

# THE DANIEL FAMILY OF VIRGINIA

By L. P. JACKSON\*

A HUSBAND and a wife of great attainment among American families were the late Charles James Daniel and Carrie Green Daniel of Virginia. Their chief interest in life lay in the pursuit of education. Born in this state, the husband during slavery and the wife immediately afterwards, they availed themselves of all the schooling which their day and generation afforded. The father and mother mastered the fundamentals and passed the high school level; six of their eight children completed a college course and six secured degrees on the graduate level. Five of the six, through research ability, made a noteworthy contribution to knowledge in their respective fields and thus became doctors of philosophy. This number of doctors of philosophy in one family establishes a record unsurpassed by any Negro family and perhaps by any American white family.

Of the eight children of Charles and Carrie Green Daniel, six are living. They are Vattel, Sadie, William, Carrie, Robert and Walter; the deceased are Charles and Corinne. Of the six living children four are currently very active in educational and academic circles. Robert is a college president; Vattel is a college dean; and Sadie and Walter are college professors. William served for a

number of years as the associate executive secretary of the American Missionary Association in its department of education; recently he has held positions in the government service as supervisor of several projects and as an associate on government boards. The other child, Carrie, is a high school teacher, housewife and mother of two children.

Vattel married Maggie Brown; Sadie, Irvin St. Clair; Carrie, Ulysses Prunty; Corinne, William Christian; Robert, Blanche Taylor; and Walter, Theodora Williams.

Extending through a period of four generations the genealogy of the Daniel family of today shows that they are the lineal descendants of Lucy Langston and Ralph Quarles; of their daughter, Maria Langston, and Joseph Powell; of their daughter, Lucinda Powell, and William Daniel; and of their son, Charles James Daniel, and Carrie Green. In this same fourth generation they are likewise the lineal descendants of three other couples in the father's line and four in the mother's line, but these are unknown to the writer. From Lucy Langston and Ralph Quarles through Charles Daniel the home

of each member of this family was Louisa County, Virginia.

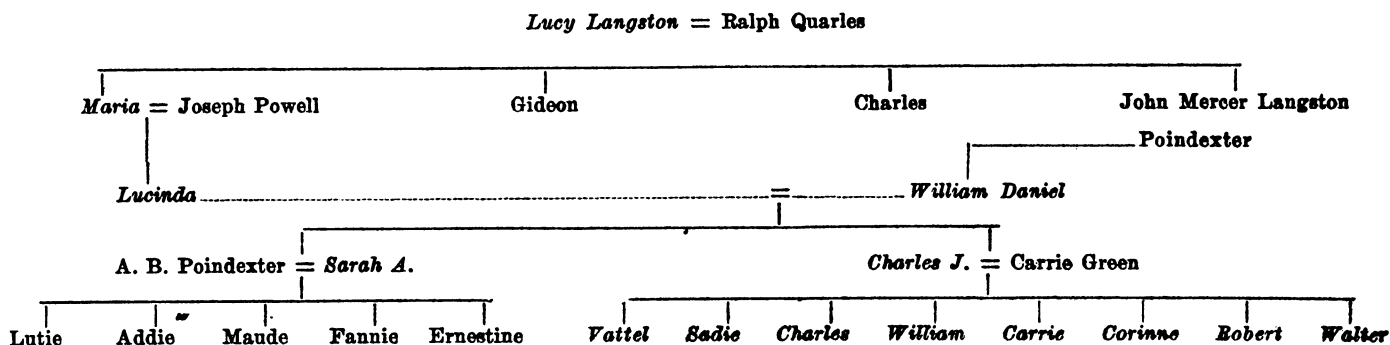
Lucy Langston was a woman of mixed Negro and Indian blood who lived as the only wife of Ralph Quarles for thirty years or more. Quarles was a planter and a kind master who allowed his bondmen a considerable degree of self direction. He liberated several, among whom was none other than his life-long consort. To them were born between 1800 and 1829 four children, who carried the surname of the mother rather than that of the father. One was Maria, mentioned above, and another was John Mercer Langston who later achieved national distinction as an orator and a man of public affairs. To the Daniel brothers and sisters of today he is a great-great uncle.

