

## Biography of Rev. W.J. Hightower

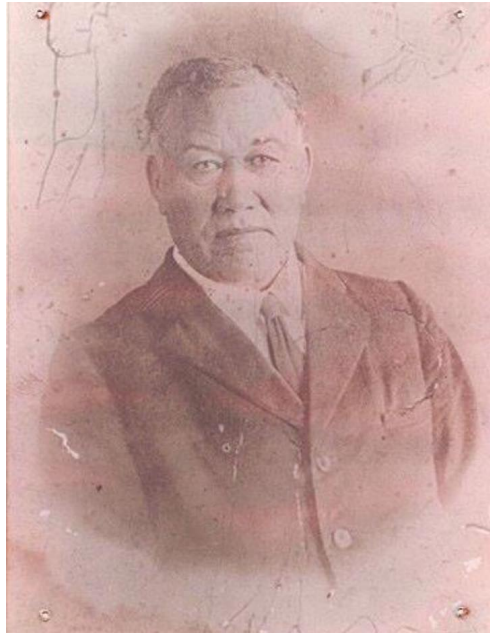
Compiled By

James R. Morgan III

Great, Great, Great Grandson of Rev. William Jefferson Hightower

(With Contribution from Gary J. Thornton-Griffin

Great Grandson)



*Rev. William Jefferson Hightower*

### Introduction:<sup>i</sup>

In the fall 2015 issue of the *Phylaxis Magazine* this writer produced the work *Finding Our Fathers: Prince Hall Freemasonry and African American Genealogy* which was an examination of the importance of utilizing the history and primary source documentation of Prince Hall Grand Lodges and other African American fraternal organizations as data sets for gleaning genealogically relevant information.<sup>1</sup> One of my relatives that I highlighted in that particular work was Rev. William Jefferson Hightower, a man who I first learned about when I was six years old from my grandfather and Masonic Brother, Gary J. Thornton-Griffin of Fellowship Lodge #439 in Headland, Alabama. Rev. Hightower was my Third Great Grandfather and although he lived a most extraordinary life our family had been left with few written records of his life probably due in large part to a tragic fire that occurred shortly after his death and took the life of his oldest daughter, my great, great grandmother Roberta Hightower-Thornton. The following is a reconstruction of his life based largely on documentary evidence as well as some family oral history concerning his parentage which I later found to be true based upon D.N.A. evidence. This reconstruction would not have been possible if the account of his

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<sup>1</sup> Morgan III, J. (2015) 'Finding Our Fathers: Prince Hall Freemasonry & African American Genealogy', *The Phylaxis Magazine*, XLII(3), pp. 13–15.

life, his ability to overcome obstacles and his steadfastness in the faith of his acceptance had not been communicated to me as a child by my grandfather.

It is for that reason that Brother Griffin is also given attribution in this paper as this is the beginning of a story of three different Prince Hall Masons from three different generations and yet we form one continuous line in one family. Rev. Hightower is a personal hero and inspiration to me and as he too was a Prince Hall Freemason it is my hope that this account of his life can be a glimmer of light for the Craft at large. Perhaps more of us will continue to connect with our great masonic ancestors and continue to pass our great fraternal legacies on from age to age, through countless generations...

### **Rev. W.J. Hightower:**

Rev. William Jefferson Hightower was born January 12, 1868 near the town of Clayton in Barbour County, Alabama, the reputed child of Robert Tarplin Hightower and Mahala Baldwin Grubbs. He is supposed to have been raised by his Caucasian father Robert among his "legitimate" children while maintaining a relationship with his Negro mother and being shuttled between his father's home and that of his mother and her husband Mr. Willaby Grubbs in the nearby town of Louisville, Alabama. His father (according to his granddaughter Robbie Thornton-Pride) paid for his education so that he could take up a suitable profession (carpentry and brick masonry) though the specific institution of his learning or tutor is currently unknown. In 1891, he appears in Rev. W.H. Mixon's "A Methodist Luminary" and is listed as a Traveling Licentiate, which marks the earliest known document of his career in Ministry.<sup>2</sup> He married Lizzie Griffin on January 28, 1892<sup>3</sup> and they had two daughters together between 1888 and 1894 named Roberta (1888-1938) and Rozeta (born 1894-unknown).<sup>4</sup> The wedding was performed by Rev. Jesse Brazier, a traveling elder in the A.M.E. church and believed to possibly be the man responsible for Rev. Hightower's conversion to African Methodism and possibly the person who started him on his career. He had one son from a previous relationship/marriage but the names of his son and first spouse are currently undocumented.

