

HORACE BRAZELTON

✦ A PHOTOGRAPHER AND HIS COMMUNITY ✦

HORACE BRAZELTON COMES TO CHATTANOOGA

BORN in New Market, Jefferson County, Tennessee, on November 24, 1877, Horace Maynard Brazelton came to Chattanooga in 1899. He and Robert H. Hannum opened a grocery, but the business failed. Soon, after training for 10 months with an unknown German photographer, Brazelton opened his own studio on East Ninth Street in 1904. Brazelton was the first African American photographer known to operate his own photography studio in Chattanooga. He took images of the city's African American residents for the next five decades.



Unnamed couple in a photography studio, c.1920.
HORACE BRAZELTON, PHOTOGRAPHER
Courtesy of Picooga/Chattanooga Historical Society



Unnamed child in a photography studio, c.1920.
HORACE BRAZELTON, PHOTOGRAPHER
Courtesy of Picooga/Chattanooga Historical Society



South Chattanooga Pastors Wives, Nov. 7, 1940.
HORACE BRAZELTON, PHOTOGRAPHER
Courtesy of Picooga/Chattanooga Historical Society

BACKGROUND:
Sanborn Fire Insurance Map
of Chattanooga, 1901, plate 61

HORACE BRAZELTON

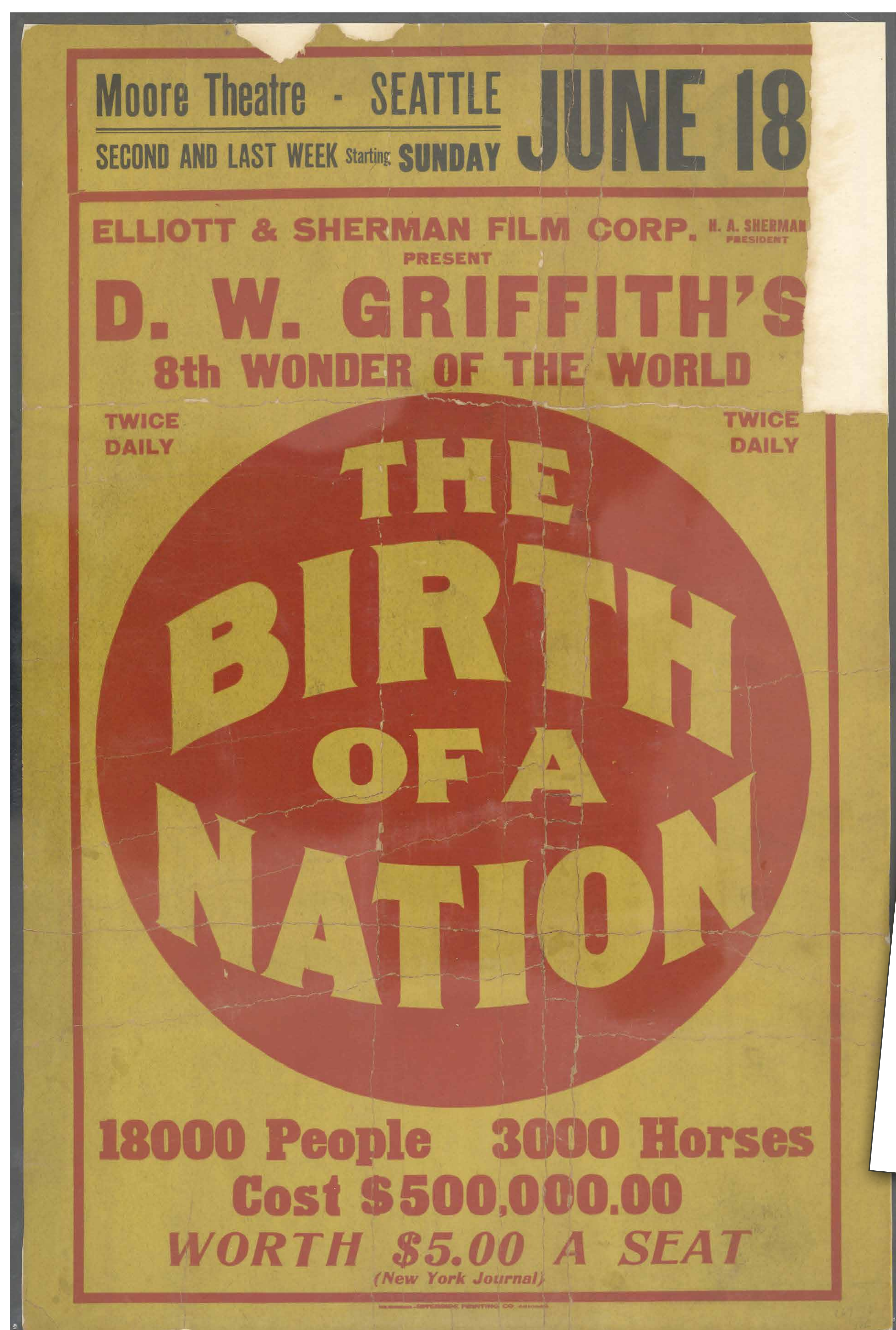
✦ A PHOTOGRAPHER AND HIS COMMUNITY ✦

A DIVIDED CHATTANOOGA

HORACE Brazelton operated his business during an era of legal racial segregation, often called Jim Crow segregation, which took root through Chattanooga's ordinances and regulations at the turn of the 20th century.

