment to the office of Register, the Presidential Campaign of 1912 was held. The Republican Party experienced a split when the regulars of the party renominated President William Howard Taft. The Progressive wing of the party bolted the convention and nominated former President Theodore Roosevelt for President.⁵³

In 1908 Napier had been supportive of Roosevelt's presidential administrations in spite of the fact that in 1906 Roosevelt had summarily given 159 Negro soldiers, stationed in Brownsville, Texas, dishonorable discharges, even though those responsible for shooting at white citizens of the town could not be identified. Napier believed that Roosevelt had mishandled the Brownsville incident, but said he did not think that Roosevelt was motivated by racism. Napier later wrote that Roosevelt's nomination of a Negro as the temporary chairman of a session of the National Republican Convention, his entertainment in the executive mansion at Albany of a noted Negro singer who was denied entertainment in the hotels, and his courtesy to Booker T. Washington in the White House all precluded the thought that he was influenced by racism. But in the election of 1912

⁵³Howard L. Hurwitz, An Encyclopedic Dictionary of American History (New York: Washington Square Press, 1970), p. 222 (hereafter cited as Hurwitz, An Encyclopedic Dictionary).

Napier supported Taft for President. During the campaign, he accused Roosevelt of trying to drive the Negro from the Republican Party by favoring Negro disfranchisement.

Furthermore, he depicted Roosevelt as being "a sensationalist and a bundle of inconsistencies."⁵⁴

Conversely, Napier had nothing but praise for Taft. As the liaison person between Taft and the Negro electorate, he stumped the state of Tennessee and visited other southern states delivering numerous campaign speeches in defense of Taft's economic and racial policies. In a speech at Columbia, Tennessee, he declared that:

. . . since the Negro is so largely dependent upon the prosperity of the country it is his duty to place his shoulder to the wheel and assist in the retention of prosperity by the election of the Republican candidate for President. If he does not do this, we are sure to come face to face with the wolf of want and the pain of retrogression.⁵⁵

In another speech he observed that "there are today more places of distinction now held by Negroes in the city of Washington and in the states than ever before. There are more of our young people in the various departments of the government than ever before."⁵⁶

⁵⁴Undated newspaper clipping, "Honorable J. C. Napier States His Position," Napier Papers, Container 1; newspaper clipping, "Negroes of State to Support Taft," October 10, 1912, Napier Papers, Container 3; Hurwitz, An Encyclopedic Dictionary, p. 80.

⁵⁵Undated and untitled newspaper clipping, Napier Papers, Container 3.

⁵⁶Scrapbook II, 1911-1912, Napier Papers, Container 3.

As a result of the split in the ranks of the Republican Party, Woodrow Wilson, the nominee of the Democratic Party, was elected President. Following the election, Napier said he would continue to faithfully discharge the duties of the office of Register of the Treasury as long as he was wanted. But he admitted that he did not expect a semblance of continuity under the Wilson Administration.⁵⁷

Napier remained Register of the Treasury for seven months during the new administration. But the new President forced Napier to resign when he sanctioned a segregation order which required white and black employees to use separate toilets in the Treasury Department. Napier immediately went to see Secretary of the Treasury William McAdoo to ask that the order be rescinded. But McAdoo was out of the city; therefore, he requested an audience with the Assistant Secretary. When he refused to rescind the segregation order, Napier tendered his resignation. Although the segregation order induced Napier to resign, he undoubtedly would have been replaced because he was a Republican appointee.⁵⁸

Napier was sixty-eight years of age when he resigned as Register of the Treasury. He returned to Nashville and

⁵⁷Newspaper clipping, May 8, 1913, Napier Papers, Container 3.

⁵⁸Ibid.

resumed his law practice, banking, political activities, and civic work. Available evidence indicates that, although advancing years brought no perceptible decrease in his mental faculties, he did not display the aggressive civic and political behavior of previous years. Perhaps the latter was due to his age and the fact that prejudice and discrimination were increasing in the nation. After 1913 his political activities were generally confined to advising party leaders, endorsing political candidates, and occasionally attending Republican conventions and campaigning for Republican candidates.⁵⁹

Available evidence also strongly suggests that after 1913, next to his business interests, civic work occupied a great deal of his time. Not only did he continue to serve as trustee of the Anna T. Jeanes Fund he also served as trustee of Fisk University, Howard University, and Meharry Medical College. In addition, he helped to organize the Theodore Roosevelt Political Club in 1926. The purposes of the club were to keep its members advised with reference to all proposed legislation, whether municipal, state, or national, to keep members informed with regard to the changes made in election laws of the state of Tennessee, to