Maria Langston inherited land and chattels from her father and always lived in comfort. From her father came not only real and personal property, but also human property in the person of her husband, Joseph Powell. Although she held him throughout life as her slave husband, Powell in practice was her free husband. Twenty-one children were born to this couple, one of whom was Lucinda. She too became the owner of considerable personal estate which she no doubt inherited directly or indirectly from her grandfather.

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## PATERNAL ANCESTRY OF THE DANIEL FAMILY

Vattel, Sadie, Charles, William, Carrie, Corinne, Robert, Walter



Lucinda Powell holds an important place in the history of the Daniel family, for it was she who married William Daniel, the first in this genealogical sketch to hold the family name of today. In all probability he was the offspring of a free father and a slave mother. The father was a Poindexter and one of a numerous group of free Poindexters of Louisa. He was born the slave of Peter M. Daniel, a man of social standing but the owner of only a few slaves. Like Joseph Powell, William Daniel was held by his wife as a slave but in reality he lived as a free man. He became legally free in 1847 through the last will and testament executed by her in that year. She willed him a personal estate, but it appears that he developed it no further. At any rate his son was left to struggle for himself.

From the union of William Daniel and Lucinda Powell Daniel came one daughter and one son, Sarah A. and Charles James. Sarah married Andrew Broadus Poindexter and thus strengthened the tie of Daniel and Poindexter. Charles was married to Carrie Green and to them were born the eight children who constitute the chief characters in this family story.

The question of the basis of intelligence and superior achievement in a family group is one which has not been completely determined by modern psychology. The conflicting claims of the influence of heredity and environment still exist. The matter is complicated further by the fact that a line of ancestors progresses in number geometrically with the result that many varying degrees of mentality arise. Every individual has two parents, four grandparents, eight great-grandparents, sixteen great-great grandparents, and so forth. Usually among them are persons of subnormal, normal, and superior intelligence. Applying this to the Daniel family the same general tendency is to be expected. Of the fourteen great-

great-grandparents not presented here, some of them must have been persons of mediocre ability. But of the two who are presented there is evidence that they and their descendants possessed good minds and cultivated their native endowment by adding the element of education. They acquired it even though they lived in slavery time.

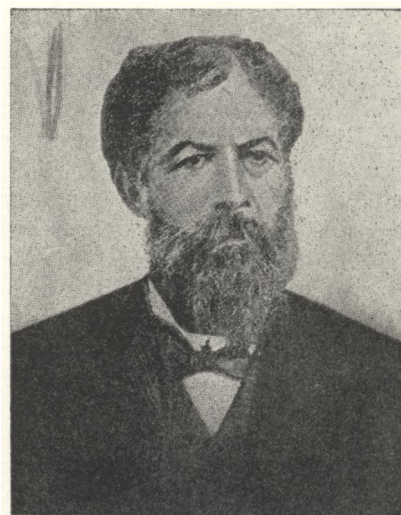
Speaking of Maria Langston Powell, John Mercer Langston says: "Her education was not neglected, and her knowledge of books was unusual . . . she spelled, read and wrote well." And commenting on her large number of children he further says: "Every son of hers and every daughter was given a reasonably fair education . . . with sound moral and religious training." Among these many daughters was Lucinda who later married William Daniel.

That William Daniel was proficient in his trade, there can be no doubt. He was a shoemaker of skill and, in common with most craftsmen who were engaged in the fashioning of leather into boots and shoes, he stood above the rank and file of his fellowmen. He labored at the last during the greater part of his life of seventy odd years and thus contributed to the welfare of his community. In common with most skilled workers of his day he operated a small farm as a side line.

On this farm were born Sarah in 1842 and Charles in 1845. Since the latter was born at the beginning of the presidency of James K. Polk, he bore the nickname, "Polk" Daniel. From the year of his birth until 1870 Charles Daniel lived with his father, his mother, Lucinda, having died within five years after her marriage. During his boyhood he learned his father's trade of shoemaking and worked on his rented farm. He labored on the farm during the day and in the shoe shop at night.