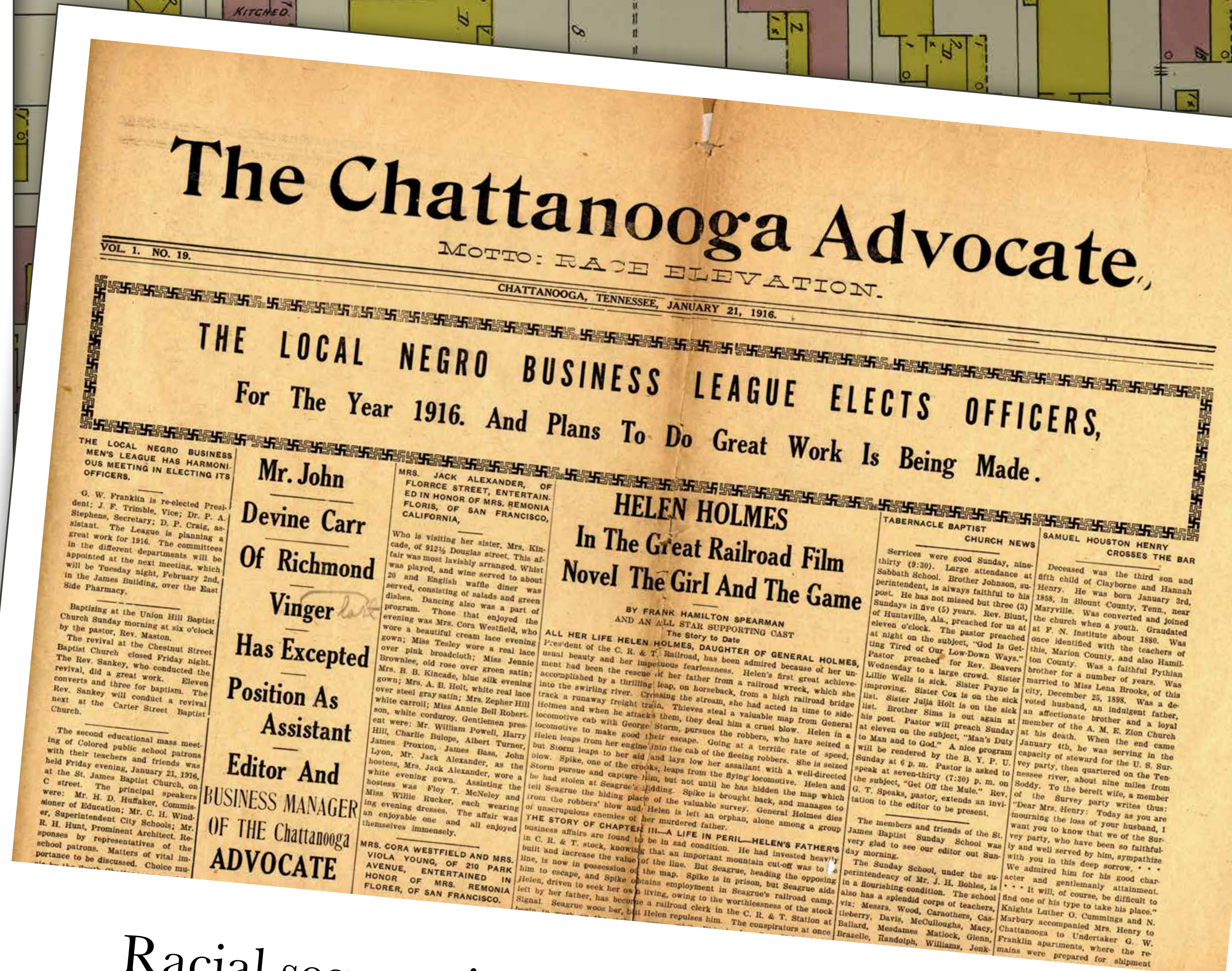
The term "Jim Crow" started with a fictional minstrel show character displaying false stereotypes and dated to 1836, when Thomas D. Rice began making Jim Crow the face of American minstrelsy by including exaggerated features and movements for African Americans. The term came to mean the equally false assumption that Black Americans were incapable of taking care of themselves or participating as equal citizens.

