1992

Memories: writing the life of Mayme Williams Carney

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Recommended Citation
https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_theses/3822
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PREFACE

My thesis is a women's history project based on the recovery of the life and works of a Southern African-American female educator, poet, and writer who lived in North Carolina in the 1930's and 40s, and who was also my maternal grandmother. The origin of this document lies largely in the stories of my grandmother's life that have been told to me by my mother throughout my lifetime. At the outset of graduate school it was, therefore, my ambition to write my grandmother's story. Subsequently, my academic experiences in the Graduate Liberal Studies program fueled my interest in women's history and in my grandmother's life.

One of my first courses, "Gender Ideology," made me aware of male Victorian biased attitudes against women. Studying the male thinkers of this period was one impetus for my interest in women's history. Other encouragement came out of my experiences in women's studies classes that I had taken outside of my graduate studies.

My final assignment in this one particular class was an oral report on the first slave narrative by a black woman entitled "The History of Mary Prince," which was published in 1831, and its relation to a poem about slavery written by Elizabeth Barrett Browning entitled "The Runaway Slave at
Pilgrim's Point," published in 1850. A connection emerged between the two texts because the female slave was West Indian and Barrett Browning's father owned West Indian slave plantations. The former text, a retrospective narrative, decried chattel slavery; the latter text was an anti-slavery tract disguised as poetry. As I extensively researched this topic to get a "picture" of the subjection of a black/slave woman and a white/free woman as well as an understanding of their perspectives, I began to get more involved in British history and the history of the enslavement of African people. Moreover, I was intellectually awakened by Victorian attitudes toward British and American slavery.

During this time I started reading Writing A Woman's Life by Carolyn G. Heilbrun. This was in May of 1989, and I began to think then that perhaps it was possible to write the life of my grandmother.

In another course, "Fate of the Earth," I was brought back in touch with my "biological" self. Because of my undergraduate background in biology and chemistry, I had had experience working with and using animals for research. Reading a required selection of essays by Loren Eiseley, a naturalist, assisted me greatly in identifying with my species-self. In this class I came to terms with my past experiences of working in a research laboratory and became more involved with feminist perspectives on biology (consequently realizing that practically all of the biology
that I had learned was written from a male perspective). This class moved me further into questioning many factors concerning a culture-versus-nature dichotomy. Thinking about this dichotomy forced me to gather the intellectual as well as the physical strength I needed to pick up my research into my grandmother's life where I had left it long ago at the abandoned cemetery where she was buried.

I grappled with symbolic forces of death in my life. I became more aware of a community's role in the fate of our planet. I began to search for answers as to why my grandmother was buried in an extremely large, neglected and overgrown cemetery in North Carolina. For the first time in four years I went home to North Carolina and actively pursued field research into my grandmother's past. I searched diligently for and located in the County Deeds office a map to the overgrown cemetery, a map that many of the local people said no longer existed. And for the first time in four years I began to interview her former colleagues about my grandmother's life and work as a teacher.

Reading utopian novels in my class "Between Past and Future: Perspectives on Polity," I became aware of how an individual's principles can be used to build societies. Therefore, for my final project I created a feminist utopian play entitled "Beings" in which women were not economically and socially dependent upon men, and many of our current economic and ecological problems had been rectified.
After this class, I became more prolific; my essay and poetry writing grew both in frequency and (I felt) quality. After so many years of neglecting my poetry-writing, I was writing again as if I had never ceased. I continued to develop contacts for my research and to take notes on how I could possibly bring attention to my grandmother's life. By this time I was receiving mailings in response to an ad from the North Carolina Women's History Project. In one mailing a brochure documented the history of particular North Carolina women - black, Indian, and white - depending upon their geographical location at the time of their achievements. I was inspired by this because I realized that a building on the campus of the university which my grandmother attended was now, according to this brochure, recognized as a historic site. I also received abstracts of papers that were presented at a Symposium on North Carolina Women in March, 1990. More and more I was beginning to see that it was quite possible to write my grandmother's life.

Another mailing announced a second Southern Conference on Women's History. At first I did not see a need to attend. But, when I discussed recent advances of my research with a friend, she suggested that I consider attending this conference, at least to make contacts. I arranged my travel plans and registered. Because the conference was in North Carolina, my grandmother's home, I made plans to do more field research. By now, I had also been assigned an advisor in
history. My work, therefore, became more focused, and there seemed to be hope for its progress.

In my course "Love and Work: Perspectives on the Person," I continued to prepare for my trip to North Carolina by writing letters ahead of time to people important to my research, such as the curator of North Carolina's Museum of History. Because the museum is planning an exhibit of North Carolina Women in 1993, I wanted to try to get a short biography of my grandmother and some of her works accepted for the exhibit. But as I wrote letters and developed contacts in North Carolina, in class I was wrestling with my positions as a married feminist and a poet. It was not a matter of weighing one against the other. I just realized that being a married feminist meant there were certain aspects of my feminisms that needed to be challenged and affirmed. Gradually I became more in touch with my poetic self, and my need to share my poetry with others. And since my research into my grandmother's life was improving, it was as though in recovering her life I was recovering my own.

The "Love and Work" class made me see my research now as "work." My methodology was not clear, but I have since learned that one often creates it along the way, as I did. So, I journaled my ideas and made it a point to follow up every source and every lead.

After this class I attended the Southern Women's History Conference. The conference made me aware of the academic
"need" to write not just a woman's history but to also write the history of a black woman from the South. On this trip I did much planning and work related to this project. It was as if everything I had studied in "Love and Work" on the philosophy of work in one's life was now beneficial to my field research. I distributed questionnaires to people willing to share their memories of my grandmother's life; I met with the curator of the Museum of History in North Carolina. I also informed my mother of my progress and my intentions. Even though the project was still slowly coming together and many elements of its development were unclear, I wanted to tell my mother how I intended to write her mother's life. Furthermore, I wanted her to know that I hoped someday my grandmother would become an integral part of North Carolina's women's history. At this point, I began to realize that I had some rather deep emotional ties to my grandmother.

In my next class, "Search for Self: Exploring the Literature of Dreams," I learned how to examine symbolism in my dreams and how to interpret those dreams (both the ones that occur when sleeping and the waking dreams). I began to understand my journey, my "task" to recover my grandmother's work, along with my connections to my ancestors.

When I first started to pursue the "cemetery" aspect of this project (in North Carolina) more aggressively, I wanted information about the owner and about who was legally responsible for enforcing the care of this land. I had in
mind only the fact that my maternal grandmother was buried there. But because my maternal great-grandmother was also buried there along with my oldest sister (who died shortly after her birth) I now realized that my connection to this land was powerful.

The meaning of this cognitive awareness emerged when I read Carl Jung's Memories, Dreams, Reflections. Following is the passage from that book that served as a catalyst for my understanding:

When I was working on ... stone tablets, I became aware of the fateful links between me and my ancestors. I feel very strongly that I am under the influence of things or questions which were left incomplete and unanswered by my parents and grandparents and more distant ancestors. It often seems as if there were an impersonal karma within a family, which is passed on from parents to children. It has always seemed to me that I had to answer questions which fate had posed to my forefathers, and which had not yet been answered, or as if I had to complete, or perhaps continue, things which previous ages had left unfinished. ¹

In my case, I was working on behalf of my foremothers.

After the "Search for Self" class I immersed myself in the microfilm of a local newspaper from Goldsboro, North Carolina. I searched first the 1930s. To my surprise, I found my grandmother's name in print! I have spent many hours scanning this film up to the year 1946. When I read its pages, I could enter her world.

This study is an attempt to understand the world of Mayme Williams Carney. I have brought together Mayme's poetry, oral histories, my field research and secondary evidence in order to try and comprehend what it was like to be a black educated woman in the South during the 1930s and 40s.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people have assisted in the production of this thesis. First, I am grateful for the cooperation and contributions of my maternal grandmother's former friends, colleagues, and students. Many of them live in North Carolina and others live in different areas of the United States. I want to thank the Dillard Alumni, Inc. for sharing my letter about this project with members at their May 1991 meeting in Goldsboro, North Carolina. I must thank Carolyn Griffin, the local history librarian at Wayne County Public Library in Goldsboro, for assisting me on several occasions with locating information on my grandmother and for giving me information on the history of Goldsboro.

I want to thank Robena Bradley a cataloguer at the Learning Resource Center at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina. In 1988 when I ventured onto Shaw's campus in search of information on my grandmother's collegiate life, it was Ms. Bradley who made me aware of Shaw's archival records. Through the years she has also given me contacts and shared some of Shaw's early twentieth-century history with me. I must also thank the Shaw Learning Resource Center staff for giving me the opportunity to sort through their archival

I am sincerely thankful for the many conversations with the curators at the North Carolina Museum of History in Raleigh, North Carolina. They have examined my grandmother's works as historical documents and given me information on preserving historical materials. I am grateful to Donna Flowers, of the Department of Cultural Resources for North Carolina, who provided me with North Carolina Statues regarding cemeteries, and to Stephen R. Claggett, state archaeologist for the state of North Carolina in Raleigh, who gave me advice on state laws governing abandoned cemeteries and who examined the map of Lightner's Cemetery to estimate the location of my grandmother's grave.

I am grateful to Virginia Daley, women's studies archivist in the Perkins Library Manuscript Department at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina. She has given me contacts, sources, and recently provided me with materials in which my grandmother's works are preserved.

I want to thank the librarians and staff at Mundelein Library and at E. M. Cudahy Library for assisting me with interlibrary loans of books and microfilm; both libraries are of Loyola University of Chicago.

I am very grateful for the assistance and guidance of my thesis director Dr. Prudence Moylan, and my other committee members, Dr. Mary Griffin and Dr. Cheryl Johnson-Odim; their valuable editing of and comments on my drafts has made this
thesis possible. I wish to thank also the faculty and staff members of the Graduate Liberal Studies program at Loyola University and my peers for their faith in my work. I especially want to thank Dr. Ann Faulkner, Assistant Dean at Loyola, who has supported my thesis project.

I am sincerely indebted to Dr. Patricia Lorimer Lundberg of Indiana University in Gary, Indiana, for making me realize it was possible to "recover" my grandmother's life and that I had the power inside of me to write it. She has also given me much advice and assistance throughout this project.

To my parents Emily Carney Williams and Clarence S. Williams, I am eternally grateful for their love and inspiration through the years, for giving me contacts, and for helping me to understand Goldsboro and the Dillard High School community.

Finally, I must thank my husband David and my son David II for their listening ears, their love and encouragement, and their lasting support.
DEDICATION

To my mother, Emily Mae Elizabeth Carney Williams.
### CHRONOLOGY OF MAYME WILLIAMS CARNEY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>Born in Franklinton, North Carolina.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923 (Fall)</td>
<td>Enters Shaw University of Raleigh, North Carolina.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924 (Fall)</td>
<td>Plays basketball, as a sophomore at Shaw.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925 (March)</td>
<td>Plays the role of Maria in William Shakespeare's <em>Twelfth Night</em>. (Performers were called Shaw University Players.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926 (Spring)</td>
<td>Plays Julia, friend to Lydia, in Richard Sheridan's <em>The Rivals</em> also given by the Shaw University Players.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>Plays Nerissa, Portia's friend, in Shakespeare's <em>The Merchant of Venice</em>. Presented also by the Shaw University Players.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927 (June)</td>
<td>Graduates from Shaw University.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927 (Spring)</td>
<td>Begins to teach at Albion Academy in Franklinton, North Carolina.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930 (March)</td>
<td>Gives birth to first child, Emily Mae Elizabeth Carney.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930?</td>
<td>Completes her journal, <em>Memories</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930?</td>
<td>Writes poem &quot;In Memory of Marjorie.&quot; This poem is the last entry in Mayme's journal, preceding it are a couple of blank pages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>Begins teaching career at Dillard High School in Goldsboro, North Carolina; teaches English and literature classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>Gives birth to second child, James Henry Carney, Jr.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1939 (December) Writes poem "After-thoughts."

1940 (February) Makes record with students from her English classes. Her poem "Afterthoughts" is included on this record.

1941 (February) "A Page From Mrs. Carney's Scrapbook" appears in the Dillard Hi News.

1941 (December) Writes (and gives?) a radio speech on Christmas Seals.

1944 Publishes poem "Hands Across The Sea" in Dillard Hi News school paper. (Date that appears under poem: January 30, 1944.)

1944 (December) Mayme's mother, Emily Baptist Williams, passes away while Mayme and her family are visiting James Carney's parents in Virginia.

1946 (October) Seventeen days before Mayme W. Carney's death, her class sends flowers to her at home; in response she writes a poem to her class entitled "A Thank-you Message To My Class."

1946 Dies on October 20th.
CHAPTER I

ORIGINS: FAMILY, EDUCATION AND INDENTITY WITH SELF

And so our mothers and grandmothers have, more often than not anonymously, handed on the creative spark, the seed of the flower they themselves never hoped to see:....
(Alice Walker, In Search of Our Mothers'Gardens p.240)

In July 1986 I visited an elderly close friend of my maternal grandmother in Goldsboro, North Carolina.¹ It was my first venture out into this community where my grandmother had once lived and worked and I was eager to talk to another woman from my grandmother's time. My mother had suggested to me that this woman would be one of the best living sources to speak to about Mayme Williams Carney. After endless requests, my father finally escorted me to her house.

It was a pleasant encounter. The woman was extremely friendly, treating me as though she had known me for years. I do not believe she had ever seen me before. As we sat facing each other at her kitchen table she spoke frankly about my grandmother as a mother, wife, friend, and teacher. I felt as though she had stored away this information precisely for me to retrieve it on that day.

¹ The woman's name was Theresa Smith Bland, and she passed away on March 20, 1989.
She had met my grandmother when they were both students at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina around 1922. They were both majoring in Education. She said that my grandmother was exceptional in English and also at reciting Shakespeare. Through the years, many people, including my mother, have often commented on my grandmother's love for Shakespeare.

She spoke of the times after they both were married, living in Goldsboro, when my grandmother, and grandfather, my mother and my uncle would come to see her on Sunday evenings where they would have homemade ice cream and cake. As the evening passed, she related more to me about my grandmother than I had anticipated or even wanted to know at that time, but I sat patiently, listened and took notes.

Goldsboro, North Carolina is my parents' hometown, and trips from Durham (which is my hometown in North Carolina) to this small town were an essential part of my younger life. As an adult woman I was now drawn there not because of my parents but because of my interest in my grandmother's life. Goldsboro is where she had lived for eighteen years of her life. It was where she had been buried and forgotten.

Mayme Braxton Williams, an African-American, was born in Franklinton, North Carolina in 1906 as the daughter of Emily Baptist and Willie M. Williams. Her mother was a

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2 I am unsure of Ms. Bland's timing, because my research indicates that Mayme started Shaw University in 1923.
homemaker and her father a carpenter and plasterer. The town of Franklinton is located in the north central area of North Carolina in Franklin County, and came into existence when the construction of the railroad line of the Raleigh and Gaston Railway was completed to connect Raleigh with the Wilmington Weldon Railroad, North Carolina's first rail line.³ Mayme's mother, Emily Baptist, was born in Warren County in 1878.⁴ Both Warren and Franklin counties were created from the parent county of Bute in 1779. Emily's mother's name was Sara Baptist and her father's name was William Baptist; both were from Warren County. Sara Baptist died in 1931 in Franklinton, North Carolina at the age of eighty-eight. Sara's mother's name was Sara Davis and her father is unknown. That is all that is known of Mayme's maternal roots.⁵

³ George-Anne Willard, ed., Franklin County Sketchbook (Louisburg: Franklin County-Louisburg Bicentenary Committee, 1982), 46.
⁵ Some of the information on Mayme's maternal roots was obtained from Emily Baptist Williams's death certificate. Sara's maiden name is unknown as a question mark follows her first name on this death certificate.

I recently discovered the month and year of Sara's death and obtained a copy of her death certificate from the North Carolina State Board of Health Bureau of Vital Statistics. The date of her death was December 11, 1931. This is the source of information I used to verify Sara's married last name of "Baptist" and the name of her mother.

Mayme's mother, Emily, had several sisters one who lived in the New York city and was named (Aunt) Sue; she is mentioned in Mayme's journal. Another is named (Aunt) Rosa (from Laurinburg, North Carolina); she is also mentioned in Mayme's journal. Another was (Aunt) Sallie who lived in
As for the paternal side of her family, Mayme's father Willie Williams was, according to my mother, the son of a Cherokee woman and a white man. His place of birth is unknown but his year of birth is believed to be 1871.\textsuperscript{6} Little is known about Emily and her husband's life in Franklinton.

