

## THE DAVID T. HOWARD FAMILY

BY FANNIE H. DOUGLASS

"I do not want freedom for myself—I am old and do not expect to be here much longer—but I want to see my children free." Thus spoke the mother of David T. Howard more than ninety years ago. She was brought to this country a slave, from the island of Madagascar and spent her entire life in Georgia.

She must have been much younger than surmised because she lived to see her three sons and one daughter reach maturity and left a progeny of seven grandchildren and twelve great grandchildren.

She loved her four children but "my son David," as she affectionally called him, was her favorite. It was he who remained near her and gave her all comforts in her old age, after the others drifted away and about whom little was ever heard.

She was thrifty and with her emancipated husband purchased property, built an attractive home, and gave her son, David, three acres for himself and his family. It was in this setting that she passed her last years happily.

David T. Howard was born a slave in Knoxville, Crawford County, Georgia, December 10, 1849. He worked on the plantation owned by Colonel Thomas C. Howard, father of William Schley Howard, from whom he took his name following his freedom.

After the war, he worked in the office of Colonel R. C. Robson, a railroad man, until 1880. At that early date he exemplified the sterling character and persistence to duty that was to mark him later in life.

It was during these early days in the office of Colonel Robson that he learned to read and write. It was said of David Howard, that, although he was without a considerable amount of formal education, this was not easily discerned through the manner of his speech or his social conduct. He was refined in behavior; he was cultured in expression; he was frugal, industrious, economi-



MOTHER AND DAUGHTERS

Left to right: Eleanor Howard [Murphy], Fannie Howard [Douglass], Mrs. David T. Howard and Lottie L. Howard.

cal, and capable of long distance planning.

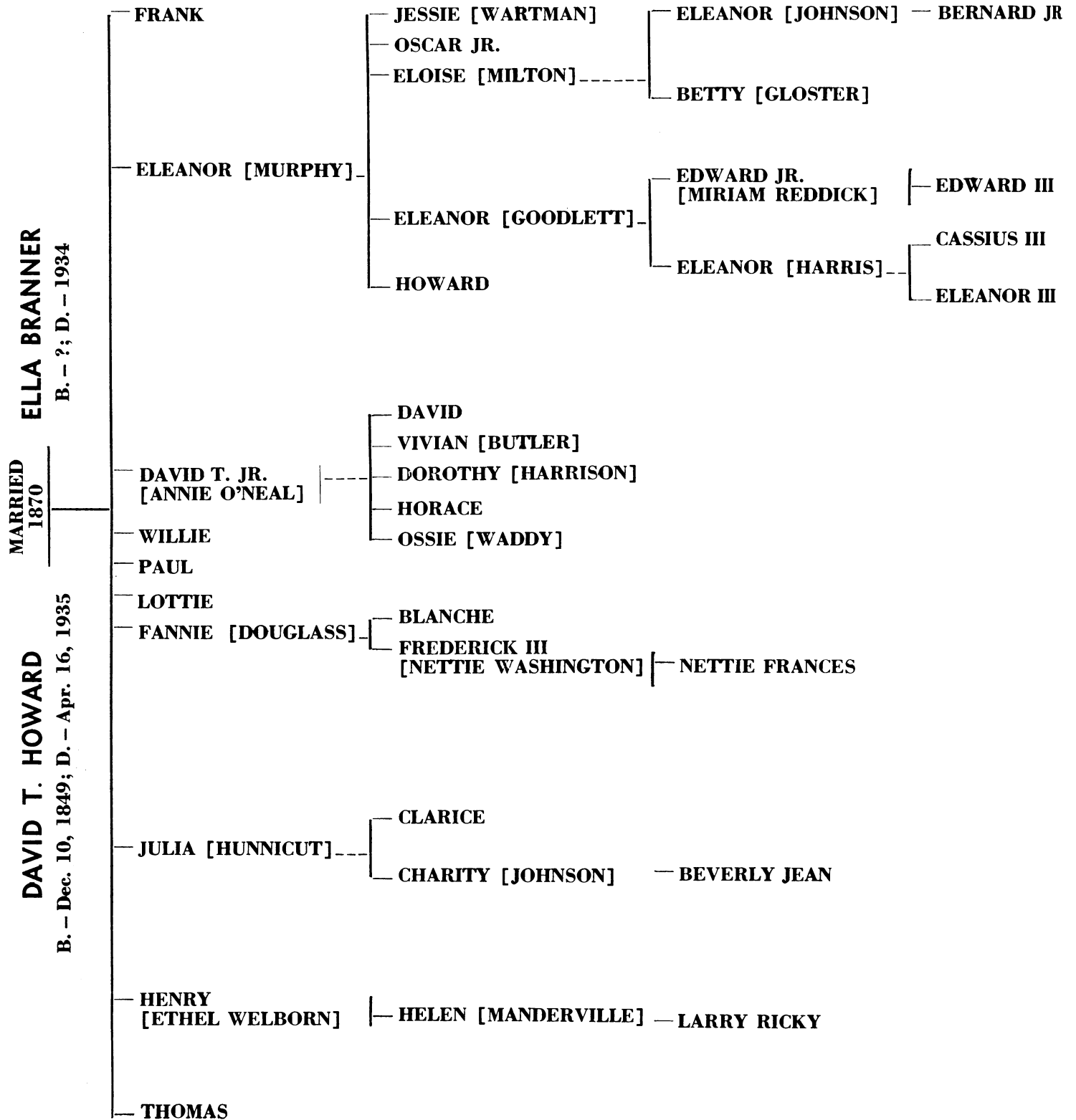
David T. Howard was not content to remain in the office of Colonel Robson, recalling advice to go into business for himself if he wanted to "get ahead." This he did in 1880. He made a decision to go into the undertaking business realizing that there was little or no competition in this field. He learned embalming

