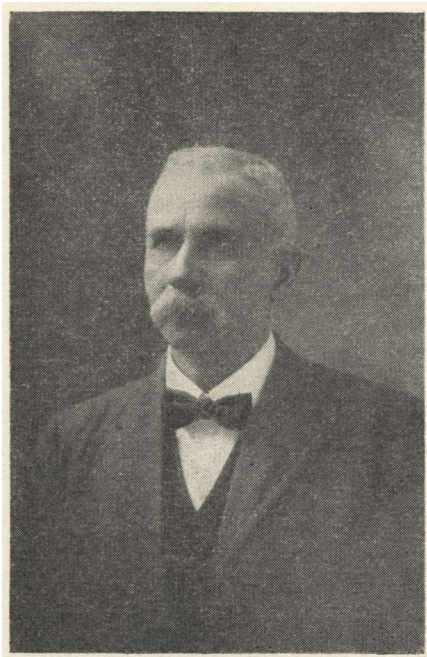


THE CUNEY FAMILY

By C. G. WOODSON

THE Cuneys were of mixed breed origin. They had Negro and Indian blood from their mother, Adeline Stuart, who was born not long before or after 1825. Her mother, Hester Neale Stuart, born about 1800, was of Potomac Indian, Caucasian and Negro blood, and was a slave in the Neale family of Centerville and Alexandria, Va. Adeline Stuart was a woman of medium height and slender build, of olive complexion, straight black hair and dark eyes. Her features were decidedly Caucasian. From their father's side the Cuneys had Caucasian blood from the Swiss family of Cuneys who settled early in Virginia along with the Archinard family. With the opening up of Louisiana after the purchase by the United States in 1803 the Cuneys moved into that territory and settled in the Rapides Parish. There party feeling ran high when the Whigs, developing from the nationalistic wing of the Democratic party, became pitted against the States' Rights wing of that affiliation. A feud developed between families thus arrayed and duels



JOSEPH CUNEY

followed. Colonel Philip W. Cuney, an ardent Whig partisan, therefore, moved on with his slaves into Texas and settled in Waller County. In 1853 the Cuneys moved to Houston. One of these slaves was the attractive Adeline Stuart who bore Philip eight children whom he eventually set free. The children reaching maturity were Nelson, Joseph, Norris Wright, Jenny Laura, and Henry Ernest. Nelson, Joseph and Norris Wright were sent to the Wylie Street School in Pittsburgh where, under George B. Vashon, they were to be prepared for Oberlin, but the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861 frustrated this plan.

Upset in his educational career by the Civil War, Joseph Cuney entered the Union army as a member of the 63rd Pennsylvania Volunteers and saw service on various fronts. Norris Wright Cuney later left school in Pittsburgh and worked on boats on the Ohio and Mississippi plying between New Orleans and St. Louis and Cincinnati. He thereby made the acquaintance of Colonel James Lewis and P. B. S. Pinchback. At the close of the Civil War Norris Wright Cuney returned to Texas and settled at Galveston. He entered seriously upon his effort of self-education, studying the best literature and reading law in order to be prepared for the service required by the belated freedmen. N. Wright Cuney came near losing his life in 1867. When working as volunteer nurse during the epidemic of yellow fever he contracted the disease, but he contrived to recover. About this time Joseph Cuney returned to Texas and, with the exception of his sister Jennie, who had been sent to Manheim in Baden, Germany to attend Madame Nichol's Institute for Young Ladies, the Cuneys were all settled in Galveston.

N. Wright Cuney's brother, Joseph, became a teacher and a lawyer. He served for some time as

a clerk in the customs house in Galveston and functioned as a clerk in Washington, D. C. He had two sons, Joseph, who died before reaching maturity, and Charles Sumner Cuney who is still living. The latter was educated at Wilberforce University, completed the law course at Howard, served for a number of years as a clerk in the United States Civil Service, but resigned in protest against the segregation of Negroes under John Skelton Williams, the comptroller of the treasury during the administration of Woodrow Wilson. Charles S. Cuney entered thereafter upon the practice of law and engaged in business in which he has prospered. Today he stands out as one of the most prominent and highly respected citizens of the District of Columbia.

