

Mystery Solved: Why there were two AOI's and how they are connected through a common ancestor.

**MYSTERY SOLVED: WHY
THERE WERE TWO AOIs
AND HOW THEY ARE
CONNECTED THROUGH
ONE COMMON
ANCESTOR**

When first started, this Power Point presentation was to serve as a stand-alone, continuous running program to viewed on a laptop or kiosk. Since then it has been added to as more information came to light.

History & Background

In 2005, the AOI promoted as one of its goals “Preserving the District’s Historic Records,” and we became more involved with Gail Redmann McCormick the Collections Manager and Vice-President of the Historical Society. At that time the HSW’s Kiplinger Research Library together with the Recorder of Deeds records, those of the Sumner School & Archives, the Washingtoniana Division of the DCPL and the DC Archives were all at risk...

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In an article that Gail had written for “Washington History” highlighting collections at HSW she wrote about the AOI’s archives and mentioned, in passing, “...a parallel African-American Organization – The Oldest Inhabitants, Inc. – [that] was founded in 1912, but is no longer active.” This prompted AOI Historian, Nelson Rimensnyder and me, to begin a search for former members of that organization and its records.

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The Association of the Oldest Inhabitants of the District of Columbia

The Association of the Oldest Inhabitants of the District of Columbia was founded in 1865 to foster pride in the nation's capital. Its formation came at a time when the post-Civil War population was surging with government workers, returning soldiers, and refugees. The city was also plagued by lingering and divisive sectional loyalties. In an effort to restore the capital's dignity, 31 prominent Washington citizens and businessmen met in the Council Chamber of City Hall on December 7, 1865, to form the new organization. Its constitution and by-laws defined the association's purpose: "to keep alive the reminiscences of the past and the social and paternal communion of the present and the future." In addition, the constitution emphasized respect for local governmental authority and national patriotism above sectional differences. At the association's founding, a member had to be at least 50 years old and have resided in the District for 40 years. Charter members included Benjamin Ogle Tayloe, Peter Force, and John Carroll Brent.

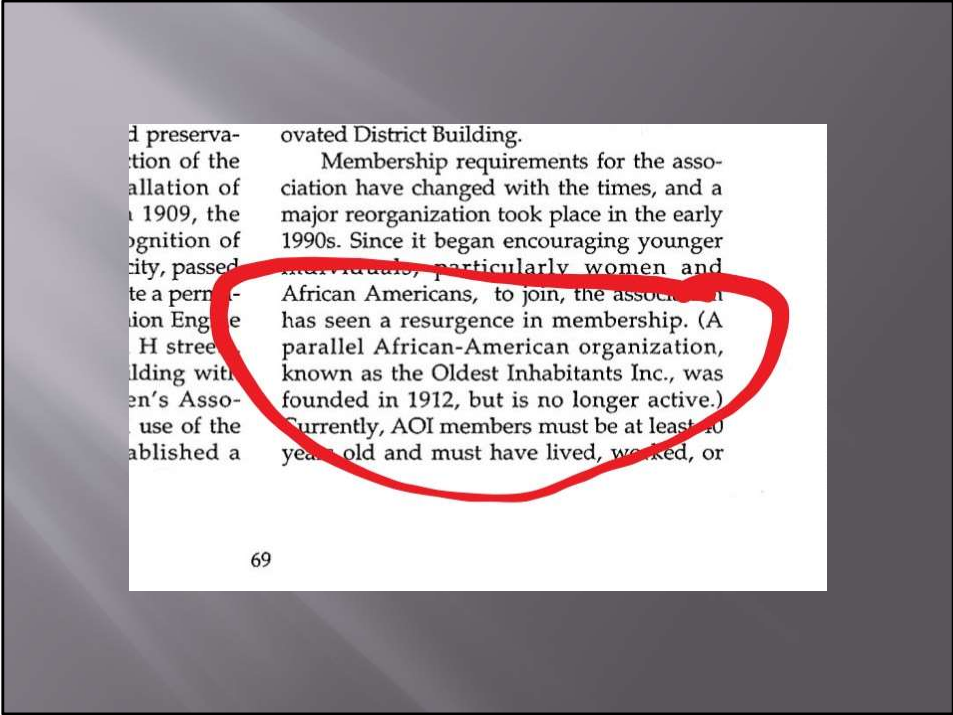
As the District's oldest civic association, AOI has been a strong supporter of many important city improvements and preservation projects, including construction of the District Building and the installation of modern city street lighting. In 1909, the District Commissioners, in recognition of the association's support for the city, passed a resolution allowing AOI to create a permanent meeting place in the old Union Engine Company building at 19th and H streets, N.W. There AOI shared the building with the Veteran Volunteer Firemen's Association, which had been granted use of the building in 1891 and had established a

