

Shadows of Light



MRS. CORALIE FRANKLIN COOK

Member of the Board of Education, District of Columbia; born at Lexington, Va.; educated at Storer College; wife of George William Cook, Secretary of Howard University.

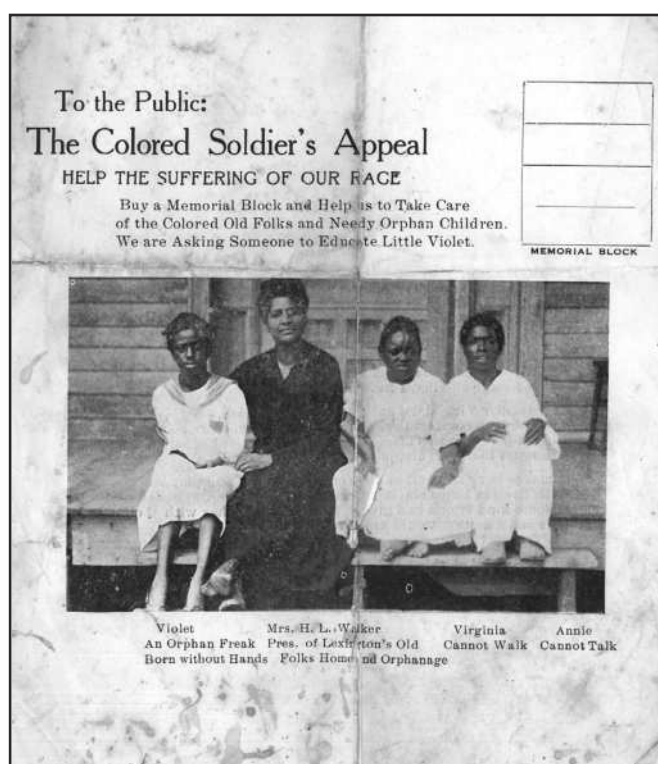
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THIS PHOTOGRAPH of Lexington native and Howard University Professor Coralie Franklin Cook was published in the November 1917 issue of the NAACP magazine, *The Crisis*, edited by Dr. W.E.B. DuBois, eminent scholar and activist, who corresponded with Cook for decades, and collaborated with Cook on projects on "Intercultural Education."



(1) Uncle Tom Lovett, (2) Aunt Etta Lovett, (3) Uncle John Lovett, (4) Miss C. Franklin, (later Mrs. Cook), (5) Dr. N.C. Brackett, (6) Mrs. Brackett, (7) Mrs. Lightner, (8) John C. Newman, (9) Jared M. Anten.

ABOVE, this 1880 photograph shows Coralie Franklin (center, #4) with classmates and faculty at Storer College, Harpers Ferry, W.Va. (Storer College Collections, West Virginia and Regional History Center) AT RIGHT is a 1918 fundraising flyer marketed by Eliza B. Walker to establish a Lexington orphanage and Old Folks Home. Pictured with her are three such orphans whom Walker's daughter noted as having run away from the Rockbridge Poor Farm. (Rockbridge Historical Society Collections, W&L)



Women Who Made History

Events, Exhibits Feature 'Lexington's Leading Ladies'

Editor's note: This article by Rockbridge Historical Society Executive Director Eric Wilson complements the Women's History Month exhibits jointly developed with the Rockbridge Regional Library, and two related public presentations next week, one at First Baptist Church (March 6) and the second at the library in Lexington (March 8). See RockbridgeHistory.org and RRLib.net for more.

On International Women's Day, two striking women from local history jointly take the stage, their own cultural range and impact providing insight and inspiration for the lives and legacies shaped by our current community, a century later.

Students and lifelong learners are invited to explore and celebrate the lives of these groundbreaking figures in Rockbridge and American history through a free public program titled "Lexington's Leading Ladies: A Pair of Progressive Era Pioneers" on Tuesday, March 8, from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. in the Piovano Room of the Rockbridge Regional Library.

In continued partnership between the Rockbridge Historical Society and Rockbridge Regional Library, community discussion will follow the slideshow that I've prepared to highlight the remarkable educational, political, charitable, and artistic accomplishments of two Rockbridge natives: Coralie Franklin Cook (1861-1942) and Eliza Bannister Walker (1874-1939). For women and men alike, boys and girls both, Walker and Cook remain inspiring models for civic purpose today. For two short features produced by WDBJ7, see tinyurl.com/ElizaWalker and tinyurl.com/CoralieCook.

Coralie Franklin was born to enslaved parents, just weeks before the firing on Fort Sumter, and Eliza Bannister arrived in the first decade after Emancipation. It's likely that they both attended the increasingly crowded Graded School on South Randolph Street, established by the Freedmen's Bureau right after the Civil War. And yet, from those more familiar, provincial roots, their creative, committed service connected Lexington with the social networks of the nation's capital in the expanding educational, professional, and commercial orbits of the early 1900s.