W.J. Hightower served as a representative from Russell County, Alabama to the Republican state convention on March 22, 1896 as a part of an all colored delegation with instructions to cast ballots for President William McKinley and to prevent a merger between the Republican and Populist parties as the Populist faction was seeking to disenfranchise African Americans.<sup>5</sup> The Populist Party was viewed as a divisive force that wanted the Negro vote but was only willing to support Negro candidates for the least influential posts, even eliminating blacks from positions they already had been serving in. On December 9, 1896 Rev. Hightower was elected to serve as Marshall for the Alabama Conference of the A.M.E. Church with Bishop Henry McNeal Turner presiding.<sup>6</sup> On July 26, 1899 Rev. Hightower performed the second day Devotional Ceremony for the Sunday School Union Convention in Alabama, reading and preaching from the first chapter of Ephesians.<sup>7</sup> On October 15, 1899 Rev. Hightower was appointed to the Finance Committee for the Women's Home & Foreign Mission Society

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<sup>2</sup> Mixon, W.H. (1891) *A Methodist Luminary*. Selma, Alabama: Selma Printing Company.

<sup>3</sup> Ancestry.com. *Alabama, Select Marriages, 1816-1942* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc, 2014

<sup>4</sup> United States of America, Bureau of the Census. *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900*. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1900. T623, 1854 rolls.

<sup>5</sup> The Montgomery Advertiser - 22 Mar 1896 - Page 12

<sup>6</sup> *The Alabama Conference* (1896) *The Southern Christian Recorder*, 16 December.

<sup>7</sup> Butler, M.E. (1899) 'The General Church News', *The Christian Recorder*.

alongside the Presiding Elder, Rev. D.C. Edmundson.<sup>8</sup> In the November 9, 1899 issue of *The Christian Recorder*, Rev. Hightower's name appears as hailing from Hatchachubee, Alabama as one of the financial donors to the effort to start an A.M.E. backed college in Queenstown, South Africa.<sup>9</sup>



Bishop Henry McNeal Turner

Rev. W.J. Hightower was ordained an Elder (fully credentialed minister) on December 10, 1899 by Bishop Henry McNeal Turner at St. John's A.M.E. Church in Montgomery, Alabama.<sup>10</sup> Bishop Turner also assigned Rev. Hightower his first pastoral post at Hatchachubee.<sup>11</sup> The Hightower family appears in the 1900 United States Census as residing in Columbus, Georgia alongside the family of Rev. William M. Clark and his wife Florida.<sup>12</sup> Rev. Winfield Henri Mixon also mentioned Rev. W.J. Hightower in his *History of African Methodism in Alabama* (1902) stating "Alabama is blessed with a great many young men in ministry. Special mention should be made of (among a list of others) W.J. Hightower".<sup>13</sup> In 1903, he was appointed by Bishop Wesley J. Gaines to preside over the Oswiche District Circuit.<sup>14</sup>

At the same 1903 Conference Rev. Hightower is documented to have been appointed as a member of several committees: Mite Missionary Money Committee, the Stations, Circuits and Missions Committee and lastly the Special Collections & Donations to Payne University Committee.<sup>15</sup> It is believed that in about 1903 he assumed the pastorate of the Gaines Chapel A.M.E. Church in Dothan. Gaines Chapel A.M.E. church had originally been founded in 1877 as Colored Methodist Church and was placed on land donated by Ms. Elvira Guilford, a black landowner in the city of Dothan.<sup>16</sup> Evidence that has been uncovered to date shows that Rev.