Though his education was handicapped in this manner and though he worked against obstacles that his children and most

Negro children of a later day never encountered, he acquired enough schooling by 1870 to be rated as the most highly educated Negro of his community. Having no opportunity in the beginning of acquiring a knowledge of fundamental learning from a school teacher and facing laws forbidding such action, Daniel contrived certain ingenious methods of learning to read and to cipher not-



JOHN MERCER LANGSTON

withstanding. From the miller, to whom he carried the grain raised on the family farm, he learned the alphabet. But realizing that his trips to the miller were too infrequent, he resorted to climbing into the loft of the miller's barn on Sunday afternoons to practice reading from the collection of letters stored away there. The multiplication table he learned while plowing in the field. Placing a book on the plow before him, he learned the table as he walked up and down the rows. By these and other methods Daniel advanced himself beyond the level of his associates, but to him this was not enough. His next turn was to seek "higher learning" by going away from home to "college."

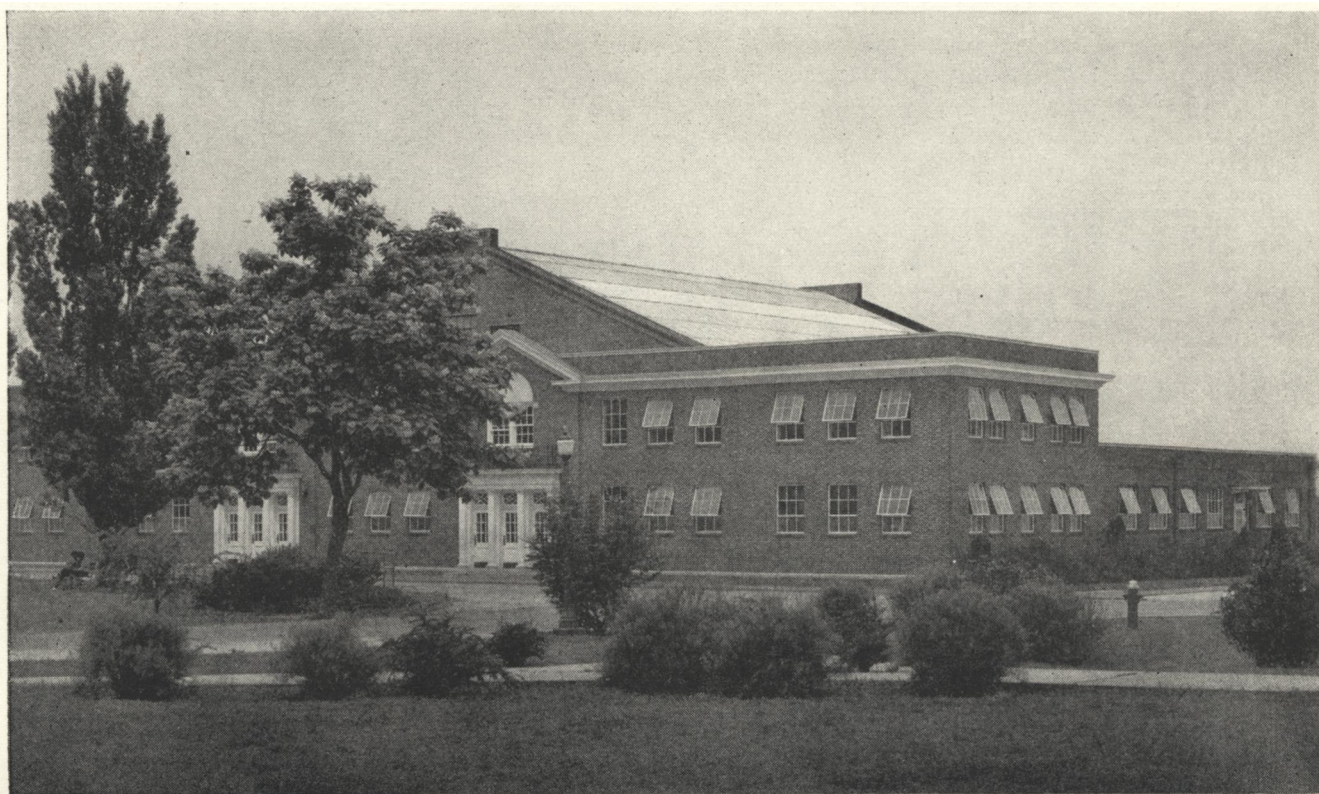
Fortunately for the ambitious Negroes of the post Civil War period, certain northern benevolent societies established schools in the South for their benefit as

early as 1865. One of these was the Richmond Institute founded by northern Baptists at Richmond in that year. Daniel entered this institution in 1871, was graduated from its normal department in 1877, and its academic department in 1878. He appears, then, to have mastered well about all that Richmond Institute then had to offer. It offered more in later years as it eventually grew into the present Virginia Union University. In 1878-79 he undertook the study of law at Howard University but remained there for this one year only. He abandoned law for the reason that, according to his observation, lawyers were always identified with politics. He apparently was not attracted to governmental activity in its professional aspects.

