

**The Pierce St Greats:  
The Talented Tenth of Lynchburg, Virginia**

Olivia M. Green

Randolph College

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## Introduction

Pierce Street is the smallest historical District in Lynchburg, Virginia, and began as a training and recruitment camp during the Civil War named Camp Davis. People began settling in the area during the 1850s and the abandoned barracks became houses. Pierce Street was then annexed into the city of Lynchburg in 1870 and became a racially mixed residential neighborhood. The Spencer-Calloway store, located on Pierce Street, was one of the few grocery stores available to people of color in Lynchburg, at the time. Located above the store were apartments that housed many people throughout the years including Amaza Lee Meredith, who will be featured later in this thesis. The Anne Spencer Museum website states, “By the 1880s Pierce Street included one of the first African American–owned grocery stores and a community center and was rapidly becoming a center of activity in the community. During the 20th century, the people of Pierce Street served as a microcosm of the forces at work in Lynchburg and the country,” this quotation is an excellent explanation of the environment of Pierce Street in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.<sup>1</sup>

## Thesis Statement

The 1300 and 1400 blocks of Pierce Street housed some of the most influential African Americans in Lynchburg’s history. These residents used their wisdom and higher education to uplift, advocate for, and educate those in need in every way they could. Many of the figures in this thesis continue to be a topic of discussion not only in Lynchburg but in the United States as a whole. These intellectual leaders were part of the phenomenon known as the Talented Tenth.

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<sup>1</sup> Jane B White, “The Neighborhood,” Anne Spencer Museum, accessed December 10, 2021, <http://www.annespencermuseum.com/neighborhood.php>.

## W.E.B. Du Bois

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, who is most often credited for the term Talented Tenth, was a Black educator, sociologist, historian, civil rights activist, and much more. Du Bois was born on February 23, 1868, and grew up in a liberal town in Massachusetts. In 1885 Du Bois attended Fisk University in Nashville, TN; after graduating from Fisk he attended Harvard to get his master's in history. In addition to his master's, he received his PhD at Harvard, in 1895, and was the first Black man to do so there, writing his doctoral thesis on "The Suppression of the African Slave Trade to the United States of America, 1638-1870". As a sociologist, Du Bois was able to do extensive research into post-Civil War African American life and was a pioneer in the field. *The Souls of Black Folk*, his most influential work, is a group of essays on how racism and discrimination affect all parts of African American life; many of his beliefs were against those of Booker T. Washington, specifically on how African Americans should go forward post-Reconstruction. After the book was published Du Bois quickly rose to prominence. In the last few years of his life, 1961-1963, he lived in Ghana, and he died the day before the March on Washington on August 27, 1963.

The Talented Tenth is a term that was popularized by W.E.B. Du Bois which emphasizes the need for college-educated Black men, and I include Black women, to become leaders within the community. I define this concept using Du Bois' text as such: one in ten Black men (and women) possess the education that gives them the ability to become leaders within the black community, allowing them to empower, uplift, and educate others. Du Bois says "The function of the Negro college, then, is clear: it must maintain the standards of popular education, it must seek the social regeneration of the Negro, and it must help in the solution of problems of race contact and cooperation," this quotation is an explanation of what Du Bois believes that colleges

should do for Black communities.<sup>2</sup> Du Bois thought traditional education was not only about individual knowledge but also a way to integrate. This is contradictory to the philosophy of Booker T. Washington. He believed that African Americans should find community with themselves and follow an education that emphasized trades, he was also staunchly opposed to integration. These two men had a well-known disagreement on what they thought was the best course of action for the Black community during the Reconstruction era and beyond. A quotation from “The Negro Problem” states “The Negro race, like all races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men. The problem of education, then, among Negroes must first of all deal with the Talented Tenth; it is the problem of developing the Best of this race that they may guide the Mass away from the contamination and death of the Worst, in their own and other races,” this is Du Bois’ definition of the Talented Tenth.<sup>3</sup> That exceptional, i.e. the higher educated, Black men and women should uplift those who do not have the resources to do it on their own It is also important to acknowledge that this term is limiting, especially as Du Bois has written it. Women are not considered in this definition though the majority of educators are women. In addition, a formal post-secondary education is not the only way to contribute to and uplift the Black community. Even Du Bois himself critiqued his definition later in life finding it to be limiting. At this time in the United States, the late 19th century more specifically post-Reconstruction transitioning to Jim Crow, it was incredibly difficult for Black people of all ages to get an education on any level from grade school to collegiate studies. In addition, many laws in place restricted Black people from voting, owning land, fair wages, and limited citizenship as a whole. The idea of the Talented Tenth was that those who were able to get an education or training

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<sup>2</sup>Du Bois, W. E. B. (William Edward Burghardt), 1868-1963. *The Souls of Black Folk; Essays and Sketches*. Chicago, A. G. McClurg, 1903. New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1968.

<sup>3</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, “The Talented Tenth’ [Excerpts],” The Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition, April 7, 2015, <https://glc.yale.edu/talented-tenth-excerpts>.

should use those newfound skills to help people in their community. Du Bois was one of the most influential men in African American history. Without him, we would not have extensive research, from a person who lived during that time, on the lives of Black Americans post-Civil War, and his impact as a leader in the community is unparalleled. Du Bois was a frequent correspondent of Anne Spencer, one of the main figures that will be discussed in this thesis, and a repeated guest of hers. Du Bois himself was part of this Talented Tenth as are the seven people who greatly contributed to the Black community of Lynchburg, Virginia and all of them inhabited the 1300 and 1400 blocks of Pierce Street at one point in their lives.

## Anne Spencer

Anne Bethel Spencer, born Bannister, was born on February 6, 1882, in Henry County, Virginia. She was born free, though she still lived on a plantation. Her father Joel Cephus Bannister, who had White, Black, and Seminole ancestry, was a former slave. Her mother, Sarah Louise Scales, who was mixed, half White and Black, was born free. When Spencer was a child her parents separated which later led to divorce. Following this, her father moved to a different state, though he was still involved in her life.

When Spencer and her mother moved to Bramwell, West Virginia she stayed with the Dixies and had a great relationship with the entire family. She and her best friend Elsie, whose father owned the hotel Spencer's mother worked at, would go on adventures throughout Bromwell. The more welcoming culture of Bramwell can be seen through the treatment of Spencer throughout her childhood. Many of the residents of Bromwell seemed to enjoy Spencer, and she was said to be well-mannered and intelligent.<sup>4</sup> In addition to their restaurant adventures;

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<sup>4</sup> J. Lee Greene, *Time's Unfading Garden: Anne Spencer's Life and Poetry* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University, 1977), 13.