Mayme's father, Willie, must have been a favorite of hers as she expresses in her poem "Dear Dad O'Mine"

Dear Old Dad, my truest fellow
You are pure gold of rarest yellow.
Always noble, ever fine
Working for me all the times.\textsuperscript{7}

This poem is one of the thirty-four handwritten poems that appear in Mayme's homemade journal. The poem is located below a picture of Mayme's father in which he stands erect with his left arm around the back of a chair that resembles a rocker. In the background is a house shaded by a large tree. "At home

Franklinton, North Carolina, and who married twice, first to a Phillips and second to a Kearney. I found external evidence in the Goldsboro newspaper reporting on how Aunt Sallie and her daughter Ruth in the early 1930's came to Goldsboro to visit her sister Emily and her niece Mayme, and on how Mayme and her family went to Franklinton. My mother recalls those trips to Franklinton as a child.

In early January of 1992 I went to Franklinton looking for information on Mayme's maternal roots. I located some "truths" but also several dead ends concerning her life in this small town.

\textsuperscript{6} Willie Williams's year of birth is estimated from his age that appears on Emily Baptist Williams's death certificate.

\textsuperscript{7} Mayme Williams Carney, \textit{Memories}. Unpublished personal family document. 1930?, poem number twenty-one, hereinafter cited as \textit{Memories}. 
summer 1926" is the subheading above this picture, and I believe he is standing in front of their Franklinton home.

Through this journal a reader becomes acquainted with Mayme's personality, her feminine spirit, and warmth. It is here where her sense of family, friends and self becomes evident as well as her pleasure in writing poetry. Documented with pictures, dates and poems, the journal functions as a poetic-narrative of the early part of Mayme's life covering the years from when she was a little girl of two until she married at the age of twenty-two.

Mayme Braxton Williams was not an only child. She had an older brother named Alvin who is mentioned several times in her journal in poems describing family. The poem below called "Joy Riders," appears under a picture of Alvin posed between two women.

See the girlie on the left so neat
She was my li'l pal Marguerite.
Who kept one laughing from "head to feet."
On the right the other dame
Was my brother's wife, Malissa by name.  

The entry is not dated (most of them in the journal are) but it follows an entry dated 1926.

The journal also indicates that Mayme's parents fostered several black children. Three poems speak of children, three boys - W.J., Prince, and Tom, and a girl named Ruth. Only one poem entitled "Tom and Ruth" provides a clue as to how long these children lived with the Williams family.

8Memories, poem number twenty-five.
Little Tom and Ruth are they
The Angels took their mother away
They stayed with us five long years
And when they left I shed many tears.  

It seems as though both sets of children resided with the Williams family at different times. Again these are journal entries not dated but do appear between dated entries from 1908 to 1921. Nothing else is known of Mayme's early years of growing up in Franklinton. Presumably, this is where she obtained her early education. There is no evidence in the journal or from outside sources to suggest otherwise.

In the fall of 1923 Mayme entered Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina. For a southern black woman to go off to college in the early twenties was an extraordinary achievement for both Mayme and her family. New clothes were purchased for Mayme to attend college, and her father Willie provided for this departure an enormous trunk, an item which is still a family heirloom.

\[9\text{Memories, poem number seven.}\]

\[10\text{When I was in Franklinton in January 1992, I checked sources in that town for information regarding public or private secondary schools in that area during Mayme's time. Albion Academy, which no longer exists, was a private high school in Franklinton but I think if Mayme had gone to school there she would have mentioned it in her journal. I did check with a local elementary school in Franklinton that currently houses Albion's records; After searching their files, they claimed that they had no records on Mayme. There were some church schools in that area but I have not been able to track them down. This is an area of my thesis project where funding is needed to do more research.}\]

In Chapter Two there is more information regarding public and private schooling for blacks in the South in the early twentieth-century.
Educating African-American women during the early twentieth-century was a black cultural effort that had been emerging for many years to prepare black women (and men) for the expanding "New South," that is the newly industrializing South which blacks hoped would open up new opportunities for them. Education also played a significant role in creating a middle-class in Southern black society.\textsuperscript{11}

Wilmoth A. Carter describes Shaw University's role in this process:

From a national perspective the history of Shaw University replicates the development and growth of Negro higher education, while regionally it parallels the emergence of the "'New South'" in which educational rehabilitation became a major goal.\textsuperscript{12}

The university began out of a white educator's paternal desire to educate black freedmen in a religious setting resembling the traditional Christian form of bible study. Henry Martin Tupper started the school by teaching a class of men "in a room located in the old Guion Hotel,"\textsuperscript{13} on December 1, 1865. His wife Sarah Tupper began teaching a class for women in March 1866 which she held in the Tupper home. These actions...

\textsuperscript{11} See Pamela Dean, "Learning to Be New Women: Campus Culture at the North Carolina Normal and Industrial College," \textit{The North Carolina Historical Review}, 3 (July 1991), 287. Dean gives a brief discussion of the development of the Southern society.


\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 2.
laid the foundation for an academic institution which eventually came to be the

... oldest institution of higher learning founded in the South, the first Negro institution in America to open its doors to women, the first college in America to offer a four year medical program, the first Negro college in North Carolina to be granted an "A" rating by the State Department of Public Instruction, and the first Negro college in the South to eliminate the high school department. Hence the university stands as a landmark in Negro higher education.

Obviously, seventeen year old Mayme Braxton Williams chose an exceptional black school to attend. Her life would reflect the classical education that she received at "Shaw U.," as she called it in her journal.

When Mayme entered Shaw University in 1923 there were a total of one hundred and twenty-eight students enrolled. Although her exact curriculum is not known, there is information in Wilmoth Carter's text on the courses generally offered and the requirements for an A.B. degree in Education. This institution was growing academically; therefore, many changes occurred during Mayme's college years. One significant addition was when

In 1923-24 education became a full program in the college. Students desiring to teach had to take 18 hours of education in addition to the 30 hours in a single subject or department.

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14 Ibid., iv-v. Shaw was granted the "A" rating by the State Department in 1923. And in 1943 Shaw was given an "A" rating by the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools., Ibid., 224-225.

15 Ibid., 78.

16 Ibid., 184.
In the 1912-13 academic year some required courses were English, Latin, Psychology, Greek History, Roman History and Industries (a three year requirement). Presumably, Mayme had to take some of the same required subjects. Perhaps, a clue of one class she took can be found in the following poem dated in her retrospective journal in the spring of 1924, the latter part of her freshman year. Under a picture of herself standing outside a brick building in front of a window, she writes

While on my way to "Livy" Class
A Kodak man I chanced to pass
He bade me stand there in the sun
While he took my picture just for fun.

Livy is "the anglicized name of Titus Livius, 59 B.C.-A.D. 17," a Roman historian, which could imply that Mayme is on her way to a Roman history class.  

Dramatics and athletics were extracurricular activities

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17 Memories, poem number ten.


Some detailed information on courses offered while Mayme was enrolled can be found in Catalogue and Announcements of Shaw University Raleigh, N. C.: Session of 1926-1927, (Raleigh: Commercial Printing Co., 1926); and in Catalogue and Announcements of Shaw University Raleigh, N. C.: Session of 1927-1928, (Raleigh: Commercial Printing Co., 1927). A schedule of classes for 1926, when Mayme would have been a junior, lists history classes but does not give a course explanation.

I recently came across these documents in Shaw University's archival records. Besides listing standard catalogued information these documents include a calendar for those years, and the names of students enrolled with their respective hometown. Mayme is listed in both catalogues.
In which Mayme participated and documented in her journal. In "Dramatics At Shaw U. 1925" she poetically describes a special event:

In the lovely spring of Twenty-five  
Shakespeare's genius was still alive  
When Prof. Brawley with this set  
Presented a play, "Twelfth Night" you bet!¹⁹

Under the poem, Mayme lists the characters and their real names; she played Maria. On the opposite journal page is a picture of the cast, including Mayme in costume.

This is one of the three plays that Mayme describes in her journal with pictures and poems. She appeared in all three plays. In addition to Twelfth Night she was in Richard Sheridan's The Rivals and in The Merchant of Venice by William Shakespeare, produced in 1926 and 1927, respectively. This was an important time for dramatics at Shaw University where professor Benjamin G. Brawley was considered a legendary personality. Brawley directed the Twelfth Night which Mayme documents in the above poem. The drama group was called the Shaw University Players and the three plays provided funds for the Shaw Journal.²⁰ Wilmoth A. Carter's explanation of how these three plays were produced suggests why Mayme could have developed an affection for Shakespeare.

¹⁹ Memories, poem number nineteen.
²⁰ Carter, Shaw's Universe, 218.
He [Brawley] instituted drama at Shaw, producing only Shakespearean plays and training the actors for a year before presenting a play. Each play was presented on two consecutive evenings, for so famous did the presentations become that the audience could not be accommodated in one evening.

Carter also suggests that the young college women did participate in some sports. Mayme includes in her journal a picture of herself and seven other girls in the fall of 1924. They are clad in casual tights and loose-fitting skirts, typical of the twenties. To tell the story of her limited interest in the sport she wrote:

"Sport Season"

When I was a Sophomore in the fall,
I used to toss a basket-ball.
I thought the game was very fine,
But kept my eye on the side-line.

Carter does not mention the development of a women's basketball team until 1925, but states that teams initially may have been "intra-mural ones since there were no schools with teams in the local and nearby areas." Carter does not mention the development of a women's basketball team until 1925, but states that teams initially may have been "intra-mural ones since there were no schools with teams in the local and nearby areas."

Many other enlightening aspects of Mayme's collegiate life are outlined in her journal. She writes of special women and men friends and of a "Play Dad At Shaw U. [in] 1924."

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21 Ibid., p. 218.

22 Memories, poem number fourteen.

23 Carter, Shaw's Universe, 205.

24 It is a (historical) social phenomena for black people to "adopt" someone who is not a blood relative but who acts in a particular role. In this situation Mayme's "Play Dad" was probably a father figure and a chaperone on campus.
When I went to College you know
To have a play daddy was all "the go."
So I took one to be in style
He was a faithful friend, and sure
could smile.  

To examine the female and male relationships of the 1920s and 30s, feminist historians can assess the strict social rules that existed in academic institutions. For example, female students and female faculty dined together. Male teachers lived off campus with their families. Women could not ride with men, nor leave campus with them. More than likely a "Play Dad" figure served as a male mentor to a female student, but only on campus.

Interestingly enough, Benjamin G. Brawley, who was an influential figure at Shaw University and provided guidance in dramatics, had his own set of rules for relating to female and male students.

He was precise and exacting in class, immaculate in dress, frowned on men who said "hello" to women, refused to attend basketball games because the male players were not sufficiently clad, disliked non-ladylike sports. If

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25 Memories, poem number eleven.

26 During the Second Southern Conference on Women's History, in Chapel Hill, North Carolina on June 7-8, 1991, in one session a paper was given by Pamela Dean entitled "College Women and Class Formation in the New South 1892-1932" in which these issues concerning (white) female students were discussed in Dean's presentation. During the final comments it was suggested that such gendered behavior was also enforced in Southern black colleges.
a female student arranged to have a conference with him. He asked her to bring a friend with her for the conference. If one went to his home to discuss a matter, he refused to pursue any conversation whatever until he had called Mrs. Brawley into the room.

Looking at the gender roles in this new Southern (collegiate) society suggests the stringent rules young college women (black and white) endured. But today feminists question how these gender roles affected a woman's sense of (feminist) consciousness. That is, how did these ascribed gender roles affect the way women perceived their own roles in relative positions as daughter, wife, mother, career woman, and in being an individual as opposed to being defined as the "other"?

Mayme's poetic-narrative journal serves as a historical document for piecing together information on a black woman's college lifestyle. In the journal she does not express a feminist attitude, but her independent spirit and an inherent need to document her life prevail even up to one of the last entries about a college day at Shaw University. To depict her "Homesick" mood one Sunday in the winter of 1926, she uses a picture of herself that makes her look older and more mature. She is sitting casually upon a bench and writes

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28 At the Second Southern Women's History Conference in June 1991, this issue was raised based on comments made at the end of the session on "Educating the New (South) Woman."
On Sunday while thinking of home  
(sweet home)  
I'd rather sit by the post alone  
Than to wander around at all,  
Or stay in Dear Old Estey Hall. 

Estey Hall where Mayme posed was completed and prepared to house female students by 1874. It is in the National Register of Historic Places and "considered the first building erected on an American college campus for the higher education of black women." Further examination of Mayme's life reveals the holistic quality of the education that she received at Shaw University. It was an education that not only trained her to do something specific but prepared her to maneuver within the boundaries of race and gender of her own time.

In June 1927 Mayme graduated from Shaw University in a class of thirty and felt prepared to endure whatever lay ahead.

"O, Commencement! not the ending  
That it seems to all my strife  
But the gate that opens outward  
To a bigger broader life." 

Part of her life would now be devoted to teaching, and another part to marriage. By the spring of 1928, Mayme's journal

29 *Memories*, poem number twenty-six.

30 Quoted from the brochure *North Carolina Women: Reclaiming Their Place in History*, (Raleigh: North Carolina Women's History Project), issued November 1990.

31 Carter, *Shaw's Universe*, 78. The author provides a list of the number of students and the number of graduates from 1920-1930.

32 *Memories*, poem number twenty-eight.
indicates that she was working as a teacher at Albion Academy, a private black high school in Franklinton, North Carolina. This means that Mayme had returned home, and begun to work in an academic institution whose work in the establishment and preservation of black education is significant to African-American history.

Albion Academy was started by an African-American, Moses Aaron Hopkins, who was born in 1846 of slave parents. Although Hopkins did not have the opportunity to learn the alphabet until he was twenty years old, afterward, he "acquired a classical education at Avery College, [in] Allegheny, Florida and later at Lincoln University [also in Florida], ...." Eventually, he studied theology at a seminary in New York. In 1879 Hopkins founded Albion Academy with the financing of the "Presbyterian Board of Missions for Freedmen". The institution became a training ground for female and male teachers of the South such as Mayme Braxton Williams and for her future husband (my grandfather) James Henry Carney who was from the North (New Jersey). Hopkins died in 1886 while serving an appointment as U.S. Minister and

33 All the information on Hopkins' life is from J. P. Mangrum, "Leaders of Albion Academy," in George-Anne Willard, ed., Franklin County Sketchbook (Louisburg: Franklin County-Louisburg Bicentenary Committee, 1982), 64.

34 The Franklin Times July 21, 1990, sec. B, p. 1. This information came from a column entitled "Together again after 51 years." Written by Elizabeth Archer, this article reviews the history of Albion Academy. The occasion is the 51st class reunion of the class of 1939.
Consul General to Liberia.

After Hopkins' death, Dr. John Anthony Savage, also an African-American, became principal of Albion Academy. Although born in America, Dr. J.A. Savage spent time as a child in Africa with his missionary parents. Later upon returning to America he graduated from Lincoln University in Florida. Dr. Savage's work at Albion Academy was highly rated. Three years prior to Mayme's arrival the school was described in the Franklinton News as an academy that

... offers courses in domestic science and agriculture, in addition to its regular literary courses. It prepares colored students to become teachers in the colored schools of the State. An entrance fee of $5 is charged, and board and room are furnished at $12 per month. The school has a library of more than 1000 volumes and over $1500 worth of scientific equipment. It is declared to be the best equipped colored high school in the State of North Carolina.

When Mayme arrived at Albion Academy, Dr. Savage was still principal and she must have respected his leadership immensely because his name appears in her journal at the top of a page above a now darkened space that looks as though it was once occupied by a picture of Dr. Savage. Beside the space is written "At Albion 1927." No poem appears about

35 J. P. Mangrum, "Leaders of Albion Academy," 64.
37 At three other places in the journal Mayme documents time spent at Albion: One, when she refers to a secretary named Allean "at Albion Term 1927-28; second, following this entry Mayme placed a picture of herself, and this is labeled
Dr. Savage. In addition to Dr. Savage's educational influence upon Mayme, he was also a pastor who started the Shiloh presbyterian Church in Goldsboro, North Carolina where Mayme was a member. My mother has told to me that as a child she often heard Dr. Savage's name mentioned in their household.

On May 12, 1928 Mayme Braxton Williams married my grandfather James Henry Carney, a New Jersey-bred black man whom she had met, according to a journal entry, at least by the fall of 1926 while she attended Shaw University. That particular journal entry indicates in a poem that theirs was a relationship based on love. Marrying my grandfather could have been based also on a choice that resulted from the social pressures placed on black women not to be alone and single. And it could have been from her desire to experience marriage with someone who had been given a status of "Professor." Included also in her journal is their marriage invitation. The wedding ceremony was held in Franklinton, North Carolina.

It is this marital relationship that governs the structural framework of her journal as the document begins with the subject of her marriage by indirectly mentioning it in the poem called "High Spots":

"Albion Spring 1928; third, at the beginning of the journal under the poem "High Spots" she speaks of her marriage occurring at the time when she and her spouse are teaching at Albion. Because of these entries, it appears that she taught at Albion for about one year after she graduated from Shaw University."
Lift me up and you will see

High spots of life put down in brief. 38

Under this poem is Mayme's "newlywed" expression of their union:

... was united in Holy Matrimony to Prof. J.H. Carney, who was also a teacher at Albion that year. He is Jimmie to me, and we are striving to do our best as we walk "hand in hand" in the path of matrimony.