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<sup>8</sup> Missionary Searchlight (Selma, Alabama) 15 Oct 1899, Sun, Page 1

<sup>9</sup> *A South African College* (1899) *The Christian Recorder*, November 9, 1899.

<sup>10</sup> The Montgomery Advertiser - 12 Dec 1899 - Page 6

<sup>11</sup> The Montgomery Advertiser (Montgomery, Alabama) 13 Dec 1899, Wed. Page 12

<sup>12</sup> Original data: United States of America, Bureau of the Census. *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900*.

Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1900. T623, 1854 rolls.

<sup>13</sup> Mixon, W.H. (1902) *History of African Methodism in Alabama*. Nashville, Tennessee: A.M.E. Sunday School Union.

<sup>14</sup> Negro Appointments African Methodist Conference Comes to Close Date: Tuesday, December 15, 1903 Paper: Montgomery Advertiser (Montgomery, Alabama) Volume: LXXIV Issue: 302 Page: 8

<sup>15</sup> Negro Churchmen Met African Methodist Conference Now in Session Date: Thursday, December 10, 1903 Paper: Montgomery Advertiser (Montgomery, Alabama) Volume: LXXIV Issue: 298 Page: 8

<sup>16</sup> Blankenship, M.B., Crenshaw, D.S.W., Foreman, B.J., Hardy, D.R. and Rumley, R.R.J. (eds.) (2000) *History of the African Methodist Episcopal church in Alabama 1868-1999*. Birmingham, Alabama: Banner Press. Pg. 116

Hightower was an active and able preacher. Rev. Hightower and his wife attended the Sunday School Convention in Hartford, Alabama on Sunday July 30, 1905.<sup>17</sup> On August 19, 1905, a notice appeared in *The Truth* newspaper (Birmingham, Alabama) stating “Every person in Dothan should go out and help Rev. Hightower in his rally on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in this month for the interest of the church”.<sup>18</sup> The July 22, 1905 issue of *The Truth* carried the news that “Rev. W.J. Hightower is carrying on a revival this week and he is having good success”.<sup>19</sup> Notices like these greatly illustrate the important role that ministers like Rev. Hightower played for the African American community at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as not only voices of hope and optimism but as will be seen also as practical institution builders.

At the 1906 Alabama Conference, Rev. Hightower was elected as a Trustee of Payne University which had been founded in 1889 in the city of Selma. It was also at the 1906 conference that Rev. Hightower was appointed as a subscription agent for the Christian Review magazine and served as Secretary of the Second Year Ministers Exam Committee having been appointed by Bishop Levi J. Coppin.<sup>20</sup> 1908 was also a momentous year as Rev. Hightower is credited as being the visionary architect who saw fit to do away with the original wood built structure for Gaines Chapel and replace it with a sturdier brick edifice, also renaming it to Cherry Street African Methodist Episcopal Church.<sup>21</sup> Cherry Street A.M.E. is the mother church of the A.M.E. denomination in Alabama and the oldest church structure in the city of Dothan.<sup>22</sup> According to a historical marker that was erected by the Historic Chattahoochee Commission and the Dothan Landmarks Foundation in 1979:

On this site in 1877 Gaines Chapel Church was organized. A wooden structure was erected adjacent to an existing graveyard. In 1891 and 1901 additional land was purchased. In 1908, the present building was dedicated. This structure was of early twentieth century design. At this time, its name was changed to Cherry Street A.M.E. Church. The Church has been declared the "Mother Church" of the A.M.E. denomination in the State of Alabama.