⁵⁹Governor of Tennessee to J. C. Napier, November 10, 1934, Napier Papers, Container 1; M. A. Leland to J. C. Napier, November 22, 1934, Napier Papers, Container 1; newspaper clipping, "Napier Resigns as U.S. Register," July 23, 1913, Napier Papers, Container 3; Nashville Banner, March 18, 1934.

aid members to work harmoniously together when their interests as American citizens were threatened, and to interest and aid black people in becoming qualified voters in the state and its municipalities.⁶⁰

With the entrance of the United States into World War I in 1917, Napier's inclination for patriotic endeavors matched his enthusiasm for civic work. He encouraged Negro youths to enlist in the armed services. Furthermore, as chairman of the Negro section of the Federal Food Administration for Tennessee, he was responsible for getting blacks to sign pledge cards agreeing to save food items so that the federal government could equip its armies and the armies of its allies.⁶¹

Napier hoped that the favorable response of Negroes to the war effort would improve the image and plight of blacks. He expressed his views on the subject in his first annual message as President of the National Negro Business League in 1917. He declared that:

We hold that our devotion to our country, to its flag, and to its government, entitles us to all that it gives to other citizens. Whenever called upon, we cheerfully

⁶⁰ Nashville Banner, March 18, 1934, June 10, 1938, and April 22, 1940; R. C. Grant, comp., Colored Directory of Tennessee: Biographical Statistics, 1926-1927 (Nashville, Tennessee: by the author, 1927), p. 16. Volume located in Fisk University Library, Nashville, Tennessee.

⁶¹ Letter pertaining to Napier's work as chairman of the Negro Section of the Federal Food Administration for Tennessee, Napier Papers, Container 1; "Biographical Notes," Napier Papers, Container 3.

and patriotically buy bonds, subscribe to the Red Cross, render service in furrows or in trenches, shed blood or give up our lives for the defense of our country, its people and its flag. If these qualities do not entitle us to a fair chance in the race of life, pray tell us what any set of people ever has or can do to win that chance.⁶²

Undoubtedly, to Napier's chagrin, most white Americans were not committed to making political and civil rights concessions to blacks as a result of their contributions to the war effort. In fact, relations between the races deteriorated during the war. Violence against black Americans increased in Tennessee and the nation. In 1919, the year after the war ended, the nation experienced the worst interracial violence, in terms of loss of human life, in its history. Approximately four hundred whites and Negroes were killed in interracial strife. Tennessee was one of the five states which experienced the worst outbreaks of interracial violence. The direct cause of the violence can be attributed to aggressive white racism coupled with the willingness of the "New Negro" to fight back.⁶³

In order to reduce racial confrontation and eliminate violence, the Commission on Interracial Cooperation (CIC) was brought to Tennessee in 1920. It had

⁶²James Carroll Napier, "President's Annual Address to the National Negro Business League," 1917, Napier Papers, Container 1.

⁶³Robert H. Brisbane, The Black Vanguard: Origins of the Negro Social Revolution, 1900-1960 (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: The Judson Press, 1970), pp. 71-73; Lamon, Black Tennesseans, pp. 234-235.

first been incorporated in Atlanta in 1919. The purpose of the new organization was to provide a line of communication between black and white leaders. The membership of the organization was made up of liberal whites and conservative blacks. The structure of the organization called for a white division and a Negro division. The two groups rarely held joint meetings except among the officers.⁶⁴

Napier was one of the black leaders of Nashville to join the CIC. He had been active with the fledgling National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) before affiliating with the CIC. Apparently, he could not reconcile his indirect approach to fighting prejudice and discrimination with the more direct legalistic approach of the NAACP. Therefore, by 1922, he had joined the CIC.⁶⁵

The Commission on Interracial Cooperation, despite its paternalistic approach, was a boon to the state in general and to Nashville in particular. In Nashville it was instrumental in getting streetcar lines extended to A. & I., initiated interracial discussion groups among Fisk, Peabody, and Vanderbilt students, and directed a drive which led to a \$160,000 legislative appropriation for expansion of A. & I. The most tangible accomplishment of the Commission

⁶⁴Lamon, Black Tennesseans, pp. 256-263.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 238.

of Interracial Cooperation was in the area of preventing racial violence in the state. During the 1920's and 1930's, lynchings dropped significantly and mob-related deaths in the state declined.⁶⁶

While Napier was preoccupied with the CIC and other civic concerns of the 1930's, his many friends in Nashville, fittingly, bestowed several honors upon him in recognition of his untiring and unselfish labor for his race, city, state, and nation. Perhaps the most memorable and enduring honor was given to him in 1939. In 1937 the United States Housing Authority Administration began to erect a federally subsidized low rent housing project for Negroes in Nashville. The Nashville Advisory Committee on Housing had opted to name the housing project in honor of Andrew Jackson. As a result of an intense and protracted campaign by black and white leaders of Nashville and the state of Tennessee, the United States Housing Authority Administration was persuaded to waive its policy of not naming a federal project after a living person. In 1939 the local housing authority was granted permission to name the housing project the "J. C. Napier Homes."⁶⁷

⁶⁶Ibid., pp. 256-263.