Spencer and Elsie would go to the river and play. Her experiences in Bramwell were where Spencer's love for nature began to grow. Though Spencer's mother and Mrs. Dixie would put her in nice dresses, Spencer would always want to do outside work and explore. Her favorite place to go was the outhouse, and there she could have privacy to read, or at least pretend to. Before the age of eleven, Spencer had no formal education which meant her ability to read was extremely limited. Observing that Spencer needed a formal education her mother began to look in Virginia for schools. There were some schools for freed Black students, but both Spencer's mother and father wanted the best for her. While searching, Spencer's mother discovered the Virginia Theological Seminary and College in Lynchburg and requested she be enrolled. The problem with this was that the school only accepted students twelve and up, to remedy this Spencer and her mother went to visit Lynchburg to convince the administration to accept her. During their visit, the teachers at Virginia Theological Seminary saw her potential and allowed her to attend.

The buildings of the school were in bad shape. There was no indoor plumbing and the food was not sustainable enough for the students to survive on. On one occasion Spencer became infected with malaria from malnourishment and had to return home.<sup>5</sup> In Bramwell, Her mother and a doctor were able to nurse her back to health and she was able to return to school. Though less than ideal conditions, the benefits of this education were enough for Spencer to stay enrolled. The professors, both Black and White, came from around the United States graduating from prestigious institutions including NYU and Temple University, the quality of this education was not one she could pass up. After Spencer's fight with malaria, her mother would send her as many packages as possible to make sure that she had good food.

Dr. Gregory Hayes, the college's second president, insisted that all of his students were to get a high-quality classical education. Institutions that would donate money, specifically the

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<sup>5</sup> Greene, *Time's Unfading Garden*, 25.

White Baptist Convention, wanted the school to focus on trades instead of providing a liberal arts education. This was a real-world example of the debate between Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois. Though trades are essential, Virginia Theological Seminary wanted to give their students a classical education, which was a rarity for Black students at the time, especially in the South. When certain donors would visit Virginia Theological Seminary, the students and teachers would have to pretend they were teaching trade skills to keep financial support. On one occasion Mr. McVickers, the head of the National Baptist Convention, caught students being taught Greek and Latin and threatened to withdraw money because according to him “Nergros had not arrived at the time when they needed to be taught Greek and Latin.”<sup>6</sup> Dr. Hayes refused to stop teaching these skills and Mr. McVickers withdrew \$1000.

Though she was an exceptional student where humanities were concerned, Spencer found the sciences to be a challenge, so a young man by the name of Edward Spencer, a native of Lynchburg, became her tutor. Anne Spencer was not only grateful for his tutoring; she also admired how he treated others. At Virginia Theological Seminary the boys would draw water for their sweetheart, but Edward would go the extra mile and draw water for girls who did not have someone to do it for them.<sup>7</sup> Anne Spencer saw the kindhearted person he was through these actions.

The first, of many, who tried to “court” Spencer were shot down immediately. The practice at Virginia Theological Seminary was to write love notes. Spencer rejected the notes from her first “suitor” and, in one instance, even went so far as to burn them. Eventually, the young man understood Spencer was not going to answer and asked for the letters back and she told him that she had no idea where the ashes were. Eventually, Edward wrote a letter asking if

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<sup>6</sup> Greene, *Time's Unfading Garden*, 28.

<sup>7</sup> Greene, *Time's Unfading Garden*, 29.

she would reply to his notes if he began to send them, she replied with “TRY” and signed it “hussy.”<sup>8</sup>

Simultaneously, she was beginning to question her religious ideology. She expressed her emotions through writing her first poem “The Skeptic,” in this poem, Spencer explained she did not believe in Christianity though it was a family practice. Unfortunately, this work has been lost.

In 1898 Spencer began her sixth, and last, year at Virginia Theological Seminary. At the end of that school year other students were selected as valedictorian and salutatorian, but neither were able to give the speech, so the honor was passed to Spencer. Her speech, which has been lost, was about the future of Black Americans in the United States in addition to the current struggles they faced during Jim Crow. This was considered to be extremely bold considering there were White people in the audience. She took excerpts from James Bryce’s *The American Commonwealth* and from Alexis de Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America*.<sup>9</sup> In the end, her speech was incredibly popular.

Now that Spencer was seventeen her mother was beginning to push marriage and was constantly trying to marry her off to men she had no interest in. For example, a “suitor” was waiting for Spencer downstairs at her residence, and she was intent on not speaking to him. Her first plan was to use a ladder that was outside her window, but it was gone. Determined to leave, she jumped out of the window which resulted in her spraining both of her ankles.<sup>10</sup> After, her mother understood that Spencer was unwilling to marry anyone she did not want, which eventually led to the marriage between Edward and Anne on May 15, 1901, in Bramwell. Afterward, they moved to Lynchburg and first lived on Holiday Street, but in 1903 they moved into their forever home on Pierce Street with their two daughters, and by 1906 their son

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<sup>8</sup> Greene, *Time's Unfading Garden*, 30.

<sup>9</sup> Greene, *Time's Unfading Garden*, 34.

<sup>10</sup> Greene, *Time's Unfading Garden*, 41.

Chauncey E. Spencer was born. In the beginning, their home was small but over the years Edward continued to add to it and update it. Today, 1313 Pierce Street is where the Anne Spencer House and Garden Museum resides, which continues to welcome visitors; and many say it feels like Anne Spencer never left.

In 1917 the NAACP, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, wanted to create a chapter in Lynchburg so they sent James Weldon Johnson, who is most known for his contributions to the Harlem Renaissance, to start a chapter. And because Spencer was a co-founder of the Lynchburg chapter they would collaborate and through this they became friends. Soon she shared her poetry with him, which led to her publication and eventual impact on the Harlem Renaissance though she lived states away. Her first published poem, “Sushan” (1920), was featured in the NAACP magazine, *The Crisis*.<sup>11</sup> In 1922 Johnson published *The Book of American Negro Poetry*, which included five of Spencer’s poems and a mini biography. Many critics appreciated Spencer’s work and thought she deserved more recognition.<sup>12</sup> Through this publication, Spencer was seen as an established competent poet, and many began to seek out her poetry.<sup>13</sup> She was a pioneer.