Jim Crow segregation came to Chattanooga in the 1890s. Before that time, Chattanooga had served as a beacon of hope and progress for a wide range of citizens. With railroad lines coming from the north, south, and west, the city reasserted its pre-Civil War role as a southern transportation hub, especially after United States Colored Troops (USCT) and freedmen largely rebuilt the tracks after the fighting ended. On the north side of the Tennessee River, an area called Hill City was the first large African American neighborhood. A second Black neighborhood grew along the railroad yards to the west of the river, and that is where Brazelton opened his photography studio in 1904.



Birth of a Nation, released in 1915, prominently features harmful and false African American stereotypes. President Woodrow Wilson showed the movie at the White House, thus reinforcing crude representations on a national stage.

Courtesy of the Library of Congress



Racial segregation and discrimination led to African Americans being largely excluded from mainstream newspaper coverage. *The Chattanooga Advocate* was an African American newspaper published by D.P. Craig, Jr. in the 1910s.

BACKGROUND:

Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Chattanooga, 1901, Plate 47

HORACE BRAZELTON

✦ A PHOTOGRAPHER AND HIS COMMUNITY ✦

BUILDING A BUSINESS IN “JIM CROW” CHATTANOOGA

WORD WITH A COLORED EDITOR.

Here is one of the “gems” from the *Chattanooga Blade* of last week:

They have taken our part of the library; they have moved our school to the frog pond; they have passed the Jim Crow law; they have knocked us out the jury box; they have played the devil generally, and what in thunder, more will they do—no one knows.

Served from week to week with this kind of mental nourishment it is little wonder that so many colored people are kept in a constant state of bitterness and resentful antagonism to their white neighbors; in fact it is strange that there is as little friction as there is. This selection is made from the *Blade*—and it is much milder than most of its colored contemporaries—to illustrate the difficulties those who are trying to create and maintain amicable relations between the races encounter in their work. This paragraph might easily have been turned so as to aid in quieting race hatred instead of stirring it up. It might have been made to read: “They are going to give us a fair showing for a library; they have given us two schools when before we had only one, and have located one of them on Eleventh street, one of these days to become a great city boulevard; they have passed a law that separates the races and guarantees us equal accommodations with our white friends in street cars; they have done us a service by relieving us of jury duty because so many of us are really not fitted for it at this time, and if we will just go on attending to our business, keep out of politics, cultivate our minds and become industrious, productive and provident citizens the devil himself can’t make them do anything that will hurt us.”

Some such encouraging and hopeful sentiments as these might accomplish some good results while the contrary accomplishes nothing but harm. The sensible colored man must promptly admit that there is no possible hope for his advancement by a course of persistent antagonism to white people, spiteful opposition or heedless resentfulness. That negro gets along best who accepts such conditions as the laws and customs of the community, in which he lives, impose in a manly, self-respecting fashion, seeking to better the same not by violence either of speech or action but working to merit it. Unfortunate circumstances may occasionally arise to test self-control very severely, but these once safely overcome strengthen for future action and encourage persistence in the right, sensible course.

October 12, 1905, article from *Chattanooga Daily Times* newspaper commenting on the *Blade* newspaper founded by Randolph Miller. This article details opposing views on local civil rights issues before the streetcar boycott that Miller organized between July and October.