⁶⁷Scrapbook IV, 1934, Napier Papers, Container 5; letters and newspaper clippings pertaining to the naming of the federally subsidized housing project in honor of Napier, Napier Papers, Container 1; Nashville Banner, April 22, 1940.

Five months after receiving that honor, Napier died. His public career had been essentially a long crusade to secure Negro rights and self-improvement. Naturally, he seized the opportunity to advance his personal ambitions, but he pursued public service not out of greed but out of a desire to use it as a vehicle to enhance the plight of his people.⁶⁸

Napier conducted his public career according to his philosophy of life. It was his conviction that one should "treat all men as you would have them treat you; never flinch from the performance of duty; be faithful, prompt, honest, and truthful; above all 'to thine ownself be true, and it must follow as the night and the day, thou cans't . . . then be false to any man'."⁶⁹

⁶⁸Editorial, Nashville Globe, April 26, 1940.

⁶⁹Nashville Banner, April 22, 1940.

CHAPTER V

METHODS OF INCORPORATING BIOGRAPHY INTO THE TEACHING OF AMERICAN HISTORY

For years history has been an important subject in school curricula, but increasing criticism has developed since the early 1970's because of both content and methods. History has been described as being too dry, too factual, too impractical, and irrelevant. Concurrently, a shrinking job market for history graduates has produced a decline in the number of college students majoring in this discipline. However, if more teachers combine the study of the lives of individuals such as James C. Napier with the teaching of history, many critics may be silenced. Since all historical events, movements, and periods have their individual leaders, spokesmen, or theoreticians, the injecting of biographical data into the study of history will result in exposing the student to events of the past with the emphasis on the individual or human factor. This procedure is called the biographical approach to history.¹

¹Annie A. Kartoian, "Methods of Teaching History Through Biography," The Historical Outlook 24 (January 1933):14; W. Warren Wagar, Books in World History (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), pp. 3-4.

History proper provides a vast and complex amount of data which focuses on the communal, cultural, economic, social, and governmental aspects of cultural groups; biography deals with the life and times of significant individuals in the stage of history. Biography alone does not offer complete understanding of mass action or social change, but when combined with other techniques used by historians it facilitates learning, according to one master historian, by "breaking down the complexity of wide movements and crowded periods into parts sufficiently simple to be readily grasped and long retained."² Moreover, since biography focuses on significant historical personalities, it humanizes history. In addition, it enables the student to understand the thinking of important historical figures and through them the collective minds of their contemporary generation. The inherent nature of biography can enhance the efforts of the teacher to achieve many of the objectives of the teaching of history. Some of the traditional educational objectives which can be accomplished through the incorporation of biography into an American history course are the instilling of good morals, values, patriotism, and civic virtues, and the development of historical methods, critical thinking, improved writing, and improved reading.³

²Allen Nevins, The Gateway to History (New York: D. C. Heath and Co., 1938), pp. 321-324.

³Ibid.

Finally, the biographical approach, drawing upon the lives of important figures of various backgrounds, can be one of the doors through which racial and ethnic minorities come to understand their contribution to American history. As a result, a more balanced and accurate picture of the nation's past will emerge. For example, whites will be better informed about the contributions blacks have made in the building of America, and Negro students can acquire a greater appreciation of the place of black history in the larger context of the development of the United States.⁴

If the biographical approach is to be successfully applied, the teacher naturally has to do some planning. The extent and thoroughness of this planning will play a large part in determining the success or failure of utilizing this approach. When planning, the instructor should consider the goals of the institution and overall curriculum as well as the purposes of the course he is to teach.⁵ He should acquire at least as much knowledge about the nature of biography as is provided in a good work on the history of America biography. Probably the best available volume which can be consulted on this subject is A History of American

⁴Paul W. L. Jones, "Negro Biography," Journal of Negro History 8 (1923):131-133.

⁵C. Easton Rothwell, Report of the Committee on Undergraduate Teaching (New Haven: Hazen Foundation, 1970), pp. 41-43 (hereafter cited as Rothwell, Committee on Undergraduate Teaching).