Spencer’s biography on Womenshistory.org states:

Though Spencer wrote prolifically, she published few poems after the death of Johnson in 1938 and in total published a relatively small number (approximately 30) in her lifetime. Two dozen more were published in her biography by J. Lee Greene, *Time’s Unfading Garden: Anne Spencer’s Life and Poetry* (1977). But the quality of her work established Spencer as a significant poet of the twentieth century. Spencer was the first African-American woman poet published in the *Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry* (1973). She used traditional forms like sonnets, epigrams, and elegies, and most of her poems are short, with few extending beyond 20 lines. Her poetry draws on universal themes such as religion and mythology as well as her garden and nature. Spencer

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<sup>11</sup>Greene, *Time’s Unfading Garden*, 52.

<sup>12</sup>Greene, *Time’s Unfading Garden*, 54.

<sup>13</sup>Greene, *Time’s Unfading Garden*, 54.

treasured her home garden and the cottage her husband built for her there, which she named Edankraal.<sup>14</sup>

This passage explains the gift that Spencer had and perfectly describes her impact, influences, and writing style. In addition, it brings attention to some of the publications where her work was featured. Spencer being the first Black woman to be published in the *Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry*, demonstrates that she was greatly impacting the literary world.

In addition to Johnson, there were a myriad of people who stayed at her home. During Segregation, there were few places for Black people to stay while traveling through the South. Due to this, many notable people stayed at the Spencer house. Some of the more notable figures include Marian Anderson, George Washington Carver, Gwendolyn Brooks, Sterling A. Brown, and Georgia Douglas Johnson.<sup>15</sup> This trend began with Du Bois needing accommodations.

The Virginia Theological Seminary and College was a popular destination for distinguished individuals to speak due to its notoriety. One of the first to visit was W.E.B Du Bois. He was set to speak and was told that he would reside on campus during his stay, but when he asked where he could bathe Du Bois was informed that they did not have indoor plumbing. Du Bois was unwilling to bathe outside and asked if there was a different place for him to stay, and he was pointed in the direction of the Spencers. Edward Spencer had updated their home to include indoor plumbing, in turn, this made them one of the first African American households in the area to have it. After his stay, Du Bois would visit the Spencers numerous times. He and Anne Spencer would have long conversations in her garden talking about their writing and ideology. Spencer had similar beliefs to Du Bois regarding the progress of African American education. The University of Virginia has some writings of hers in their archive that have not

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<sup>14</sup> "Anne Spencer", Marianna Brandman, <https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/anne-spencer> (accessed Nov. 20,2021).

<sup>15</sup> Marian Anderson (American Opera Singer), George W. Carver (American Scientist), Gwendolyn Brooks (American Poet), Sterling A. Brown (American Poet), Georgia Douglas Johnson (American Poet)

been published, one of these prose is called “Chattel Slavery or Why I Dislike Booker T.,” the title alone is indicative of her thoughts and opinions on Washington’s “Atlanta Compromise,” which encouraged Black people to learn trades and get a vocational training as opposed to going the classical education route as well as other opinions on how Black Americans should go forward post Reconstruction. Both she and Du Bois were staunchly opposed to many of Washington’s ideologies. As a Black woman who had a classical education, not only did she go on to advocate for Black students so they could have better resources while in high school she would also encourage them to continue their education and get a college degree.<sup>16</sup> Later in their lives, when Du Bois relocated to Ghana in 1961, Spencer voiced she believed he moved to Ghana was not because he had a great love for Africa, but instead, he moved due to his hatred of White America.<sup>17</sup>

It goes without saying, that Langston Hughes was arguably her most famous guest. Spencer expressed that, compared to her other guests, she was most able to be herself with Hughes.<sup>18</sup> When Hughes was not at the Spencer residence he would send postcards and pictures of all the places he visited so that she could see beyond what Lynchburg had to offer. Though there is not a lot of writing between her and Hughes, she valued him as a close friend. This particular friendship is an example of just how different every one of her guests was. From artists to politicians to sociologists.

After all of her children were of college age Spencer applied to the Jones Memorial Library, which was segregated for Whites only.<sup>19</sup> She brought the anthology she was published in

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<sup>16</sup> Papers of Anne Spencer and the Spencer Family, 1829, 1864-2007, #14204, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va.

<sup>17</sup> Greene, *Time's Unfading Garden*, 71.

<sup>18</sup> Greene, *Time's Unfading Garden*, 75.

<sup>19</sup> The original Jones Memorial Library Building is still standing, as of August 2024, on Rivermont Ave. in Lynchburg, VA. The Jones Memorial Library that is currently in use is a research and archival library that is located on Memorial Ave. above the Lynchburg Public Library.

as her credentials and got the job as the lead librarian at the additional branch of the Jones Library which would be in Dunbar High School, the segregated Black high school in Lynchburg.<sup>20</sup> Though Spencer was staunchly opposed to the Jim Crow system; she wanted to give Black students access to books that would not have been available to them otherwise. Through her work, she was able to spark many students' love of literature. She wanted to see her students thrive in an academic setting. The passion she had for her students, the persistence to provide academic resources for the Black community that were not otherwise available, and her actions of encouraging students to pursue post-secondary education are the embodiment of Du Bois' Talented Tenth.

She was well known throughout the Lynchburg Community for her poetry and her continued resistance against Jim Crow laws. *Time's Unfading Garden*, states "She began her one-woman boycott of segregated public facilities in the early decades of this century. She refused to ride public transportation and would walk, take a taxi, or just stay at home before she would spend money to support Jim Crow," this serves as evidence of her dedication to avoid supporting Jim Crow in any way she could.<sup>21</sup> Because of this, she was a controversial figure. To avoid trolleys she would ride on the back of grocery carts and hitch rides on the back of wagons, which was not seen as something a respectable woman would do. On one occasion, she was unable to avoid taking the trolley while she and her daughter-in-law were running errands in downtown Lynchburg, when it was time to board the trolley they sat in the White section which led to them being harassed by the trolley operator. When she was finished with her errands she went down to the manager's office to vehemently voice her complaints.<sup>22</sup> Another way in which

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<sup>20</sup> Many of the buildings that were associated with Dunbar High School were torn down when the Lynchburg School system was integrated, but the remaining buildings are currently being used as Dunbar Middle School.

<sup>21</sup> Greene, *Time's Unfading Garden*, 88.