The March 8 event at the library is the most comprehensive and broadly illustrated among a series of other presentations being adapted next week to kick off Women's History Month.

On March 11, in American Literature classes at Rockbridge County High School, we'll explore Walker's adoption of an experimental range of literary personas. Her more commercially marketed and private poems both provide an illuminating artistic and demographic bridge between the gilded Jazz Age energies of F. Scott Fitzgerald's "The Great Gatsby" (1925) and the feminine vernacular of Zora Neale Hurston's "Their Eyes Were Watching God" (1937), riffing her own lyrical portraits of rural Black life in the South.

At First Baptist Church on Sunday, March 6, at 11 a.m., all are welcome to learn about this striking pair of "Leading Ladies" in a more targeted presentation (framed there by a few distinctive pictures, rather than a projected slideshow). As in my library and school presentations, their goals and accomplishments will be both coupled and counter-pointed; but in the historic sanctuary, remarks will center more extensively on Walker and Cook's religious commitments and educational leadership.

Eliza Walker's story has been more frequently told here in Rockbridge, often emphasizing her specific impact on local and state institutions, and the broad skill set she drew on to enlist community support, and fundraising. In continued legacy for Lexington City Schools (where RHS is also piloting other Women's History Month projects), Walker helped lead the local charge of parents and community activists to build and gradually expand Lyburn Downing into a substantial elementary and high school, serving Black children across Rockbridge from 1927 to 1965.

Coralie Franklin's native ties, and her artistic and educational authority, are less well-known. Yet as other colleagues have concurred, Mrs. C.F. Cook may well be the most notable woman born in Lexington to have taken the national stage.

She also left her distinctive stamp in the heart of the nation's capital: an increasingly important location for Rockbridge residents in this area to find educational opportunity, professional training, and new social networks.

After her family moved to Winchester and then Harpers Ferry in the late 1860s, Coralie graduated from Storer College in 1880, thought to be the first descendant of enslaved families at Monticello to earn a college degree.

She was soon hired as the first Black woman at her alma mater, to teach English and Elocution. After additional oratorical training in

Philadelphia and Boston, she further advanced her career in Washington, D.C., where she served for 12 years on the city's School Board.

Through those networks, she would also continue her decades-long correspondence with W.E.B. DuBois to help systemically install a curriculum promoting "interracial attitudes" as part of program of "Intercultural Education."

Her pioneering essay, "Votes for Mothers," was featured in the seminal suffrage-centered 1915 issue of "The Crisis," the magazine DuBois edited for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

She was elected president of the Washington Artists Association, founded the School of Expression for the Washington Conservatory of Music, and was widely admired for her own public speaking, including addresses on prominent Black poets such as the precocious Phillis Wheatley (enslaved from Africa before her verses astounded the leading literary lights of 18th-century Boston); and Cook's fellow D.C. resident and ground-breaking 20th-century author, Paul Laurence Dunbar.

She managed these rich cultural claims while working with and challenging her friend Susan B. Anthony (whose 80th birthday celebration Cook spoke at in 1900) in order to achieve political equity and voting rights for women of color and whites, alike. Not to mention her "day job" in higher education, teaching and chairing Howard University's Department of Oratory for the first third of the 20th-century.

Her husband and colleague was the no-less impressive George W. Cook. He had been born enslaved in Winchester in 1851, before rising to become one of Howard University's most important early leaders.

Across his 50-year tenure, he variously served as a law professor, alumni secretary, dean, acting president, and trustee. More broadly, he was also a founding board member of the NAACP; a key leader, like his wife, on the Washington School Board; and president of the D.C. Colored Social Settlement, a progressive institution for housing improvement and job development that would hire, as its own leader in 1912, William Washington Jr.

Washington was a Lexington native himself, and preached special sermons here at First Baptist Church. After his own prize-winning education at Storer and Oberlin Colleges, Washington was hired as principal of the Randolph Street Grade School that Coralie, Eliza, and he would serially have attended.

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Donating To Salem VA

The Fincastle chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, which includes women who live in Rockbridge County, recently gathered 150 reading glasses, 68 shower shoes and toiletry items to donate to the Salem VA Medical Center.

Symposium Tackles Loyalty During Civil War

The annual Washington and Lee University Institute for Honor Symposium, this year titled "The Civil War and the Ethics of Loyalty," will take place Friday, March 4, and Saturday, March 5. Registration is required and is available to access online at go.wlu.edu/IFH.

The keynote address, which is on Friday at 4 p.m. in the University Chapel, will be delivered by Elizabeth R. Varon, the Langbourne M. Williams Professor of American History at the University of Virginia and a member of the executive council of U.Va.'s John L. Nau III Center for Civil War History. Varon's talk, which is free and open to the public, is titled "Southern Dissent and Amnesty: The Civil War Ethics of Loyalty."