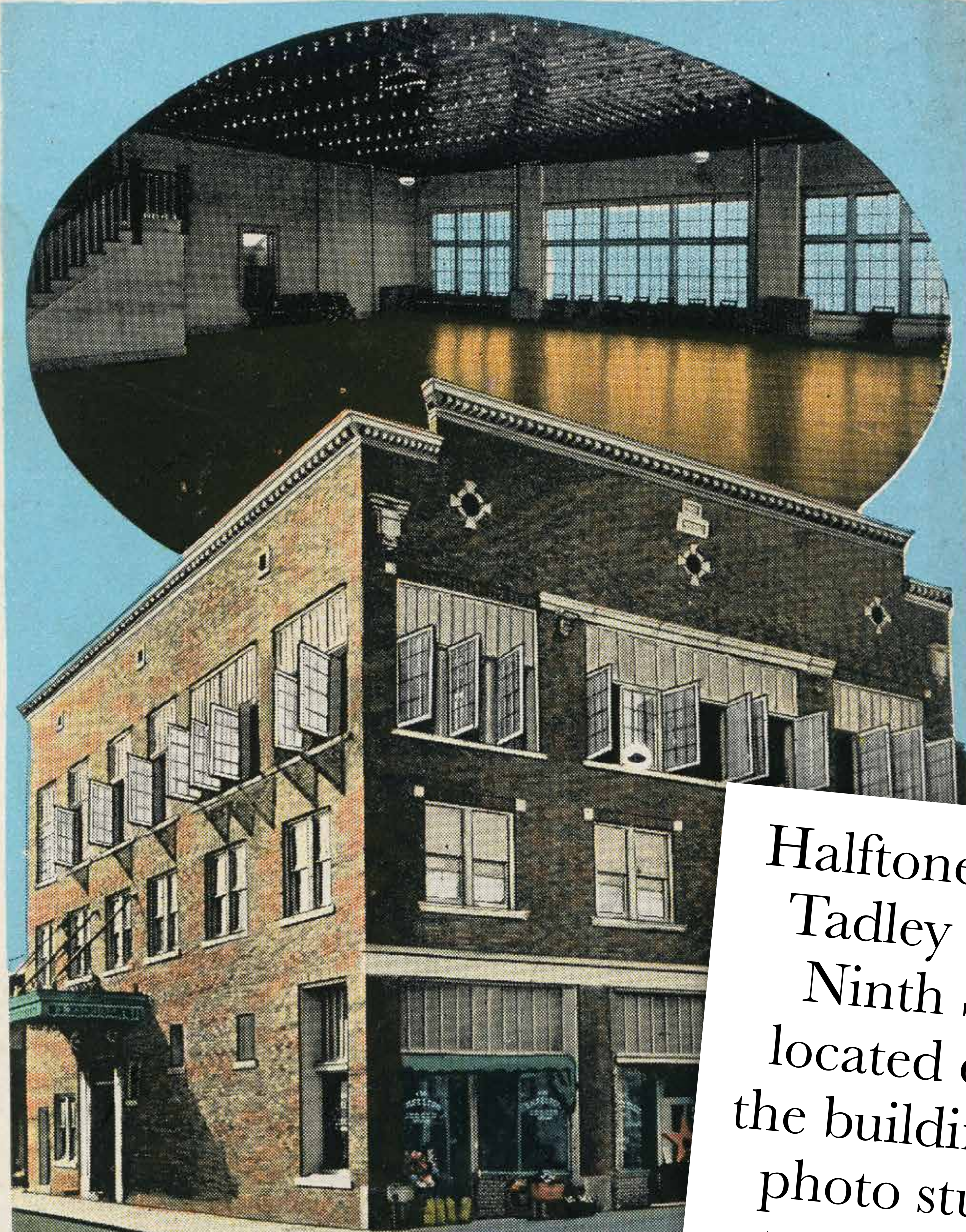
HORACE Brazelton faced long odds to be successful as a photographer. Tennessee approved its first segregation law in 1875 and, for the next 30 years, added more laws and regulations to keep the races separate. Brazelton could only make images of other African Americans and had no access to lucrative event photography, unless the event only included other Black people.

Despite these challenges, Brazelton charted his own course, similar to the ways that Black barbers, hairdressers, and undertakers could develop their livelihoods. White businessmen in those fields did not want Black customers out of fears of alienating White customers.

Still, segregation undermined Brazelton’s business in ways small and large. Public transportation, so necessary in urban areas, was limited for African Americans after a 1905 Tennessee law demanding segregation in streetcars. Segregated service meant that many Blacks refused to accept such second-class treatment; often, the streetcars and later buses rarely traveled into African American neighborhoods.

Another Chattanooga businessman, Randolph Miller, was a formerly enslaved man who founded *The Weekly Blade* newspaper in 1869. After the 1905 segregation law, Miller led a three-week-long boycott of Chattanooga streetcars that gained temporary success as one of the first protests against segregated transportation, some 50 years before the Montgomery bus boycott. The protest did not produce lasting change; segregation remained the rule in Chattanooga until the 1960s.

DR. J. C. TADLEY BUILDING, CHATTANOOGA, TENN.



BACKGROUND:
Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of
Chattanooga, 1901, Plate 48

Halftone printed postcard of the Dr. J. C. Tadley Office Building, located on East Ninth Street. Various businesses were located on the first and second floors of the building, including Horace Brazelton’s photo studio. The third floor was home to a dance hall called the Silver Slipper Garden. *Courtesy of Picooga/Chattanooga Historical Society*



1942 photograph of the pastor, choir, officers, and ushers of Warren Chapel A.M.E. Church.
HORACE BRAZELTON, PHOTOGRAPHER

Courtesy of Bessie Smith Cultural Center

HORACE BRAZELTON

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A FAMILY BUSINESS

HORACE'S father was Anderson Brazelton, a USCT veteran who helped repair and build local railroads during and after the Civil War. His mother was named Lee Anna (Fain) Brazelton, also from the Jefferson County area. His parents named him after Horace Maynard, a prominent East Tennessee Unionist who was a postmaster general after the war. After Anderson died in 1879, Lee Anna raised their seven children alone, operating a family-owned farm supplemented with her husband's army pension.