museum of fire fighting equipment and memorabilia. AOI met for the first time at the Union Engine Company on July 11, 1911, and continued to meet there until 1966, when the building was demolished for the construction of the International Monetary Fund headquarters. At that time, part of the valuable fire equipment collection was donated to the Smithsonian Institution and part to the Columbia Historical Society (now HSW), where the association subsequently held meetings.

The organization has had many strong leaders, perhaps the most prominent being Theodore Noyes, owner and publisher of the *Evening Star*, who became president in 1908 and served for 35 years. To support civic improvement, AOI embraced the efforts of the Chamber of Commerce (later merged with the Board of Trade to form the Metropolitan Board of Trade) and became an early member of the Federation of Citizens Associations, founded in 1910. Over the years, preserving historic sites has been a major commitment of the organization, including the erection and maintenance of statues and memorials. Currently the association is working to restore the statue of territorial governor Alexander Shepherd, whose controversial tenure was responsible for dramatic civic improvements, to its former position of prominence in front of the newly renovated District Building.

Membership requirements for the association have changed with the times, and a major reorganization took place in the early 1990s. Since it began encouraging younger individuals, particularly women and African Americans, to join, the association has seen a resurgence in membership. (A parallel African-American organization, known as the Oldest Inhabitants Inc., was founded in 1912, but is no longer active.) Currently, AOI members must be at least 40 years old and must have lived, worked, or

The page from Fall/Winter 2000/2001 "Washington History" where the existence of the Oldest Inhabitants Colored is first mentioned...



A bump-out of that reference...

Over the years, Nelson discovered and began collecting obituaries with references to the deceased being “active” in the “Oldest Inhabitants, Incorporated,” obviously something related to or similar to the AOI of DC as Gail had mentioned but geared toward and serving the African American community. Many of these notables were affiliated with Howard University, African American organizations or traditionally Black DC hospitals.

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Charles W. Gray

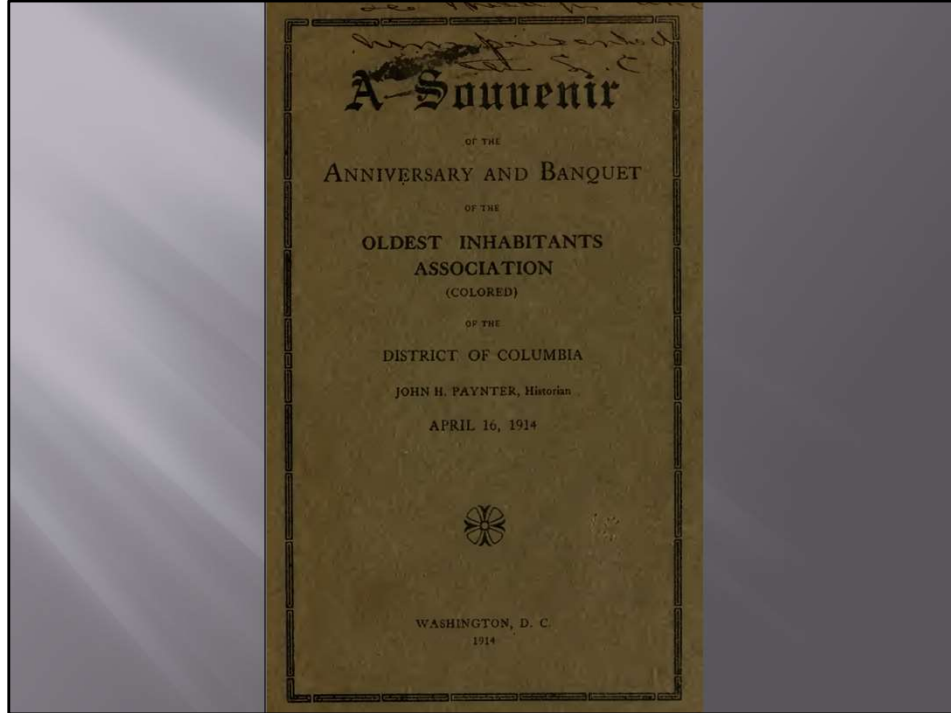
Funeral services for Charles W. Gray, 69, Treasury Department employe for more than 27 years, of 1025 21st st. nw., will be held tomorrow at 12:30 p. m. from the Metropolitan A. M. E. Church at 1618 M st. nw. Burial will be in Arlington Cemetery. He died Saturday at Emergency Hospital after a short illness.