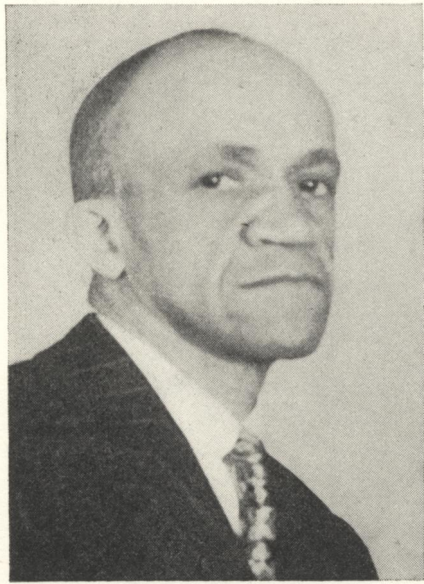
Instead of practicing law Charles J. Daniel chose the profession of teaching. Securing a position as teacher and principal of a school in Danville, he went there about 1882 and remained until 1888. During these years he met Carrie Green, a teacher in



MRS. CARRIE GREEN DANIEL



DANIEL HALL, VIRGINIA STATE COLLEGE



VATTEL ELBERT DANIEL



WALTER GREEN DANIEL



ROBERT PRENTISS DANIEL

this city. In 1889, at the age of forty-four he married her; she then was twenty-three.

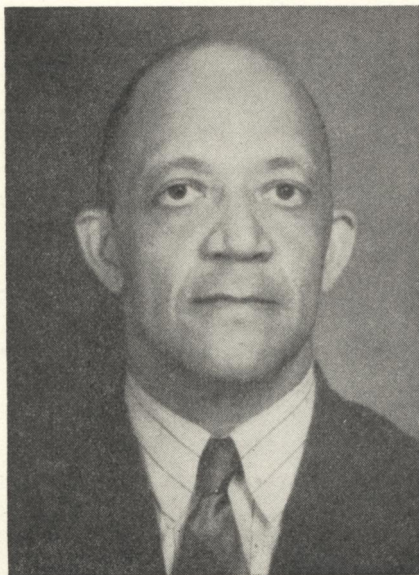
One explanation for the late marriage of Charles Daniel was the role of father which he was called upon to play for the children of his sister, Sarah Daniel Poindexter, who died before her five daughters were grown. Following the same line of action which he later mapped out for his own eight children, Mr. Daniel urged that his five nieces obtain as much education as the times afforded. Leaving Louisa County, as the

girls of no other family in the county had previously done, they attended Hartshorn Memorial College at Richmond during the years 1885-1892. Four of the five were graduated and with high standing. Each married successfully. Lutie married Oliver Derritt; Addie, Dr. John Mitchell; Maude, Empey Holt; Fannie, Edward Meade; and Sarah Ernestine, George Monroe. Before her marriage in 1900, Addie Poindexter taught at the Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute in company with her uncle and counselor,

Charles Daniel. Each of these five sisters, who may be styled the first family of Charles Daniel, is now deceased.

The children of these five Poindexter sisters chose the professions for vocations and excelled in the subjects leading thereto. They attended the leading universities of the land and one by one became physicians, dentists, lawyers, and teachers. One of them, Frances Monroe, was graduated from Mt. Holyoke College and was initiated in "Phi Beta Kappa."