<sup>22</sup> Greene, *Time's Unfading Garden*, 88.

she would voice her opinions on how Black people in Lynchburg were being treated unjustly, Spencer would send letters to local media outlets. Due to being such a controversial figure, in addition to being a Black woman, Spencer would have slurs thrown at her and was generally disliked by the White population of Lynchburg though she didn't seem to care one way or the other about her critics' opinions. Looking through a modern lens Spencer was an exciting, inspirational, and extraordinary woman. Her story not only resonates with the people who knew her but also those who never got to meet her decades after she passed.

In 1947 Spencer left her position as librarian at Dunbar. During her retirement years, she and Edward lived a comfortable life. Anne and Edward enjoyed their grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and Edward was featured in the local newspaper for his beautiful birdhouses. Her literary comrades would occasionally visit and write, but as they got older and were losing mobility they gradually stopped visiting. She was still outspoken on her opinions, such as not integrating the Lynchburg schools. It inevitably happened, but her concern about Black students being overlooked was justified. Dunbar High School was an institution where Black students were judged on their abilities rather than their race and were able to succeed in a more stable environment. Spencer rightfully believed that Black students should be able to thrive in a place that would not judge them based on racist ideologies.

Unfortunately by 1964 Edward's mental and physical health began to deteriorate, and on May 17, 1964, Edward Spencer died. They were not a traditional marriage of the time and saw themselves as best friends and equals, his death was devastating. For six months she lived with her daughter, Bethel, but then returned to Pierce Street. She vowed to never leave because she could feel Edward (Pop) there. "Pop just let me do what I wanted. If I liked it, he did too. Pop

was so good to me that everything I did he entered into it,” this perfectly encompasses the love she had for her late husband and gives us a glimpse into their relationship.<sup>23</sup>

The Author of *Time's Unfading Garden*, J. Lee Greene first met with Spencer in 1971, and she informed him if he wanted to write a biography of her life she wanted to be in control of it. Many of her poems had been lost from vandalism, but after learning of this project she attempted to reconstruct as many as possible, so many ‘new’ poems were included within the book.

In May of 1975, she was honored at her alma mater and they presented her with an honorary doctorate of letters, unfortunately, she was too weak to attend the ceremony. Later that year on June 27th she died quietly with her daughter Bethel by her side.<sup>24</sup>

Anne Spencer is the most influential member of the Talented Tenth of Pierce Street. Spencer emulates the concept through her actions towards her students at Dunbar, her opposition to Jim Crow, and her work as a poet. The Talented Tenth is not a concept that one consciously tries to emulate, instead, they help others within their community because they want to. Anne Spencer did not choose her actions based on wanting to be part of the Talented Tenth but instead knew that the community was at a disadvantage and understood she could help. She knew her students were at a school that did not have as many resources, and the job at the Jones Library was the perfect opportunity to get books that would not have been available otherwise. Both Spencer and Clarence W. Seay were integral parts of Dunbar High School. Spencer gave students access to books not accessible without her and gave them the opportunity to learn about literature, and Seay built the environment in which they would have the opportunity to thrive.

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<sup>23</sup> Greene, *Time's Unfading Garden*, 160.

<sup>24</sup> Greene, *Time's Unfading Garden*, 172-174.

## Clarence W. Seay

There is not as much biographical information on Clarence William Seay compared to other figures within this paper, but he was one of the most important educators in Lynchburg and transformed Dunbar High School. Seay was born in Nashville, Tennessee on October 9, 1902. He attended a public school, went to Fisk University to get his undergraduate degree, and got his Master's of Arts at Columbia University. He used these degrees to teach students all over the country. He became principal of a school in Petersburg, Virginia from 1935 to 1938.<sup>25</sup> In 1938 he was asked to be principal of Dunbar High School in Lynchburg and did so until 1968.

He transformed Dunbar from a small school for Black students into an institution that gave them opportunities to thrive. He added college preparatory classes, classics classes, general education courses, business courses, and vocational training to the school's curriculum.<sup>26</sup> Seay made it his mission to have an all-Black staff at Dunbar, get updates to buildings, add Black leaders to the school board, and give Black students a better future. He did all of this and more. Professor Hermina Hendricks, a Dunbar High School alumni, a former resident of Pierce Street, and a retired professor from Randolph College in Lynchburg, fondly remembers him as a classy-looking man who always wore a suit.<sup>27</sup> He was passionate about setting his students on the path to success. At one point in Dunbar's history, while Seay was principal, there was one Dunbar graduate in every Ivy League school. It is obvious that he put his heart and soul into this school, and with it came great accomplishments. Through this, he emulates Du Bois' idea.

When Dunbar and E.C. Glass began integrating in 1962 students began having the choice of staying at Dunbar or going over to Glass; many chose to stay at Dunbar, Professor Hendrics

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<sup>25</sup> Hermina W. Hendricks and Christine Petticolos, *Lessons Continue: The Legacy of Dunbar*, (Lynchburg Chapter of the Links, 2016), 39.

<sup>26</sup> Hendricks and Petticolos, 40.

<sup>27</sup> Interview by Olivia Green. Hendricks, Hermina. (2021).

included. They believed if they went to Glass they would not have as many opportunities, and unfortunately, this was common in schools that integrated. Dunbar was a place for Black students to have a better educational experience, and that was fully taken away by 1970.

Seay was elected to the Lynchburg City Council in 1970 and then re-elected in 1974. According to the Lynchburg Museum's website, "Seay had the distinction of being the first African American on Lynchburg City Council since the 1880s, almost 100 years earlier. He held the position of vice mayor and also served on the Transportation, Finance, Bridge Construction, and Drug Abuse Committees," this shows just how determined he was to be a leader for the Black community in Lynchburg.<sup>28</sup> He ran for mayor of Lynchburg in 1974, though he did lose, and thought about stepping down from the City Council. He was discouraged by the leader of the Lynchburg chapter of the NAACP, so he served until 1978. Another quotation from the Lynchburg Museum's website states "During his years in office and up to his death in 1982 he was an active community member. He was involved with many local organizations, including United Way, the Lynchburg Planning Commission, American Red Cross, United Negro College Fund, NAACP, Jackson Street United Methodist Church, and many more," Seay had a love for his community and helping countless students through his work at Dunbar.<sup>29</sup> His efforts to make Lynchburg a better place is why he is one of the Talented Tenth of Pierce Street.