Mr. Gray came here from Norfolk, Va., more than 34 years ago. He worked for a time on the Eastern Seaboard Railroad, but in 1918 went to the Treasury Department as a messenger. In 1894 he served aboard the USS Monongahela.

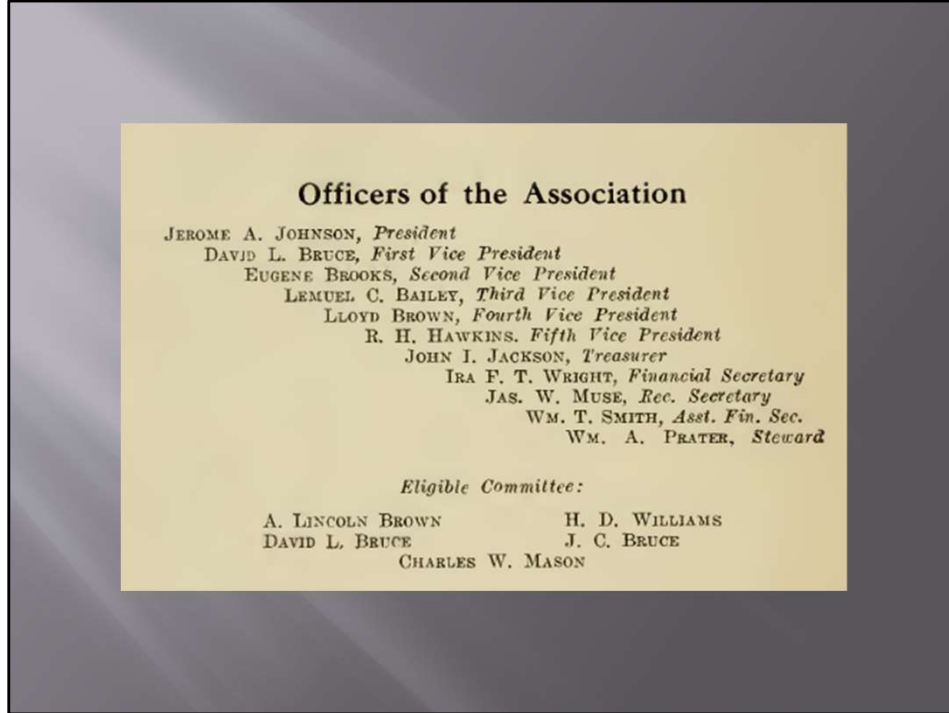
He was a member of the Elks Morning Star Lodge No. 40, I. B. P. O. E. of W. and the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows, Mount Olivet branch, and of the Association of the Oldest Inhabitants, Inc. (Colored).

He leaves his wife, Mrs. Ida R. Gray; a son, Charles V. Gray; three daughters, Mrs. Ruth Marshall, Mrs. Noami Johnson and Miss Ida Mae Gray, and two granddaughters, Miss June Marshall and Miss Gloria V. Gray, all of Washington.