and became the first colored embalmer to be registered in Georgia. He established his first funeral home, which he maintained for several years, in the central part of the City of Atlanta. As the business grew and expanded he moved to more commodious quarters on Piedmont Avenue where the building still stands.

David T. Howard married Ella Branner in 1870. She was born in

## DESCENDANTS OF DAVID T. HOWARD

(1) Children                      (2) Grandchildren                      (3) Great Grandchildren                      (4) Great, Great Grandchildren



Sommerville, Georgia, and came to Atlanta to attend the old Storr's school, one of the schools of the American Missionary Association, an outgrowth of which was the Atlanta University.

She became a part of the civic life of Atlanta taking an active part in the church, temperance and club work. She organized the first Atlanta Woman's Club which later became affiliated with the National Association of Colored Women. She was the first president of the Gate City Free Kindergarten Association and for a number of years was the president of the Daughters of Bethel, an outstanding organization connected with the Big Bethel A.M.E. Church.

Of this union ten children were born, seven of whom reached maturity. There were fifteen grandchildren and nine great grandchildren.

A home was built on the property given by the mother and in this lovely little modest cottage all of the children were born. As the family grew additions were made and with the help of the wife, who had a passion for flowers, it became one of the most attractive spots in that section of Atlanta. The neighbors would frequently stop to admire the flowers and rare plants, and they were usually rewarded with handsome bouquets.

There was room for a large garden with different varieties of fruit trees. Registered cows furnished milk and butter not only for the family, but also for the neighborhood. Horses and equipment necessary for the undertaking business were housed in the large stable in the far corner of the lot. The raising of poultry, including turkeys, became one of the family hobbies. The products of the garden kept the family table amply supplied, and a healthy group of youngsters profited thereby. Later these extra activities were moved to the farm, a distance of nine miles out Peachtree road from Atlanta where they were conducted on a much larger scale.

Here he found time to indulge his hobby and the farm became one of the show places of Atlanta in the early 1900's. The children and grandchildren met every summer,

## ILLUSTRIOUS ANCESTORS



NETTIE FRANCES WASHINGTON DOUGLASS  
Great Granddaughter of David T. Howard and Booker T. Washington and  
Great Great Granddaughter of Frederick Douglass.

gathering energy from the out door life to carry them through the winter. At times there were from fifteen to twenty mouths to feed daily and on Sunday when the men of the family joined the group, there were twenty-five and over.

The chores at the farm were proportionately shared and it was a hardship for no one. The farm and country home will be remembered by friends from afar for the famous barbecues and the picnics for different Sunday schools, and for the an-

nual outing for Miss Chadwick's Orphanage. She was an English woman friend of Mrs. Coleridge Taylor, and devoted her life's work to this institution situated near Spelman College. The children looked forward to this day every summer when they could spend a day at Howard's Farm where there were trees, flowers and a tennis court. They always left with fruits and vegetables given to them as they scurried to get a seat in the Tallyho that came for them.

One of the outstanding events at Forest Home as it was affectionately called, was the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary, the Howard's Golden Wedding in October 1920. The ceremony with the reception was held out of doors under the trees, and beautiful yellow leaves of the hickory trees, yellow chrysanthemums, and ferns formed the lovely back-ground decoration for the occasion. Professor W. H. Crogman of Clark University, who was "best man" at the wedding fifty years before, was attendant at this time. The music was furnished by an orchestra, and one of the leading tenors from Atlanta University. A piano duet was rendered by his daughter, Fannie Douglass, and grand daughter Jessie Murphy Wartman. The magnificent display of gifts from friends of all walks of life testified to the esteem in which the couple was held.

The three sons, Frank, David, and

Henry and two grandsons David III and Oscar Murphy grew up in the undertaking business and became expert embalmers and undertakers. Julia, the youngest daughter, became the bookkeeper following graduation from Atlanta University, and held this position until her marriage. The eldest daughter Eleanor Howard Murphy then came into the business and spent over thirty years as bookkeeper and confidential secretary. Following the death of her father she managed the business for ten years when she retired.

The other daughter Fannie traveled with her husband, the concert violinist Joseph H. Douglass, as his accompanist, and later was for twenty-five years an instructor of public school music in the Junior High schools of Washington, D. C.

