

More about the Tanner Family

AFTER we had despaired of securing additional facts about the George Howard Tanner Branch of the Tanner Family and had gone to press Mrs. Maudelle B. Bousfield who had been delayed by illness submitted some important additional facts and illustrations which we are publishing herein. In the April issue appeared a sketch of Mrs. Bousfield, who is well known in this country for her work as a teacher and administrator, and it is fortunate that we can publish a cut of her in her mature years. Of much importance also is it to have the picture of her mother, Arrena Tanner Brown, once a teacher in the St. Louis Public Schools, and finally the companion of Charles H. Brown, who taught in the same system for about half a century. She was not only the mother of Maude B. Bousfield, but of three other children: Charles Howard Brown, Elmer Alfred Brown, and Nell Brown McMahon. This mother died in 1935. Mrs. Bousfield has only one child, a daughter married to Leonard Evans, Jr. This daughter is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin, having received the degrees of Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts. She taught at Tuskegee from 1937 to

1939 and at the Du Sable High School from 1941 to 1943 when she married. She has a son, Leonard Bousfield Evans fourteen months old, the grandson of Maude Bousfield Brown, great-grandson of Arrena Tanner Brown, and great-great-grandson of George Howard Tanner.

Charles Howard Brown, was educated in the St. Louis Public Schools. He served as postal clerk in that city from 1906 to 1938 and

as superintendent postal clerk from 1938 to the present. Nell Brown McMahon, married to William O. McMahon, a government employee in St. Louis, is a graduate of Stowe Teachers College. She has done case work in connection with Washington University, the Social Security Office in that city and in a similar capacity with the Aid for Dependent Children in Chicago. From 1940 to 1945 she was the superintendent of the Industrial School for Negro Girls at Tipton, Missouri. She is the mother of two sons: William O. McMahon, Jr., a graduate of Lincoln University in Missouri and a Master of Arts of Howard University. He served with the United States Army overseas in World War II, and is now employed by the International Harvester Company in Chicago. The other son, Tanner B. McMahon served with the rank of Lieutenant in the United States Medical Corps and is now at the Howard University Medical School.

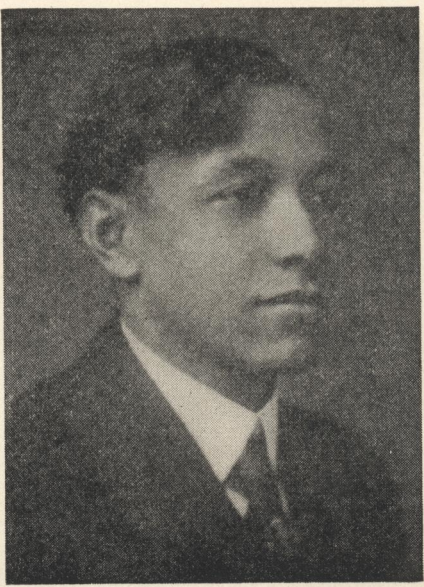
Benjamin T. Johnson has just made it known that he is one of the sons of Rev. J. Q. Johnson and Dr. Halle Tanner Johnson, the other son "having been a postal clerk in Chicago for a long number of years. Benjamin T. Johnson is a



ARRENA TANNER BROWN



MAUDELLE B. BOUSFIELD



CHARLES HOWARD BROWN



NELL B. McMAHON



MAUDELLE BOUSFIELD EVANS

graduate of Howard University and Harvard University and is a member of the Massachusetts Bar and the Boston Bar Association in which city he is engaged in the practice of law.

"In 1923 he married Mary Parker of Boston, a graduate of Simmons College and a staff member of the State Department of Health. They have three sons. Sgt. Benjamin, Jr., fought with the 366th Infantry in North Africa, wrote for the *Stars and Stripes* and received the Purple Heart in the Italian Campaign. Later he was sent to the Philippines. He speaks five languages fluently and is a Senior now at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, in which city the Johnsons have lived on one street now for more than a hundred years. Cpl. John Q. II was a cadet in the Army Air Force at Tuskegee when the war ended and at various times has sold the *Afro-American*, particularly when the family lived in New London, Connecticut. Joseph is a student at the Roxbury Memorial High School, Boston, Mass."

It may be interesting to note that the records of several branches of the Tanner Family have been collected and deposited in the Library of Congress in the Manuscript Col-



LEONARD BOUSFIELD EVANS

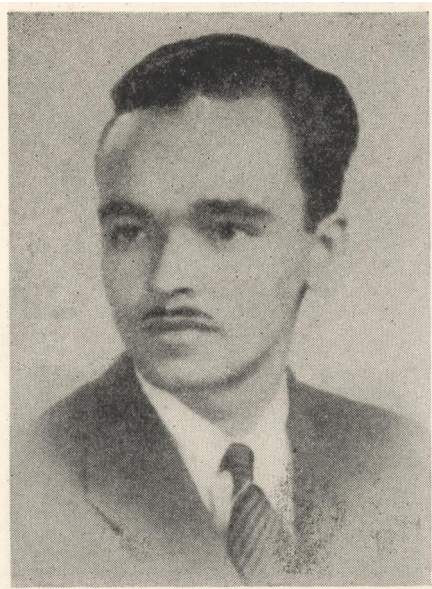
lection of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History along with several thousands of other documents. One branch of this family still holds on to the records and undertakes to safeguard them in a home which is not fire-proof and thus exposes them to the danger of being destroyed at any time. Persons who collect such records and store them in school buildings where they are likewise exposed are running the same risk.