An example of a reference to the Oldest Inhabitants, Inc. (Colored) in an obituary in the Washington Post from Sept. 27, 1945 for Charles W. Gray.



A 1914 souvenir booklet of the Oldest Inhabitants (Colored) anniversary and banquet was the only definitive piece which provided clues to the membership and goals of the organization but nothing about its founding or any connection to the original Association of the Oldest Inhabitants founded in 1865.



Here is a list of the 1914 officers including Jerome A. Johnson, President and listing Eugene Brooks as Second Vice-President.

Foreword

During many years, since the principle of liberty for all men became the mighty shibboleth in the rebirth of the Union, the serious thought of many old residents of color in the District has been given to the establishment of an Oldest Inhabitants Association.

It was thought that such an Association, molded upon lines similar, in the main, to those upon which one was formed among white fellow-citizens, could do much toward encouraging a pride of race, as well as of residence, among a people whose long years of sad experiences could not of themselves be expected to stimulate the growth of these ennobling sentiments.

The essential work of establishing a presumable equality of being and opportunity having been completed, the Negro made his entrance into civic life as a new creature, rejoicing as some proud victor "at dangers past and conflicts won," with tales as true and strange and thrilling as ever yet, with merry rhythm or solemn period, were fashioned into an epic for a race; and so the thoughts and hopes of many citizens were crystallized by the fact of organization, mainly through the efforts of Mr. Jerome A. Johnson, when in November, 1912, was formed the Association of Oldest Inhabitants of the District of Columbia (Colored).

It seemed appropriate and natural that the sixteenth of April should be considered the most important in the calendar of the Association, and so was adopted as its natal day, to be appropriately observed on each recurring anniversary.

The forward to the 1914 anniversary booklet stating among other things, "It was thought that such an Association, modeled upon lines similar, in the main, to those upon which one was formed among white fellow-citizens, could do much toward encouraging pride of race, as well as of residence, among a people whose long years of sad experiences could not of themselves be expected to stimulate the growth of these ennobling sentiments."

INAUGURAL PROMENADE AND RECEPTION
of the
OLDEST INHABITANTS' ASSOCIATION/(Colored) OF THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA



AT CONVENTION HALL MARCH 6, 1917

Eugene Brooks, President; Samuel W. Watson, 1st Vice President;
Dr. George Sewell, 2nd Vice President; Edward W. Turner, 3rd
Vice President; Edward A. Savoy, 4th. Vice President; George
W. Stewart, 5th Vice President; James W. Muse, Recording
Secretary; Alfred P. Brent, Financial Sec.; William S. Smith,
Assistant Financial Secretary; John I. Sackson, Treasurer;
John H. Paynter, Historian; Walter Young, Sergeant-at-arms;
Charles H. Turner, Assistant Sergeant-at-arms; Charles H. Ta-
per, Chaplain; William A. Prater, Steward.

Date: Saturday, March 3, 1917
Paper: Washington Bee (Washington (DC), DC)
Page: 5

An announcement of a grand meeting of the Oldest Inhabitants' Association (Colored) from March 3, 1917 from the "Washington Bee."

This led Nelson and AOI's then President Bill Brown to begin a public relations "campaign" in an attempt to locate anyone who might have knowledge about this elusive organization.

There was no response from the general public even after the Washington Post's "Answer Man" John Kelly wrote in great detail about what we knew about the organization and AOI's quest for information in 2010.

The response: crickets... nothing....


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For years, AOI sought to find the records of the AOI (Colored)

TUESDAY, MARCH 23, 2010



JOHN KELLY'S WASHINGTON

Help clear cobwebs off history of black old-timers' group

On July 4, 1891, the Association of the Oldest Inhabitants of Washington met at Willard Hall on F Street NW to celebrate America's birthday in its customary fashion: with a reading of the Declaration of Independence.

Wrote a reporter for The Post: "The strong points of this familiar and famous document were heartily cheered by the old men who have lived a lifetime in a country that has prospered under its beneficent influences."