In an attempt to give the basis



WILLIAM ANDREW DANIEL



CARRIE DANIEL PRUNTY



SADIE DANIEL ST. CLAIR



ERNESTINE POINDEXTER MONROE

for the academic achievement of the children of Charles and Carrie Green Daniel, one factor lay no doubt in the keen intellect of the mother as well as the father. Mrs. Daniel attended Wayland Seminary in Washington, D. C., and was graduated from this institution in 1886 as the ranking student in her class of nineteen. Her two brothers, Robert and William, sought advanced training and excelled in it. Robert at-



ERNEST POINDEXTER MONROE

tended Hampton Institute and learned the trade of brickmasonry which he followed for nearly fifty years. William was graduated from Wayland Seminary and became an embalmer and undertaker. Robert's daughter, Nannie Green Gibson, maintaining the family reputation, was an "A" student at Virginia State College.

In 1888 Charles Daniel was called from Danville to Petersburg to fill the position of secretary of the Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute located in this city. The following year he married his former pupil and colleague, and their first offspring, Vattel, was born in Dan-

ville, Virginia. These three occupied an apartment in the main building, the original Virginia Hall, and it was in this same apartment that the remaining seven children were born.

Mr. Daniel held his position for a period of twenty-eight years. Following his death in 1916 his family moved to Richmond where four of his sons completed their college education at Virginia Union University while two of his daughters completed their college education at Fisk University. One son, retarded by poor health, was graduated much later from the Fayetteville State Teachers College in North Carolina.



YVONNE PRUNTY AND EDITH PRUNTY SPENCER

As secretary of the Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute (now known as the Virginia State College) Mr. Daniel's chief duty was to keep the accounts of students and report funds received to the state treasurer at Richmond. He had an excellent memory and in his work he exhibited traits of industry, precision, and accuracy which reflected the discipline he gave himself in simple arithmetic as a self-made scholar on the farm back in Louisa and as a student under formal training at Richmond Institute.

Mr. Daniel gained no reputation as a public speaker nor was he a citizen active in public life. He was rather the reserved type of man with steady habits who knew his job and performed it well. In recognition of his long years of service and of the esteem in which he is held in Virginia State College circles today, the gymnasium on the campus has been given the name "Daniel Hall."

Without another type of contribution which Charles J. Daniel made to posterity his career today would arouse hardly more than local interest. The same observation holds for his wife. Their contribution lay in the maintenance of a type of home life which featured a very careful training of their sons and daughters. Their development was a matter of day-by-day concern to them. History tells us that the mother of George III, King of England, desired that her son be a strong monarch when he ascended the throne of Great Britain. To prepare him for this type of kingship she admonished him daily in these words: "George, be King." In like manner Mr. and Mrs. Daniel, earnestly desiring that their children become capable educational leaders, admonished them daily with the words: "Children, be scholars."

In the accomplishment of this laudable design the Daniel children were blessed with a foundation upon which to build. Heredity and environment counted heavily in their favor. Both father and

mother excelled in school work and possessed a deep yearning for it, just as their parents before them showed similar tendencies. The environmental setting for these five sons and three daughters was likewise well-nigh perfect. All but one was born in a school building, all were reared in this building, and throughout childhood each mingled with a student body whose home training was superior to that of most Negro Virginians of that day.

Surrounded by the facilities necessary to educational growth and guided by parents whose one great aim in life was for their children to excel in education, these brothers and sisters were given an advantage hardly surpassed by any other Negro family in America. It is no accident, then, that five of them have become doctors of philosophy and hold positions of influence in American life.

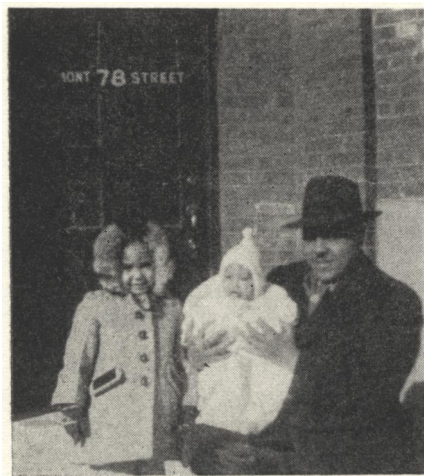
Of the six enterprising children of this family who were graduated