Nelson Cuney, another brother, followed the mechanical pursuit of a painter and house decorator. He married and settled in Galveston, where he had a number of children who have since made an impression upon the public in various ways. His son, Norris W. Cuney, II, was educated in Galveston, Texas, and in the Howard University Law School. He later entered the serv-

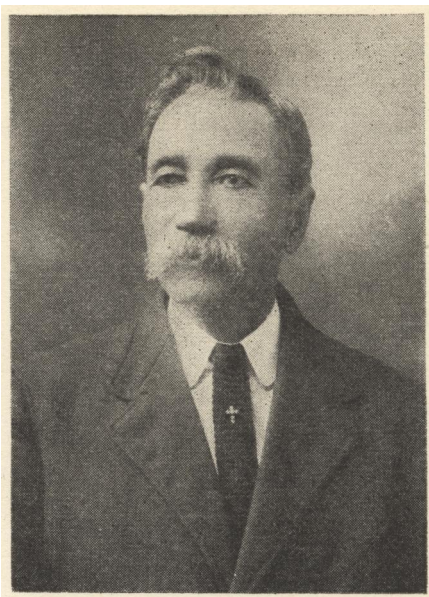


CHARLES S. CUNEY

ice of the Federal Government where he functioned until his death. He left two sons, Norris W. Cuney, III, now a teacher at the Armstrong High School in Washington, D. C., and William Waring Cuney, who is a student of voice, now doing special work in this field at Columbia University. Richard, another son of Nelson Cuney, was graduated in law, and was preparing to practice but died in the Galveston flood along with his mother and grandmother in 1900. Daisy Cuney, the daughter of Nelson Cuney, married Frank Byron who served for a number of years as clerk of the Naval Committee of the United States Congress. Mae Cuney, another daughter, crossed over to the white race as did her aunt Jenny and aunt Laura.

Henry Ernest Cuney, a brother of N. Wright Cuney and of Nelson Cuney, entered politics in which he succeeded for a few years, but passed from the scene early in life.

In 1871 Norris Wright Cuney married Adeline Dowdie, the handsome daughter of a mulatto slave woman and a white planter of Woodville, Mississippi, who moved to Texas in 1864. She was only sixteen but by that time had made ample preparation for teaching. She had a beautiful soprano voice and sang publicly to aid worthy causes. She was of great assistance to her husband as he launched upon his political career to secure for Negroes the facilities of education and the right to participate in the government. He became one of the school directors of Galveston in 1871 and did much to advance public education in that city. Throughout these years he fought without ceasing, in season and out of season, for the establishment of the State School for the Deaf, Dumb, and Blind for Negroes and labored likewise for a Negro Branch of the University of Texas. He was one of the advocates of what became the Prairie View State College in 1879. He was likewise interested in opening avenues for Negro labor. In 1883 he organized a unit of Negroes as longshore-



NELSON CUNEY

men, supplied them with tools, and broke the ban on Negroes as longshoremen in spite of the menace of strikers and mobs that declared that they would dispose of Cuney unceremoniously.

N. Wright Cuney's main contribution, however, was in politics. He was not a politician in the sense of one seeking personal aggrandizement. When he was in position to say the last word on patronage in Texas someone working in opposition to Mrs. Morrow, the postmaster at Abilene, asked Cuney to use his



NORRIS WRIGHT CUNEY, II

influence to dislodge her. Cuney refused, saying: "The lady who is postmaster there is the daughter of a man whose services in behalf of Texas are historical, and not only will I refuse to aid anyone to supersede the daughter of General Sam Houston, but I will file a protest with the department against her removal."