Clarence W Seay was one of the most influential educators for Black students in Lynchburg. He used his education and wisdom to improve Dunbar High School and helped his students flourish. His determination to give students better opportunities gave them the freedom to flourish in a school without fear of discrimination. In addition to his years of work at Dunbar,

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<sup>28</sup> "C.W. Seay: From Dunbar to City Council," Emily Kubota, <https://www.lynchburgmuseum.org/blog/2019/2/21/k6dr0q5ej7y7cx8q3g4jdids7jmrkl>, (accessed Nov 19, 2021)

<sup>29</sup> Kubota "C.W. Seay: From Dunbar to City Council."

his time as a City Council member gave him the ability to positively impact the whole city of Lynchburg. His work as a principal, a Council member, and an active member of the community makes Seay an impactful member of the Talented Tenth.

## Chauncey Spencer

Chauncey Edward Spencer was born on November 11, 1906, in Lynchburg, Virginia. His father, Edward Spencer, was the first Black postman in Lynchburg, and his mother Anne Bethel Spencer, was a Harlem Renaissance poet. His family was very prominent in Lynchburg, and during Chauncey Spencer's childhood, he was able to absorb information from celebrated Black artists and intellectuals who stayed at the Spencer home. He was constantly surrounded by impactful and notable figures.

When Spencer was eleven he had the opportunity to see his first airplane, and after that, it became a lifelong fascination. His father took him to the Preston-Glenn airport, now the Lynchburg airport, and asked if his son would be able to take flying lessons. The pilot refused to enroll Spencer due to racial prejudice. Though Spencer was turned down he never lost his ambition to become a pilot.

When Spencer finished high school at Dunbar he went to Virginia Theological Seminary and got his degree in sociology. He had many different jobs including being a social worker and managing the first integrated theatre in Lynchburg. Though he had job opportunities, he was still not satisfied with his life and knew he wanted to get his pilot's license.

In Spencer's own words:

Finally, a door opened. Oscar De Priest, the Chicago Congressional Representative, visited my family and suggested I come to Chicago to study flying... Marital Problems kept me rooted in Lynchburg. A year or two later, I accepted his offer. Prompted by a

separation from my wife and a pending divorce, I wanted to get away from Lynchburg. Now was my long-awaited opportunity.<sup>30</sup>

Now that the ties to Lynchburg were gone, Spencer was able to pursue his dream of becoming a pilot. Unfortunately, when he arrived De Priest explained there were no job openings due to the depression. He met Dr. Earl Renfroe in 1934, a Black dentist and pilot, who told Spencer about the Aeronautical University.<sup>31</sup> The next day he attended classes but was eventually told he could no longer attend due to a complaint by a white student. Though rejected, an administrator at Aeronautical University was willing to give Spencer a seal of approval if he did satisfactory work at the Coffey School of Aviation, which was an aviation school for aspiring Black pilots.<sup>32</sup>

The Coffey School of Aviation is where Spencer met Dale White, a “pioneer Negro flyer” and they began rebuilding a plane for Dr. Renfroe.<sup>33</sup> To save money for classes he became a dishwasher, ate cheap meals, and saved the extra money his father gave him. He was eventually able to earn his student's license and began to practice by himself. To gain notoriety Spencer and White, who were sponsored by the National Airmen’s Association and the *Chicago Defender*, embarked on a goodwill tour. They would start their tour in Chicago and finish in Washington DC. White and Spencer thought doing this would help push for the inclusion of Black men in the Army Air Corps.<sup>34</sup>

Spencer had saved up five hundred dollars and friends donated money to them, so they were able to rent a Lincoln-Paige bi-plane. After they began their infamous flight in Chicago, their crankshaft broke; and according to Spencer, White “swerved and slid and finally rested

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<sup>30</sup> Spencer, *Who is Chauncey Spencer ?*, 28.

<sup>31</sup> Spencer, *Who is Chauncey Spencer ?*, 29.

<sup>32</sup> Spencer, *Who is Chauncey Spencer ?*, 29.

<sup>33</sup> Spencer, *Who is Chauncey Spencer ?*, 29.

<sup>34</sup> Spencer, *Who is Chauncey Spencer ?*, 31.

within a hundred yards of a farmer's backyard."<sup>35</sup> They ended up in the small town of Sherwood, Ohio. The owner of the farm they landed in found a hotel room for Spencer and White, and also provided dinner. Eventually, the NAA was able to raise enough money for a new crankshaft, but the people of Sherwood were kind enough to pay for all of their expenses. For their gratitude, they came back months later to offer the residents plane rides and pictures.<sup>36</sup>

Once Spencer and White got their plane back into working condition, they continued to Pittsburg; once they arrived the two pilots were given the okay to fly into Washington DC. When they arrived Spencer and White met with Edgar Brown, the head of the Negro Federal Workers Employees Union, and while they were on the US Capitol Subway they met Harry Truman. Truman asked what they were doing there and the two explained they were officially working for the WPA, but were taking time off for the NAA goodwill tour. In addition, Spencer and White told Truman that Black men were not admitted to the Air Corps not because of their lack of skill, but based on discriminatory practices. Truman was curious about their flight so Spencer and White took him to their plane and explained what had happened. Spencer explained that Truman replied to them saying, "If we had the guts to fly this thing to Washington he had enough guts to back us up," and so they began their journey training alongside White men under the Civilian Pilot Training Program; through this program, they were able to train other Black pilots to join the Air Corps.<sup>37</sup>

In March of 1941, Spencer enlisted in the Army; he was stationed at Fort Custer, and Anne, his second wife, lived in Lynchburg with his Family. After Spencer served for 8 months he applied to be in the Negro Air Corps in Tuskegee that summer. Though he was qualified, he exceeded the age limit. In turn, he and Anne moved to Patterson Field so he could be an

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<sup>35</sup> Spencer, *Who is Chauncey Spencer ?*, 32.

<sup>36</sup> Spencer, *Who is Chauncey Spencer?*, 32.