DR. ADDIE POINDEXTER MITCHELL



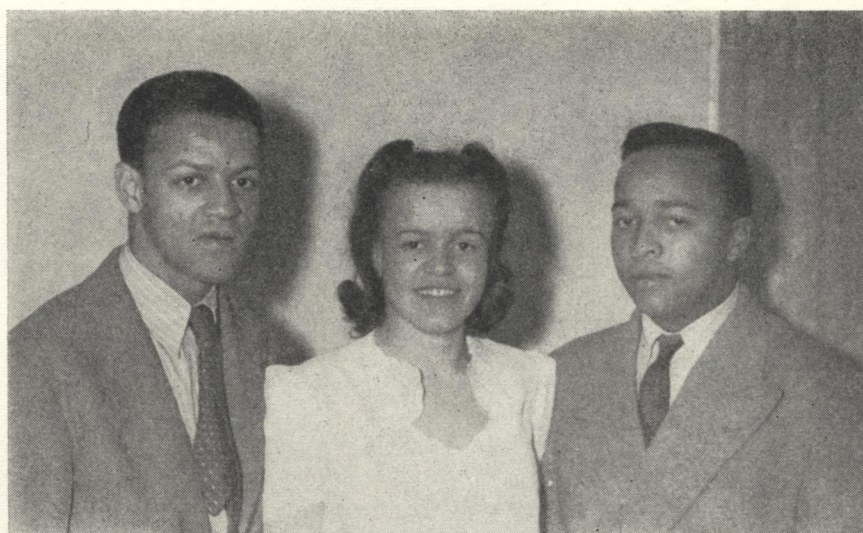
LUTIE POINDEXTER DERRITT



ANDREW POINDEXTER DERRITT WITH DAUGHTER MARJORIE AND SON ANDREW, JR.



SARAH DANIEL POINDEXTER



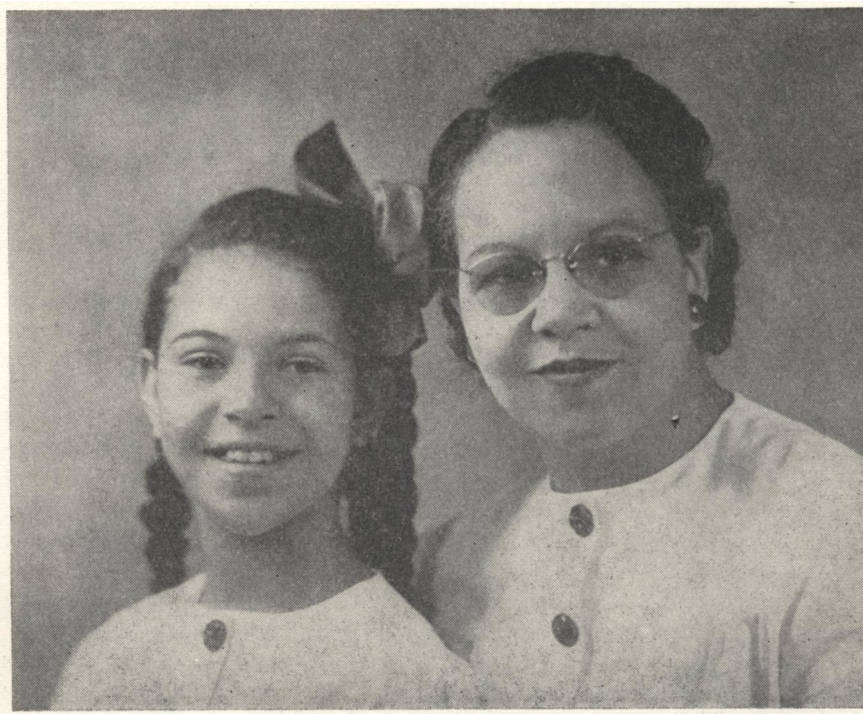
ALAN MONROE, FRANCES MONROE KING AND ERNEST MONROE

from college, all stood at the head of their classes or very close to first place. Because of the fine record which these persons maintained at their respective schools and colleges; because of their sterling morality; and because of the degrees won and positions held since graduation, Virginia State College, Virginia Union University, and Fisk University are proud to include them among their illustrious alumni. In reality Virginia Union claims two generations of

the Daniels—the father and mother and four of their five sons. To this extent the Daniels only serve to give lustre to the fair name of this liberal arts college.