The construction of the new building was particularly special for the African American community of the city because although Rev. Hightower had raised funds to purchase building materials, the brick factory in town refused to sell bricks to Negroes. Rev. Hightower initiated a plan whereby members of all ages in the black community began to “liberate” bricks from white work sites and abandoned buildings until enough had been gathered together to start to build. A mural was created in Dothan to honor this story. For many years after Rev. Hightower’s death several elders in Dothan’s African American community could recall being charged to bring home one or two bricks by their parents to give to Rev. Hightower's plan. Cherry Street A.M.E.

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<sup>17</sup> *The Truth* (Birmingham, Alabama) · Sat, Aug 5, 1905 · Page 1

<sup>18</sup> *The Truth* (Birmingham, Alabama) · Sat, Aug 19, 1905, Page 2

<sup>19</sup> *The Truth* (Birmingham, Alabama) 22 Jul 1905, Sat, Page 1

<sup>20</sup> *Minutes of the Thirty-Ninth Session of the Alabama Annual Conference* (1907) Nashville, Tennessee: A.M.E. Sunday School Union.

<sup>21</sup> *The Heritage of Houston County* (2003) (The Heritage of Alabama; Vol. 35 Vols). Clanton, Alabama: Heritage Publishing Consultants. Pg. 12-13

<sup>22</sup> Sailors, J. (2016) *Alabama’s Oldest AME Church Celebrating Milestone*. Available at: [http://www.dothaneagle.com/news/alabama-s-oldest-ame-church-celebrating-milestone/article\\_2cb404ca-4586-11e2-8271-0019bb30f31a.html](http://www.dothaneagle.com/news/alabama-s-oldest-ame-church-celebrating-milestone/article_2cb404ca-4586-11e2-8271-0019bb30f31a.html) (Accessed: 19 August 2016).

Church is the oldest continually standing religious structure in the city today and was built at a cost of \$8,000 in 1908 money.<sup>23</sup> Rev. Hightower's name is etched into the cornerstone of the building.



*Gaines Chapel A.M.E. Church (1902)*

Rev. Hightower's name appears in the A.M.E. Handbook of 1909 as a registered Minister residing in Louisville, Alabama.<sup>24</sup> He is also listed as a resident of Dothan, Alabama in the 1910 Census.<sup>25</sup> Rev. Hightower was elected as one of eight delegates to the 1912 National A.M.E. Convention in Kansas City, Missouri representing his home state.<sup>26</sup> The 1912 Quadrennial Session of the African Methodist Episcopal Church had Booker T. Washington as one of the highlighted speakers<sup>27</sup> and it is highly likely that Rev. Hightower would have seen him speak and possibly met with him as a delegate from Alabama, though this is admittedly speculative. By 1912 Rev. Hightower was elevated from being a Pastor to the rank of a Presiding Elder in the denomination and he governed the Columbia District of A.M.E. Churches in Alabama under the auspices of Bishop Joshua H. Jones.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> *The A.M.E. Congregation* (1908) *Dothan Eagle*, 7 November, p. 6.

<sup>24</sup> Butcher, C.S. (1910) *Handbook of the A.M.E. Church 1909*. Nashville, Tennessee: A.M.E. Sunday School Union.

<sup>25</sup> Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910 (NARA microfilm publication T624, 1,178 rolls). Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29. National Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>26</sup> Governor O'neal Wil Speak to Conference. Executive Accepts Invitation to Address A. M. E Gathering Now in Session Date: Saturday, December 2, 1911 Paper: Montgomery Advertiser (Montgomery, Alabama) Volume: LXXXII Issue: 336 Page: 12 Piece: One of Two

<sup>27</sup> A Kansas City Political Deal: The Weekly Gazette Globe (Kansas City, Kansas) 20 Jun 1912, Thu, Page 1

<sup>28</sup> Negro Methodists Meet. Alabama Conference in Session at Florain (Floral) Date: Friday, December 6, 1912 Paper: Montgomery Advertiser (Montgomery, Alabama) Volume: LXXXIII Issue: 341 Page: Seven