The paper did not see the need to point out that all the old men were white. To borrow some language from Thomas Jefferson, it was a self-evident truth that a group such as AOI would not accept black members (or women). Washington was a segregated city, comprising parallel worlds. There were white churches and black churches, white Masonic lodges and black Masonic lodges, white professional associations and black professional associations. Only occasionally would those worlds intersect.

As in 1919, for example. On the




PHOTO COURTESY THE WASHINGTON POST

The segregated Association of the Oldest Inhabitants used to meet in an old fire engine house at 19th and H streets NW.

were no old times."

AOI's successes must have inspired black Washingtonians with similarly deep roots in the city to form their own group. AOI (Colored) was incorporated in 1919, modeling the language in its incorporation papers on the older group's. Members met that year at Calvary Episcopal Church

For years, AOI sought to find the records of the AOI (Colored)... The Washington Post's John Kelly was instrumental in helping spread the word about our quest for information about the presumed defunct organization.

Over the years, Nelson came across occasional references to the two organizations gathering it was believed to “jointly welcome returning Veterans of the Great War,” but in his biography of “‘Judge’ Eugene Brooks:

Supreme Court Messenger and Proponent of Black Awareness, 1881-1926” AOI member Terry Walz writes, “In 1917 [*The Washington Bee*] drew attention to the invitation that the AOI (Colored) had received to meet with the AOI (White) and that “pleasant words” had been exchanged. Brooks and his fellow members were shown a 20-foot section of the survey chain that had been used by Benjamin Banneker in the original surveying of the District. Another meeting between the two groups took place in 1919.”

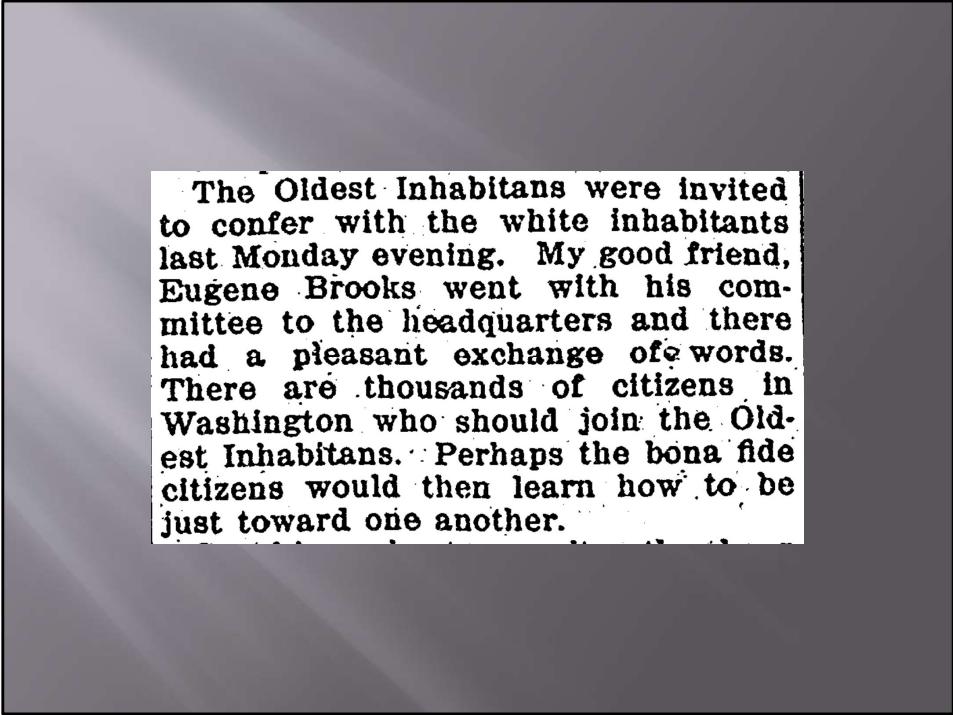
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[*Washington Bee*, June 23, 1917, p. 4; *Washington Bee*, June 30, 1917, p. 1; *Evening Star*, July 5, 1919, p. 2 (which mistakenly reports it was the first meeting between them.)]



Oldest Inhabitants (Colored)'s Founder &
President Jerome Johnson

The Oldest Inhabitants (Colored) founder and First President Jerome J. Johnson. This photo is taken from their 1914 gala banquet.