In the fall of 1928 Jimmie an[d] I went to Goldsboro, N. C. where we began working in the Public School System of that City.

At the end of her journal, the marriage is also highlighted; so, the subject of her marriage is where she begins her story and the period before that is told in retrospect. She tells her story up to the point of her life when my mother is seven months old. 40

Because of my positions as both granddaughter and historian I observe this journal from two perspectives. As granddaughter, I know that it is another one of Mayme's heirlooms greatly admired by my mother, myself and a few

38 Memories, poem number two. This particular poem appears on the second page opposite another poem "Memories" which is discussed later in this chapter in more detail. Poem number two is pasted onto a background that resembles wallpaper. The reader actually has to "Lift . . . [it] up" to read a brief description of her marriage of which the first phrase (obviously her name) is missing.

39 This is the first and only prose entry in the journal.

40 My mother was born in March 1930.
family members. The journal usually lies inside a coffee table in my mother's living room. With its external black cover worn by age and the title *Memories* still readable despite its fading written image, the journal resembles a small, simple composition notebook. Inside, its delicate brownish colored pages contain the aforementioned personal black and white photographs and two to ten-line handwritten poems under each photograph that explain to the reader the significance of the pictures. My grandmother's originality in constructing this journal has withstood the elements of time. The journal also uniquely serves as a chronological guide to the early years of her life.

On the other hand, as a historian I am intrigued by the historical significance of this work. Several questions come to mind: Why did Mayme create the journal? Who is Mayme addressing in the journal? Why did she choose to tell her story? Why did she select the picture-poem format to tell her story? To attempt to answer these questions, I will examine the structure of Mayme's text.

Even though the journal is private, the first poem invites the reader to view the history of a young woman who is now married and in retrospect narrates her life from 1908 to 1930.
Peep into memory's
    garden fair,
You will find some
    Precious flowers there.\textsuperscript{41}

In \textit{Black Sister} Erlene Stetson interprets the "flower" as an image

of rootedness and by contrast, rootlessness. Flowers symbolize the cultural diversity of women; like flowers, black women are rooted in the culture of which they are part. They join with and become their landscape. They must be transplanted to open soil and fresh air to breathe and extend their roots. Yet they bloom both within and outside captivity. Their seeds have been widely dispersed. The insistent metaphor of the flower has a personal significance\ldots\textsuperscript{29}

From the introductory poem, one can sense that Mayme Williams Carney's garden is full of flowers, "precious" ones that she is not hesitant about sharing. Specific dates in the journal indicate that it could have been created about two years after her marriage in 1928, a time when a happily married woman would feel comfortably rooted, embracing her marital life. Yet, Mayme feels the need to preserve her prenuptial life. This is why she welcomes the reader in the next stanza to

\textsuperscript{41}Memories, poem number one. This poem is in fact entitled "Memories."

Wander into every nook
You will think you are in a Fairy-Book.

Mayme chose to tell her story in this form, I speculate, because of her interest in journalism. She is exemplifying her talent as a practicing journalist and as a poet. Laying out pictures of herself, family and friends, with poems to express her early autobiography is a logical thing for Mayme to do, more so since journalism eventually became an essential aspect of her writing life. This journal functions as Mayme's own personal story book.

Because the journal is a poetic-retrospective narrative of Mayme's life written by herself, it is an autobiographical text. Therefore, Mayme's identity with self comes to fore. To look closer at the subject of identity as it is portrayed in Mayme's text, consider the poem "Directions" where she introduces her family to the reader.

Lift the veil
that guards the ways,
Leading back to my childhood days.

Mother, Dad, and Brother three
And the fourth was little me.

This poem appears under a traditional American family

\(^{30}\) Memories. Second stanza of poem entitled "Memories."

\(^{31}\) Memories, poem number four.
portrait, where Mayme is sitting in her mother's lap and looks to be about two years old. Her brother who appears to be about two to three years older stands in front of the father. 32 This is 1908, and "The Family in those days" is the heading that Mayme placed above the portrait. But what about the style and meaning emanating from the simple construction of the poem and the layout of this entire page? "Mother," "Dad," "Brother" and "me," the subjects of the poem and the picture, are written at the top of the page in apposition. Each is separately circled, individualized, but is also part of a link. "The Chain" is written above these words with a connecting symbol below it to indicate that the chain begins at Dad. From observing this page, it is obvious that Mayme's sense of "directions" is powerfully connected to early family ties. As an adult woman looking back Mayme realizes the impact of this early familial relationship upon her childhood, and perhaps also upon her present life; this recognition symbolizes her way of identifying with self.

But, the child (and woman) in question is of African-American descent. Despite the traditional American qualities of the picture and the poem, the reader-historian should consider the times of this portrait. It is 1908, the turn of the century and a turbulent time for African-Americans due to racial segregation and racial conflicts, lynchings of blacks

32 In a picture that appears on the preceding page Mayme describes herself as being two years old. She appears to be of the same age in this family portrait.
and prevailing myths designed to make blacks appear subhuman.

The proliferation of racially motivated Jim Crow laws that surfaced in the South at the turn of the century presented insecure living and working conditions for blacks. C. Vann Woodward describes that time:

The mushroom growth of discriminatory and segregation laws during the first two decades of this century piled up a huge bulk of legislation. Much of the code was contributed by city ordinances or by local regulations and rules enforced without the formality of laws. Only a sampling is possible here. For up and down the avenues and byways of Southern life appeared with increasing profusion the little signs: "Whites Only" or "Colored." Sometimes the law prescribed their dimensions in inches, and in one case the kind and color of paint. Many appeared without requirement by law - over entrances and exits, at theaters and boarding houses, toilets and water fountains, waiting rooms and ticket windows.

"Lift the veil/that guards the/ways" invokes now what message to the reader? Does the "veil" imply concealed memories of Mayme's childhood? Or, is her use of the term "veil" suggestive of the daily struggles of black Americans in a white racist society where they were forced to live and work in a segregated system?

In addition, in that phrase is there an implicit meaning that reflects not only the racial prejudice of 1908 but also the race and gender problem that has negatively characterized black womanhood? In Black Women Writing Autobiography when Joanne M. Braxton examines issues concerning black womanhood she interprets the black woman's lifestory as the "Afra-

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American experience" that can be claimed through autobiography. According to Braxton,

... within the veil of our blackness and our femaleness. We have been as invisible to the dominant culture as rain; we have been knowers, but we have not been known.

Whether or not "veil" is indicative of the racially isolated culture of a young black girl and her family, the journal itself makes the reader aware of a black woman's (literary) desire to characterize herself and her family at a time and place in Southern history where visibility outside of segregated community was not allowed. To better understand the historical use of the metaphor and term "veil" in African-American writing, consider Braxton's comparative illustration of how this "shared experience" has been conceived by both black women and men.

Black women have been carriers of tradition, and values of care, concern, nurturance, protection, and, most important, the survival of the race. W. E. B. Du Bois spoke of the black man as a seventh son of a

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34 Joanne M. Braxton Black Women Writing Autobiography: A Tradition Within a Tradition, (Philadelphia: Temple University, 1989), p. 1. Braxton goes on to state that this is a "paradox," and suggests that as it pertains to the black woman, it should be called the "Afra-American experience." See also p. 211 Braxton's text where she explains that she uses this term as an adjective "to designate the distinctively feminine aspects of black American literature and culture; the term is, by definition, feminist, or to use the word coined by Alice Walker, '""womanist,"'...."

seventh son, gifted with a veil he could see out of but which others could not see into. For the black woman, there is a veil within a veil, a realm of shared knowledge communicated from generation to generation, both through literature and the oral tradition.\textsuperscript{36}

It would be naive for the reader not to consider that Mayme and her family were affected by Jim Crowism. Yet, Mayme portrays family, friends and the joy of life lived.\textsuperscript{37}

This process of identifying with self through poetry closely resembles one defined by Erlene Stetson who sees "a compelling quest for identity" as a dominant theme in black women's poetry. Stetson believes that "the psychic hell of existing where cultural wholeness is denied ... [has] given further impetus to this search for personal and collective integration."\textsuperscript{38}

Since the next to the last entry in the journal is dated 1930 and announces, with a picture and a poem, the birth of my mother, who was named Emily after Mayme's mother, one can understand how the journal gave my grandmother the opportunity to privately identify with her earlier life. It was her way of saying goodbye to it as she developed the new (married) one. Is the journal therefore a "refuge of identity and a route of potential

\textsuperscript{36}Ibid., 3.

\textsuperscript{37}I am grateful for Dr. Cheryl Johnson-Odim's various suggestions on how I could shape many of my comments in this chapter to exemplify the black person's experience as Mayme chose to express it.

\textsuperscript{38}Stetson, \textit{Black Sister}, xvii.
Throughout the text, Mayme supplies the reader with an autobiography that sends positive messages about her childhood and her transition into womanhood similar to ones that Joanne M. Braxton sees in two 1940 black autobiographies, Era Bell Thompson's *American Daughter* and Zora Neale Hurston's *Dusk Tracks on a Road*.

..., these women autobiographers portray resilient and self-sufficient individuals rather than victims of their culture. The authors are, in short, survivors. For them, there was nothing tragic about their blackness; ....

I must consider the fact that if my grandmother had not designed the journal, many elements of her early life would have been left unknown, and therefore perhaps unavailable to a historian because there are no oral stories documenting this time in her life. The majority of the events described in this journal occurred before my mother's birth. Moreover, my mother does not recollect many stories orally handed down about those days. She retains mostly stories of my grandmother's life as a mother, teacher and writer. Thus, the journal provides the written form; it supplies historians with original material for which the oral tradition is missing.

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40 Ibid., 140.

Braxton also supports this fact by first citing "the words of Temma Kaplan," "'Often in the most oppressive situations, it is the memories of mothers handed down through the daughters that keeps a community together.'" Then Braxton explains that "Indeed, this 'unwritten literature' and the juxtaposition of literary and oral forms create a linguistic vitality that informs written literature on many levels."42

The journal has survived only because my mother has kept it in her possession; her preservation of these memories has enabled me to continue the story. When I was visiting the North Carolina Museum of History in June of 1991 to discuss the possibility of having my grandmother's journal entered in a 1993 premiere exhibit on North Carolina Women's History, the curator of research responded enthusiastically about the contents of the journal as he carefully looked it over. Upon leaving he told me that they, meaning himself and other curators, knew that black women were writing during my grandmother's time but they did not know what they were writing. To share and tell our black foremothers' stories is crucial to understanding the Afra-American experience.

writing especially since black women are doubly oppressed by race and gender.

42 Braxton, Black Women Writing Autobiography, p. 5.
CHAPTER II

GENDER AND RACE: TO BE MARRIED AND VISIBLE "AMONG THE COLORED"

Who will be the first white child born in Goldsboro in 1930? (From the Goldsboro News-Argus, January 1, 1930)¹

This was a "burning question"² that appeared on the front page of the daily local newspaper issued in Goldsboro, North Carolina. My grandmother Mayme Carney was pregnant with my mother at this time. Perhaps, my grandmother or another black woman who was expecting a child could have used the gifts that local merchants in Goldsboro were offering to only the "first white baby" such as a "pair of crib or cradle shoes."³ But this was in the South, during the Jim Crow era when segregation of the races was the law. To identify people by their racial heritage was like a social norm that stigmatized black people. African-Americans comprised 45.8% of this

¹ The Goldsboro News-Argus is the result of two Goldsboro newspapers that merged in 1929. This question appears in the middle of the cover page with the following heading: "Gifts Offered to First 1930 Baby."

² Ibid., This phrase appeared in the advertisement. I borrow it here to emphasize the racial issue of the ad. The statement from which it is taken reads as follow: "That was a burning question for more reasons than one this morning."

³ Ibid., January 1, 1930. The reader should know that these quotes appeared in a Kinney Shoes ad.
city's population, but they were not recognized in the same class as white citizens.

In this newspaper there was a racially identified column referred to as "Among The Colored." The news column was designed to report on the local news of the "colored" community in Goldsboro. It appeared on irregular days and the length of the column also varied. Many times an obituary of a white citizen would be written in more detail than the local black news. But, on Saturday the column delivered more local news to the African-American community when it announced the upcoming services at the black churches. The paper often amounted to eight pages and cost three cents. Yet, there was no specific page or location in the newspaper for the "Among The Colored" column. Sometimes it would be interspersed on a page with other local news, or near comic strips which ridiculed the image of black women and men, or by the want ads which usually specified whether or not a "colored" or a white person was needed for a particular occupation, or the column would be placed on the back page.

On February 2, 1930 it was announced in "Among the Colored" that "Mrs. Mayme Carney has gone to her home at 4

\[\text{See [Guy B. Phillips], The Goldsboro Township Schools: A Cooperative Survey Report (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1956), 8. This survey lists the population in Goldsboro in 1930 at 8,117 white Americans and 6,868 black Americans.}\]
My grandmother went to Franklinton then to live with her parents while she awaited the birth of my mother. In March, two days after my mother was born, the column reported: "Prof. Carney went to Franklinton Saturday to see his newly born baby, a girl. Mother and daughter are doing nicely. Congratulations." 

Goldsboro, which is located in the Coastal Plains area of eastern North Carolina, is where my maternal grandparents raised a family and taught school. In Mayme's journal, she mentions that she and James Carney went to teach in the Goldsboro School System in 1928. It is believed that her first teaching job was at an elementary school for black children, called School Street School. By 1931, Mayme was teaching at Dillard High School. She was introduced to the Dillard faculty and staff by her husband, James, who at that time was the principal of Dillard.

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6 "AC," March 17, 1930, p. 2.


8 "AC," January 7, 1931, p. 4 reveals that in her first year at Dillard Mayme taught in the Grammar Grade department, grade 6B with a 90% attendance rate.

8 Wilmette Banks Starke, completed questionnaire, June 1991. Ms. Starke was the school secretary for Dillard High School at that time, hereinafter cited as Starke completed questionnaire.

Sometime after Mayme and James came to Goldsboro in 1928, he became principal of Dillard High School. However, he is not given credit for his time in office. Instead the credit
Originally started in 1885, Dillard High School was then known as the Goldsboro Colored Graded School. In 1894 Rev. Clarence Dillard, who was from South Carolina but educated at Howard University in Washington, D.C., served as principal until 1924. Two years earlier the school had been moved to a new site. Upon Rev. Dillard's retirement, the school was renamed Dillard High School. This academic move, in 1924, to establish public secondary education for black children in Goldsboro proved to be an extraordinary effort.

In the latter nineteenth century the formation of graded schools for whites and African-Americans occurred throughout North Carolina.

It was during the decade of 1875 to 1885 that the graded school movement got underway in North Carolina. The larger communities of the State established such schools, the first being established in Greensboro, then in Raleigh, Salisbury, and Goldsboro. The General

is given to Hugh Victor Brown, a black patriarch in the Dillard community (which includes faculty, staff and students). In my conversation with Mr. Brown in June of 1991, he states that Carney was not an "official" principal. In the J.H. Carney interview, Mr. Carney confirms that he was indeed principal during the administration of Superintendent Ray Armstrong, which was in the 1930s and early 40s, and that he signed students' diploma. In an "AC" column (November 23, 1932, p. 3) J.H. Carney is listed as the Principal of Dillard High School and Hugh V. Brown as the Superintendent Principal.

No personnel records exist for Goldsboro City Schools prior to 1960; the earlier records were destroyed in a fire. For this reason I have had to depend upon external evidence to document the careers of my grandparents during this time.

10Emma R. Edwards, "History of Goldsboro Schools," 1929 (obtained from the vertical file at Wayne County Public Library in Goldsboro, North Carolina); Rachelle R. Richardson, Ethel W. Twiford and John H. Wooton, Sr., eds. "Supplement to 100th Anniversary Celebration History Outline," 1981-82 (also from vertical file at Wayne County Public Library).
Assembly of 1881 passed a special act authorizing the establishment of the Goldsboro Graded School District, which provided for a 20c tax rate for the support of the school.¹¹

However, racist attitudes prevailing in the South affected the development and the maintenance of black public secondary schools "from 1880 to the mid-1930s."¹² These attitudes took the shape of political, economic and social barriers designed exclusively to prevent black children from pursuing an education beyond the primary level. What happened to alleviate this situation?

African-American churches established many of the private secondary schools at this time. Another resource came from some African-American universities such as Shaw University. They designed an Academy department for their students to obtain or to complete a private secondary education and consequently be qualified to pursue a college education.¹³ As for external funding, assistance came from northern philanthropists. However, this assistance was geared toward the creation of industrial high schools for blacks as opposed

¹¹[Phillips], The Goldsboro Township Schools, 6.