After attending Maryville College with his brother, Horace moved to Chattanooga in 1899 before marrying Hettie Hodge in Knox County in 1900. Hettie was born to William Hodge and Frances West in Jefferson County, Tennessee, on August 15, 1876.

Brazelton was a business leader in Chattanooga. In 1909, the *Chattanooga News* included his image as part of a story titled "Chattanooga's Colored People are a Credit to their Race." In 1917, when the city hosted the National Negro Business League, Brazelton delivered a speech about his business at Umbrella Rock in which he called on local youths looking for work:

"I would like right here to make a special appeal to young men, who are honest workers, who are undecided what field of profession or business to enter, that the photographic field offers excellent opportunities. It is the one field that the crust is hardly broken, a scientific and magnetic profession with quick returns on your money, and expansion as big as the man."

B | 1 H. Art'y. | **U.S.C.T.**

Anderson Brazelton
....., Co. L., 1 Reg't U. S. Col'd H. Art'y.

Appears on
Company Descriptive Book
of the organization named above.

DESCRIPTION.
Age *21* years; height *5* feet *8* inches.
Complexion *Black*
Eyes *Black*; hair *Black*
Where born *Jefferson Co. Tenn*
Occupation *Farmer*

ENLISTMENT.
When *Aug 11*
Where *Knoxville Tenn*
By whom *W. McCullty*; term *3*
Remarks: *Promoted to Surge
Sept 26th 1864 by order
Lieut Col Shannon*



Negro Building at Jamestown Ter-Centennial Exposition in 1907. Brazelton won a silver medal in photography at the event.
Courtesy of Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University