The Oldest Inhabitants were invited to confer with the white inhabitants last Monday evening. My good friend, Eugene Brooks went with his committee to the headquarters and there had a pleasant exchange of words. There are thousands of citizens in Washington who should join the Oldest Inhabitants. Perhaps the bona fide citizens would then learn how to be just toward one another.

Here is one of the only two documented meetings between the two organizations, the "Washington Bee's" Sage of the Potomac wrote not only of the 1917 joint meeting (probably just among the officers) but The Sage of the Potomac also took the opportunity to encourage "thousands of citizens" to join the Oldest Inhabitants... to "learn how to be just towards one another." This is further evidence of the social divide among Blacks at the time... well documented in such works as, "Aristocrats of Color: The Black Elite 1880-1920" by Willard B. Gatewood, Jr. This is merely an except from the "Sage of the Potomac's" column entitled "Public Men and Things."

INAUGURAL PROMENADE AND RECEPTION
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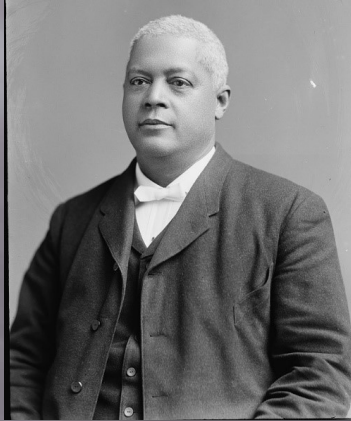


AT CONVENTION HALL, MARCH 6, 1917

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A March 3, 1917 announcement of a meeting of the Oldest Inhabitants (Colored) that appeared in the *Washington Bee*.



Eugene Brooks

A photo of Oldest Inhabitants (Colored) Second Vice-President and eventually second President Eugene Brooks. This photo is provided by AOI Terry Walz from his research on Brooks.

PUBLIC MEN AND THINGS

(By the Sage of the Potomac.)

I did not attend the lawyers' smoker. I thought none but lawyers would be present. But to my surprise many of the lawyers were absent. There is something lacking in the present organization. What is it? I regret to see so much division in the legal ranks. One of the members said to the Sage a few days ago that you would hear nothing more of the lawyers' association after this smoker. I judged by that the interest has died out.

I attended Howard theatre this week and found things as lively as usual with but one exception. I heard a fine damsel remark how she missed Vincent. Poor girl, her heart is not the only one that has been cracked since his departure for the camp.

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This article from the *Washington Bee* by the "Sage of the Potomac" recounts a joint meeting of the two organizations and encourages readers to "learn how to be just toward one another" a reference to the class schism in the Black community as documented in "Aristocrats of Color..." and other accounts of the era.

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The readers were challenged to, “learn how to be just toward one another.” Another indication of the schism that existed within the Black community.

By the way, the Sage of the Potomac of the "Washington Bee" was none other than William Calvin Chase, an African American lawyer-journalist. He played a pivotal role as the editor of the Washington Bee, a Washington, D.C.-based weekly newspaper founded in 1882.

Over the years, Nelson came across occasional references to the two organizations gathering believed to "jointly welcome returning Veterans of the Great War," but in his biography of "'Judge' Eugene Brooks: Supreme Court Messenger and Proponent of Black Awareness, 1881-1926" AOI member Terry Walz writes, "In 1917 [The Washington Bee] drew attention to the invitation that the AOI (Colored) had received to meet with the AOI (White) and that "pleasant words" had been exchanged. Brooks and his fellow members were shown a 20-foot section of the survey chain that had been used by Benjamin Banneker in the original surveying of the District. Another meeting between the two groups took place in 1919." These are the only documented meetings between the two organizations.