<sup>37</sup> Spencer, *Who is Chauncey Spencer ?*, 34.

instrument repairman; he worked there till June 1942. After his time there, Spencer was sent by the Civilian Aid of the Secretary of War and the Commanding Officer of Tuskegee to look at the working conditions of Black men as an undercover agent posing as an aircraft mechanic. The working conditions for Black servicemen were, unsurprisingly, abysmal compared to their White counterparts. For example, while eating two hundred Black men were crammed in a small room with mosquito nets over their food to keep the bugs away, while the White men had a beautiful dining room.<sup>38</sup>

On Spencer's first day, a White supervisor told him to sweep the floor, which was not his job. Spencer explained that he was a mechanic, not a janitor. The supervisor told Spencer that he didn't care, and Spencer still refused. The next day the marshall had Spencer arrested, and he was suspended for five days. More examples of mistreatment of Black soldiers Spencer observed included, White officers telling shop foreman that they could order Black men around regardless of rank as a form of control. In addition, they would tell Black servicemen that White Southern men were at the pinnacle of the hierarchy and they needed to comply with what they were told.<sup>39</sup> He reported all of these situations to his superiors.

After his job working at Tuskegee, Spencer returned to Patterson Field and worked as an Employee Relations Officer to begin the process of integration. He believed that after unearthing the mistreatment at Tuskegee he could aid Black soldiers to provide better working conditions so they could be judged based on skill and merit rather than being treated as if they were inadequate based on bigotry.

In 1953 Spencer received a letter from the Headquarters of the United States Air Force accusing him of being a communist and a bootlegger. His accusations of being a bootlegger were

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<sup>38</sup> Spencer, *Who is Chauncey Spencer ?*, 44.

<sup>39</sup> Spencer, *Who is Chauncey Spencer ?*, 45-46.

from his time as a bellhop in Lynchburg where he would serve alcohol to guests, but he did not sell directly to them; and the accusation of being a communist stemmed from attending a rally that featured Paul Robeson, who was a friend of the family. He lost his job while awaiting trial. The unspoken reason for the accusations was that he was instructed to slow down the integration of his department and refused to do so. In December 1953 he went to trial and was exonerated, but the damage had already been done, and his wife and son continued to be harassed. By 1959 he retired from the Air Force altogether.

In 1962 he began working as a security officer and as a substitute teacher at a high school in San Bernardino. In 1970 he was asked to become the Deputy Administrator for Highland Park, Michigan, which was an opportunity he could not refuse. His mother died in 1974, and he decided to move back to Lynchburg. Though there is not a lot of biographical information on his later life, he was essential to his mother's house being added to the National Registry of Historical Places. He died on August 21, 2002.

Chauncey Spencer used his education and passion for aviation to become an essential part of integrating the US Air Corps and without Spencer and White, it could have taken many more years before the Air Corps was fully integrated. And even though Tuskegee was already integrated, Black personnel were still being treated as second-class citizens and Spencer was vital for the progress that was made. His advocacy for Black servicemen and his willingness to train others as pilots are a few of the many reasons he is a part of the Talented Tenth of Pierce Street. Spencer not only supported those in his local community, but his work also created opportunities for Black Americans all across the country. As has been previously stated, the essence of the Talented Tenth is to use wisdom and education to help uplift those within the Black community, and Spencer's contributions are great examples of this concept in action.

## Dr. Robert Johnson

Doctor Robert Walter Johnson was born on April 16, 1899, in Norfolk, Virginia. His father, Jerry, worked as a lumber contractor and his family lived comfortably, he had eight siblings in total. When he was a teenager Dr. Johnson started playing football at Elizabeth City Normal School in Elizabeth City, North Carolina.<sup>40</sup> Years later, Dr. Johnson began his semi-professional football career at Shaw University. Though, he did not graduate from Shaw because he was expelled due to sneaking into the girl's dorms. After this, and due to the encouragement of others around, him he 'settled down' and married a woman named Annie Pate. In 1922 Dr. Johnson decided to go to Lincoln University, he joined their football team where he got his nickname Whirlwind Johnson, and the name stuck for the rest of his life. During his time at Lincoln, he decided he wanted to go to medical school, but before that, he became a football coach at Virginia Seminary College in Lynchburg, Virginia in 1924. This is where he was first introduced to the city. He coached football, baseball, and basketball; and though he was a great coach he was not able to be paid due to lack of funding. The next year he coached at Sam Houston College in Austin, Texas, and each of his teams had a record-breaking season.<sup>41</sup>

In 1928 he went to Meharry Medical College in Nashville and left his wife and son back home. His letters home to Annie were essentially begging her to divorce him. She tried to save up money to leave him, but one of Dr. Johnson's sisters spent the money so Annie would be forced to stay. Eventually, she was able to divorce, and remarry, so Johnson began to pursue his new girlfriend, Peggy English.<sup>42</sup>

In 1932 he graduated from Meharry; so he, his new wife, Peggy, and his son, Robert Jr, moved back to Lynchburg and began to build their life. Dr. Johnson wanted to establish a

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<sup>40</sup> Smith, Doug. *Whirlwind: The Godfather of Black Tennis* ( Washington DC Blue Eagle Pub. 2004), 11.

<sup>41</sup> Smith, *Whirlwind*, 29.

<sup>42</sup> Smith, *Whirlwind*, 33.

medical practice in Lynchburg and it took him about a year to gain the trust of the Black community. The majority of doctors in Lynchburg were White and refused to take Black patients. In the beginning, he would see patients for free or people would offer him food. Eventually, Dr. Johnson was able to set up a clinic and employed a small staff.<sup>43</sup> He would have medical students shadow him and allow them to assist with patients. White female patients would come to him for abortion services, due to it being unavailable elsewhere.<sup>44</sup> He also advocated for the inclusion of Black doctors in the Lynchburg Hospital and was the first Black doctor to practice in Lynchburg General Hospital. His readiness to aid both Black and White patients and his advocacy for Black doctors shows his willingness to help people who are in need. These actions are indicative of someone who embodies the Talented Tenth.

In 1936 he moved into a house located at 1422 Pierce Street, which is still standing today, and constructed a tennis court in his backyard. After a long day of work, he would unwind by playing tennis, and it became an essential part of his life.<sup>45</sup> Dr. Johnson understood he needed to play with others of the same caliber to improve his skill, and through a friend, he was able to play with some professionals in North Carolina the same year he built his court. In addition to playing with his peers, he would teach neighborhood kids how to play, so they had a place to go after school. Some of the students he trained would become tennis legends.

In the 1940s Dr. Johnson would host Labor Day tournaments and would invite big names in the ATA, American Tennis Association, to come and play in his backyard court. They would spend their days playing and their nights parting. His basement essentially became a gentlemen's club. He was known as a ladies' man throughout his life, but this was the height of his escapades

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<sup>43</sup> Smith, *Whirlwind*, 37.

<sup>44</sup> Smith, *Whirlwind*, 39.