The symposium will also host three speakers who will contribute to the collective understanding of the mid-19th century by examining the issue of allegiance and its many variegated layers.

Speakers include Barton Myers, Class of 1960 Professor of Ethics and History at W&L; Ricardo A. Herrera, professor of military history at the School of Advanced Military Studies, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College; and Hilary N. Green, associate professor of history in the Department of Gender and Race

Studies and co-program director of the African American Studies program at the University of Alabama.

Each presenter will reexamine the most divisive period in our country's history by offering new perspectives to the growing understanding of the diverse landscape of wartime loyalty.

The difficult personal and professional decisions that drove historical figures as they considered liberation, union, secession, freedom and independence can all be better understood by reframing the discussion around the questions of allegiance during a time of great national discord, said a spokesman.

See the entire schedule of events online at go.wlu.edu/IFH-events.

Established in 2000 at Washington and Lee by an endowment from the Class of 1960, the Institute for Honor includes an array of initiatives and specific programs designed to promote the understanding and practice of honor as an indispensable element of society.

For more information or to register for the entire program, contact lifelong@wlu.edu or call 458-8916.

Women

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A compelling circle of life, through all educational opportunities and commitments.

For the last 30 years of her life, Coralie would practice the Baha'i faith, and serve as its international ambassador, after she and her husband converted in 1913. Professor Franklin-Cook would write extensively for Baha'i publications, extending her advocacy for political equality to an even broader vision of universal brotherhood and sisterhood, on a global spiritual scale. As one of her 1932 editorials affirmed: "Since 1844, the date of its origin, the leaders of the Baha'i faith have stood against oppression and have admonished its followers to ignore race differences."

Displays in the Lexington library feature both Bannister-Walker and Franklin-Cook as a complementary pair, with particular emphases on their work in education, and in the performing and literary arts. Fitting, indeed, to have their specific poems and speeches highlighted in the public library, or their hometown. The exhibits are up through March, alongside a special shelf-list of books featuring women authors. Those titles can be browsed in the library's online catalogue, and a range of other materials on Local Women's Histories and Local Black Histories can be digitally explored at RockbridgeHistory.org/rhs-essays.

Library Book Sale This Week

The Rockbridge Regional Library will hold its monthly book sale this Thursday, Friday and Saturday, March 3, 4 and 5.

The hours of the sale are Thursday, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.; Friday, 1 to 5 p.m.; and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Prices range from 50 cents for paperback books to \$2 for hardback books. The \$2 bag sale is on Saturday from 1 to 2 p.m.

This month, along with a wide selection of fiction and nonfiction books, there are children's books. Also available are free magazines.

Staff and volunteers work together to make the monthly book sales a success. Anyone interested in volunteering to help with the book sale is invited to fill out a form at the front desk of the library or request it online by emailing the librarian at the bottom of the website at <https://www.rrlib.net>.



CRIME REPORT

The Rockbridge County Sheriff's Office made these felony arrests recently:

Roger Alan Barry, 25, of Lexington, for assault and battery on a correctional officer, Feb. 18.

Larry Duffield, 38, of Summersville, W.Va., for the possession of a Schedule I or II drug, Feb. 25. He was also charged with two misdemeanors: the possession of paraphernalia and driving on a suspended license.

Andrew William Wonderly, 35, of Lexington, for the possession of a Schedule II drug, Feb. 26.

Christian Lee Murphy, 22, of Edinburg, for the possession of a Schedule II drug, Feb. 26.

Daniel Marvin Hindenberger, 19, of Lexington, for two counts of grand larceny and one count of larceny with intent to sell or distribute, Feb. 27. He was also charged with one misdemeanor: selling a firearm for money without running a check on criminal history.

The Lexington Police Department made these felony arrests recently:

Ashley P. Baker, 45, of Buena Vista, for the possession of ammunition by a convicted felon, and for the possession of a Schedule I or II drug, Feb. 12. She was also charged with one misdemeanor: the possession of a Schedule V drug.

Michael Clark, 43, of Buena Vista, for forgery and for uttering, Feb. 18. He was also charged with one misdemeanor: obtaining money under false pretenses. This arrest was made by the LPD for the Glasgow Police Department.

The Buena Vista Police Department made this felony arrest recently:

Shawn K. Campbell, 44, of Buena Vista, for eluding police and for the possession of a Schedule I or II drug, Feb. 6. He was also charged with one misdemeanor: the possession of drug paraphernalia.

RARO Board Meets Tonight

The board of the Rockbridge Area Recreation Organization will hold its monthly meeting tonight, Wednesday, March 2, at 6 in the community meeting room of Lexington City Hall.

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