¹³While I was researching the Shaw University archives (in January 1992) for information regarding Mayme's early years at Shaw, I met Dr. John Fleming a retired teacher of Shaw. Dr. Fleming made me aware of the racist conditioning in the South that excluded black children from a public secondary education. For this reason, black churches and universities provided private secondary education.
to the establishment of academic high schools. James D. Anderson explains the nature of this limitation which tacitly established a biased system of education for blacks.

To accomplish its goal the Rosenwald Fund adopted a new approach that came to characterize its reform campaigns in several southern cities. The fund hired its own team of experts on school architecture, industrial education curricula, and the social and economic characteristics of urban black communities.\(^\text{14}\)

In late 1931 the Rosenwald Fund withdrew abruptly from its campaigns to direct black secondary education into industrial channels. In vital respects, the fund's campaigns were the last major efforts by northern philanthropists to impose upon black children of the American South a racially repressive model of industrial education. These campaigns ended because of the lessons the philanthropists learned about race and class in the southern urban economy as the country moved deeper into the national economic depression. Northern philanthropists increasingly realized how sharp were the differences between their ideology of industrial education as a formula for racial segmentation in the labor market and the material reality of black economic oppression in the urban South.\(^\text{15}\)

\(^{14}\)Anderson, The Education of Blacks in the South, 208. The Julius Rosenwald Fund "came to symbolize the crusade for black common schools in the rural South during the first third of the twentieth century" (see this same text by Anderson p. 153). Rosenwald was a philanthropist from Chicago and at that time the president of Sears, Roebuck, and Company. Anderson's text gives a detailed description of the philanthropic role in establishing common schooling for blacks in the South. According to Anderson, these schools for blacks became known as "Rosenwald schools" because of the contributions from the Rosenwald Fund. That label led to the popular belief that the schools were paid for mainly by the fund. In actual practice, the fund never gave even one-half the cost of a schoolhouse, and it generally contributed an average of about one-sixth of the total monetary cost of building, grounds, and equipment. Most of the cash, either through private contributions or public tax funds, came from rural black citizens, (see Anderson pp. 153-154).

\(^{15}\)Ibid., p. 228.
Essentially, northern philanthropic influence appropriated funds for industrial schools that would provide blacks with courses for trade occupations such as washing and greasing in automobile service stations, bricklaying, plastering, tailoring, heating and janitoring. These "trade schools" were not accepted by the white South because during the periods of economic recession whites were moved from their high paid positions down to the trade occupations that blacks normally held. This situation caused both blacks and whites to migrate to Northern cities for employment opportunities. On the other hand, industrial schooling for blacks was not accepted by the black South because it was perceived as a barrier designed to keep blacks from pursuing an academic secondary education.

In the light of northern philanthropic interest in the biased reformation of Southern black schools, who in the 1930s was paying for the operation of the North Carolina schools? According to a notice, in the Goldsboro News-Argus "North Carolina ... [paid] the entire cost for a six months school term, and ... [provided] supplementary funds for 2 additional months."\(^\text{16}\) By 1933 North Carolina "assumed the expense for eight months of schooling" and the city of Goldsboro imposed a tax to fund the ninth month of the school year.\(^\text{17}\)

\(^{16}\)Ibid., February 18, 1932.

\(^{17}\)"Goldsboro City Schools' Centennial Celebration: 100 Years of Quality Education (A Proud History)." This is a publication that is in the vertical file at the Wayne County Public Library in Goldsboro, North Carolina.
The existence of Dillard High School in Goldsboro, however, provided black children the opportunity to receive a secondary education. Evidence shows that the promotion of education within this budding (black) subculture was becoming a primary force at this time. By 1933 North Carolina had one of the largest black populations in the South of children between the ages of fourteen and seventeen years. Out of sixteen Southern states, North Carolina with 93,578 black students had the third highest population of this age group. Of this total 24,705 black students were enrolled in secondary grades.\textsuperscript{18} North Carolina had the second highest enrollment in the South at this time.

In Goldsboro, the development and progress of the "colored" schools were being monitored, presumably by the local black educators, and reported to the community.

The colored schools have enrolled 2086 pupils up to the close of the 3rd month. Of this number 906 are boys. School Street School has the largest number 737. The average daily attendance for the month for the system is 1789.5. The percent of attendance is 90.9. Following is the standing of school according to percentages. Dillard High 94 percent; School Street School 90.8 percent.... \textsuperscript{19}

In 1932 there was an increase in the school enrollment.

\textsuperscript{18}Ibid., 236.

\textsuperscript{19}"AC," December 10, 1931, p. 6.
The enrollment in the Colored Schools for the 5th month which closed February 5 increased from 2,141 to 2,193, an average daily attendance of 1,851 and a percentage of 91. The attendance is thus better than it has been at anytime within the last eight years. 

Comparative information on the current status of the "colored" schools in Goldsboro was periodically published in the "Among the Colored" column. School enrollment was reported on the grade schools and the high school including those classes with the highest percentage of attendance. Information also was released about the tardy record, and the number of teachers and parents attending the Parent/Teacher Association meetings. The reporting of these statistics showed this black community's concern for the advancement of their student enrollment and attendance and for the progress of their teachers. One article stated:

State School Facts for January published monthly from the office of the State Superintendent of Public instruction is dedicated to the subject of training of teachers. It shows Goldsboro Colored schools ranking 4th in training of teachers among 10 cities [in North Carolina] including Gastonia, Kinston, Salisbury, Fayetteville, Wilson, .... The rural schools of Wayne County rank 35 among the State's 100 counties.

Since black Americans of the South were not recognized as being in the same "class" as white Americans, presummably this spilled over into some of the basic operations of the "colored" schools. As C. Vann Woodward states "Much ingenuity

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20 Ibid., February 18, 1932.

21 Ibid. Goldsboro is in Wayne County.
and effort went into the separation of the races...." This meant that some cases existed such as when "North Carolina and Florida required that textbooks used by the public-school children of one race be kept separate from those used by the other, .....""}

Because Dillard was the only black high school in Goldsboro, it strove to set an exemplary model for its black community and surrounding black schools in Goldsboro and throughout North Carolina. It provided instruction for a Grammar Grade and a High School. It gave daily Chapel exercises and made it a requirement for the students to sing the "designated" African-American national anthem "Lift Every Voice and Sing" during assembly programs. Oratorical contests and annual Declamatory contests were held; plays were given and a debating team was formed to compete against

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23 Ibid., 102. Despite the fact that North Carolina set aside monies for schooling and later taxed the citizens (white and black) for the last month of schooling, I do not want the reader to go away with the notion that black schools such as Dillard were probably given their fair share of funding. Racial segregation was severe in the South. Woodard confirms this when he comments that "The extremes to which caste penalties and separation were carried in parts of the South could hardly find a counterpart short of the latitudes of India and South Africa," (See Woodward's text, p. 101).

24 James Weldon Johnson (1871-1938) wrote this anthem which was first performed in the early 1900s. This song was not a part of my primary or secondary schooling but it was a part of my cultural heritage so I grew up knowing it.
Throughout Mayme Carney's teaching career at Dillard High school, which lasted about fifteen years, she served as a homeroom teacher, taught English, literature and journalism, and she supervised many extracurricular activities. Mayme dedicated her teaching life to her Dillard students. As early as 1931, Mayme's teaching and community activities were being reported in the "Among The Colored" column. Twice in this year when the percent of attendance was reported for Dillard, Mayme's class ranked in the 90% range. Once it was reported at 96.5%.

What was it like to experience a class under Mayme Carney? According to a former student,

Mrs. [Mayme] Carney challenged her students. Her classes were full of learning. Students and teachers alike often said that she believed English literature was the one and only subject in the entire school program. She arrived at school early, and left late, often tutoring students in her home.

As early as December 1930 the column reported that Mayme "entertained members of her class at her home Tuesday night.

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25 High school students throughout North Carolina gathered at A&T to compete against each other, according to a staff member who works in A&T's archives. (A&T had a program for high school students until 1927.)

26 J. H. Carney interview.

27 "AC," December 1931.

28 Neal A. Stitt, completed questionnaire, June 1991. Mr. Stitt entered Dillard High School in 1939, hereinafter cited as Stitt completed questionnaire.
The members of the class exchanged gifts among themselves."\(^{29}\)
In this same column it was stated, too, that "Prof. and Mrs. J.H. Carney, and their little daughter, Emily Mae left Wednesday for Richmond, where they will visit Mr. Carney's parents."\(^{30}\)

Many times my mother has spoken to me about how every Christmas her family would go to Richmond, Virginia to visit with the Carney parents. She would tell me how generous her grandparents were and how her grandmother Mary Elizabeth Carney was blind and yet a talented pianist, and that her grandfather Vernon was a teacher. My mother's stories of these visits are now confirmed by the fact that they were briefly documented in the 1930s and 40s in this column.

By 1932, "home" was at 508 Miller Street. The land was purchased for ten dollars by Mayme Williams Carney and James Henry Carney in February of that year. They thereby acquired a mortgage of $1300.00 on March 1st, 1932.\(^{31}\) Subsequently, in

\(^{29}\)"AC," December 29, 1930 p. 2. At this time I believe Mayme was teaching at School Street school, an elementary school.

\(^{30}\)Ibid. This information on the Carney family appeared in the second paragraph following the previously mentioned material on Mayme entertaining class members. On this day the column news occupied about two columns of news reporting on various activities such as church but much of the news was information on the visitors and visiting relatives of local blacks and local family entertainment for the holidays.

\(^{31}\)Land deed on file at the County Register of Deeds office in Wayne County Courthouse, Goldsboro, North Carolina, February 26th, 1932. No records have been found to determine where the Carney's lived in Goldsboro prior to 1932.
March 1932, Mayme's parents moved from Franklinton to reside with Mayme, James and their daughter Emily: "The community welcomes the Carneys and their parents Mr. and Mrs. Williams who have moved to Goldsboro. They are at home at 508 Miller Street."  

This was a move that offered Mayme both domestic and maternal support, which she needed in order to expand her career at Dillard. To have her mother living in the same household to assist with Emily and the household duties gave Mayme the "space" she needed. This freedom from doing "all" of the domestic responsibilities allowed her to put more time into her school work, to continue her work in community activities, to attend social gatherings or meetings, or to travel with her husband James. For example, after her parents moved to Goldsboro, Mayme and James once traveled together to Greensboro to chaperone the Dillard debating team. This was not of course unusual considering that at this time James was principal of Dillard and Mayme was an English teacher there, too. As a young married African-American couple living in a segregated community in the South in the 1930s their lifestyles, work and leisure, revolved daily around each other. Once at a program at the local Presbyterian church, Mayme did a "select reading" and James did an "instrumental
solo." This new familial arrangement on Miller Street also meant that more people now lived in the household, and that there would be more financial responsibilities. But, to supplement the family income Mayme's father Willie continued to work as a plasterer and carpenter.\(^{35}\)

Mayme's home at 508 Miller served too as a refuge for black teachers to stay when they first arrived in Goldsboro. James Tyler, a retired teacher who taught at Dillard High School, describes his experience when he first came to this segregated town.

September, 1937. I arrived in Goldsboro from Hampton Institute on the Friday before Labor Day. Mr. Brown (H.V) [principal of Dillard at that time] assigned the home of Mr. and Mrs. Carney as my residence.

I came to Goldsboro to set up and teach a new shop (Auto Mechanics) at Dillard High School.

I was a lodger and boarder at her home only from Sept. 1937 to Easter 1938 - when I married and moved out.\(^{36}\)

My mother has verified that this gesture by her mother and father was not uncommon. On many occasions they rented out

\(^{34}\)Ibid., April 19, 1932, p. 4.

\(^{35}\)In one column, "AC," May 2, 1932 (p. 5), it was reported that "Mr. Willie Williams has returned from Franklinton where he had been working recently." My mother recalls Mayme speaking often of her own father going off to work in the morning.

\(^{36}\)James B. Tyler, completed questionnaire, July 27, 1991. These are answers from three separate questions that refer to when and how Mr. Tyler met Mayme, hereinafter cited as J.B. Tyler completed questionnaire.
one of their rooms to teaching guests, to compensate for the lack of motel accommodations and affordable housing for black people in this city.\(^{37}\)

The newspaper printed information on Mayme's public and private worlds when she entertained out-of-town friends and relatives at 508 Miller. Once when she was visited by a school friend "Miss Cormelia Hunt who ... [was teaching] in ... Wilson High School,"\(^{38}\) the column described the entertainment:

On Saturday night Prof. and Mrs. Carney entertained a large number of friends in honor of Miss Hunt, a class mate of Mrs. Carney's. Many hands of whist were played. Miss Hunt received the guest prize, ....

Social gatherings which consisted of the local people welcoming visitors or entertaining each other were common in this segregated community at that time. Of the many black educated women and men living in this community, which functioned as a subculture of the larger (white) culture, social events of this caliber assisted in the formation of community clubs and organizations. These activities, therefore, symbolized how this black culture, on a daily basis, was making a "quality" living out of their second class

\(^{37}\)Since this was during the Great Depression, affordable housing, much less available housing in a segregated residential area was not a convenience. There were boarding houses but no "colored" motel. There was however a white hotel called Hotel Goldsboro.

\(^{38}\)"AC," November 26, 1932, p. 5.

\(^{39}\)Ibid., November 28, 1932, p. 2.
citizenship in Goldsboro.

In November 1932 a Woman's Civic Club was formed of which Mayme was elected secretary. And twice, December 30th and the 31st, the Goldsboro News-Argus reported on an upcoming event where Mayme was scheduled to speak:

The Annual Emancipation Program will be given at 3 o'clock Monday afternoon January 2 at Dillard High School Auditorium.

The Emancipation Proclamation will be read by Miss Lillie Alridge. Mrs. Mayme W. Carney will speak on behalf of the women.

That following Monday in the first week of January 1933 "Emancipation day was observed... [and] sponsored by the Pilots' Club" (a black male teachers' club). A "Prof. J.E. Green spoke on the lives of various leaders the race has produced." He told the audience that they "should look forward rather than backward," but that "the lives and works" of black "leaders inspire" them "to look forward." Other speeches were given: "Negro scientists" by a Prof. W.A. Foster and Mayme Williams Carney spoke on "The Negro Woman." Mayme was the only adult female speaker at this annual event.

To read that my maternal grandmother had once spoken on the topic of "The Negro Woman" at an event such as the Emancipation Day memorial had a profound effect upon me. Thoughts pertaining to my own cultural heritage and my black

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40 Ibid., November 10, 1932, p. 8.
41 Ibid., December 30, 1932, p. 5.
42 Ibid., January 3, 1933, p. 6.
womanhood emerged. Within the community's invisibility, these educators maintained a visibility in the public sphere which my grandmother as a married educator shared, too. Here I was for the first time in my life confronted with a public image of my grandmother that no one had ever informed me of, an image that reflected many of the things I believed in, especially an image of black feminism. Why else would my grandmother choose to speak on this topic if she did not believe that at this particular place and time the position of the "Negro Woman" had a distinct relevancy to the "black race"? In this capacity, on this day, she was representing the black women of that community, the black Southern women, the black women of the 1930s. Through this brief news of a day in my grandmother's life I was seeing and feeling an image of her with which I could totally identify, an image of a black woman with political consciousness. It was a glimpse of her past Afra-American experience, and of my own black matrilineage.

If we had an Emancipation Day program today, what kind of impact would it have upon black and white students? What would be students' responses to hear the Emancipation Proclamation read?

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43 To read more on black matrilineage, see Diane F. Sadoff "Black Matrilineage: The Case of Alice Walker and Zora Neale Hurston" in Black Women in America: Social Science Perspectives, Malson, Micheline et. al., (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988).
I, Abraham Lincoln, president of the United States of America, and commander in chief of the army and navy thereof, do hereby proclaim and declare ...:

That on the first day of January in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any state or designated part of a state, the people where of shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom."

For the black community in Goldsboro to recognize this document as a vital part of black American history was a distinctive reminder of their cultural heritage. It was a time when they, the educators and the students, looked back on the oppression of their ancestors. They could then assess the progress of their own "race."

When I went to segregated elementary and junior high schools in North Carolina in the 1960s and early 70s, there was no recognition or detailed discussions of the emancipation of black slaves. Nor did my family discuss slavery. Yet, in my grandmother's time when the anniversary of Emancipation Day came around, it was a publicly acknowledged topic in their subculture. Educators, like my grandmother, knew that they had

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"Charles Sullivan, ed., Children of Promise: African-American Literature and Art for Young People (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1991), 51. This is only a paragraph of the actual Proclamation. I have only included a portion of it here to emphasize to the reader the significance of such a document."
to educate their black community not just with a classical or formal education but also about their own black history.