<sup>45</sup> Smith, *Whirlwind*, 39.

and was said to fly women from Cuba to join these parties.<sup>46</sup> He even had an estranged daughter who lived in Washington DC, and she was not aware Johnson was her father until she was 17.<sup>47</sup> Peggy greatly disapproved of her husband's behavior and turned to drinking as a coping mechanism, they got divorced in 1945.

In 1946 both Dr. Johnson and Dr. Eaton, another physician turned tennis coach, were tracking Althea Gibson's improvement in her tennis playing and saw her win against Nina Irwin, which won her the title on the ATA circuit. They believed she had a lot of potential, and thought she could be a professional player. So the two coaches made a deal with Gibson; Dr. Eaton would have her stay with him and with his family to train while she was finishing high school. And Dr. Johnson would train her during the summer. They knew she was destined for greatness, but she needed the opportunity to be in school and training, and both coaches knew that they could provide her with a stable environment. In the summer of 1947, Dr. Johnson and his son Robert Jr. began training Gibson for the ATA circuit.<sup>48</sup> During this circuit, she won nine consecutive singles titles.<sup>49</sup> Though Dr. Johnson was not the only coach in Gibson's lifetime; he played a major part in her development as a tennis player. Gibson became the first African-American to win the Grand Slam title in 1956. One year later she won Wimbledon and the U.S. nationals.

Johnson also had a training program for boys who had promise as tennis players. They would come to his home and stay throughout the summer to train. Ronald Charity was a tennis coach and his youngest player was Arthur Ashe. At eleven years old Charity took Ashe from Richmond to Lynchburg to show Dr. Johnson his skills, and Johnson agreed to work with Ashe.

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<sup>46</sup> Smith, *Whirlwind*, 66.

<sup>47</sup> Smith, *Whirlwind*, 67.

<sup>48</sup> Smith, *Whirlwind*, 57.

<sup>49</sup> Smith, *Whirlwind*, 57.

With coaching from both Dr. Johnson and his son, Ashe was able to dominate the court in his teen years. Johnson was not the only person to train him, but similarly to Gibson, Dr. Johnson was an essential part of Ashe's development as a tennis player. Ashe became the first Black person to be selected to be on the United States Davis Cup Team and, thus far, the only Black man to win the singles title at Wimbledon.

Dr. Johnson used his talents to both heal and educate the people of Lynchburg. Through his work as a doctor, he provided free medical aid to the Black community and provided services that were not readily available to other members of the community. The lack of facilities made it very difficult for Black people in Lynchburg to get treatment and very few doctors were willing to provide abortion services. Dr. Johnson's ability and willingness to perform abortions were crucial to the women who needed it. He also advocated for the inclusion of Black doctors at Lynchburg General, which was another step towards both equality for the Doctors who worked there and equal treatment for the patients that were seen. With his passion for tennis he was able to give children a structured environment to train and, in some cases, develop their talents so they could become professionals. Dr. Johnson's efforts to heal, mentor, and uplift those within his community are examples of what the Talented Tenth exemplifies and what Du Bois' idea is trying to convey, that those who can and are willing to educate can help others to have better opportunities. This is clearly shown by the mentorships that Dr. Johnson cultivated with Althea Gibson and Arthur Ashe.

## Smaller Figures

### Amaza Lee Meredith

Amaza Lee Meredith was an American Architect who was born on August 14, 1895, in Lynchburg, VA.<sup>50</sup> Her father, Samuel Peter Meredith a White man, was a master builder, and her mother a Black woman, was a seamstress. They were legally married in Washington DC, and though her father was not named on her birth certificate, because he was white, he still loved his family dearly. It is speculated that on account of the extreme racism towards his family and the failure of his business, Samuel Meredith killed himself in 1915. After her father's death, she and her mother moved to live above the Spencer-Calloway store, formerly located on Pierce Street. Amaza Meredith graduated from high school the same year her father died and was at the top of her class.

Meredith taught at an elementary school in Lynchburg and then in a one-room schoolhouse in Botetourt County, Virginia. In Botetourt, she saw the Black community struggling because of a lack of resources and funding, so she created a parent-teacher association, which partnered with the Negro Origination Society of Virginia, which was created to begin fixing some of these issues. After this, she enrolled at, what is now Virginia State University, and graduated in 1922 which led her to teach mathematics at Dunbar High School. In 1926 she moved to Brooklyn to go to Columbia University for their teaching program, and graduated in 1930. She got her master's in teaching by 1934. She then went back to her alma mater, Virginia State University, to teach art and was the founder and chair of the art department. Darrell Laurant states “ Unafraid of her superiors, she frequently complained about the primitive

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<sup>50</sup> The exact year of her birth has been different with every resource, this information was provided by *Inspiration Street*.

conditions of her studio and teaching area, especially the lack of running water,” through this quotation, it is evident that Meredith was a woman who advocated for the needs of her department.<sup>51</sup>

She met Edna Colson at Virginia State University, they moved into a house that was designed by Merideth herself, which now serves as the alumni house at VSU. It is a very unique home, and with no formal training in architectural planning, this was an amazing accomplishment. Instead of colonial inspiration, which was common with many houses in the United States in the 30s, it was inspired by post-WWI German architecture. This style of home is one of few in Virginia. Though not seen as impressive at the time, it is an example of how Meredith was an innovator.

In 1947 Merideth and her sister, Maude Terry, created a summer vacationing community for Black people in Sag Harbor. Meredith used her skills and developed 120 lots, and the neighborhood was named Azurest North, or Azurest. It became a hub for middle-class African American families to get away and have a nice place to vacation. Many notable African American visitors would stay at Azurest, including Langston Hughes.<sup>52</sup>

Though Meredith died in 1984 her memory lives on through her art and architecture. She left half of her estate to Virginia State University, and when her partner died, the house and estate were fully left to their mutual alma mater. Amaza Lee Meredith was a leader in the architectural field and her work at Virginia State University helped many students both in the past and to this day with her development of the art department. Without her love for art and architecture, there would not have been an art program at VSU. Because of her work at Azurest, she gained

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<sup>51</sup> Darrell Laurant, *Inspiration Street* (Lynchburg, Virginia Blackwell Press, 2016.) 56-57

<sup>52</sup> “The Visionary Women of Sag Harbor’s Historic Azurest Community,” <https://preservationlongisland.org/the-visionary-women-of-sag-harbors-historic-azurest-community/>, (accessed Nov 2021)

notoriety and ultimately became a pioneer. Many have her to thank on account of her passion and dedication to the craft; without people like her, there would be limited opportunities for women of color in fields such as these.