Frederick Douglass III, son of Joseph and Fannie Douglass, graduated from Vermont University, and

finished medicine at Meharry Medical College. His first appointment was to the Veteran's Hospital at Tuskegee Alabama where he did outstanding work in surgery. He married Nettie Washington and to them was born a daughter Nettie Frances.

In 1933 the Twenty-Seven Club, an organization composed of outstanding business and professional men of Atlanta, presented David T. Howard with a bronze plaque citing him as being the most constructive factor in Atlanta Business Circles and the city's finest citizen in his time.

The Mayor of the city on this occasion said of him as a citizen: "Men who contribute what David T. Howard has contributed to public life become more than outstanding persons—they become institutions. Very few men have lived as useful a life as has this man nor have better standing than David T. Howard."



Family gathering at Fiftieth Wedding Anniversary of David T. and Ella B. Howard

Mr. Ulrich, of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce said, "David T. Howard deserved all the honor that he could receive; and that anyone who could operate a business for fifty years has the spirit of pioneering that must be reckoned with in the making of America."

D. T. Howard's interest in the advancement of youth was evidenced by the vast number that he assisted by financing their education, asking only in return that they become a credit to the race.

David T. Howard's attitude toward his community was ultra liberal. He lavished labor and funds on other people's projects as if they were his own. His activities included earnest support of school, church, fraternal organizations, the Y.M.C.A. and the Y.W.C.A. He was also one of the founders and directors of the First

Negro Bank in Atlanta; a member of Atlanta University Housing Project Board; a charter member of the Atlanta Interracial Commission; a veteran member of the St. James Lodge A. F. and A. M.; and for over fifty years a staunch member of Big Bethel A.M.E. Church where he served in the capacity of class leader, Trustee, and Treasurer. The Howard High School was named in *his* honor. He was a man of faith and had an intuition for sensing the historical and progressive significance of things which never develop in the ordinary mortal. His generosity knew no limits except the indefinable bounds of a great faith.

David T. Howard died April 16, 1935, almost a year following the passing of his faithful wife.

The Rev. J. Raymond Henderson, pastor of Wheat Street Baptist

Church had this to say at David T. Howard's funeral, "In a world where men falsely believe themselves to be better than other men and embitter themselves with hate, he was an apostle of goodwill, of love, the greatest commoner in the history of Atlanta, the type of which is difficult to duplicate."

Governor Slaton of Georgia said, "You can see the stones of the church he worked so faithfully and gave so freely to maintain, but you cannot tell how many lives have been touched by his benefactions." Congressman Wm. Schley Howard in his eulogy said, "He was one of the most noble men I have ever known of any race." David T. Howard was more than a great churchman, more than a great citizen, he was a great man.

## Four Horsemen

(Continued from Page 72)

all on the basis of individual merit? The citizens association seeks to solve these problems on the level of the local community.

It is unfortunate that many Negroes expect all of their problems to be solved by new laws or favorable court decisions. It is certain that such laws and decisions will result in improved conditions and continued racial progress. They will enable Negroes as individuals to rise above proscriptions of race and enjoy a new day of freedom. For the masses of Negroes, however, there is still the question of making progress that rests upon family security, educational efficiency and moral strength. To remove legal barriers to the improvement of these basic institutions is only the first step. The need for continued special racial strategies will exist as long as any type of racial distinctions endures.

For the present and the foreseeable future, if conditions in states where laws already are favorable to Negroes constitute a criterion, it will be necessary for Negroes to continue to rely strongly upon the "Four Horsemen of Racial Progress."

No single one of the "Four Horsemen" alone can do the job. Each serves a different end. The A.S.N.L.H. is ineffectual as a means to the progress of Negroes, if it does not influence the white majority and the policies of the N.A.A.C.P., the Urban League and local citizens associations. The N.A.A.C.P. could win a fight and lose a war, if it did not consider causal factors related to progress that the A.S.N.L.H. can reveal. In like manner, the Urban League and the citizens associations must base their actions upon sound knowledge of forces and conditions. There is no such thing as the possibility of one succeeding and all the others failing, if progress is to be achieved.

All persons interested in the progress of Negroes, as well as mankind in general, might consider contributing something extra to the organizations that are helping a great nation by raising its most underprivileged element.

For lasting progress, organizations and movements related to home, school and church must receive first consideration. To hasten this progress, support the A.S.N.L.H., the N.A.A.C.P., the Urban League and your local citizens association!

You can give most in time, service and money to your "pet" charity, but be sure to give something to freedom and progress by contributing to the support of all four of the "Horsemen of Racial Progress."

Send Materials for the  
*Negro History Bulletin* to  
ALBERT N. D. BROOKS  
1528 Ninth Street, Northwest  
Washington, D. C.

## Pioneers of Long Ago

By JESSIE H. ROY  
and GENEVA C. TURNER  
Illustrated by LOIS M. JONES

An unusual book by two of the well known authors of *Word Pictures of the Great*. *Pioneers of Long Ago* fills a gap in history taught pupils on the intermediate grade levels.

Well Illustrated  
263 Pages Price \$4.00

## Associated Publishers

1538 - 9th Street, N. W.  
Washington, D. C.