Providing education was one key to the survival of this black community in Goldsboro. For blacks, an academic education meant liberation. Another key was the social maintainence and the rememberance of their historical past, the sustenance of their cultural heritage amid the turmoil of racial segregation. This community serves as an example of how a black subculture can survive within an American white culture. Other black female writers have explored and defined the historical existence of a subculture within a dominant (larger) culture in racist societies. Katie Geneva Cannon describes an aspect of this culture as it existed during black slavery in America:

In spite of every form of institutional constraint, Afro-American slaves were able to create another world, a counterculture within the white-defined world, complete with their own folklore, spirituals, and religious practices.45

When bell hooks discusses the sex roles of black female and male slaves she describes the emergence of a black slave subculture and relates how the divided "Sex roles in the black slave sub-culture mirrored those of patriarchal white America."46 Hooks's examination of the ascribed black slave


cultural roles focuses on white male sexist attitudes that filtered into the black subculture and tainted the general status of black women.

While researching the 1930s and 40s issues of the Goldsboro News-Argus, the source of negative images of black women has become clearer to me. Generally, the images of women portrayed at that time were those of "white" women. There were no black women portrayed in this newspaper unless they were former slaves, "respected negresses," or negative female figures, in syndicated comic strips, who supposedly resembled either poverty-stricken illiterate black women or the white racist mythical image of the "Old Black Mammie of the South."

Reading that my maternal grandmother had a publicly recognized voice in this black segregated community has enabled me to envision now not the typical traditional grandmother - that is, one involved in the (black) art of domesticity but to see one who was in the public domain with an influence upon the progressiveness of this community.

A third key to the survival of this community was the social organization of black women's and men's clubs. In this text I address the formation and purpose of black women's clubs. As early as November 1932 black women were organizing in Goldsboro: "Nearly forty women met at Dillard High School yesterday afternoon and organized a Civic Club. Several

47 Ibid., 58. Here, I borrow hooks's use of this term.
inspiring talks were made. . . ." Mayme was not a featured speaker but she was listed in this same article as the group's secretary.

Also, in January of 1933 the black Woman's (Civic) Club of which my grandmother was still secretary issued a statement on the club's purpose and current status.

The Woman's Club has been organized and is functioning well with many leading women of the community asking part. The club is working earnestly to help bring about better conditions among our people. Mrs. H.V. Brown, President; Mrs. J. H. [Mayme] Carney, secretary.

In Gerda Lerner's discussion of the black woman's historical role in her community, Lerner summarizes the essence of these organizations.

The work of Black clubwomen contributed to the survival of the black community. Black women's clubs were, like the clubs of white women, led by educated, often middle class women, but unlike their white counterparts, black club women frequently successfully bridged the class barrier and concerned themselves with issues of importance to poor women, working mothers, tenant farm wives. They were concerned with education, self and community improvement, but they always strongly emphasized race pride and race advancement.

There were similarities in the structures of black and white woman's clubs as Lerner states. Moreover, this was a

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49 Ibid., January 12, 1933, p. 5.

period of political growth for both races of women - the activities of black women in their subculture and of white women in the larger culture.\textsuperscript{51} The activities of black women's clubs, however, were not in the "spotlight" as were white women's clubs. Their activities were parallel; yet, they were literally divided due to racial segregation.

The Goldsboro News-Argus reported frequently on white women's clubs and the political progress of white women in the local and national news. The American Association of University Women (AAUW) met in Charlotte, North Carolina in February 1930.\textsuperscript{52} The following month the Dean of Duke University in Durham, North Carolina spoke at the local women's club meeting in Goldsboro. Her speech embraces the success of the white women's role, but ignores the plight of black women.

"Since the World War, progress in education for women in colleges and universities has been rapid.

\textsuperscript{51}In this text I am concerned only with the political growth of black women in Goldsboro. I must clarify this because there were some exceptions. As early as the late nineteenth century when black women began to form clubs, there were black women who rose out of slavery, segregation or who lived in the North and were politically active in the larger white culture. I suggest if the reader is interested in exploring this topic further, see Paula Giddings, \textit{When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America}, (New York: Bantam Books, 1984).

\textsuperscript{52}"AC," January 23, 1930, p. 8.
"Where women once clamored for admittance to men's classes on equal terms, the keynote of today's education acknowledges the fundamental differences in men and women, and knowledge available for everyday living can begin in the classroom..."  

By the end of 1931, six white women were members of Congress in the House of Representatives and the media expressed its fear of the ramification of feminist political power:

... if these six women should take it upon themselves to form a feminist bloc, they could completely control legislation in the lower house during the coming session.  

In 1933 Mrs. Minnie Craig, of Esmond, North Dakota, became the first female speaker of the House of Representatives. Because of their color and powerlessness in this white racist society, black women were excluded from such events and opportunities. They had to maintain their own visibility by structuring their own clubs and organizations.

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53 Goldsboro News-Argus, March 20, 1930, p. 3. The article was entitled "Dean of Women at Duke University Speaks Before Local Woman's Club." The dean at that time was Miss Alice Baldwin.

54 Ibid., December 3, 1931, Thursday, "'Women in Congress Hold Spotlight' by BBonita [sic] Witt." This is a detailed article, which is too long to elaborate here on the history of these (white) women. I do want to clarify that these women were Republicans and Democrats who were elected to office between 1924-1930. They were from different areas of the United States. It is interesting to note that some of them were elected to succeed their husbands in office.

55 Ibid., January 6, 1933, cover page. A picture of Minnie Craig is shown and the story under her picture is: "For the first time in United States history a woman has become speaker of a house of representatives. She is Minnie D. Craig ..., a banker's wife and former national Republican committeewoman. Mrs. Craig has been a member of the North Dakota legislature, at Bismarck for 10 years."
The location and availability of Dillard High School in Goldsboro's black community meant that it was often used as a meeting ground for the women: "There will be a mass meeting of the women of the city at 4 p.m. Sunday at Dillard High School. All women are urged to be present."\(^{56}\) Two days later the "Among the Colored" column gives an update of the results of this meeting: "About 200 leading women of the city met Sunday at Dillard High School at the call of Mrs. H. V. Brown in the interest of the Community chest."\(^{57}\)

The Community Chest was an outgrowth of the (men's) new Civic League in the black community, and it often sponsored programs to raise money. In one case after expenses were paid off, funds raised were turned over to the Bureau of Social Service.\(^{58}\)

The meeting of the 200 leading women appears to have been a genesis for the formation of the black Woman's Civic Club in Goldsboro. In another article another mass meeting was announced and "colored women" were requested to donate "at least fifty cents to the Community Chest." Members were then appointed to work specified districts in Goldsboro, presumably black districts, to raise money.\(^{59}\)

Participation in civic and political activities allowed

\(^{56}\)"AC," December 5, 1931, p. 4.

\(^{57}\)Ibid., December 7, 1931, p. 4.

\(^{58}\)Ibid., March 12, 1930, p. 8.

\(^{59}\)Ibid., December 16, 1931, p. 3.
black women such as Mayme Carney to become visible movers in their community, but their visibility instead has been historically overshadowed by the racist organization of white women's clubs. White women's clubs supported the separatist ideals that were enforced by the local white government. In addition they had the mainstream media, dominated by white men, that recognized them as the "women's club." This type of public recognition signified to local whites and the black community that the women of the black race were not women. In this context, black women of this time encountered prejudice against both their race and their gender.\footnote{For a detailed discussion of the struggle of black women's clubs during the mid- to late nineteenth-century to the early to mid-twentieth-century, see bell hooks, \textit{Ain't I A Woman: Black Women and Feminism}, (Boston: South End Press, 1990); Angela Y. Davis, \textit{Women, Race & Class}, (New York: Random House, 1981).}

In those early years in Goldsboro Mayme Carney was visible outside of her teaching duties in other community affairs besides the black women's civic club. In February 1932, black history week, a program entitled "The Feast of Belshazzar" was held at the local Antioch Baptist Church. As a historian, I feel that I am now a witness to how black women were excluded from local women's club formation during this time because of racial segregation. A cover story and picture appeared in the \textit{Goldsboro-News Argus} much later, on February 7, 1939, that announced the anniversary of the "Goldsboro Woman's Club." The picture and the story did not include black women. The club was celebrating its 40th anniversary.

I am grateful to Dr. Cheryl Johnson-Odim for her comments and suggestions on gender and race. It has helped me to better understand my grandmother's oppression.
Five hundred people came to this event where a dramatization was given, the Dillard High School Glee Club "sang two selections," and Mayme gave a speech entitled "The Voice of Night." She also attended two Ideal Social Club meetings. In one of those meetings "Four progressions of bridge were played" among ten guests.

In the following year she participated in

An all female program featuring the best musical and literary talent of the city ... [on] Sunday night at St. James A.M. E. Zion Church. Aside from choruses the individual participants who appeared on the program were: Mrs. Mayme Carney, Misses Bertha Whittington, Frances Johnson, Charity Hatcher. Mrs. Ruby Marshall.

Mayme's desire to work in the field of journalism surfaced in early 1932 when as Faculty Adviser she supervised

The first copy of "'The Crescent,'" [which was] published for the colored schools of the city, was distributed to subscribers Friday. It is an attractively gotten up 4-page 3-column pager and devoted in the main to news of the schools.

Mayme's newspaper staff consisted of thirteen students: ten editors, two poets and a circulation manager.

This newspaper could have been the initial impetus for her founding of the Dillard Hi News school newspaper. For many years I have often heard my mother proclaim that Dillard Hi News was her mother's creation. But the Dillard community

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61"AC," February 15, 1932, p. 4.
62Ibid., February 17, 1932, p. 5.
63Ibid., April 24, 1933, p. 4.
64Ibid., March 14, 1932, p. 4.
has not given my grandmother public credit for the establishment of this newspaper.

In a survey on the current status of the "colored" and white schools in the 1950s, the Dillard High School curricula and extracurricular activities were summarized. The following appeared about the school newspaper:

The Dillard Hi News is the school paper, published quarterly. It is a printed paper, and gives evidence of a rather wide coverage of various types of news, with major emphasis upon news of pupil activities. The committees [overseeing the survey] had no information on whether or not the staff and reporters for the paper were volunteers, limited to juniors and seniors, or whether the positions were open to all competitors.65

I speculate that Mayme founded this school newspaper in the early 1930s. I have a color photograph of her in which she stands upon a stage in an erect and firm pose. In the backdrop are closed stage curtains. Her hair is shoulder length, pulled away from her face and brought behind her ears. She has a high forehead, an oval face, and big brown eyes. Her lips are "painted" a dark red and her facial expression is pensive. She has on a dark colored dress with low heeled pumps that appear to match a dark fairly large purse that she has under her left arm. Both her hands are to her sides and in each hand is a maroon-colored dress glove. According to my mother and a close friend of my grandmother, Mayme was a stylish dresser who appreciated "fine" clothes. My mother said that her mother often wore dresses with matching

65[Phillips], The Goldsboro Township Schools, 82.
pocketbooks and shoes. In comparison to the younger photographs of Mayme she appears to be in her late 30s in this picture. This photograph is related to her work with the school newspaper. On the back of this picture in her cursive handwriting appears:

1) Mrs. Mayme Williams Carney, "'Dillard Hi News'" adviser Twelve Years ago and Today

2) (Please enlarge Photo and use only Bust form.)

Willette Banks Starke, a school secretary at Dillard High School in 1931, confirms that Mayme

... founded the Dillard Hi News. It was an outstanding Newspaper for a High School and was published by a firm in Durham, N.C. - A Mr. White who was a Hampton Institute graduate, was the publisher.

The school newspaper was highly regarded by students, faculty and adults of the black community. As an organ for local black school news, its reputation spread throughout North Carolina. A former colleague states:

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66 From a color photograph about 3x5 inches. (The numbering of 1 & 2 is my addition.) There is no information as to why Mayme wanted this picture enlarged in bust form.

67 Starke questionnaire. I had a telephone conversation with Nathaniel White; he vaguely remembers my grandmother. Mr. White still resides in Durham, North Carolina and told me that in 1985 there was a fire that destroyed the building which stored business files and probably old issues of the Dillard Hi News. Mr. White does not know of any existing issues.
Mrs. Carney's work with the Dillard Hi New[s] caused the paper to receive recognition as one of the outstanding ones among the ethnic journals during this time. I have tried to locate some issues but was unable to do so.  

Mayme also worked diligently on two other passions of hers: drama and rhetoric. Her interest in these areas probably stemmed from her experiences with Shakespeare during her years at Shaw University. She did not hesitate to exemplify her love for these two subjects in and outside of the classroom. Colleagues and students who are still living attest to her extraordinary success in promoting the use of drama and the art of speaking throughout her teaching career.

In describing some of my grandmother's challenging accomplishments, one former colleague lists "Inspiring the students to realize their potential; [and the] production of Shakespearean plays, 'A Midsummer Night's Dream,' [which was] her most famous. Authentic costumes were ordered from N.[ew] Y.[ork]." And a former faculty member of Dillard recalls that my grandmother "worked with the students in learning their parts for the many Plays given at the school during her tenu[r]e ...."  

Mayme shared her love for drama and Shakespeare with her students. Even today some, such as Gene Bass, can reminisce

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68 Herman B. Lucas, completed questionnaire, August 12, 1991, hereinafter cited as Lucas completed questionnaire.

69 Starke completed questionnaire.

70 Lucas completed questionnaire.
clearly about her knack of encouraging students to study and enact Shakespeare's plays.

Ms. [Mayme] Carney introduced me, and all of her students, to many things we would have otherwise not "'met.'" I will never forget Shakespeare and his plays. She produced several of them and I performed in all that she produced. She was, by far, an exceptional person and teacher.

In 1933 there was a school event that truly represented my grandmother's talent to produce a play:

The mid-year graduating class is presenting Friday night, "The Rivals" by Sheridan, an Eighteenth Century comedy-drama. It will be beautifully costumed and ably presented. Mrs. M.W. Garney [sic] is sponsor. Special seats will be reserved for white people who are cordially invited.72

Frances J. Tyler, who was a faculty member at Dillard High School from 1932 to 1946 and who took over some of Mayme's classes after her death, looks back at how this memorable event touched the students and faculty as it reflected the tremendous work that Mayme had accomplished with its direction and production.


72 "AC," January 26, 1933, p. 3. Mayme's name is misspelled here. All evidence such as the timing of the article and the event, and the use of her initials "M.W." proves this to be Mayme W. Carney.

It is interesting to note that the play The Rivals was one of the plays that she performed in while at Shaw University; it is mentioned in Chapter I.
She directed the only mid-term graduation ever held at Dillard in 1933. It was very sentimental. There wasn't a dry eye in the house at the conclusion. All the members of the class participated.  

To Mayme, speaking effectively was an essential element of black education. Frances Tyler also asserts that "She encouraged them [her students] to dramatize their studies for the entire school." In addition, Gene Bass, a Dillard alumnus, expresses Mayme's deep commitment to advancing the quality of rhetoric among blacks of that time.

She provided excellent guidance in understanding English as a subject and our spoken tongue. Aside from being my homeroom teacher throughout high school; she too was my English teacher throughout high school.

She firmly believed that a mastery of the English language, could and would provide a pathway to success.

My mother even recalls her mother instructing her in methods of public speaking:

... I remember when I was graduating into high school, that is going into the ninth grade and I was salutatorian and Wilveria Bass was the valedictorian. My mother was a professional public speaker. She wrote speeches and she loved to deliver speeches and she knew the proper gestures, and how you capture an audience with the way you deliver your speech. So therefore, she trained me and coached me as to how to deliver my speech. As I stood before the audience, I was very nervous. But as I began to speak I could see my mother's face and all my classmates' faces and I soon became at ease. This was a very happy time for me and I'll always cherish it. And I'll always cherish the fact that she was a special lady to me and to I think a lot of her students. She taught me how to deliver my

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74 Bass completed questionnaire.
speech eloquently and how to pronounce my words, how to gesture, how to turn to capture the audience, what way to look at certain times at certain sentences were being delivered. And she taught me how to stand as far as poise and I'll always cherish that.

When assessing my grandmother's achievements, these qualities that she tried to instill in her students come to the fore as I am developing a portrait of her life. She illustrated in her teachings exactly what she herself represented. According to my mother, my grandmother was often sitting off by herself writing, preparing a speech for a public speaking engagement at school or for one at a community event.

My grandmother's influence upon her students went beyond the ordinary teacher/student relationship in the sense that her teaching was a pervasive element in providing a positive role model for black Dillardites. Mr. Herman B. Lucas, a former faculty member and Chairman of the Dillard High School Vocational Department, says that he

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75 Emily Mae Elizabeth Carney Williams, June 1991, taped interview. Salutatorian is the second highest honor student.

76 The subject of my grandmother's speech making emerged when my mother and I were discussing whether my grandmother typed her own poems. This is when my mother described one of her remembrances of her mother "writing a lot," and how she does not recall her mother typing. My mother also recollects that her mother stayed up late into the night writing and sewing. And that it was not unusual for her to awaken and find that her mother had written a short story or a play, or had sewn my mother a dress for Sunday school.
... knew Mrs. [Mayme] Carney as a good teacher and one who loved to work with students. She was able to inspire them to do their best work in her classes. I was a member of the Discipline Committee and rarely did we have to deal with her students."

In addition a former student explains my grandmother's long-term influence upon her students, and of her own experience and respect for my grandmother's teaching.