### Amelia Perry Pride

Amelia Perry Pride was born a free Black woman on April 27, 1857. In 1873, at the age of sixteen, both of her parents died and in the same year, she enrolled herself at Hampton University to pursue a degree in teaching.

After graduating she returned home to Lynchburg and began developing a school for formerly enslaved women to pursue a trade education so they could be financially independent. Pride was an advocate for higher education, but she knew practical skills would be necessary for formerly enslaved women to earn money to support themselves and others if needed. In the late 19th century it was difficult for formerly enslaved people, especially women, to get jobs and this was an opportunity for women who did not have an education before this to be taught skills that would become valuable to them. When she became the principal of the Polk Colored School; she added a sewing school and cooking school. It was not only an institution for Black women, Monacan women were able to attend as well. In 1897 she opened a care home for formerly enslaved elderly women. To do this she purchased a vacant lot at 1311 Pierce Street with the help of an organization in Dorchester, Massachusetts. To show how grateful she was, she named it the Dorchester Home. This shelter provided formerly enslaved elderly women with food, clothing, and a place to live. Through her hard work, she impacted countless lives of women who needed a second chance and by extension their families as well. For this reason, she is included within the Talented Tenth. Pride did not technically live on Pierce Street but one of her larger projects, the Dorchester Home, was located on Pierce Street and is still standing. Her contributions are

remembered through the building, the historical marker on Pierce Street, and the continuing efforts to preserve Lynchburg's history. By giving formerly enslaved women an opportunity to learn a trade that would allow them to earn a living, Pride was emulating the Talented Tenth even if it was not in the traditional way of providing others with a classical education. She was still educating women in a way that would guarantee them a living wage. Her work with the Dorchester house was another way that emulated the Talented Tenth. By giving food and shelter to previously enslaved elderly women, she was providing an opportunity to live out the remainder of their years comfortably and in the community. Without her, there would have been many women without the resources to take care of themselves and without a place to call home.

### Frank Trigg

Frank Trigg is the only figure in this thesis who was born into slavery. He was born in 1850, and his parents were enslaved people who worked at the Virginia Governor's Mansion. At 13 he lost his arm in a farming accident, so the only activity he could easily partake in was reading. Because of this accident, reading became something he was able to concentrate on and developed into a passion of his.

After the abolition of slavery, Trigg was able to attend the Hampton Normal Education Institute, in which he became good friends with Booker T. Washington. After he graduated, Trigg taught in Abington, Virginia, and then moved to Lynchburg in 1880.<sup>53</sup> There he had many accomplishments including becoming the first African American superintendent in Lynchburg and becoming principal at Jackson Street High School. He then moved to Princess Anne, Maryland became the president of Princess Anne Academy, which is now known as the University of Maryland Eastern Shore. There he taught theology, hygiene, literature, psychology,

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<sup>53</sup>Fisher, Bernard. The Historical Marker Database, May 26, 2014. <https://hmdb.org/m.asp?m=74014>.

pedagogy, and geography. His first graduating class only had six students, but only two years later approximately 188 students were enrolled. He had the opinion that both boys and girls should pursue an education, which he extended to his children, of which eight survived to adulthood.<sup>54</sup> He moved back to Lynchburg in 1910 to lead the Virginia Collegiate and Industrial Institute. Five years later he moved to Greensboro to become the President of Bennett College. Though not much is known about the personal life of Frank Trigg, it is extremely apparent that he had a love for educating both young and collegiate-level students. In 1926 he retired in Lynchburg and resided on Pierce Street; in 1933 he died and was buried in the Old City Cemetery, which is located in Lynchburg, VA.

His passion for education is why he is included in this thesis and places him in the Talented Tenth. Frank Trigg used his education to further educate others, which is the fundamental theme of the Talented Tenth. Trigg, as a former slave, came from nothing and used his perseverance along with the wisdom and education that he was able to gain throughout his life to educate others and became a leader in the education system in Lynchburg. As stated above there is not much known about Trigg's personal life, but the work that he did in his life shows where his passions and values were placed. His belief in higher education for both Black men and women alike is the rudimentary belief of Du Bois' idea, which is why Trigg is an example of the Talented Tenth of Pierce Street.

## Conclusion

The Talented Tenth of Pierce Street is a group of people who lived, or in Pride's case worked, on Pierce Street and used their education to make the lives of those who are part of the

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<sup>54</sup> "African American Educators." Old City Cemetery and Arboretum. <https://www.gravegarden.org/african-american-educators/>.

Black community better. Though these individuals were formative in the success of the Black community in Lynchburg some of these stories have been lost to time, and it is necessary to acknowledge those who made it possible to have the opportunities that are available today. The feats performed by these figures are countless when it comes to giving the Black community opportunities, especially in Lynchburg. Du Bois and leaders like him were and are essential for the United States to continue to strive for equality. It is not that those who are part of the Talented Tenth are somehow superior to others, but instead, the term acknowledges the struggle that the Black community has gone through, and continues to go through, to get equality. To this day there is still major education inequality both in grade school and post-graduate studies, and not acknowledging that is doing a disservice to the Black community and those who work hard to combat this. Without educators and leaders, at a small and large scale, this will continue. By celebrating people who majorly impacted a single city, though many within this thesis had a much larger reach than Lynchburg, it shows that anyone can be a member of the Talented Tenth no matter if you are a school teacher or a Harlem Renaissance poet. Every positive impact on the Black community should be celebrated. The Talented Tenth, as defined by this thesis, are not just those who have a nationwide impact; they are also your favorite elementary school teacher, the high school teacher who makes sure they hold office hours, the social worker who is always advocating, or the after school counselor who creates a safe environment for neighborhood children. The Talented Tenth are everyday people that we know and love who are uplifting, advocating for, and educating those within the Black community who may not have the resources to do it themselves. The Talented Tenth did not end with Du Bois and it did not end with those on Pierce Street either; there is still a need for extraordinary people to help others; that is exactly what the people on Pierce Street did. These exceptional men and women used their wisdom and

knowledge to make Lynchburg, and the United States, better. The Talented Tenth of Pierce Street wanted to change how Lynchburg saw the Black community and did so. Because of those within this thesis, the Black community in Lynchburg was given better education, medical care, and opportunities in a country that continues to fail them.

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