Biography, 1800-1935 by Edward H. O'Neill; it was updated in 1961. Once the instructor has become familiar with the nature of American biographical writing, he should then determine what methods he will employ to execute the biographical approach, what devices he will use to implement the methods, and communicate with the college and public librarians to ascertain what biographical materials are available. This task can be partly accomplished by consulting the Library Journal, which reviews the best reference books of the year in various fields and the Biography Index, which indexes biographical material in books and magazines. A third option, and possibly the most beneficial, would be to consult the reference volumes available in all good bookstores listing books currently in print--both paperback and hardback.⁶

Of all the preparatory steps listed above, those concerning methods and devices are among the most important. Three distinct methodological approaches can easily be adapted to incorporating biography into the college-level American History Survey Course. They are the Contrasting Characters Approach, Sequential Lives Model, and Grouping Men About Events Model. The Contrasting Characters

⁶Henry Johnson, Teaching of History in Elementary and Secondary Schools with Applications to Allied Studies (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1940), p. 131 (hereafter cited as Johnson, History in Elementary and Secondary Schools); John G. Fetros, "Observations on Biographical Assignments," The Social Studies, 64 (1973):126-130

Approach involves using biographical reports on representative men or women who were on opposite sides of historical issues, events, or represented schools of opposing thought. If this model is to be successfully used, the instructor must exercise great care when selecting the lives to be studied.⁷

The strength of the Contrasting Characters Approach lies in the fact that it enhances the student's understanding of both sides of important events, issues, and schools of thought. For example, the study of the lives of Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson will enable the student to grasp a more thorough understanding of the contending political and economic theories of the Federalist and Democratic-Republican parties in the 1790's. Similarly, if the lives of Booker T. Washington and William E. B. Dubois are studied, the student would acquire a better understanding of the two schools of Negro thought which have largely determined how the Negro has reacted to racism in this country. This approach could also be used to study the contrasting racial philosophies of such lesser Negro leaders as James Carroll Napier and Monroe Trotter. In addition, the study of the leading generals of the Civil War, Robert

⁷Rothwell, Committee on Undergraduate Teaching, p. 142.

E. Lee and U. S. Grant, will reveal pertinent information about the prosecution of the war by the North and South.⁸

The Sequential Lives Approach requires that the lives of representative characters be sequentially arranged from one historical period to another. The outstanding advantage of this model is that it provides, in the view of one scholar, "a bird's-eye view of a great stretch of years through the study of carefully selected typical biographies."⁹

The study of the life of Christopher Columbus could encompass European efforts to reach the Orient, the search for an all-water route and eventual discovery of the New World. The life of Hernando de Soto or any other outstanding explorer could be the vehicle for the discussion of the saga of the exploration of the Americas. An analysis of the lives of John Smith and William Bradford could help the instructor to develop the saga of early colonial life. Benjamin Franklin's life could be studied to project information relative to the growth and maturing of the thirteen colonies, their relation with the French and English colonies, and the coming of the American Revolution.

⁸Paul Klapper, The Teaching of History (New York: D. D. Appleton and Company, 1926), pp. 7-9 (hereafter cited as Klapper, Teaching of History); Johnson, History in Elementary and Secondary Schools, pp. 141-142.

⁹Johnson, History in Elementary and Secondary Schools, pp. 141-142.

For example, from more recent American history, a study of the lives of Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, Marcus Garvey, and Dr. Martin Luther King will give the student a broad understanding of the race problem in the United States from the 1830's to the 1960's. When the instructor combines this model with the conventional approach of teaching American history, the student will be exposed to an interesting, vivid, and personalized account of our past.¹⁰

The Grouping Men About Events Model entails assigning biographical reports on leading participants in pivotal historical events or movements. The study of the Revolutionary War movement can not be adequately covered by focusing on the life of George Washington, John Adams, or any one man associated with the movement. But, if the student were exposed to the role of a group of men of torres and patriots who were connected with the Revolutionary War and who possessed varying motives, aspirations, social positions, personal grievances, and occupational positions, he would acquire an in-depth understanding of the movement. This approach can be used with groups of scientists, inventors, soldiers, abolitionists, statesmen, and even free Negroes. The life of James Carroll Napier, for example, can be compared with that of other free Negroes of the

¹⁰Klapper, Teaching of History, pp. 6-8.

post-Civil War South. As a result, the student would not only secure a deeper understanding of the social, economic, civil, and political problems which confronted this anomalous class of people but would also ascertain how each of the biographical subjects of the group studied reacted to the societal pressures of the post-Civil War period.¹¹

The principles of the three teaching models discussed above can also be used to inject state and local history into the teaching of American history. The life of James Carroll Napier can be adapted to each of these categories. One example of the state level approach could be a review of the factional struggle which crystallized in the state Republican Party of Tennessee in 1900 as a way of approaching Republican Party factionalism and policies in the South. Napier was an integral part of that struggle. Examples of applying the principles of the biographical approach and local biography could include a review of the accomplishments of Randall Brown, James Carroll Napier, Charles Gowdey, and Thomas H. Griswold as Nashville city councilmen and the study of James Carroll Napier, Preston Taylor, and Richard Henry Boyd as civic leaders of Nashville's Negro community. Their careers could be used as examples of the achievements of blacks in the first decades after slavery.