Mrs. Carney was my homeroom teacher during the 4 years of High School. During these years, she taught me English/Literature. She was the best. She was known throughout the state for her teachings. If you went to college, you were recognized as having been one of her students. She caused me to become a teacher, with emphasis in the Language Arts.

To know her was to love her. 78

While examining my grandmother's life in this chapter, I have chosen to discuss her life within a theoretical framework that has been used by feminist scholars and historians in the past twenty years. 79 It is the relation between the public and the private spheres (sometimes in women's studies scholars refer to it as the public versus the domestic). In an effort to try to come to terms in my mind of how my grandmother

77 Lucas completed questionnaire.


maintained her life as a wife, mother, educator, poet, sponsor of plays, public speaker and clubwoman, I recently quizzed my mother about this by using the modern term "juggle." I asked "How did Mayme juggle all of her responsibilities?" And my mother answered "That's simple, she had her mother living with her." To explain how significant my mother's grandmother was to the Carney-Williams household, she continued with "Our kitchen was my grandmother's kitchen. She owned that kitchen!" But this did not mean that Mayme could or would not cook, sew, and clean; she did attend to domestic responsibilities despite her other duties outside the home.

This was the first time I had heard my mother speak in this way of her grandmother's relationship to the family. Since I began this research into my grandmother's life, my mother has recalled many of those early familial relationships.

In another example, my mother had no recollection of when her maternal grandparents came to live with her family. But she had a clue for me when she stated that for as long as she could remember her grandparents were around. Later in another one of our reminiscing conversations she recollected that her grandparents spent a lot of time in raising her, and that she seemed to remember her mother often being away.

In looking back at Mayme's life, these are important facts. Mayme dealt with the opposition that can develop between a woman's domestic and public spheres due to the
assistance of her mother (and her father) in that household. This familial arrangement enabled Mayme to accomplish three significant things that were essential to progress in this society: She was able to surround herself with family; (my mother has often told me this was an important to Mayme). She was able to form a link with public institutions; finally, she was able to excel as a teacher despite the gendered social roles that she had to contend with as a "colored" woman living in a racist society.

There is a downside, however, to this reasoning that I must examine here because of the interrelationship between the public and private spheres. As Jean O'Barr observes,

... [an] assumption commonly employed is that politics occurs only in the public domain, in the formal and informal relations which individuals have with governments.... There are two problems with this assumption, both leading to distortion. First, events in the private domain of human relationships often set the parameters for that which happens in the public. Second, political strategies, goal-setting, and influence wielding are socio-political processes operating universally not just in the public domain.

While Mayme's public role flourished in those early years in Goldsboro, one must question the impact this may have had upon her private life, namely in her marriage. My evidence for examining this dichotomy rests upon a dual premise. First, I was raised with stories that my grandfather had a "mistress."

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80 Mayme's commitment to family is illustrated in her journal, Memories.

And during my field work I was told of a second mistress. In other words my grandfather's unfaithfulness was perhaps long-term and more consistent than I care to imagine.

Second, in my attempt to try and extract more information on this issue from close associates of my grandparents, I ran into almost total resistance. One person told me "It was rumored that Mr. Carney did not return the love for his wife that she gave to him. You could see it in her eyes although she never showed it outwardly in class."\(^{82}\) I believe that Mayme could have been more active in the public sphere and perhaps politically were it not for problems in her private sphere.

In 1934, Mayme gave birth to a son, named James Henry Carney, Jr. She nicknamed him "Wing." According to James B. Tyler, who lived a short time with the Carney's when James Jr. was three years old, "Mrs. Carney would not let her husband touch [meaning punish] Wing. To her, he could do no wrong."\(^{83}\) My mother acknowledges this by saying that her brother was somewhat "spoiled" and pampered by Mayme, and that she really cannot remember her father ever punishing him.

\(^{82}\)To protect the identity of the person who released this information to me, I must omit the source's name. This information is from a completed questionnaire, July 29, 1991.

\(^{83}\)Mr. Tyler mentioned this to me in a conversation that I had with him and his wife in Dudley, North Carolina in December 1991. Note also that this is the same James B. Tyler who is mentioned earlier in this chapter concerning his stay with the Carney's when he first came to Goldsboro to teach in 1937.
Except that after her mother's death her father punished her brother for boxing her.

After the birth of Mayme's son in 1934 and until 1939, her public activity subsides. She seems to direct all of her energy into the shaping of her teaching career. But Mayme Carney's Africana-American experience was governed by social and cultural forces that had grave implications for her public and private life.
CHAPTER III

INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM: MATERIAL OBSTACLES TO BEING A SOUTHERN BLACK WOMAN WRITER

Mayme was "... an artist who left her mark in the only materials she could afford, and in the only medium her position in society allowed her to use."
(The quote is from In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens by Alice Walker p.239.)

I grew up knowing that my maternal grandmother was a writer. A scrapbook, handmade from wood, with a collection of about fifty of my grandmother's poems shared my childhood bedroom for as long as I can remember. My mother stored this handmade scrapbook in the same huge trunk that my great-grandfather had given my grandmother when she left Franklinton to enter Shaw University; the trunk was fitted snugly into the closet of my room. My mother usually used the trunk to store my and my sister's clothes in summer and winter. I can recall as a young girl holding the scrapbook in my hands, admiring its outer design. Here I had something in my possession that my late grandmother had created. I cherished it - knowing that I would never get to meet her. It symbolized everything that I had been told about her as a poet. And the collection proved to me that she was in fact "real."

My memory of the scrapbook is somewhat vague now. Its existence seems like a dream. But I do recall that it was a conventional scrapbook, one with pages held together with a
string resembling a shoelace tied in a bow. The front cover was of a light, perhaps, brown color. My grandmother's name was written (I believe in her own hand) in the bottom left corner. My mother recalls that her own mother had a man especially design the scrapbook for these poems. For the most part, the scrapbook contained poems about my grandmother's family, many about my mother's and her brother's childhoods, and about my mother's grandparents.

I do not remember clearly the contents of any of the poems. Only one poem that I have recovered sounds familiar to me, "Hands Across The Sea," and my mother has confirmed that it was in this collection. The poems were obviously special and probably my grandmother's private collection. During my research I have inquired about its existence of former friends and colleagues, but none of them has any recollection or knowledge of it, not even those who knew she wrote poetry. My mother, however, remembers that it was a collection that her mother wanted to get published, which is probable because publishers usually look for fifty up to one hundred poems in a volume.

Merely recalling the existence of this scrapbook has been emotionally painful for me. Because, before I began to write poetry the scrapbook had disappeared from my family's life.  

1This poem will be discussed in Chapter IV.

2A close family member who promised to have the poems published took the scrapbook several years ago from our home with the permission of my mother who thought the book would be
Its significance to my grandmother's history and to her memory is incalculable. On the other hand, its absence in an uncanny way sustains the mystifying aspects of her short life. As I write the life of Mayme Carney, I find that this mystification can be analyzed but never wholly explored. Her missing scrapbook joins a phantom collection of (black) women's writing that has been lost to and in various male-dominated societies and cultures. Poetry, however, was not the only medium that Mayme used to share her Afra-American experience with the black subculture in which she labored and lived.

By late 1939, Mayme had been married, teaching and living in Goldsboro for about eleven years. Her daughter Emily was now nine years of age and her son James, Jr. was five years old. For nine of those eleven years Mayme's teaching career had flourished at Dillard High School.

At the end of this decade, Mayme's career was comparable to that of the early 1930s in the sense that she was concerned both with her school work and with public affairs, and her achievements were still being reported in the local news. But, as for black women's clubs, there is no evidence regarding her role. This leads me to believe that during the late 1930s and 40s she concentrated her "strengths" more on her teaching life and on seeking out artistic mediums in which

returned safely; unfortunately, this person lost the book while traveling. This was in the early 1970s before the availability of the photocopier machine. So, excluding the poetry that I have recovered, I have no other copies of the poems that may have been in Mayme's scrapbook of poetry.
she could express herself and the needs of the community.

For example, the following item appeared in the "Among the Colored" column in late October 1939:

This column will be edited in the future by the "'Dillard Hi News'" staff, and we do sincerely hope that you will find it informing and entertaining. Any information or news for publication should be sent to the Journalism class or to Mrs. Carney at room 10 the day before the evening of publication. Dillard Hi News Staff.

It appears here that Mayme is supervising the publication of the "Among the Colored" column. Furthermore, this illustrates her interest in and influence upon this community. Not only was she supervising her students, but she also maintained some type of (business) relationship with the Goldsboro News-Argus. In addition, Mayme now had the final "say" of how, when and where something was being reported on to the black and white community.

Mayme's own activites in the school and the community continued to be cited in the "Among the Colored" column. For example, the following month on November 9th it was stated

The Junior and Senior English Classes of Dillard High School ... [celebrated] American Education Week.

The question: "Should the Federal Government Appropriate Funds for Equalization of Educational Opportunities in the United States'" was debated Thursday noon by a senior group.

The observance will close Friday noon with an

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3 "Among the Colored," October 24, 1939, hereinafter cited as "AC."
Armistice Day program featuring pupils from Mrs. Barnes' and Mrs. Carney's English classes.  

The next month another program was held in which Mayme's guidance played a significant role.

On Monday, Dec. 4, 1939, during the assembly period at 12:30, members of the Junior and Senior English classes of Dillard will present a resume of the facts they have found out as a result of their recent study of crime in the United States. The entire performance will answer in talks and dramatic skits the question "'Who Commits Crime and Why?'" The classes and their teacher, Mrs. Carney, invite the public to be present.

In February 1940 there was a Junior oratorical contest. Students had to maintain a "B" average to be eligible to participate. Mayme and another female instructor at Dillard coached the students for this program. The subjects covered were: "The Negro and Economic Slavery; Silent Influence; The Negro's Contribution to American Culture; New Achievements in North Carolina; Citadel of Democracy; Will You Give Me Justice Now?; The Problems of Youth; Of Thee I Sing; Roosevelt, The Man of the Hour; and Education Moves Democracy Forward." The topics for this event and that mentioned above reveal the educational structure, goals and ideology of the Dillard community at this point in time.

The oratorical contest centered on topics concerning the black race perhaps because in February, 1940, black history
week was being recognized by Dillard. Additional activities were held in that month though not reported in the local paper. Instead, the programs were given press in the Dillard Hi News. In an article entitled "Negro History Week Observed at Dillard" it was stated that "Mrs. Carney's English classes recited Kelly Miller's famous poem 'I See and Am Satisfied.'" In that same issue appeared a story, "Dillard Students Make Record."

Can you imagine anything quite so thrilling as having records made?

The Glee Club of Dillard High, School Street, and Greenleaf Schools made several recordings of their best numbers and these will be sent to Radio Stations all over North Carolina for Transcription programs.

Individuals having records made were Amelia Sampson, Octavia Kelly, Clara Norman, Marie Whitley, Sue Lee Wooten, Cora Sykes, Mattie King, Helen Branch, Miriam Scott, Sadie Lewis, Hilda Davis, and Mrs. Carney.

On Wednesday February 21, several of the records were played in chapel auditorium. Mrs. Carney's original poem "Afterthoughts" lent an air of profound dignity to the ears of those who listened as she recited it.

Obviously, this was a productive period in Mayme's life. One program after another took place with her often as the

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7 Dillard Hi News, February 1940. I have this record; on the label is written in my grandmother's handwriting the following information: "Mayme W. Carney"; the recorder: "Jan King Studios"; and the date: "Feb. 20, 1940."

The record, however, is warped. So far, I have not been able to recover another copy. I have also been searching for a transcript of the recording. My contact with the local radio station in Goldsboro, WGBR, informed me that there was a fire sometime around 1945 that destroyed most of their property. As for a Jan King Studios, I have not been able to locate one. My source related to me that Jan King could have been a traveling radio announcer in the 1940s who was passing through Goldsboro at the time.
driving, motivating force behind it. For several years now her husband James had been a principal in the county school system. In a literal sense, Mayme was now surviving on her own in the city school system.

But she had already proved to the Dillard community and to herself that she was exceptionally skillful at her work. In the spring of 1940 she was responsible for one of Dillard's most important productions.

Students of the Goldsboro colored schools will present, "Up From Slavery," an original pageant, featuring the achievement of the Negro Race, ....

The pageant was written [and directed] by Mayme W. Carney, teacher of English. White friends are cordially invited to attend.

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8 J. H. Carney interview. In a February 21, 1939 "Among the Colored" column, it was reported that Mr. Carney was principal of Vail School, outside the city school system.

9 "AC," May 3, 1940, p. 3.

10 In the May 4, 1940 announcement of this program it was stated that Mayme was to "direct" the pageant.

Mayme must have been skillful at producing, writing and directing programs. Also, in the "AC," on December 18, 1940, it was announced that she would direct a one act play "The Christmas Guest" to be presented on December 19, 1940 in the Dillard High Auditorium at 12:30 p.m. It appears from the announcement that this particular event was for the Dillard students and faculty.

11 "AC," May 6, 1940, p. 3. This event was announced in three consecutive issues of the newspaper column. I noticed during my research that this was only done when an event appeared to be significant to a "cause" or for a particular fundraising. In one announcement, May 4, 1940, it was stated that "There will be a small admission and all citizens are asked to see it." Because of the pageant's topic "Up From Slavery," it was important to the blacks of Goldsboro, and because all citizens, black and white, were invited it could have been designed to raise funds.
Although Mayme had already obligated herself for almost nine years now to the production of the *Dillard Hi News* and recently to the editing of the local "Among the Colored" column," it is possible that she was behind the appearance of another news source in the *Goldsboro News-Argus* entitled "Dillard High Review Week."\(^{12}\) It too was edited by the Dillard journalism class. This article highlighted the major weekly activities and events at Dillard.

By September of 1939 photographs of blacks appeared at times near the "Among the Colored" column. These were like a photo-story of a particular event in the black community. Now, with the "Dillard High Review Week" a picture sometimes accompanied an article. This gave the Dillard community more news coverage and indicated that there were slight changes occurring in the black and white relationships of Goldsboro.

I have attempted in the previous chapter and in this chapter to illustrate the wide range of media in which Mayme worked aside from her teaching responsibilities. She was a public speaker, a journalist, a writer and a producer of plays, and a poet. In 1939 and the early 40s Mayme was at a "peak" in her career. She worked through and for her students because they represented the future black race.

This conclusion can be drawn also from the diction that

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\(^{12}\) *Ibid.*, November 8, 1940, back page. In this particular column it was stated that this new article was to be a "weekly school feature." However, during my research I noticed that the article was infrequently published.
she uses in her poem "After-thoughts," one of the poems that she recorded in February 1940. Mayme wrote the poem in December 1939. It expresses her deep feelings about "teaching" but it appears also to shed light on her emotional state at this time.

When the last school bell has sounded
And every child has gone
I like to sit in my classroom
To dream and muse alone.

I like to stare at the black boards
Where colored figures are drawn
Ere I turn to behold the desks
So empty and forlorn.

Then think I of youthful faces
That above them late have shone
But now they're gaily strolling
A-down the lanes to home.

And as I sit there musing
And dusk o'ertakes the day
My thoughts with sorrows tinge
And to myself I say;

O Lord, this is my realm
This classroom is my throne
In it I'll reign with justice
I'll make each child my own.

O, Lord this is my mission
My church this classroom be
I'll preach a living gospel
'Til every child shall see.

I'll teach them to be pioneers
Who blaze a lonesome trail
Toward a new horizon
Where many men have failed.

I'll teach them to be statesmen
Who for the right are sent
To try to win the cause
Though justice seem forspent
I'll teach them to be Captains  
Who steer a mighty bark  
Through rough and angry waters  
In spite of hungry sharks

I'll teach them to be soldiers  
Who never carry guns  
But win a many battle  
In countless climes and suns

I'll teach them to be prophets  
Whose foresight never fails  
But leads them gently onward  
To find their Holy Grails

I'll teach them to be Christians  
Who bear their standards high  
Remembering that their Maker  
Can see them passing by.

O, God! this is my mission  
Until my race I've run  
And when my work is finished  
O Father, say "Well done!"\textsuperscript{13}

Mayme composes the poem within a religious framework that resembles a prayer with a promise. This is the only extant poem in which Mayme's religious faith emerges. For the speaker in the poem, the classroom is her church and the students are her innocent congregation, ignorant of the challenges that await them in a racist society. Their teacher plans to awaken them to the power of Christianity, to prepare


This poem was recovered in August 1991 as a result of my fieldwork. Francis J. Tyler gave it to me. According to Frances, my grandmother made copies of this poem and handed them out. That was how Frances obtained a copy and she told me it was one of my grandmother's favorite poems.

To give me also an idea of my grandmother's joy in writing poetry, Frances says "She could compose a poem for any occasion and frequently did." (Francis J. Tyler completed questionnaire, July 27, 1991.)
them for their own mission.