*Gaines Chapel A.M.E. Parsonage, Dothan, Alabama. (1902)*

Rev. Hightower made the newspaper at the 1912 Alabama conference because he and a delegation (consisting of himself, Rev. G.B. West, Rev. T.E.H. Dickerson and Rev. T.J. Stewart) from his region stated that they felt that territory was being taken from the Alabama Conference and given to the Eastern Alabama Conference in an unfair manner. The verdict was found in his faction's favor.<sup>29</sup> In about 1912 he became a Prince Hall Affiliated Freemason and a charter member of Fairview Lodge #513 F.&A.M.-P.H.A. in Dothan, Alabama.<sup>30</sup> Rev. Hightower's name appears on the membership returns of his lodge in the 1913 proceedings listed among some of the most noted black churchmen of the city at that time. Some of the other members of note included Rev. James M. Dixon, Rev. Monty W. Frazier and Rev. Still Paul Pryor (Hightower's predecessor at Gaines Chapel).

In December of 1913 the 46<sup>th</sup> Annual Alabama A.M.E. Conference was held in Dothan at Rev. Hightower's beloved home church. During this session the Bishop Henry McNeal Turner, the now Senior Bishop of the A.M.E. Church visited and gave remarks.<sup>31</sup> Rev. Hightower was assigned to the Committee on Admission during this conference.<sup>32</sup> He also served as one of the ministers responsible for hospitality of the delegates.<sup>33</sup> At the formation of the South Alabama Conference in Enterprise, Alabama, Rev. Hightower was named as the chairman of the Endowment Committee by Bishop Joshua H. Jones on December 9, 1914.<sup>34</sup> On December 12, 1914 Rev. Hightower was named Presiding Elder of the Columbia District by Bishop Jones.<sup>35</sup> During the last week of January 1915, Rev. Hightower held a ministerial conference with the

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<sup>29</sup> Stormy Session of the Conference Lively Discussion over Boundary Lines of the Conference Yesterday Date: Saturday, December 14, 1912 Paper: Columbus Daily Enquirer (Columbus, Georgia) Volume: 84 Issue: 279 Page: Six Piece: One of Two

<sup>30</sup> Annual Returns of Subordinate Lodges." Proceedings of the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Alabama. Thirty- Sixth Annual and Special Communication (Reckoned from Formation, Forty-Fourth), Tuskegee Institute, Tuskegee, Alabama. Birmingham: Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Alabama, 1913. Page 723. Print.

<sup>31</sup> Dothan Eagle (Dothan, Alabama) · Fri, Dec 5, 1913 · Page 1

<sup>32</sup> Dothan Eagle (Dothan, Alabama) · Fri, Dec 5, 1913 · Page 4

<sup>33</sup> Dothan Eagle (Dothan, Alabama) · Fri, Dec 5, 1913 · Page 4

<sup>34</sup> Colored Methodists Hold Conference. Bishop Jones Compliments Organization on -Payment of Regular Assessments Date: Thursday, December 10, 1914 Paper: Montgomery Advertiser (Montgomery, Alabama) Volume: LXXXV Issue: 344 Page: Five

<sup>35</sup> A. M. E. Conference Appointments by Bishop Jones South Alabama Session Held at Eufaula Great Success Date: Tuesday, December 14, 1915 Paper: Montgomery Advertiser (Montgomery, Alabama) Volume: LXXXVI Issue: 348 Page: Nine

ministers of his district at Cherry Street A.M.E. Church.<sup>36</sup> On December 15, 1916 Rev. Hightower visited the East Alabama A.M.E. Annual Conference.<sup>37</sup>



Cherry Street A.M.E. Church

In 1916 Rev. Hightower was one of the chief organizers of the "Interdenominational Ministers Alliance of Houston County".<sup>38</sup> This organization which I am informed still exists was created as an interfaith professional and continuing education organization for local black ministers. On January 9, 1916, Rev. Hightower held his first quarterly conference for the year 1916 at Cherry Street A.M.E. Church. This conference and his two sermons were noted as the first story mentioned in the newly established column "News for Colored People" by Mr. J.W. Cook in *The Dothan Eagle* newspaper further exemplifying the high regard Rev. W.J. Hightower was held in by the black community of southeastern Alabama.<sup>39</sup>