¹¹Johnson, History in Elementary and Secondary Schools, pp. 139-142.

The advantages of this approach are many. The study of the lives of persons who participated in the development of the student's own community or state will generate a high level of student interest. Moreover, as a result of the proximity of primary sources and the accessibility of field-trip sites, the local biographical model can offer invaluable opportunities for enriching the teaching of history. Another advantage of incorporating local biography into the study of American history is that it provides an excellent opportunity for the development of skills in historical research.¹²

As a means for achieving the traditional educational goals and implementing the methodologies previously discussed, the instructor will discover that a variety of time tested teaching devices can be employed to inject biography into the teaching of American history. Among those frequently used are the lecture, panel, forum, and parallel reading. No one of these teaching strategies is better than the other when used to maximize the learning experience. Thus, the teacher must be a master at utilizing various teaching devices.¹³

¹²Ralph A. Brown, "The Local Scene in American History Teaching," Social Education 16 (1952):20-22.

¹³Joseph Justman, College Teaching, Its Practice and Its Potential (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956), pp. 189-192; Rothwell, Committee on Undergraduate Teaching, p. 40.

Although the lecture, the most often used of the devices, has been severely criticized for being too teacher-centered, it continues to be recognized as the best device for covering large amounts of factual data, introducing new material, and making available material that is not in appropriate form for presentation by other methods. The lecture can also serve as an effective guide to student reading. Ideally, the teacher should strive to give brief lectures to introduce new lessons, summarize lessons, review lessons, and to provide background information periodically. If a long lecture is necessary, the teacher should allow a period for student questions and free discussion. This will allow for feedback from the students and will induce active thinking on their part.¹⁴

A teaching device which is as popular among college professors as the lecture is the small group discussion strategy. It involves student participation in discussing a subject under the guidance of the instructor. Its significance lies in the fact that it is a student-centered learning situation which places the student in an active learning role instead of a passive learning role. Moreover, the use of the small discussion group as a teaching instrument will help the student to think critically,

¹⁴Calvin B. J. Lee, ed., Improving College Teaching (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1967), pp. 216-217.

integrate facts, amass relevant evidence, evaluate conclusions, improve self-expressions, and digest the democratic principle of freedom of speech.¹⁵

The instructor should be cautioned about the numerous abuses which can emanate from the use of the small discussion group. Some of the more serious abuses are insufficient student planning, lack of or absence of enough reading materials, tendency by the teacher to stress performance, argument, debate to the exclusion of the subject matter (its objectives), and inadequate teacher preparation.¹⁶

If the small group discussion is to be successfully applied, the teacher has to make some preparation. The minimum amount of planning requires the teacher to be sure of his objectives and be very familiar with the biographical subjects to be discussed. He should prepare a list of questions with the objectives of the lesson in mind. These questions will facilitate research by the students. The instructor should also construct a list of biographical subjects which will conform to the biographical model he has

¹⁵J. G. Umstatted, Instructional Procedures at the College Level: An Analysis of Teaching at Biarritz American University (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1947), p. 50 (hereafter cited as Umstatted, Instructional Procedures at the College Level).

¹⁶Roy J. Deferrari, ed., Quality of College Teaching and Staff (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of American Press, 1961), pp. 11-12 (hereafter cited as Deferrari, Quality of College Teaching).

opted to use. The teacher must be sure that appropriate, adequate biographical materials and reference sources are available for students. His lectures and collateral reading should be geared to preparing students for the discussion groups. He should also schedule conferences which should be used to monitor the progress of each discussion group. Furthermore, the teacher must determine the size of his subgroups, how they will be organized, and the duration of the discussion. It is suggested that the results are more favorable when the officers of the discussion groups (the chairman and secretary) are selected by its members. The chairman of the group serves as its moderator and keeps the discussion moving so that the group adheres to the topic. The secretary keeps detailed notes of the discussion and reads them to the class at the end of the session. According to research, thirty minutes is the average time used for discussion.¹⁷

Although the extent and thoroughness of the preparation made by the teacher in planning for the group discussion is crucial, sufficient preparation by the students is necessary to make the group discussion effective. For, without adequate student preparation, the discussion device will not work. Students must carry out their reading assignments, take lecture notes and review

¹⁷Deferrari, Quality of College Teaching, pp. 8-10.

them, attend all discussion group meetings, and propose questions and problems prior to the actual presentation. The role of the teacher and student complement each other. On the day discussions are presented, the teacher should arrive ahead of the class and arrange student desks in circles. When the students arrive, for the purpose of identification, he should give each group a number. Next, he must state very clearly the objective of the discussion. His role during the discussion will be that of a patient leader giving support to all groups and helping those who are in need of direction. The student's role is to be courteous and cooperative to the members of his group, be prepared, actively participate in the discussion, and take notes. Each student should also share with the group any new interpretations and findings which he or she may have run across in the various biographical materials they have consulted.¹⁸