Cuney labored unrelentingly to advance the Negro in the enjoyment of his civic rights and never sought to profit personally by any political victory thus achieved. He became the controlling spirit of the Republican party in Texas by 1884 in spite of some defeats and many cruel attacks, and his influence was not overcome until he had to succumb to the assault of the Lily White element that played into Mark Hanna's hands when he bought up the Southern delegations to nominate William McKinley in 1896. Norris Wright Cuney was not for sale regardless of the amounts made available for the rotten boroughs. He stood to the end for principle and saw his delegation unseated.

Because of his aggressive leadership Cuney evoked so much bitter opposition that he could never be elected to high office. He was a candidate for the State legislature several times but always met defeat. Yet he was doubtless the most influential person of African blood ever to live in Texas. Although not in office he dictated to the incumbents what should be done. While unable to secure election as Mayor of Galveston, he dictated the policy of the successful candidate. The only political positions of consequence which he attained, however, were sergeant at arms of the State Legislature, inspector of customs, and collector of the port of Galveston. He figured conspicuously in the national Republican conventions in control of the delegates from Texas, but his defeat in 1896 and the death of his wife a little earlier combined to break him down, and he died in 1898.

N. Wright Cuney's success was due mainly to the fact that in his

relations with members of both races he demonstrated that he was a man of honor and unquestioned loyalty to what he considered to be right. He enjoyed, therefore, the respect of the best citizens of both races, even that of those who opposed him in politics throughout his career. He arrayed himself eternally against that faction of the Republican Party which, during the 80's and 90's, endeavored to bring that party to the point of abandoning the struggle for human rights. The leaders of this affiliation had in mind to concentrate on the protection of the moneyed interests which since that time has dominated the Republican Party and resulted in its temporary elimination from control of the Federal Government. Because of Cuney's high character and recognized manhood, the increasing restrictions upon the egress and regress of Negroes in Texas were never enforced against him and his family. During his life he had entree to the best the city of Galveston could afford. Wherever he went and became known, he was always respected as a gentleman of high culture and lofty purpose.

Norris Wright Cuney had two children who became well known. His son Lloyd Garrison Cuney, educated at Tillotson College, married and settled in Washington as



NORRIS WRIGHT CUNEY

a clerk in the United States Civil Service and thus functioned until his retirement. He became a deeply religious man and was conspicuous in all movements projected by the Congregationalists with whom he was affiliated. He had no offspring.

Norris Wright Cuney's daughter, Maud Cuney Hare, became the most famous of this branch of the family. She was thoroughly educated and attained prominence as a remarkably talented woman of diversified activities in the musical field. In the introduction to her outstanding work, Clarence Cameron White said of her:

"Mrs. Hare is a pianist, lecturer and writer whose devotion to the highest ideals of her art has compelled admiration. She was born in Galveston, Texas, February 16, 1874, and was graduated from the Central High School of that city. Her musical education was received at the New England Conservatory in Boston and later under private instructors among whom were Emil Ludwig, a pupil of Rubenstein, and Edwin Klahre, a pupil of Liszt. Following the completion of her work under these masters, she became director of music at the Deaf, Dumb and Blind Institute, of Texas, and at Prairie View State College in the same State. In 1906 she returned to Boston where she married William P. Hare of an old and well-known Boston family, and made her home there. She died there February 13, 1936.

"As a concert- and lecturer-pianist Mrs. Hare travelled widely and as a folklorist she collected songs from far off beaten paths in Mexico, the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and Cuba. She was the first to collect and bring to the attention of the American concert public the beauties of New Orleans Creole Music as attested by her *Creole Songs*, published by Carl Fischer and Company of New York City.

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MAUD CUNEY HARE



ADELINA DOWDIE CUNEY



LLOYD G. CUNEY

know of the rise of an articulate group of Negro students of the past who see in him a noble friend of their race; for he never conceived of a higher honor than to be known as the champion of equality and a helper of the oppressed.