Rev. Hightower was elected as a ministerial delegate to the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Quadrennial Session of the A.M.E. Church which took place from May 3-24, 1916 at "Mother" Bethel A.M.E. Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.<sup>40</sup> On April 30, 1918 the Trustees of Payne University met at St. John's A.M.E. Church in Montgomery to confirm the legal trustees and then decided to amend the charter of the school. This amended charter increased the number of trustees from nine to twenty-five.<sup>41</sup> Rev. W.J. Hightower was serving as a Trustee from the South Alabama Conference.<sup>42</sup> By 1919 Rev. Hightower had been reassigned as the Presiding Elder of the Troy District as several newspaper notices from 1919 and 1920 illustrate his presiding at conferences and events at St. Paul's A.M.E. Church in Troy and making visits to other nearby towns such as Brundidge, Alabama.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> The Voice of the Negro (Dothan, Alabama) · Fri, Feb 5, 1915 · Page 2

<sup>37</sup> A. M. E. Conference of East Alabama is Opened at Opelika Bishop J. H. Jones Presides at Session Date: Thursday, December 16, 1915 Paper: Montgomery Advertiser (Montgomery, Alabama) Volume: LXXXVI Issue: 350 Page: Three

<sup>38</sup> Negro Preachers of Houston Organize Bible Study School Date: Sunday, July 9, 1916 Paper: Montgomery Advertiser (Montgomery, Alabama) Volume: LXXXVII Issue: 191 Section: First Section Page: Ten

<sup>39</sup> The Dothan Eagle (Dothan, Alabama) · Tue, Jan 11, 1916 · Page 3

<sup>40</sup> Wright Jr., R.R. (1916) *Centennial Encyclopedia of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Book Concern of the A.M.E. Church.

<sup>41</sup> The Emancipator (Montgomery, Alabama) 04 May 1918, Sat, Page 1

<sup>42</sup> The Emancipator (Montgomery, Alabama) 04 May 1918, Sat, Page 3

<sup>43</sup> The Emancipator Montgomery, Alabama Sat, Nov 8, 1919 – 2

Rev. Hightower and his wife both appear in the 1920 Census residing in Dothan, Alabama.<sup>44</sup> In 1921 Rev. Hightower attended the Alabama A.M.E. Conference in Prattville where they voted unanimously to endorse Bethel College as a new A.M.E. backed school and to appropriate money for it as well. Bethel College was in the city of Montgomery.<sup>45</sup> This was not the only event centered around an academic institution that occurred this year in Hightower's life. Payne University Trustees entered discussions to move the college from Selma to the city of Montgomery. This was because a landfill had been placed roughly one hundred yards away from the main site of the original campus and other evidence of unequal treatment by the city and county governments. A faction of ministers sued to have this action ceased and stated that the Trustees were not legally entitled to their positions and therefore unable to make such a decision.<sup>46</sup> On February 12, 1921 cooler heads prevailed as Bishop Benjamin F. Lee was able to sit all sides down and see to it that the purchase of the two-hundred-acre campus of the former St. Joseph College was ratified.<sup>47ii</sup>



Payne University

Rev. Hightower is also documented as having served as Pastor for New Bethel A.M.E. Church in Florala, ending his time there in 1928 though the date of his starting there is unknown.<sup>48</sup> His wife Lizzie Griffin-Hightower was a school teacher at the City Colored School at that time. In the 1930 Census, Rev. Hightower and Lizzie are listed as residents in Eufaula, Alabama.<sup>49</sup> Rev. Hightower preached the twenty-third anniversary service at his beloved Cherry Street A.M.E. Church on December 20, 1931.<sup>50</sup> He is also documented to have Pastored at St.