At the conclusion of the discussion, the students should reassemble to listen to the secretaries of each group summarize the decisions of their small group. Speaking in turn, each secretary reads from notes the conclusions reached by the group. This could be followed

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 11-12.

by a general discussion by the whole class group or a summation by the instructor.¹⁹

Two variant forms of the discussion which can be used as devices for incorporating biography into the teaching of history are the panel and the forum. The panel is a planned informal conversational presentation by several individuals, followed by a group discussion; whereas, the forum is a formal presentation by several individuals in succession, followed by group discussion. In short, the forum requires a series of set presentations followed by questions from the floor while the panel provides interchanges among the participants.²⁰

Since the panel and forum are very similar teaching procedures, it follows that each possesses many of the same weaknesses and strengths. Increased student motivation as a result of voluntary selection of a topic of interest, experience in free expression, opportunity to use and organize source materials, and the development of skills in the democratic process are some advantages of utilizing the panel and the forum. Some of the weaknesses of the two teaching devices are loss of time developing information that could be presented quicker and with more efficiency by

¹⁹Herman A. Estrin and Delmer M. Goode, College and University Teaching (Dubuque, Iowa: William C. Brown Co., 1964), p. 43.

²⁰Umstattd, Instructional Procedures at the College Level, p. 55.

the teacher, too many students (those not on the panel or forum) placed in a passive learning situation, superficial treatment of topics by immature students, and presentations which lack the erudition of a seasoned teacher.²¹

As a learning technique, especially for the participants, the panel is probably the better of the two techniques because it demands more attention and knowledge of a wider range of content data on the part of each panel member. In addition, the panel may be better for topics that have many controversial aspects; whereas, the forum might be superior to the panel for the presentation of factual information. During a presentation by a panel or a forum, the instructor's role is to act as referee, offer observations when necessary, prevent straying from the main idea, correct inaccuracies, and assist participants in synthesizing the information discussed.²²

Another device which can be used to execute the biographical approach to teaching history is the debate. A debate is a discussion of a problem or an issue formally and logically presented by two opposing individuals or teams followed by a rebuttal. Its use is not as widespread in colleges and universities as the panel and forum because it

²¹Ibid., p. 132.

²²J. G. Umstattd, College Training Background, Theory, Practice (Washington, D.C.: The University Press of Washington, D.C., and the Community, 1964), pp. 132-134 (hereafter cited as Umstattd, College Training Background).

offers the opportunity of involving only a small number of students, and too often the purpose is to win the argument rather than develop all of the aspects of a particular historical issue or event. The task of the debate participants is to accumulate theories and information favoring their respective sides of the issue and to present them in a way that members of the class will fully understand the problem and, thus, be able to make their own decision.²³

Dramatization is another procedure which can be utilized to inject biography into the teaching of history. It has been described by one author as "presentation, by acting out an event, episode, situation, or story."²⁴ Its value lies in the fact that it stimulates the imagination, arouses the emotions, and provides a vehicle for self-expression. In brief, it transmits to the spectator a sense of historical reality to a degree that no other technique can achieve.²⁵ However, dramatization has had its limitations as a teaching device, the most prominent being the possibility that the conventional fifty minute class

²³Umstattd, Instructional Procedures at the College Level, pp. 59-60.

²⁴Umstattd, College Teaching Background, p. 136.

²⁵Daniel C. Knowlton, History and Other Social Studies in the Junior High School (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926), pp. 78-79 (hereafter cited as Knowlton, History and Other Social Studies).

period will not be adequate time for effective use of dramatization.²⁶ However, with good planning, dramatization can be staged effectively within a fifty minute time frame. Students can act out the important events in the lives of prominent figures in American history for the benefit of their classmates. This biographical role-playing, followed by general class discussions of the contributions of the historical figures to America's past, can be a most effective technique for using the biographical approach in a history class.²⁷

The student report is also an excellent procedure for incorporating biography into the teaching of American history. It is a written or verbal presentation by a student after special study of a historical figure. The teacher can require students to use a variety of source materials in completing the assignment. This type of assignment is often used in college courses in history. It has proven effective in enhancing student initiative in independent study and critical thinking, and it generates greater interest and understanding of a subject or field under study.²⁸

²⁶Claude E. Buxton, College Teaching: A Psychologist's View (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1956), pp. 220-221.

²⁷Knowlton, History and Other Social Studies, pp. 80-81.

²⁸Umstattd, College Teaching Background, pp. 152-153.