Dr. Robert P. Daniel is the president of Shaw University, Dr. Vattel E. Daniel is dean of instruction at the Alabama State Teachers College, Dr. Walter G. Daniel is former librarian and now professor of education at Howard University, and Dr. Sadie St. Clair is

*(Continued on page 58)*



ELFRED MITCHELL MATHEWS AND DAUGHTER ADDIE

## NEGRO HISTORY WEEK, FEBRUARY 8

THE celebration of Negro History Week, beginning the 8th of February, will offer an excellent opportunity to emphasize the importance of Negro family history and records. The demonstration of the value of such history is now being driven home by the articles on Negro families appearing in this magazine. Even the members of these families get a keener appreciation of their background when the facts are thus investigated and reduced to literary form. These narratives not only record distinctive achievement but show a continuity which is still more significant. These families showing sustained effort upward for generations and in some cases for centuries focus attention on the contributions of the Negro to the making of America.

The opportune moment for emphasizing this background of Negro families is during Negro History Week. Assemblies held by lodges, churches and schools will bring together thousands of people who are seriously concerned with what the Negro has thought and felt and attempted and accomplished. Since the family is the unit of the social order it supplies a key to understanding what a community has actually done for the well-being of the people. If it appears that the family ties have not been strong and that the standards have not been high, the observer may find the cause for inaction in that community and suggest a remedy.

Improvement must be the objective of all history. The rehearsal of affairs which do not stimulate persons in this direction fails to reach the point. Man must learn from the past how to readjust matters for the better in the present and so clarify his vision as to be able to brighten his future. As far as possible, therefore, schools should draw upon the immediate environment for instances of those who have achieved greatness. Local here, however, does not mean the circle in which one moves, but

rather those men and measures of consequence actually known to the participants in these exercises. Time should not be lost in parading before the public every publicity seeker who may have attracted local attention but has not yet developed himself sufficiently to get into the main stream of public life.

Washington, D. C., for example is crowded with politicians whom their credulous people delight to "honor," although they have achieved nothing for others and nothing for themselves. Yet in this city there is a family which has been running a feed store for more than a century. In Philadelphia a half dozen or so self-advertisers are always in the lime light, but we seldom hear anything about a catering firm there which has been doing a successful business for more than a hundred years. In New Orleans you first make the acquaintance of those considered as present-day leaders, but at the same time there may be found in that city property owners and business men who are still carrying on the work begun by their forebears who, in spite of the handicaps more than a century ago, acquired property, built homes and made themselves an asset to their city. In Oklahoma you hear with regret the sad story of those Negroes who grew rich by inheriting valuable oil lands and quickly squandered their patrimony, but in Oklahoma City today is an enterprising Negro who became the successful junk man of the city. When the acute shortage of housing forced many Negro families into the street this man and his wife bought a hundred or more acres of land just outside of the city and built four hundred houses to shelter these families. They pay for these houses as they build them and they sell every one they build. This man is a maker of history.

Of all persons, Negro writers should be careful about what they record as history. Since the Negro

element in the United States is considered by our "standard" historians as having no history at all, what is said to the credit of the Negro should be restricted altogether to what can be actually proved. Hearsay and rumor are not proof. Columnists now contributing to Negro weeklies take delight in playing up such undocumented statements, and many students and teachers who have made no special study of history are accepting these assertions as facts. The Negro press publishes these extravagant accounts because they help to sell the papers among the gullible. In this way such unscrupulous publicists are doing the Negroes in America much harm for which the race must suffer at the hands of those discrediting all claims of the Negroes as makers of history because of these propagandists in quest of filthy lucre. The Negro public is now being surfeited with so much falsehood and exaggeration of the unimportant that it is difficult for history to secure a hearing.

### The Daniel Family of Virginia

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an assistant professor of history at Miner Teachers College. Dr. William A. Daniel, who, unlike his brothers and sisters, taught only one year, was an economist for the Wage Stabilization Board until this agency was recently terminated. Aside from teaching, these brothers and one sister have done some writing, one brother does a considerable amount of speaking, and nearly all have held high office in teaching and professional organizations of a statewide or regional scope. To these organizations and to the institutions which employ them, they have rendered excellent service—the type of service which their dutiful parents envisioned for them fifty years ago.