<sup>44</sup> Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920. (NARA microfilm publication T625, 2076 rolls). Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29. National Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>45</sup> Negro Methodist Conference Meets. Bethel College Endorsed by A. M. E. Churches at Meeting in Prattville Date: Friday, November 4, 1921 Paper: Montgomery Advertiser (Montgomery, Alabama) Volume: XCII Issue: 308 Page: Two

<sup>46</sup> The Selma Times-Journal (Selma, Alabama) 09 Feb 1921, Wed, Page 5

<sup>47</sup> Negro University Goes to Montgomery: Ministers and Laymen of A. M. E. Church Ratify Purchases of St. Joseph's College Date: Sunday, February 13, 1921 Paper: Montgomery Advertiser (Montgomery, Alabama) Volume: XCII Issue: 44 Page: Twelve

<sup>48</sup> Kent-Lambert, K. (1928) 'Alabama: Birmingham News', *Chicago Defender*, 20 October, p. A11.

<sup>49</sup> United States of America, Bureau of the Census. *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930*. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1930. T626, 2,667 rolls

<sup>50</sup> *Anniversary Week of A.M.E. Church to Start Sunday* (1931) *The Dothan Eagle*, 17 December, .



John's A.M.E. in Eufaula (1928-1930) as well as Jones Chapel A.M.E. Church in his hometown of Clayton, Alabama<sup>iii</sup> (1930-1932) and John's Chapel A.M.E. in Enterprise, Alabama.<sup>51</sup> Rev. William J. Hightower died on August 2, 1935, in Clayton, Alabama, at the age of 67.<sup>52</sup> A memorial service was held in his honor at the South Alabama A.M.E. Conference, which happened to have been held at the Cherry Street A.M.E. Church.<sup>53</sup> Many years after his death as a part of a wider project to tell the history of Dothan, Alabama through visual art, a mural was created by artist Wes Hardin to honor the story the construction of Cherry Street A.M.E., the church built with stolen bricks. The stone that the builder refused had indeed become the chief stone of the corner!



Cherry Street A.M.E. Church Mural (Artist: Wes Hardin)

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<sup>i</sup> An earlier version of the biography of Rev. W.J. Hightower was published in the Phylaxis Magazine Vol. XLIII No. 4 (Fourth Quarter 2016). This current version has been amended and updated due to documentation that was not previously available to the writer.

<sup>ii</sup> Payne University would remain at this new site until the school's unfortunate demise in the 1970's. The land is still owned by the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

<sup>iii</sup> Rev. W.J. Hightower's pastorate over Jones Chapel A.M.E. is substantiated by a group of administrative documents which were shared with this writer that hold his signature as the Pastor. These documents consist mostly of financial statements and Sunday school attendance records

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<sup>51</sup> Blankenship, M.B., Crenshaw, D.S.W., Foreman, B.J., Hardy, D.R. and Rumley, R.R.J. (eds.) (2000) *History of the African Methodist Episcopal church in Alabama 1868-1999*. Birmingham, Alabama: Banner Press.

<sup>52</sup> Alabama Deaths and Burials, 1881-1952." Index. FamilySearch, Salt Lake City, Utah, 2009, 2010. Index entries derived from digital copies of original and compiled records.

<sup>53</sup> *Delegate Choice to Occupy A.M.E. Convention Time* (1935) *The Dothan Eagle*, 24 October.

Rev. William  
J. Hightower

NUMBER BRIDE GROOM Marriage Date Married By:

1	Adams, Cora	Fain, Robert	23 December 1905	Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G., M.G.
2	Antley, Espy	Taylor, Charley	05 January 1907	Rev. Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G., M.G.
3	Askew, Sarah Jane	Hudgins, Albert	01 June 1908	Rev. Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G., M.G.
4	Beachamp, Lucinda	Eberheart, Monroe	24 December 1905	Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G.
5	Blackmon, Eloise	Seals, Ed	14 September 1907	Rev. Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G.
6	Blackmon, Nora	Brown, A.B.	19 September 1907	Rev. Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G.
7	Blay, Minnie L.	Hawkins, G.H.	21 February 1906	Rev. Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G.
8	Brown, Johnie	Rickes, John Walter	06 January 1906	Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G., M.G.
9	Crapps, Rosa	Culver, Willie James	25 December 1906	Rev. Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G., M.G.
10	Cumbry, Julia	Robinson, Allen	03 February 1906	Rev. Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G., M.G.
11	Davis, Nellie	Miller, Henry	12 May 1907	Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G., M.G.
12	Denson, Annie	Lockhart, Ed	27 September 1905	Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G., M.G.
13	Everett, Jane	Wilson, Robert	20 December 1908	Rev. Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G.
14	Finigins, Idell	Cooper, Dan	04 March 1909	Rev. Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G.
15	Flowers, May Bell	Clayton, G.W.	19 March 1905	Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G., M.G.
16	Gaston, Ada	Clark, Frank	09 February 1907	Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G., M.G.
17	Gisendaner, Victoria	Waters, Arter	23 January 1908	Rev. Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G.
18	Granville, Carrie	Mack, Isiah	12 May 1907	Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G., M.G.
19	Harris, Lenora	Martin, Cotie A.	22 September 1907	Rev. Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G.
20	Hartfield, Cathen	Oneal, Anderson J.	02 July 1905	Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G., M.G.
21	Hays, Fadie	Clark, Jesse	25 November 1906	Rev. Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G.
22	Henry, Laney	Robertson, Milton L.	20 November 1907	Rev. Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G.
23	Higgins, Annie Bell	Truluck, James	25 February 1907	Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G., M.G.
24	Idner, Lensey	Cawthon, Lonzie	20 October 1906	Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G., M.G.
25	Irwin, Mandy	Godwin, Jeff	05 July 1907	Rev. W,J, Hightower, M.G.
26	Jackson, Stella	Washington, Isaac	05 August 1906	Rev. Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G., M.G.
27	Johnson, Mattie	Newman, Will	21 March 1909	Rev. Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G.
28	King, Anna	Gissendaner, Love	11 March 1909	Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G., M.G.
29	Labe, Kittie	Gunn, J.E.	14 April 1907	Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G., M.G.

30	Leonard, Cornelia	Curry, L.C.	01 March 1909	Rev. Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G.
31	Martin, Anna	Grace, John	24 June 1906	Rev. Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G., M.G.
32	Mathis, Susie	McElroy, S.M.	29 October 1907	Rev. Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G.
33	McKerrick, Katie	Morris, J.S.M.	17 October 1907	Rev. Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G.
34	Moore, Vale	McGriff, Tommie	02 May 1909	Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G.
35	Murphy, Lizzie	Cotton, Lee	27 January 1908	Rev. Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G., M.G.
36	Peak, Mamie	Thurman, Nathan	21 January 1908	Rev. Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G.
37	Perry, Pearl E.	Gamble, Soloman G.	04 March 1909	Rev. Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G., M.G.
38	Ross, Maria	Williams, Wm.	27 January 1907	Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G., M.G.
39	Rouse, Lilla	Turner, Eugene	26 February 1905	Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G.
40	Scott, Mary	Jones, Willis	22 December 1905	Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G., M.G.
41	Shackleford, Pastoria	Mason, L.	19 May 1909	Rev. Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G.
42	Taylor, Virginia	Tyson, James	21 Oct 1908	Rev. Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G.
43	Thomas, Martha	Hall, Thomas	21 June 1906	Rev. Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G., M.G.
44	Thompson, Mabel	Buchanan, Waverly B	23 May 1909	Rev. Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G.
45	Tiller, Henrietta	Willis, Wesley	16 September 1907	Rev. Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G.
46	Walker, Hattie	Kizer, J.R.	10 July 1905	Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G., M.G.
47	Walker, Maggie	James, Noble	13 April 1908	Rev. Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G.
48	Willis, Hattie	Jackson, Ed	03 June 1905	Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G., M.G.
49	Worthy, Bulah	Lightner, Cullus	08 July 1906	Rev. Rev. W.J. Hightower M.G., M.G.