Last but not least, the instructor can assign biographies as independent reading assignments or provide the students with reading lists that include biographies and allow the student to read books of their own choice selected from those on the list. The variety of biographies of excellent quality concerning the lives of significant figures in the history of the United States is great. Whether the subject is Civil War generals, prominent Negro spokesmen, heroes of the Revolutionary era, Indian chieftains, or business leaders, the student will find biographies available, the reading of which will bring history alive in a rich and personal way. No survey course reading list would be complete if it did not include representative volumes of American biography.²⁹

After the instructor has firmly established his course purposes or objectives and selected the teaching methods and techniques he will use, the teacher is then ready to prepare a formal plan of instruction or a course outline. The printed package of material should include all of the following: statements of objectives, descriptions of course requirements and tests that will be used, and a calendar of events. The objectives of the college level survey course in American history should be

²⁹Paul Klapper, College Teaching: Studies in Methods of Teaching in the College (New York: World Book Co., 1920), pp. 266-267; Umstattd, College Teaching Background, p. 153.

specific and contain realistic goals. Naturally, there must be a close relationship between what the teacher proposes to accomplish in the course and the methods and devices used.³⁰

To be sure, the biographical approach is not a panacea for the problems which confront the history teacher today. But if the approach is used many of the educational objectives of teaching history can be achieved. Use of this approach can humanize history, increase interest, and enhance learning.

³⁰Rothwell, Committee on Undergraduate Teaching,
p. 40.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY

James Carroll Napier's public career was launched in 1878, the year he was elected to the Nashville City Council, and ended in 1913, with his resignation as Register of the United States Treasury. Thus, Napier's public career falls within the span of years which some historians have depicted as the period when the status of the Negro was at its lowest point since the abolition of slavery.

Napier's reaction to the trend of relegating the Negro to second class citizenship was reflected in his racial philosophy. Unlike most Negro leaders of the day, he espoused conciliation by the Negro in race relation and gradualism in the procurement of Negro civil rights. This accommodating theme was coupled with a dualistic strain of black nationalism which identified the Negro with both America and the Negro group. He maintained that Negroes were natural-born Americans and should enjoy all the rights and privileges due them under the Constitution of the United States.

Negro leaders of this ideological strand were divided on the best approach to be used in working for racial equality. One school of thought believed that the Negro should concentrate efforts on the legislative and legal fronts. The proponents of this school argued that, since the white man had traditionally shown respect for the law and court decisions, favorable legislation and court rulings would be the best way to combat racial segregation and discrimination.

The opposing school of thought advanced an indirect approach as the best way to achieve racial equality for black Americans. The adherents of this school argued that the legislative and legal approach to secure Negro civil and political rights would only antagonize white southerners and mitigate chances of winning full citizenship. Furthermore, they reasoned that, even if blacks were successful in securing victories on the legislative and legal fronts, it would be an exercise in futility since the attitude of white southerners would not change. Thus, this school urged Negroes to concentrate on those activities which would change the attitude whites had toward Negroes. This could be accomplished, they felt, through industry, education, good morals, and the acquisition of property. Napier was an exponent of this school of thought.

Napier used his public career to implement his racial philosophy. His public career was essentially a long

crusade to secure the rights and self-improvement of black Americans. To accomplish his objectives, he associated himself with those institutions and organizations which were devoted to the uplifting of black people. The many groups with which he became affiliated touched almost every need of Negroes.

Among the more important institutions and organizations with which Napier was associated in Nashville, Tennessee, were the Nashville City Council, Nashville Board of Trade, Fisk University, Meharry Medical College, and Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial College (now Tennessee State University). He gave his money, time, influence, and talent in support of the above institutions of learning. Furthermore, he served on the Board of Trustees of Fisk University and Meharry Medical College and was a leader in the drive to establish Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial College. He was also an ardent supporter of Bethlehem Center, the Community Chest, and the Negro division of the Young Men's Christian Association. He often chaired fund raising drives for the YMCA and the Community Center. Napier was elected president of the Board of Trade in 1914 and was appointed to the Nashville Housing Authority in the 1930's.

Napier made important contributions to the Negroes of Nashville in the area of banking. Not only did he conceive the idea of establishing the One-Cent Savings Bank

in 1903 (now Citizen's Savings Bank and Trust Company) he also chaired the organizational meetings, contributed his expertise in the drafting of the charter, and served as cashier of the bank from its inception to his death, without receiving a cent of pay.

The founders of the bank perceived its mission to be that of teaching frugality among its customers and inculcating racial pride and confidence. Napier maintained that the bank would teach Negroes that saving helped the black businessmen as well as the depositors.