Even if these records may thereby be preserved, it is highly impor-

tant for the documentation of the history of the Negro that as many of these records as possible be placed in the Library of Congress where they will be accessible to scholars from all parts of the world. A scholar from abroad seeking to examine the manuscript materials available in the United States will go to the National Archives and the Library of Congress. He may never know of the smaller collections kept here and there, and if he had such information it might be inconvenient for him to make many rounds to find what ought to be made easily accessible. It is earnestly desired, therefore, that others in charge of valuable family records will follow the example of the surviving Tanners who have the vision of their value among the documents of the Nation.

These records make it possible to study this and other families scientifically. The brief sketches now being run in the BULLETIN are more educational than scholarly. The aim of this series is to show the background of outstanding families and to trace roughly their record from the earliest known times down to the present. From this brief treatment new possibilities for research will be opened. From this effort Negroes will be con-

(Continued on page 189)



TANNER B. McMAHON



WILLIAM O. McMAHON, JR.

visual education which had long been denied.

During the First World War, Camp Taylor situated near Louisville, housed a large number of colored troops. The city was policed in part by soldiers and those from the South were vulgar and rough with colored citizens, creating a near riot, and the rough Negro elements were arming for battle. Meyzeek heading a committee of citizens hastily visited the Commanding General, acquainted him with the dangerous situation and urged that the white military police be withdrawn from Negro districts and that colored military police be organized and substituted. He pledged civil support. This was done, and order was restored. Negro civil police followed after the war.

In May 1910 Meyzeek was elected President of the Kentucky State Negro Normal School to replace a discredited official. After finding unqualified teachers solidly entrenched through politics and that scandal had engulfed the school, he resigned in June after filing with the Board of Trustees a frank report of faults and failures.

On another occasion he courageously stood before the Board of Education in defense of two young teachers who were summoned to show cause why they should not be suspended for altercation with insulting white park guards. He was always frank in criticism of inadequate supplies tendered the colored schools. He was slightly reprimanded by four Superintendents for what they considered unfair remarks while in a General Principals' Conference, and for his bold civic activities; but he was never punished by reason of his outstanding abilities, success as an administrator, unimpeachable character and loyal support of his race.

As a sarcastic rebuke to the Kentucky Day Law, Meyzeek conceived the idea of establishing an Indiana University Extension Center in southern Indiana where intelligent Negroes and southern whites may

sit down in the same class room. While at work on his Master degree, he pulled every accessible string to influence the officials of his old Alma mater to consider New Albany as a possible site for the school and secured the cooperation of principals of New Albany and Jeffersonville High Schools. Together they guaranteed expense for the first trial year. The school opened and continued at New Albany for several years until moved to a permanent site in Jeffersonville, and hundreds of Negroes have been benefited thereby.

He was for many years a popular instructor of teachers' training courses and institutes throughout the state and was once the President of the Kentucky Negro Educational Association.

In all efforts for civic improvements Meyzeek was well in the vanguard. The late Dr. E. G. Harris said that "his citizenship has been a blessing to our people. He is the last of the old fighting guard often called 'old war horse.'"

More about the Tanner Family

(Continued from page 176)

vinced of the importance of the continuity of their history, and others who have despised the record of non-whites will cease to write the Negro off as a non-entity.

There is also something else likewise important in dealing with this aspect of our social history. Negro families not only have endured. They have also achieved. There has not been much resting on the oars after having gone a considerable distance on the way. In many cases these stories show that the descendants have surpassed the record of their forbears. The father was a minister and the son learned to function both as a minister and an educator. The mother was a seamstress and the daughter became a milliner with a creditable business, and so on the story goes. Progress is the rule.

It is not the purpose of this effort to prove that all Negro fami-

lies are like these to which we have directed attention, nor is the objective to leave the impression that every member of the families discussed has been a success in life. All families are made up of the good, bad and indifferent. A family meets the test of being distinguished if most of its members show a determination to struggle upward and endeavor to give the world the best service of which they are capable. Such is the record of the families treated in this series of sketches.

One especially impressive feature of the stories is the service rendered the Nation. In most cases the members of these families have served in all the wars of the United States. They have reason for complaint from the abuses of public officials and the denial of equality and justice by both the states and the nation, but they have been loyal and have defended the honor of the nation with an enthusiasm which must make this country hide its head in shame when it considers how such patriots have been rewarded with evil for their good deeds. Herein such Negroes have shown the vision of knowing that history does not warrant the pessimism of believing that wrong will forever triumph over right.

It is remarkable also that these heads of families and those who followed them were equal to the double task of taking care of their own while bearing the burdens of others. After earning money to pay taxes on their property to maintain schools which their children could not attend they had to provide otherwise for the education of their children in private schools. After laboring to build towns and cities for the convenience of the public, they were denied the use of its parks, and were driven from the best streets to the slums where they had to contend with the vicious agencies at hand to drag them socially downward. Those who achieved well under such circumstances are really heroes.