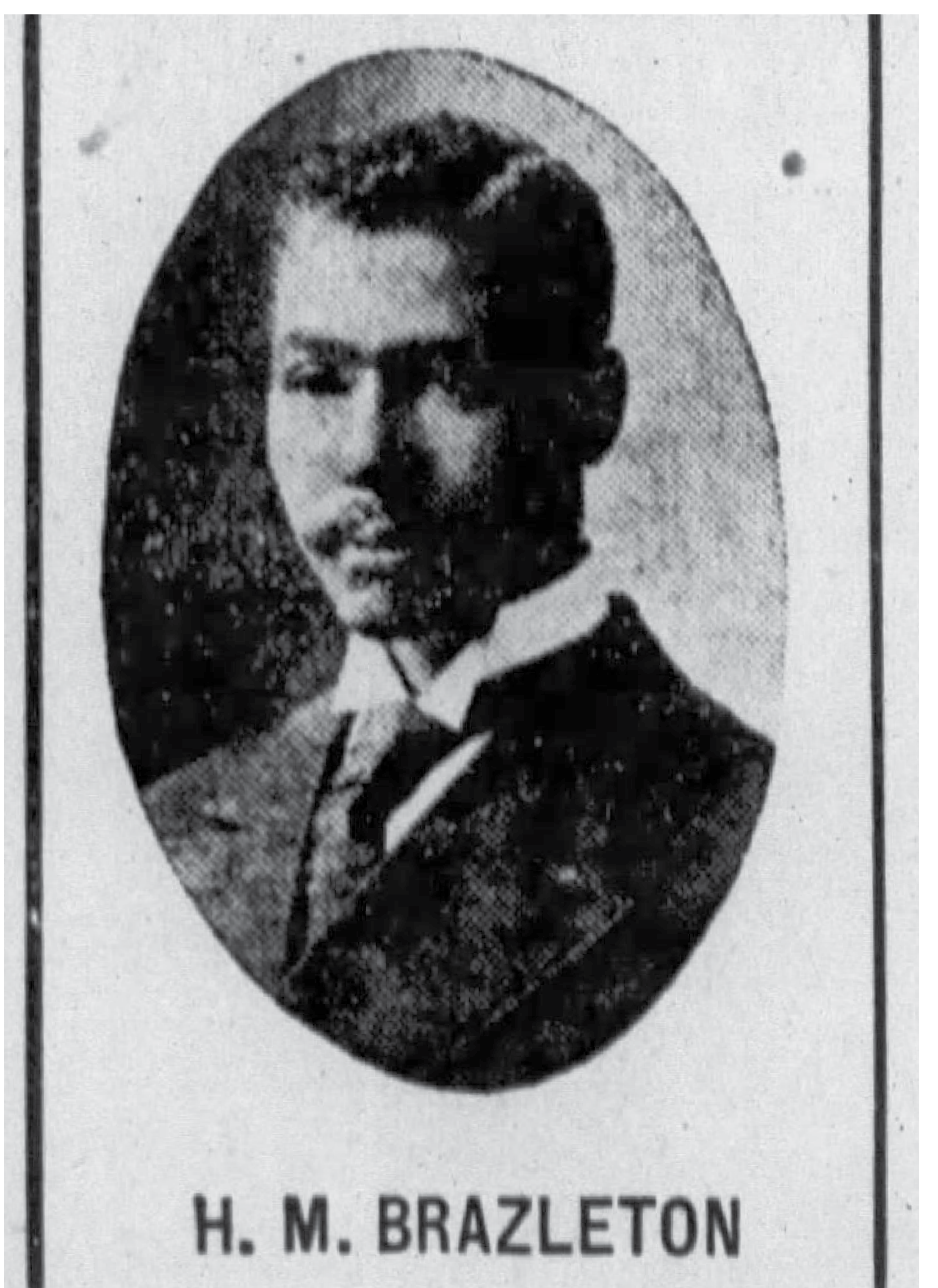


Photo of Horace Brazelton taken for an August 31, 1909, *Chattanooga News* story titled "Chattanooga's Colored People are a Credit to their Race"

C. C. Parker
(3880) *Copyist.*

Record of Anderson Brazelton's 1864 enlistment in the United States Colored Troops.
Image courtesy of Ancestry.com. Original document located at the National Archives in Washington, D.C.

ATTENTION!

Photographs

I do not ask your size or age, I only ask that you have your pictures made at "BRAZELTON'S." I have just finished a special course in posing, lighting and retouching. I have a new line of fall mounts and folders that will please. I have added several new posing chairs, backgrounds and vignettes. I strive to please. My motto: The best is none too good for my patrons. So come and see "BRAZELTON" the successful Photographer, who is always thinking of your needs and supplying them with artistic Photography.

Call at the gallery for prices. Some special at \$4.00 per dozen; smaller sizes at less money. Watch street cars for new styles. A deposit of one-half required on all work.

Location: 514 East Ninth Street
Between Douglas and E Streets

BACKGROUND:
Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Chattanooga, 1917, plate 35

HORACE BRAZELTON

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A FAMILY BUSINESS

HORACE and Hettie Brazelton became a powerful professional couple. Hettie was instrumental in her husband's work, often acting as a photographer's assistant and studio manager.

Black professional women were also leaders in the Jim Crow South. They formed women's clubs and organizations that supported social welfare programs and helped those in need. Some women also worked to challenge discrimination and segregation by organizing protests, and they advocated for civil rights by registering Black voters.

Hettie Brazelton was one of these strong women. She served as an elder at Leonard Street Presbyterian Church, judged Emancipation Day cooking and canning competitions, and volunteered at the Phyllis Wheatley Branch of the YWCA as chair of the hospitality committee.

Hettie also raised an adopted daughter named Lucille, who was born in July 1920. On July 19, 1938, their lives changed once again when Lucille gave birth to a son, Leon Brazelton Jones, Jr. Unfortunately, Lucille passed away on March 16, 1939—when Leon was only 8 months old. Horace and Hettie then raised their grandson as their own.