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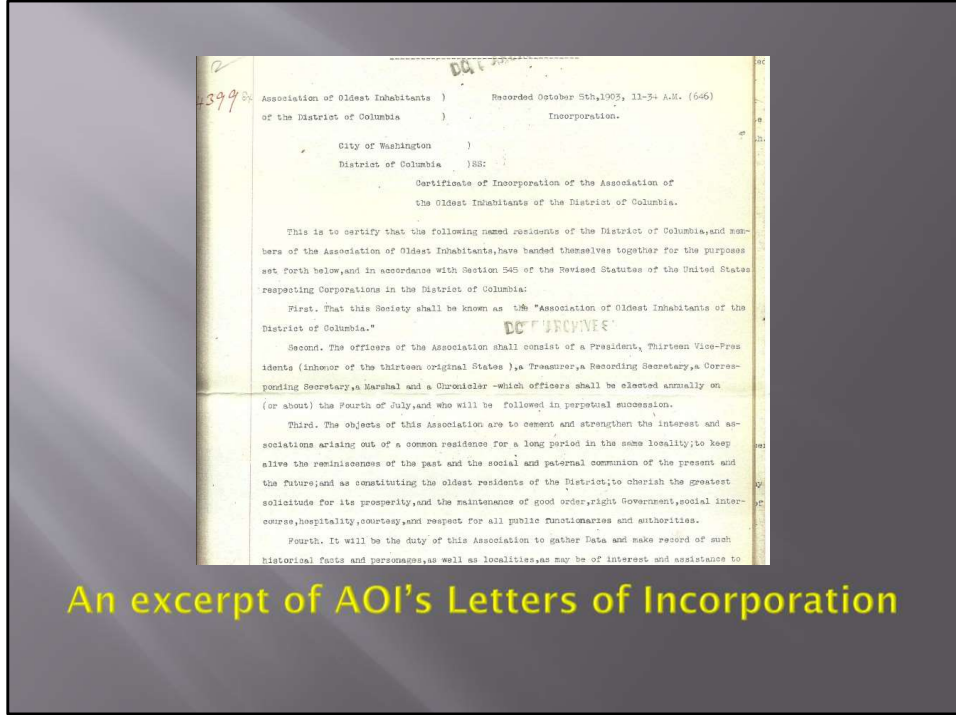
Guest at Patriotic Exercises.

Eugene Brooks, president of the Oldest Inhabitants' Association of the District, colored, was the guest yesterday of the organization of that name composed of the oldest white residents of the District, at its patriotic exercises held in the Union engine house, 19th and H streets northwest. He was welcomed by Vice President Bryan and made a brief address that was reminiscent of former days in the capital. It was the first visit that has been made to the association by the head of the colored organization.

From a Washington Star article of July 5, 1919 where Eugene Brooks is listed as President of the Oldest Inhabitants' Association. While it is listed as a "patriotic exercise," there is no mention of welcoming or saluting returning veterans of the Great War. This is the last known documented reference to any joint meeting of the two organizations.

In 2010 AOI President Bill Brown and AOI Historian Nelson Rimensnyder researched the records of both organizations at the D.C. Archives and convinced the D.C. Dept. of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs to reconcile their records to accurately reflect the incorporation history of both organizations...

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An excerpt of AOI's Letters of Incorporation

An excerpt of AOI's Letters of Incorporation... the wording for the Letters of Incorporation filed with the Recorder of Deeds (as was done in that era) for the AOI Colored were verbatim the wording for the original, White AOI with only the names of the officers appropriately changed.

Search Results

Organization Name	File Number	Registration Date	Organization Status	Organization Type	Jurisdiction
ASSOCIATION OF OLDEST INHABITANTS OF D.C.	004399	10/05/1903	Active	Non-Profit Corporation	Domestic
ASSOCIATION OF THE OLDEST INHABITANTS, (COLORED)	14024	1/15/1916	Revoked	Non-Profit Corporation	Domestic
ASSOCIATION OF OLDEST INHABITANTS OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA AND LITERARY AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE U.S. OF AMERICA	4077	6/05/1903	Revoked	Non-Profit Corporation	Domestic

DCRA's Corrected Entries

DCRA's Corrected Entries...showing AOI's incorporation in 1903 and the AOI (Colored)'s incorporation in 1916 like the original AOI, a number of years after first forming.

Serendipity

Then, in 2011 while researching materials for a forthcoming book, AOI member Dr. James Goode (now deceased) finds a connection to our past...