Barbarism at the Capitol

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Much of his time for three and a half years Sumner spent in Europe. In June, 1860 he again addressed the Senate. The subject under discussion was still the admission of Kansas as a free state, and as he remarked in the opening sentences, he resumed the discussion precisely where he had left off more than four years before—"The Barbarism of Slavery."

The Cuney Family

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"As music historian Mrs. Hare takes high rank. She collected data in this field for more than a generation. She exhibited her personal collection of Aframerican and Creole music and Early American music which dates chronologically from 120 years ago. As a writer on music subjects she was a valued contributor to the *Music Quarterly*, the *Musical Observer*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, *Musical America*, and many other newspapers and magazines of the first order. For a number of years she edited the column of music notes for the *Crisis*. As a writer of distinction outside of the field of music she attracted wide attention with published works of real literary value. In this list may be included a biography of her father and an anthology of poems called *The Message of the Trees*.

"During recent years Mrs. Hare found time to establish in Boston the Musical Art Studio. Together with the musical activities of an art centre, she fostered and promoted a "Little Theatre" movement among the Negroes of Boston. Included in the plays produced her original play "Antar,"

written around the life of the Arabian poet, was staged in Boston under her personal direction. Concurrently with these activities Mrs. Hare has appeared with great success as recitalist, with William Howard Richardson, the baritone, at such educational centers as Wellesley College, Syracuse University, Albany (New York) Historical and Art Association, and elsewhere in costume recitals of music of the Orient and the Tropics.

"To do any one of these things well would be a distinct achievement, but to do all of these acceptedly as Mrs. Hare did is truly amazing. As a crowning achievement she gave us an authoritative record of *Negro Musicians and Their Music*—a book that is more than an anthology, in fact a source book of great value to musicians, music lovers and all others who wish to be well informed on matters of artistic racial development and progress."

The Third Party

(Continued from page 122)

disposed to join with the progressive Democrats of the North and West to enact these required laws, are likewise charged with insincerity. Many are daily remarking that the Republicans also are seeking to corral Negro voters and, if they pass such measures they will never enforce them as they failed to do in the case of other such laws after the Civil War. The Republican party threw the Negroes overboard in 1877 after they saw the possibility of carrying elections without their support in the South. The present political play, it is said, is a step in the same direction.

The third party movement in the United States has served to upset the expectations of the two older parties but has never succeeded except in cases where the third party supplanted one of the two old parties. The American or Know-nothing party was a movement to register politically the sentiment of an element against foreign-born citizens, especially Cath-

olics, and it could not long thus endure. The Liberty party, launched by anti-slavery forces, doubtless defeated Henry Clay for the presidency in 1844, but found it necessary by 1848 to coalesce with the Free Soilers, another third party opposed to the extension of slavery. The latter served as a transition agency by which the anti-slavery elements left both the Whig and Democratic parties to found the new Republican party which supplanted the Whigs. They died of an unsuccessful attempt to swallow slavery. Inasmuch as the Republican party came near electing Fremont president in 1856, only two years after its organization, and elected Lincoln in 1860, the political scene was again dominated by two major parties as before. After the Civil War the Greenback party and the Populist party likewise menaced the rule of the two-party system, but the proposals of the former proved to be unsound and those of the latter were adopted in the main by the Democratic party. The Socialist and Prohibition parties never attained the position of a following large enough to disrupt the two-party system.

Uncertainty of Law

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"New Deal," endeavored also to change the complexion of the court to assure the continuance of these reforms. To such a proposal the majority of the people of the United States objected, but he finally reached the same end by availing himself of the opportunity to appoint liberals to the vacancies which occurred in the Court during the twelve years he served as the chief executive of the nation. "The voice of the people is the voice of God," as it is sometimes phrased, but it is not always clear exactly what is the voice of the United States Supreme Court. We rejoice when these decisions are favorable to our needs and purposes, and when to the contrary we contrive in some way to change the complexion of the Court.