The slow growth of the bank can be attributed to the fact that its promoters did not win adequate confidence from the black community, the slow rise in paid-in capital stock prevented the bank from making sizable loans to institutions such as Fisk University and Meharry Medical College, and because of the bank's conservative investing policy. Despite its slow growth, the institution remained solvent during the Great Depression of the 1930's and met its responsibilities to its depositors. Furthermore, the bank was a source of racial pride and a needed institution from which Negroes could secure loans.

Perhaps Napier's greatest contribution to black Nashvillians was in the area of politics. During his seven years on the Nashville City Council, Napier was indirectly responsible for Negroes getting city contracts and more city jobs. He was directly responsible for the establishment of

a Negro fire company, the erection of Meigs and Pearl schools, and the expansion and improvement of other school facilities for Negroes.

Napier did not confine his crusade for Negro rights and self-improvement to the city of Nashville. He utilized the state Republican Party as a vehicle to obtain his racial objectives. From 1878 to 1910 his public career was enmeshed with party politics. Between 1878 and 1888, his major role as a Republican was to advocate party harmony. With the rise of the "Lily White" wing of the Republican Party in the late 1880's, which advocated purging the Negro from the party's deliberations, Napier responded by ~~launching a vigorous campaign against "Lily Whitism."~~

While Napier conducted his uphill battle against "Lily Whitism" in Tennessee during the first decade of the twentieth century, he was emerging as a national Negro leader. His friend, Booker T. Washington, was primarily responsible for his rise to national prominence. Washington used his vast influence to secure Napier's appointment to the Board of Trustees of the Anna T. Jeanes Fund, assignment as the Register of the United States Treasury, and affiliation with the National Negro Business League.

Napier used his position as Register of the Treasury, Trustee of the Anna T. Jeanes Fund, and member of the National Business League as tools for implementing his racial philosophy. He became a major cog in the National

Negro Business League from its inception. The League was founded by Booker T. Washington in 1900 for the purpose of encouraging Negroes to enter business. From 1900 to 1915 Napier was one of Washington's chief spokesmen for the League. He traveled throughout the southern states delivering speeches to local and state branches of the League. In a typical address Napier usually cited statistics to reveal progress of the Negro, praised the local branch for its accomplishment, encouraged its members to educate themselves in their particular area of business, extolled the role the parent organization was playing in the success of the branch and the Negro race, and associated the progress of black Americans with the Negro's quest for full citizenship rights.

Napier became president of the League in 1916. He served in that capacity for three years. During his administration, the League carried out a nation-wide advertising campaign for the purpose of inducing Negro consumers to support black businesses and conducted clean-up and health week campaigns in an effort to increase the Negro businessman's sense of pride and also stimulate business.

While a trustee of the Anna T. Jeanes Fund, Napier was instrumental in determining how the one million dollar trust fund would be used for the advancement of rural education for Negro children in the South. The fund was established in 1907 by Miss Anna T. Jeanes, a wealthy

Philadelphia Quaker. Miss Jeanes designated Booker T. Washington and Hollis Burke Frissell, principal of Hampton Institute in Virginia, "administer and manager of the trust fund." They were also given the authority to appoint the fund's trustees.

Napier's leadership role soon brought him offers from Republican presidents to enter government service. After rejecting President Roosevelt's offer of Consul to Bahia, Brazil, in 1908 and President William Howard Taft's offer of Minister Resident and Consul of Liberia in 1910, he accepted the office of Register of the United States Treasury in 1911. As Register, Napier was the official bookkeeper of the United States. His chief duties were to keep all the accounts of receipts and expenditures of public money and of all debts due to or from the United States. He also countersigned all United States currency.

Napier continued his unrelenting crusade to secure Negro rights and self-improvement while Register of the Treasury. He endeavored to obtain for black Americans their full share of federal funds under the Morrill Act of 1890. He used his position as Register to obtain funds to conduct an investigation pertaining to the use and distribution of funds received by institutions of higher education in the South. After completing his investigation in 1912, he testified before the House Committee on Agriculture to promote the passage of the Page Bill. This Bill was

designed to eliminate discrimination against the Negro in the allocation of federal money to land-grant colleges in the South.

In his opening remarks before the committee, he asserted that Negroes were striving to become useful, law abiding, and productive citizens and only ask the assistance that all other citizens received. He asserted that the passage of the Page Bill would give the Negro that needed assistance.

Although the Page Bill never passed the Congress, Napier's efforts were not entirely futile. As a result of his efforts, A. & I. was established as a land-grant college and began to receive its equitable share of federal funds as stipulated in the Morrill Act of 1890, by 1913.

Meanwhile, Napier resigned as Register of the United States Treasury in 1913 when the newly elected President, Woodrow Wilson, sanctioned an order to segregate all federal rest rooms. As a result, Napier resigned and, at the age of sixty-eight, returned to Nashville and spent the remainder of his life pursuing his law practice, banking and political activities, and civic work.

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