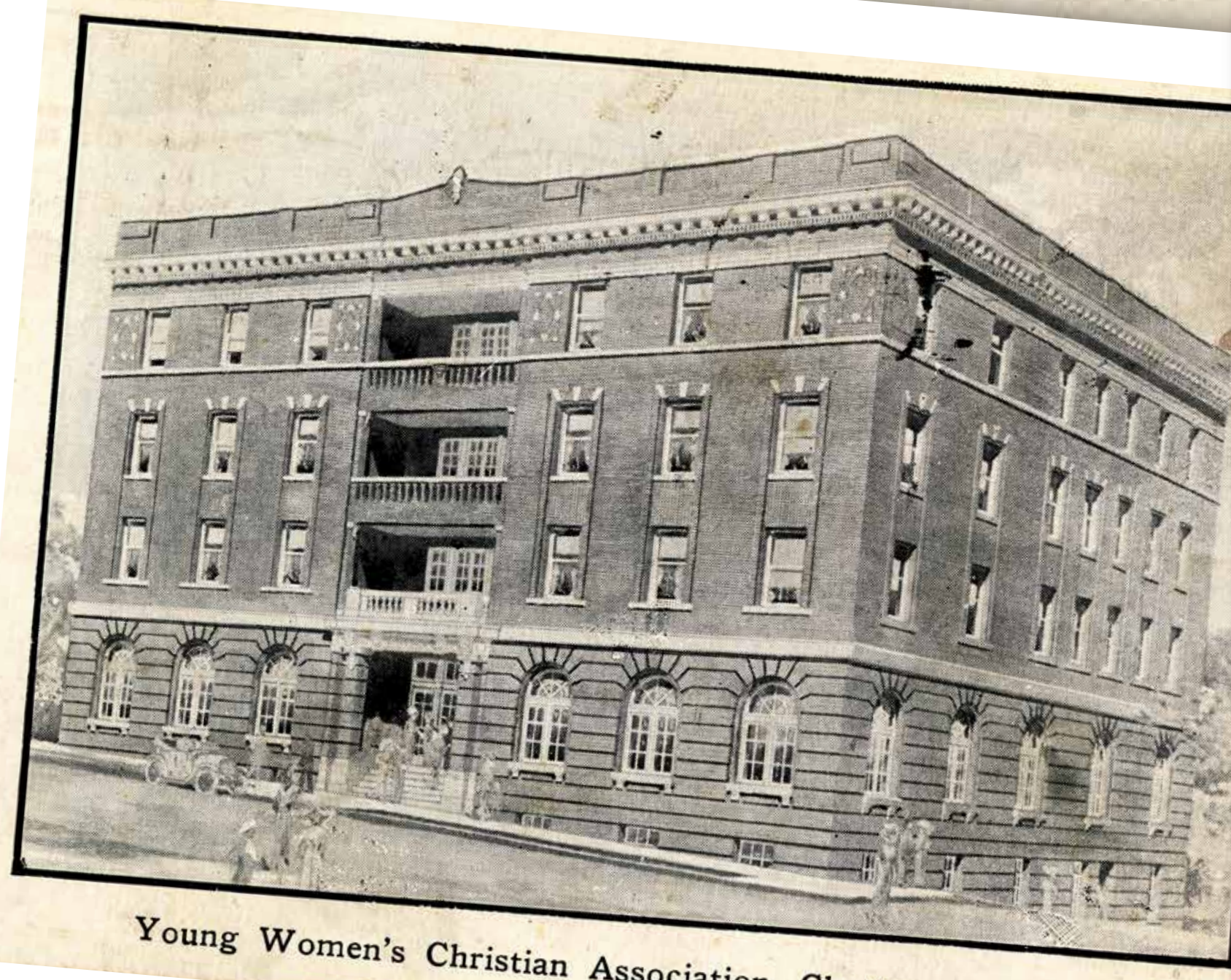
Horace Brazelton passed away at his home on Palmetto Street in 1956. Hettie died in 1957. Both are buried at Pleasant Garden Cemetery in Chattanooga.



The Session in 1943. Left to right, front: Elders Douglas and Jones. Back row: Elders Harris, Coker, Brazelton, W.M. Hixson, Rev. Barbour, Elders R. W. Hixson, Goodlet, and Collins.

Elders of Leonard Street Presbyterian Church in 1943, including Hettie Mary Brazelton.

Courtesy of the Presbyterian Historical Society



Young Women's Christian Association, Chattanooga, Tenn.

Photo of YWCA building on Eighth Street.
Courtesy of Picooga/Chattanooga Historical Society



Presumed photo of Lucille Brazelton Jones and Leon Brazelton Jones, Jr.

Courtesy of Picooga/Chattanooga Historical Society

CARD OF THANKS
We wish to thank our many friends, neighbors and relatives for their kind words of sympathy and floral offerings during the brief illness and death of our mother, wife and daughter, Mrs. Lucille Brazelton Jones. We especially wish to express our thanks to Dr. G. H. Moores and nurse of Walden hospital, Revs. Barber and Bell, and Bailey & Davis, morticians, for their courteous and efficient service.
Leon Jones,
Mr. and Mrs. H. M. Brazelton,
Leon Jones, Jr.

A March 22, 1939, note in the *Chattanooga Daily Times* from the Brazelton family thanking Walden Hospital for their care of Lucille Brazelton Jones before her death.

BACKGROUND:
Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Chattanooga, 1917, plate 36

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A THRIVING BUSINESS DISTRICT

DESPITE the challenges, Black business ownership was on the rise, coalescing into thriving business districts across the country. In Chattanooga, the heart of the larger business district ran along the streets of East Ninth Street, known today as Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard. Local African Americans established schools, businesses, fraternal organizations, churches, and two hospitals. In 1915, for example, Emma Wheeler, the city's first African American female doctor, established Walden Hospital. The building still stands, serving the area as apartment units. Carver Memorial Hospital opened on June 18, 1947, in the old West Ellis Hospital building.

Photography produced by the Black community included images of well-to-do individuals from a growing middle class, celebrating their triumphs over a system that was designed to make them fail. However, the very existence of the Black middle class suggested that dramatic changes were occurring during the Jim Crow period.



Photo of Heard Shoe Company, formerly located on East Ninth Street. Courtesy of Picooga/Chattanooga Historical Society



Three men in front of an unidentified store on East Ninth Street. Courtesy of Dr. Earnestine Jenkins

HORACE BRAZELTON

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URBAN CHANGE: RENEWAL OR ERASURE?

CONGRESS passed the 1956 Federal-Aid Highway Act in order to create the interstate highway system. In Chattanooga, the Golden Gateway Project expanded U.S. Highway 27 to connect with the new interstate and, allegedly, create efficient access to surrounding communities. Self-sufficient and established neighborhoods on the west side were slated for demolition to make room for the new highway.