When Gloria T. Hull outlines the role of black women and poetry from the late eighteenth-century up to the 1970s, she describes the black poetry that evolved out of the 1930s and mid 40s - a period central to examining Mayme's life.

What poetry exists is tinged with depression, socialism, and sometimes protest. Between 1930 and 1945 the major poet was Margaret Walker and the most important poetic event the appearance of her 1942 volume *For My People.*

If Mayme read Margaret Walker, there is no evidence of it. That her poem "After-thoughts" is "tinged with depression, ... and ... protest" is clear. And that she shared her poems with her students and friends affirms Mayme's wish to be read. Furthermore, as a singular work her poem resonates a black woman's pioneering spirit and her social responsibility to reform present attitudes of "injustice," as she takes on the roles of "ruler," "preacher," and "states[wo]man."\(^{15}\)

From all that I know of my grandmother, this poem is transparently autobiographical. It conveys not only her deep commitment to her students but her determination to help them survive in a hostile world where they will find few,


\(^{15}\)I want to thank Dr. Prudence Moylan who showed me that Mayme would not speak of teaching her students to be "statesmen" unless she thought of herself as having the qualites to be a "states[wo]man". In turn, Dr. Moylan's illustration helped me to realize how socially responsible Mayme was to her society.
if any, role models. It expresses as well her conviction that, as educated young people, they must join the cause for their own black race but they must be nonviolent. And it reveals her own profound realization that teaching was her "vocation" - her call to do the work her (religious) Father had sent her to do. It is a mission for which she will be blessed and receive approbation.

Mayme was thirty-three when she wrote this poem. Piecing together what I have learned from my field work about her public and private life with the stories that have been retold to me about her personal life, I understand the passion in these lines. The stories of her husband's infidelities and the persistent open secret of the "other woman" imply that theirs was a troubled, perhaps failing marriage. That Mayme should so totally have thrown herself into her school work, into her writing, indicates possibly a woman with an aching void to fill. And because Mayme chose a religious framework for the poem it appears that she wrote not only to encourage her students but to encourage herself - to remind herself that there was One (her religious father) who was faithful and never wavered in His care for her.

Her religious faith was deep and practical. It shines also through a moving essay in which she explores the hardship of a family at Christmas. "In [a] Memoriam" column of the Dillard Hi News, February 1941 issue, the work was entitled "A Page From Mrs. Carney's Scrap Book." In this essay she is
visiting one of her students who is extremely ill and whom Mayme longs to comfort spiritually.

When I gazed at the frail little figure of a girl lying there before me, I knew that I had come to the right place on Christmas day. Standing there face to face with suffering and humble surroundings I feel like a traitor to the real spirit of Christmas in my wide saucy maroon hat that made me feel flattered and foolish before the eyes of her sad eyed mother. Sensing the triteness of the gift I had brought her, I was reluctant to offer it but I did, and as her weak, feeble voice thanked me, all of the pride and pomp of the Christmas which I had hitherto, felt, went out of my life, and a new resolve to try to bring immediate relief and hope to this little girl, so sick and neglected, gripped me so firmly that tears of determination rose up in my eyes. My soul, awakened to its newest responsibility, forgot about everything pertaining to Christmas of the moment.... Yes, standing there in that drab, dreary, little sick room, nothing remained in my memory, save the recollection of the spirit of Christ. I seemed to hear him say again-- "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of my little ones ye have done it unto me." There and then I resolved and pledged myself to the great work of helping to bring health and happiness back into this humble home where suffering and sorrow dwelled.  

This is an unforgettable sketch of a woman suddenly uncomfortable in her "wide saucy maroon hat" as she comes face to face with a "real" meaning of Christmas.

In In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens Alice Walker comments on the fact that "black writers seem always involved in a moral and/or physical struggle, the result of which is expected to be some kind of larger freedom."  

16 Dillard Hi News, February 1941.

17 See her chapter "Saving the Life That Is Your Own," (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), 5. Walker states further that "Perhaps this is because our literary tradition is based on the slave narratives, where escape for the body
Mayme's writing, at this time in her life, represents Walker's interpretation of black writers. Both the poem "Afterthoughts" and the essay "In Memoriam" illustrate a black writer's request for moral respect and "freedom for the soul."\(^{18}\)

On the other hand, Mayme depicts herself as a "queen" an image that aligns her with Zora Neale Hurston's Janie Crawford of whom Alice Walker has written:

\begin{verbatim}
I love the way Janie Crawford
left her husbands
the one who wanted to change her
into a mule
and the other who tried to interest her
in being a queen.
A woman, unless she submits,
is neither a mule
nor a queen
though like a mule she may suffer
and like a queen pace the floor.\(^{19}\)
\end{verbatim}

Mayme represented in reality neither a mule nor a queen; she did not conform to the negatively ascribed roles assigned to black women at that time. And it appears that her husband did not treat her preferentially. Even though Mayme was keenly aware of her social and moral responsibilities, this need of hers to pour her physical energy into her school work makes me wonder if she was contemplating, like Janie, to leave her husband at this particular juncture of her life. Here Mayme finds the desks to be "empty and forlorn" after hours. and freedom for the soul went together,....

\(^{18}\)Ibid.

\(^{19}\)Ibid., 7.
She says firmly that her classroom is her "realm," her "throne," and that she sees her job as a "mission." Are Mayme's "After-thoughts" directly related to her feelings about her teaching or are they indirectly expressive of her "second thoughts" about her marriage? Unequivocally, the poem "After-thoughts" suggests that Mayme's work, both in the school and in the community, was a sustaining life force with which she courageously embraced.

Mayme's devotion to her "work" has enabled me to write her story. By publishing her poem and an essay in the Dillard Hi News, I can read it today, some fifty-one years later. By taking the time to have "After-thoughts" typed and copies made to pass around, I can share it. By preserving the small poetry of her life in the journal called Memories I can reach some understanding of what she was like as a vigorous young woman before and after her marriage.

As her granddaughter, I can say that I do now cherish Mayme Carney's poetry as well as her dauntless spirit. Ironically, I have come to realize as I write her life that she represents the black female model for whom I have so long searched. In Walker's essay "Saving the Life That is Your

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20 I am referring here to the poem "Hands Across the Sea," which was published in I believe a 1944 issue of the school newspaper.

21 I am grateful to Dr. Mary Griffin for sharing with me her insight into Mayme's life of how it relates to Walker's character model and to my own life.
"Own" she explains how

The absence of models, in literature as in life, ..., is an occupational hazard for the artist, simply because models in art, in behavior, in growth of spirit and intellect - even if rejected - enrich and enlarge one's view of existence.22

Mayme's missing collection of poetry was my literary model and I did not know it at that time. I was too young. I did not even know that I, myself, would want to be an artist someday.23

Mayme did not get the chance to fulfill a dream of hers to return to Shaw as a teacher. And as far as I know she never managed to publish even one small volume of the poetry she never ceased to write. But her journal remains, her newspaper items, her personally circulated poems, to allow me to paint a portrait of a perservering, talented, black woman who was an activist before the word had achieved its current respect and meaning.

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22 Walker, In Search Of Our Mothers' Gardens, 4.

23 My reading of Diane Sadoff's "Black Matrilineage: The Case of Alice Walker and Zora Neale Hurston" in Micheline R. Malson, et al., Black Women in America: Social Science Perspectives (Chicago: The University Of Chicago Press), 197-219, has been an additional influence upon my understanding of the significance of female models to a black woman's life. It is only through my field work that I have recovered the poem "After-thoughts" and the essay "In Memoriam." One can only assume the effect these works would have had upon my life if I had been raised with them.
Black women are called, in the folklore that so aptly identifies one's status in society, "'the mule of the world," because we have been handed the burdens that everyone else-everyone else- refused to carry. We have also been called "'Matriarchs,'" "'Superwomen,'" and "'Mean and Evil Bitches.'" Not to mention "'Castraters'" and "'Sapphire's Mama.'" When we have pleaded for understanding, our character has been distorted; when we have asked for simple caring, we have been handed empty inspirational appellations, then stuck in the farthest corner. When we have asked for love, we have been given children. In short, even our plainer gifts, our labors of fidelity and love, have been knocked down our throats. To be an artist and a black woman, even today, lowers our status in many respects, rather than raises it: and yet, artists we will be.

(Alice Walker, In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens, p. 237.)

World War II (1939-1945) according to John W. Dower,

"meant many things to many people.

"To over fifty million men, women, and children, it meant death. To hundreds of millions more in the occupied areas and theaters of combat, the war meant hell on earth: suffering and grief, often with little of any awareness of a cause or reason beyond the terrifying events of the moment."

A year after the war began in Europe the American Teachers Association made a statement outlining its current position for democracy.
In affirming its faith in democracy, the American Teachers Association, meeting in Pine Bluff (Ark.) July 26, pledged itself to cooperate with other educational agencies in providing for the national defense. The association placed itself on record as favoring selective compulsory military training within the limits necessary for actual national defense. It opposed any compulsory labor-training program unless such civic and vocational education remained in the control of the regularly constituted local, state and federal agencies. Any system of selective training, too, must be "'absolutely devoid of discrimination against any person on account of race, creed or color.'" Negroes, for example, are not permitted now to enlist voluntarily in all the armed forces. Such instances of elimination of the Negro people from full participation in American life were decried by the association.

On December 8, 1941 the United States declared war against Japan. By the middle of 1943 the U.S. had victories against the Japanese in the Pacific and "decisive victories against the Axis powers were scored in North Africa and Italy ...." In early 1944 Mayme Carney's son James, Jr. was nine years of age and not old enough to enlist. But Mayme did empathize with the tragedy of losing a son to a war. She had many former Dillard students serving in the armed forces overseas. Perhaps she knew that some of them had participated in those "decisive victories." To honor those students Mayme wrote "Hands Across the Sea":


3The quotes on the victories are from [Editorial Board, Roth Publishing, Inc.] World War II and Aftermath, 1940-1950 (New York: Poetry Anthology Press, 1982-1986) Vol. IX of Survey of American Poetry, xiv. I read this text to get an interpretation of how poets may have related to WWII.
I cannot see you face to face today.

I cannot grasp your hands as in days of yore,
For you have gone to fight for
Liberty
Your letters come as hands across the sea.
Yester-year you nestled close to your mother's breast;
Yester-year you toddled round your mother's knee,
But childhood days no more for you shall be
Your letters are your hands across the sea.

Yester-month you played in yard and street;
Yester-month you sent your kite a-sailing in the Blue.
Now gone are boyhood's days of childish glee
Your letters are your hands across the sea.

Yesterday, you sat in pews before my desk;
Yesterday, you raised your hand to answer "Yea or Nay."
Now in manhood tones, distinct to you and me
Your letters serve as hands across the sea.

No more, we see you on your youthful way,
No more, returning to your homes when school is out,
For now you're champions of the free
Your letters are your hands across the sea.

Today, in India's Hindoo Clime you gallantly dwell;
Today, in Africa's Torrid Zone you proudly fight.
Wherever Freedom's cause may rightly be
Your letters come as hands across the sea.
Perchance from Italy's Ancient
Shrines they come;
Perchance from Sacred lore.
No matter length or breadth away
you be
Your letters reach like hands across
the sea.

So here's to every lad of Dillard bred!
So here's to Hardy, Eddie, Harrison,
Francis, Charles, Arthur—and all
Until Peace and Victory our land
can see
Our letters go as hands across the
the sea.

The theme is a conventional one, the soldiers' need to write
home about the war, and the civilians' moral responsibility to
correspond. But because the poem made its way overseas it
provided morale to these black soldiers:

Each month over seventy issues of "'The
Dillard High News'" ... is ... now [distributed] all
over the world. These subscriptions were secured the
first of the year, and are mailed by the members of the
Journalism class. Boys write that these papers are
more than "'Hands Across the Sea.'"\textsuperscript{5}

As a war poem "Hands Across the Sea" embraces American
patriotism. It does not, however, address the positions of
black soldiers fighting in WWII. In a recent article Jonathan
Marwil criticizes the mood of that period and the absence today

\textsuperscript{4}Personal family document, January 30, 1944.
This poem appeared in an issue of the Dillard High News. Because the date "January 30, 1944" appeared below the poem under Mayme's name, I believe this was a 1944 issue of the school newspaper.
The poem was given to me in 1989 by Ms. Janet Dean, a 1937 graduate of Dillard High School. When Ms. Dean gave me the printed original it appeared to have been torn out of the school paper.

of pictorial images that show the black American soldier.

Although the war bound us together, it was still a war in which we lived our separateness. Black servicemen fought in segregated units. No black seaman is watching the Japanese soldier bathe; no black worker is working on an aircraft engine. Indeed, none of the familiar photographs of the war includes a black person. We know why that is, and we know that in the next war the races fought side by side, and so we do not talk much about the subject, especially since it might spoil the satisfaction we take in the Good War.

Mayme did not reveal the racial segregation of black soldiers in her poem. Nor did she speak of the exclusion of black soldiers from promotions. And she did not call attention to the American Red Cross's decision to keep separate blood banks for blacks and whites.

Instead Mayme wanted the black soldiers to see themselves as "champions of the free" and to recall the culture from which they came. She made it clear to them that as they "proudly fight" in "India's Hindoo Clime" and Africa's Torrid Zone" they have earned the right to be recognized "Wherever Freedom's cause may rightly be."

"Hands Across the Sea" offered also a ray of hope for the Dillard students waiting for the return of their male peers:

News Staff
The Dillard Hi News staff for 1944 and '45 was presented Wednesday in Dillard Auditorium. The testimonies [sic] were mae [sic] by several members of

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It was not unusual at this time for the black and white high schools (colleges and universities) to assist in their own way with the war. Dillard High School had its own War Fund Drive campaign which it called "'Back ing up the Boys.'" Money was collected from each class and also from the teachers. In one report Mayme's class collected $16.01, the highest amount of all classes. Robert Pulliam summarized the reasons for student assistance during wartime:

The high schools are being called upon for large amounts of community-service work in connection with the war. This is altogether proper. It has two values that support and enforce each other. First, it gives the young people a chance to do some volunteer work to help the country in the crisis, a thing which most of them want and which all of them ought to be taught to want.

Furthermore, this work will furnish the high-school social-studies classes with vital civic and social experiences to back up the more or less traditional materials that are used in the regular classes.

Mayme Carney understood the significance in community work. And she often gave her students specific assignments to investigate and report on in the Dillard Hi News. A former student explains her assignment to write on scrap metal that was collected for the war and stored on the grounds of Dillard

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7 "Dillard High Review" In Goldsboro News-Argus, November 4, 1944, p. 5.

8 Ibid., November 11, 1944, p. 4.

High School:

In those days, 1940 to 1944 America was just getting involved in World World II. On the side of the Old "'Dillard High'" there was a huge scrap pile of metal (iron, aluminum, copper pipes, etc.). We were saving it to send to Japan.... I thought it was for our country to make bullets or tanks, but I heard many years later that the metal that Americans saved was sent to Japan and they made it into bombs and bullets and used them against us by bombing Pearl Harbor, Dec. 7, 1942.

Mrs. Carney had a great imagination and she visualized each piece of scrap metal talking amongst themselves about their individual purpose. She appointed me to write an article for the Dillard High News. I loved to write feature stories and with her help, the story was printed which brought me a lot of praise. I wish I had saved those old school newspapers.

Both black and white citizens of Goldsboro were strongly encouraged to contribute to the war fund drive:

The attention of the citizens is directed to the approaching annual community chest and war fund drive to begin Monday night with a "'send off'" dinner at the community center. Tickets for the dinner are in the hands of most of the teachers. After addressing the gathering of white citizens at Memorial Community building, Brigadier Kenneth Royal, of the U.S. Army, will address the colored citizens assembled at the community center.

With so many of our boys of the colored race now serving with the armed services and with a knowledge of our own local welfare problems, our people should need little prodding to support the drive. The goal is $3,500 and every person employed is asked to contribute the amount of a day's work for the drive. Our fighting men are giving their all for us. Shall we not give what we can for the cause for which they are fighting?\(^\text{11}\)

\(^{10}\)Maria Whitley Lockhart Wynkoop, Letter to Gloria Yvonne Williams McCowan, July 29, 1991.

\(^{11}\)"Among the Colored," October 25, 1944, p. 7, hereinafter cited as "AC."
The war fund drive demanded large contributions from the local citizens. After the above article appeared, on November 7, 1944 the Goldsboro News-Argus ran on its cover page that the "The deficit in the Wayne County United war Fund was sliced to $21,089.38 from Monday's contributions which amounted to $2,696." Furthermore, they asserted that "This is a long distance to go before reaching the quota of $55,000, ...."  

To continually gather up monetary support for WWII, local advertisers sponsored ads in the Goldsboro News-Argus that showed a white injured soldier on a stretcher. The headline of this one ad was "It'll cost you an extra $100 Bond to look him in the eye!". Coca-Cola had an ad that illustrated a young (white) boy who had a "cap" on his head that resembled the cap of a Coca-Cola bottle. The boy was making a salute. Beside this illustration was "'You'll always be glad you did.'" "For Freedom's Sake Buy War Bonds."  