To justify the demolition, city officials declared these Westside communities “slums and blight,” calling for the destruction of beautiful buildings and community resources like schools and churches, as well as the removal of families and homes. At a time when integration seemed imminent, hundreds of homes, businesses, schools, and churches were razed in the name of economic and community development. In fact, over a 340-acre area, an estimated 1,221 homes were demolished, and 1,484 families were displaced, some 65% of them families of color. This was the fourth-largest project in terms of scale nationwide and was the twelfth largest in terms of total development costs at the time.

The psychological, economic, and social effects of such programs were devastating to the people who lived and worked in affected areas. The destruction of homes, churches, schools, and businesses had longstanding consequences but did not completely eradicate these neighborhoods or their inherent culture.



Homes and businesses owned by African Americans,
Chattanooga, Tennessee, ca. 1899
W.E.B. DU BOIS, PHOTOGRAPHER
Courtesy of the Library of Congress

BACKGROUND:
Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of
Chattanooga, 1951, plate 41

HORACE BRAZELTON

✦ A PHOTOGRAPHER AND HIS COMMUNITY ✦

PHOTOGRAPHS AS A WINDOW TO THE PAST



Portrait of Grace [Allen] [Mcehy].
HORACE BRAZELTON, PHOTOGRAPHER

Courtesy of Dr. Charles S. Boyd Photograph Collection, University of Tennessee, Knoxville - Libraries

PHOTOGRAPHY creates a visual representation of a person, captures a moment in time, and helps preserve the legacy of a life. Without that image, those precious memories may be forgotten sooner than expected. This idea of memory points back to the desire to remember the past—to validate the people who are no longer here—and to place the self in society. It also enriches our collectively shared history through the promotion of African American communities by preserving their stories for posterity.

Imagine if you had never seen an image of yourself, or if you never had the chance to pass a photo of your parents down to the next generation. What would that feel like?

Black portraiture was used as a way to connect ties of kinship and remember ancestors and community members. Those images sitting in attics, albums, archives, and libraries or hanging on the walls of family homes were once part of a visual political movement. The use of photography in Black communities quickly became a way to create memories, assert identity and personality, and reaffirm self-worth since portraits created specifically by Black photographers conveyed the truth that African Americans were dignified, well-dressed, and respectable.



Portrait of an African American woman in a studio.
HORACE BRAZELTON, PHOTOGRAPHER

Courtesy of Dr. Charles S. Boyd Photograph Collection, University of Tennessee, Knoxville - Libraries

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TIMELINE

NOVEMBER 25, 1863 – Final Confederate defeat in Chattanooga, during the Battle of Missionary Ridge

MARCH 3, 1865 – United States Congress passed “An Act to establish a Bureau for the Relief of Freedmen and Refugees” meant to provide food, clothing, shelter, medical care, and reclaimed land to displaced Southerners, including formerly enslaved people.

MARCH 7, 1867 – Largest recorded flood in Chattanooga history

NOVEMBER 1873 – Nashville barber Sampson W. Keeble became the first African American man elected to the Tennessee General Assembly.

AUGUST 15, 1876 – Hettie Mary Hodge is born in Jefferson County, Tennessee.

NOVEMBER 24, 1877 – Horace Maynard Brazelton is born in New Market, Tennessee.

1881 – Tennessee passes the first Jim Crow law, requiring segregation in train cars.

SEPTEMBER 7, 1885 – Charles Williams is lynched in Chattanooga.

FEBRUARY 14, 1893 – Alfred Blount is lynched on the Walnut Street Bridge in Chattanooga.

FEBRUARY 26, 1897 – Charles Brown is lynched in Hamilton County.

FEBRUARY 14, 1900 – Horace Brazelton and Hettie Hodge are married in Knox County.

SPRING 1904 – Horace Brazelton opens the first Black-owned photography studio in Chattanooga.

MARCH 19, 1906 – Ed Johnson is lynched on the Walnut Street Bridge in Chattanooga.

1907 – Horace Brazelton wins a silver medal in photography at the Jamestown Exposition.

DECEMBER 1909 – Pioneer Realty Company is incorporated as the first Black-owned realty company in Chattanooga, with Horace Brazelton serving as vice president.

JULY 27, 1920 – Horace Brazelton’s adopted daughter, Lucille, is born.

OCTOBER 29, 1929 – Stock market crash of 1929, leading to the Great Depression

JULY 19, 1938 – Grandson Leon Brazelton Jones, Jr., is born.

MARCH 16, 1939 – Death of Lucille Brazelton Jones

1953 – Brazelton Photo Studio closes.

MAY 13, 1956 – Death of Horace Brazelton

JULY 5, 1957 – Death of Hettie Brazelton

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