In the Dillard High News "Keep on Backing the Attack with War Bonds" appeared under Mayme's poem "Hands Across the Sea." Thus advertisers in the school newspaper and in the local news supported the purchasing of war bonds.

By the end of 1944 World War II was coming to a close and

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12 Goldsboro News-Argus, November 7, 1944.  
13 Ibid., September 11, 1943, p. 3.  
14 Ibid., September 15, 1943, p. 3.
slowly was the life of Mayme Carney. In December her mother died suddenly,\textsuperscript{15} depriving Mayme of the kind of support few professional women know of today.

Mrs. Emily [Baptist] Williams, mother of Mrs. M. W. Carney, died suddenly at the home of her daughter on Miller street Thursday afternoon about 5 o'clock. Only her husband was with her at the time. She was reading the afternoon paper. Prof. and Mrs. Carney and the children were in Richmond, Va. where they were reached by telephone.\textsuperscript{16}

My mother has told me the story of this particular December in 1944 when "Prof. and Mrs. J. H. Carney and two children, Emily Mae [my mother] and James, Jr., left Tuesday evening for Richmond, Va., to visit relatives there."\textsuperscript{17} Soon after the Carney family arrived in Richmond, my mother recalls her father having to tell her mother the tragic news of her own mother's death. Consequently, they returned to Goldsboro and a neighbor who had been looking after her grandfather answered the door of their home on Miller St. When my mother walked into the house she witnessed the solemn look upon her grandfather's face, who had taken to his bed until their arrival.

I do not know much about my maternal great-grandmother Emily except that my mother is her namesake, or what I have learned from researching and writing my grandmother's life.


\textsuperscript{16}"AC," December 29, 1944, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{17}Ibid., December 28, 1944, p. 7.
A picture that Mayme pasted in her journal illustrates a nineteenth-century woman of color and of strength. The bone structure of her face suggests that like my maternal great-grandfather she had an Indian as well as an African heritage.

Emily Baptist was born in 1878 at the end of the Reconstruction period in Warren County which is in the Coastal Plains of North Carolina. This was a county densely populated with black people. During slavery, before 1865, there were eight plantations located in the Coastal Plain area. One of those plantations existed in Warren County where tobacco and cotton crops were produced. In 1860, of the total population in this county 66% were slaves and 3% were free.\(^{18}\)

Emily Baptist's parents Sara and William Baptist both were from Warren County.\(^{19}\) And Sara, born in 1843, has no recorded maiden name. I think that my maternal great-greatgrandmother Sara may have been born to slaves. Sara lived to be eighty-eight years old and died in 1931 in Franklinton, North Carolina.\(^{20}\) She was a widow at the time and her profession during her working years was housekeeping just like my great-grandmother. In Sara's lifetime she gave


her daughter Emily many sisters, some of whom attended Emily's funeral:

The funeral of Mrs. Emily [Baptist] Williams, the mother of Mrs. M. W. Carney, was held at the Shiloh Presbyterian church Monday, at 3 o'clock. Burial took place at the Lightner cemetery. Out of town relatives attending the funeral services included three sisters of the deceased, Mrs. Maggie Smith of Norwich, Conn.; Mrs. Ella Hawkins, of Louisburg; Mrs. Sallie Kearney and her husband of Franklinton, N. C. Aside from the sisters there were present two nieces, Mrs. Clarence Green and her husband of Henderson, and Miss Thelma Johnson and father, H. H. Johnson of Laurinburg, N. C. The son of the deceased, Alvin Williams of Philadelphia was here also. The members of the James H. Carney family and their father, Willie Williams, gratefully acknowledge the kindness and sympathy shown them during their recent bereavement occasioned by the sudden death of their mother and wife, Mrs. Emily [Baptist] Williams.\footnote{21}

Losing her mother had to have been a pivotal point in Mayme's life. It is likely that the presence of her mother in the household gave Mayme the time to write, to be active in the black women's clubs. Possibly it was her mother who also gave Mayme the strength to stay in her marriage.\footnote{22} Thus when

\footnote{21}{"AC," January 5, 1945, p. 5. I did not know the names of my great-grandmother's sisters and nieces listed above until I began this research into Mayme's life and ultimately came upon this article. Some of her other sisters are mentioned in a footnote at the beginning of Chapter I. This research has put me in touch with many of my foremothers.}

\footnote{22}{I had a conversation in January 1992 with someone whom knew the Carneys "extremely well" while growing up. This particular person told me that they witnessed several times as a child James's way of distancing himself from Mayme, and how he would "cut her off" in a conversation. As a child this person thought nothing of his actions. Now as an adult looking back, this source could relate clearly to his negative behavior. Even today this person confided to me that she has never been able to accept the woman James married, after my grandmother's death, because she was/is not Mayme Carney.}
Mayme's mother Emily passed away, Mayme's private sphere - her domestic life - unraveled at the seams. Within two years she herself would be dead.

In 1945 Mayme continued to teach at Dillard High School and James maintained his position as a principal in the county. In the spring of that year Mayme gave a speech at the local Shaw alumni meeting. I, however, have not been able to discover any other external evidence that documents her activities in the remaining months of 1945 and in the early part of 1946.

In the summer of 1946 my grandfather went away as he did in previous summers, presumably to attend Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He was working toward his master's degree. According to my mother's stories, he was not often heard from while away. It was as if he had deserted the family both emotionally and financially. Black teachers did not earn a salary in the summer but this did not stop the mortgage from coming. That particular summer to make ends

I mention this conversation here only to prove that there probably were family problems within the home that alluded to James's infidelities. I believe Mayme's mother and her father knew what was going on, as did many people of the community.

I do not mean to imply to the reader that Mayme and James were separated. As far as I know they remained married and living together. Their occupations separated them during the day.

"AC," March 23, 1945, p. 5. Mayme spoke at the alumni meeting on the "Spirit of Shaw."
meet, my grandmother and her daughter Emily "picked tobacco" and worked in a local laundry. My mother remembers that the latter job paid her fifty cents per hour; but she cannot recall what her mother was paid for this work.

When James returned at the end of the summer of 1946, he waited to greet Mayme on the porch of their home on Miller street. The story is that Mayme gave him a cold, hard look one which my mother says she will never forget. Mayme then stormed past James into the house as if he did not exist.

I speculate that by the beginning of the school year, September 1946, Mayme became ill. Therefore, she was incapable of performing many of her regular duties at Dillard High School and in the community. The senior class of 1947,

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25 In North Carolina "picking tobacco" is a phrase often given to work that is done in a tobacco field. I am not sure of the exact nature of this work. I assume that it involves the picking of tobacco leaves.

When I was a teenager in the early 1970s I wanted to work in tobacco. But my parents would not allow it because it is strenous work. I had female and male friends that would pick tobacco in the summer to earn money for their school clothes. "Picking tobacco" was not an unusual form of summer employment in North Carolina.

26 This is the only summer that my mother recalls she and her mother having to work these two jobs. In other words their family did not usually experience financial problems that required my mother to work. During this particular summer, it got to the point where my mother says she, herself, could not continue to work in the laundry because she could not withstand the "heat" from the laundry machines. My grandmother gave my mother permission to quit working in the laundry but continued to work there herself.
her homeroom class, sent her flowers. She answered with a poem "A Thank-you Message to My Class." Beneath it she wrote "At home in bed Oct. 3, 1946."

But what caused Mayme's illness? The stories I grew up with deal mostly with the aftermath, that is what occurred at 508 Miller after the onset of her sickness. But from what I know now, Mayme was forty years old and she was not just "sick"; she was pregnant.

Is it possible that Mayme tried to reconcile with her husband before his summer trip, and found as a result that she was carrying their child? Was the summer in the tobacco fields, were the hours at the laundry a strain she could not handle emotionally and physically? Could she possibly have injured herself physically during this early unwanted pregnancy? And did she blame James when he returned the last summer she was alive and therefore shut him out of her life?

My mother was now sixteen years of age and her brother was twelve. A day or two before Mayme's death on October 20th, she confined herself to her bedroom away from her family who had been at the center of her life. In the newspaper on October 16th, the former "Among the Colored" column which was now called "Our Negro Community," since early 1946, reported that "Mrs. Pauline Carey, Mrs. Valnoail Scott and Mrs. M. W. Carney have been on the sick list recently, but are reported
improving."\(^{27}\)

In retrospect, my mother recalls how angry and upset her own mother was in those last days because Hugh Victor Brown the principal of Dillard had removed her as advisor to the Dillard High News. That newspaper was Mayme Carney's creation. This action must have contributed to her emotional condition at that time. On October 19th, a Saturday and the last day that Mayme was alive, it was reported in the local paper that three new advisors had been appointed to oversee the production of the Dillard High News.\(^ {28}\)

In those last days Mayme attempted to make contact with a friend of hers. This friend recalls "I don't remember who called me [about Mayme's death] but she had come by my house a day or so before - [and] said she didn't feel well."\(^ {29}\)

Another friend recounts

I returned to Goldsboro alone with two little girls, .... This was in October. We did not own a telephone. The people next to your grandparent's [Mayme and James] home had a telephone which was used by other people in the neighborhood. This was on Miller Street. I think around noon. I had to call someone and went to this house to make the call. As I came out of this house to return to my home I had a strong urge to go next door to see Mrs. Carney (I had heard that she was not well).

\(^{27}\)"Our Negro Community," The Goldsboro News-Argus, October 16, 1946, p. 7, hereinafter cited as "ONC."

\(^{28}\)The news item that appeared on that day stated: "Two seniors, seven juniors, eleven sophomores, one freshman make up the Dillard Hi News staff for this year .... Advisors are: Mrs. M. K. Jackson, Miss C. E. Hatcher, Miss A. J. Riggsbee, and J. E. Green."

I paused on the brick steps to decide what to do and decided to get on back to Mama's house because she was keeping the children for me. That evening I heard that Mrs. Carney had died.

On that final day of Mayme's life, she allowed her husband James to enter the room. Whenever my mother attempted to enter, Mayme would bicker and tell her to leave. Later that evening an ambulance removed Mayme to the hospital. When the attendants lifted her pale, now frail body onto the stretcher, my mother noticed her mother's nightgown was drenched with blood.

By 1 a.m. the following morning, Mayme Braxton Williams Carney was dead at the age of 40.

The entire community was shocked seriously Sunday before day break to learn of the sudden passing of Mrs. Mayme W. Carney, teacher of English at Dillard high school. She was stricken while going about her household duties Saturday and was taken to Goldsboro hospital where she died about midnight. The funeral will be held from the Presbyterian church at 3 p.m. on Wednesday. The body will lie in state Wednesday just prior to the funeral.

On account of the death of Mrs. M. W. Carney, the School Fall musical which was to have been held tonight, (Monday) will be postponed to a later date.

I am convinced that Mayme Carney did not want to die! Mayme was a strong, resilient, and courageous black woman.

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She had excelled in her career far beyond the capacity of most black women of that time of Goldsboro, North Carolina. In her last months alive, she was emotionally depleted and physically exhausted. Since her own mother's death in December 1944, Mayme's sense of "rootedness" - her powerful sense of family - was probably blurred. On her last day alive Mayme did not know how to morally reach out to ask for the help of her sixteen year old daughter. The only other adult in the household at that time aside from her husband was Mayme's father, Willie, and she could not ask him for help either. In addition, perhaps Mayme did not know that her health was deteriorating, or that she needed medical attention. Things, therefore, got out of control.\(^\text{33}\)

\(^{33}\)On Mayme's death certificate, the "immediate cause of death" is cerebral embolus "due to incomplete abortion." In medical terms, incomplete abortion is an abortion that can be either "spontaneous" meaning involuntary or "induced" meaning voluntary. A "spontaneous" abortion could also apply to what we refer to in layperson's terms - a miscarriage. It is not known whether Mayme's abortion was "spontaneous" or "induced."

The reader should also consider that Mayme was deeply religious, a Presbyterian by faith. In Social Purity, a book that Mayme left behind there appears the church's opinion on abortion in the early twentieth-century:

**Position of Presbyterian Church.** The following are the words of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States concerning infanticide: "'Nor can we shut our eyes to the fact that the horrible crime of infanticide, especially in the form of destruction by parents of their own offspring before birth, also prevails to an alarming extent .... This assembly regards the destruction by parents of their own offspring before birth with abhorrence, as a crime against God and against nature; and as the frequency of such murders can no longer be concealed, we hereby warn those that are guilty of this crime that, except they repent, they can not inherit eternal life.'" (Gibson, Prof. and Mrs. J. W. (Naperville: J. L. Nichols & Co., 1903, 349.)
It is clear to me now why during my field work whenever I brought up Mayme's name to some women they gazed at me as if I were a "ghost" from the past. It seems as though this black society thought of her death as a "taboo" and my resurrection of it was unbelievable.

The night before Mayme's funeral her body was brought home just as her own mother's body had been. This gave my mother a final chance to say goodbye.

Before the funeral, the services were moved to Mayme's husband's church, St. James A. M. E. Zion Church, to accommodate a larger crowd. On the day of the funeral my mother recalls only her father escorting her into the church. Just about every black person of Goldsboro that Mayme had taught or known came to her funeral. The Dillard High senior class of 1947, her last homeroom class, was in full attendance. Mayme's obituary, one she had written herself, was read at the funeral.34

I supposed that special songs were played and sung during

34 According to one student in the class of 1947, "She [Mayme] urged the class to write our obituary and told us that she had written hers and suggested that we keep it up-to-date. I recall that hers was read as she had written it at her funeral." Dorothy Smith, Letter to Gloria Yvonne Williams-McCowan, Washington, D. C., August 7, 1991.

I am still searching for a copy of Mayme's obituary. St. James A. M. E. Zion was destroyed by a fire in the 1940s as were many of its records. I have checked with members of Mayme's home church, Shiloh Presbyterian but no one claims to have a copy.
the service. There would be a sermon and then the casket would be shut. The funeral procession would wind out to Lightner's Cemetery where Mayme was to be buried beside her mother. An inexpensive marker was placed at her gravesite. Since that dreary day in October, my mother has not returned to the cemetery.

This "neglected" piece of land is now surrounded by a residential community. And Mayme lies in it - in an unidentified grave. It has the largest oak trees I have ever seen. And, whenever I am in Goldsboro, North Carolina, I go there "in search of my own foremothers' gardens."

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35 According to burial records, one metal gravemarker was purchased for Mayme's grave. I know from my research on cemeteries and from a historic tour of a cemetery (in Elgin, Illinois) this kind of marker does not "last." It can be easily removed from a gravesite. It can rust from exposure to weather and its identification also is apt to be destroyed from exposure to rain, etc. At this time, I have not been able to locate a marker. Thus I have not been able to identify my grandmother's gravesite.

36 I must thank a boy named "Jamie" who lives in this community next to the cemetery and who brought my attention to the enormous size of these trees, when I last visited the cemetery in January 1992.

37 I want to thank all of my advisors, Dr. Prudence Moylan, Dr. Mary Griffin, and Dr. Cheryl Johnson-Odim for discussing with me on numerous occasions my grandmother's life and work, and for helping me to get through the formidable task of reconstructing the events in the last two years of her life.
In each chapter an underlying theme is my mother's stories. Through the years if it were not for the constancy of her stories I probably would not have been able to write my maternal grandmother's lifestory today.

Memories: Writing The Life of Mayme Williams Carney has taught me many lessons about life, most significantly about black women's history. But the entire process of putting this work together has helped me to (re)discover Mayme Carney. I say this because I was raised with a limited view of her life. There were too many unanswered questions. It took the writing of her life to figure out some answers.

Through this writing I have come to know her Afro-American experience of living in the South and her achievements before the mid twentieth-century. I have learned to love and respect my grandmother for who she was and strove to be. How I wish I could have known the living Mayme Braxton Williams Carney. Many times during my field work when I was traveling back to Durham from Goldsboro, my eyes would be wet and my heart full of indignation that I could never see and touch her. But as her granddaughter I have recovered her life in this work. I can now identify with why her students and my
mother were so "enchanted" by Mayme Carney.

One of the greatest gifts in doing research of this nature is that during my field work I have come to know Mayme through her former friends and colleagues. Talking to these people about Mayme has been like going back in time. And being invited into their homes to discuss Mayme has resulted in warm relationships with some of them.

Another gift is that through this writing I have come to know more about myself and my relationship with my mother and my own cultural heritage. I have been able to locate my maternal roots back to the year 1843. In other words, in trying to define Mayme's Afro-American experience, I have come to understand a significant part of my own.
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Dean, Pamela. *College Women and Class Formation in the New South, 1892-1932*, Paper presented as part of the conference session "Educating the New (South) Woman" at the Second Southern Conference on Women's History, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 7-8 June 1991. (Sponsored by the Southern Association for Women Historians.)


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The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the thesis is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

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April 15, 1992
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