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Serendipity



James Goode

James Goode

William D. Nixon's Home on University Terrace



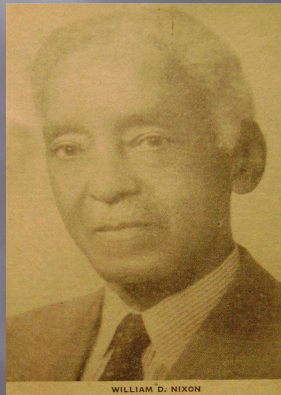
William D. Nixon's home on University Terrace in the Palisades which he designed that James was researching...

William Nixon's Granddaughter Delores Mounsey



Led to James contacting William Nixon's Granddaughter Delores Mounsey...

William D. Nixon, President
Association of the Oldest
Inhabitants (Colored), Inc.
1942-1962



Among the papers and scrapbooks that Delores shared with James were several labeled, "Oldest Inhabitants, Incorporated." It turned out that Delores' grandfather William D. Nixon was the President -- Association of the Oldest Inhabitants (Colored), Inc. from 1942-1962! Some records had finally been found!

Delores Mounsey, Bill Brown &
Nelson Rimensnyder with
William Nixon's Papers



Delores Mounsey, Bill Brown & Nelson Rimensnyder with William Nixon's Papers at her home in Silver Spring.


The Post's John Kelly documents the finding for posterity...

The Washington Post
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2012

POSTLOCAL

Talk to us. Talk to newsmakers. Talk to each other. Join the conversation at postlocal.com

A 'snapshot' of D.C.'s segregated past comes to light in a roundabout way




The answer to a question that has bedeviled some Washington history lovers for years finally came in an unexpected place: in front of a handsome art deco-style house in Northwest Washington.

The question was: What's the story behind the Association of Oldest Inhabitants (AOI) Inc.?

The group of leading black District residents — founded in 1914 — was linked to the Association of Oldest Inhabitants (AOI), a white group that is founded in 1865 and is probably the oldest civic organization in the city. As is the norm in those racially segregated days, the two groups were pariahs, but they occasionally came together for common goals. In 1939, they did a joint meeting to commemorate street residents — black and white — who served in World War I.

Two years ago, Nelson Pilgreen, a historian for AOI, made a plea in my hunt for information on AOI (see story). He knew the group had info and felt certain someone out there must have documents related to it. And then James M. Goode stood in front of 2015 University Terrace NW, in Washington's University Park neighborhood. James is a historian, the author of such must-have D.C. reference books as "Washington Sculpture" and "D.C. Addresses." He's working on a book about historic houses in Washington, and the University Terrace house will be in it. It's a gem: Light-colored brick is arranged in curved sections, and one round exterior wall is set in glass block.




This house on University Terrace NW was designed by William Nixon, who from 1942 to 1962 was president of the Association of Oldest Inhabitants (AOI) Inc.

The 1961 house was designed by a man named William D. Nixon, and when James spoke with the current owners, he learned that one of Nixon's granddaughters lives in Silver Spring. And so he went to meet that granddaughter, Delores Mounsey, who grew up in the University Terrace house. Nixon designed it for his daughter Ethel (Delores' mother), a psychiatrist at Johns Hopkins Hospital.

As James flipped through family scrapbooks looking for information on the house, he found something else: page after page relating to Nixon's involvement with AOI (Colored). Nixon was president of the organization from 1942 until shortly before his death at age 61 in 1962.

"It was really extraordinary," James



William Nixon taught art and put his skills to work in various media.

He put his artistic skills to use in all manner of media. He designed the packaging for a patent medicine called Harris' New Blood Tonic. (The logo showed a rabbit jumping through a hoop, an illustration, perhaps, of how rejuvenating the tonic was.) He painted landscapes and designed stage sets. He arranged tableaus, those ornate, living recreations of classical scenes so beloved in the 1920s. He hand-carved at least one piece of furniture. (Delores has the intricately detailed wooden chair.) And he designed three houses and a commercial building.


Of his staid University Terrace house, Delores remembered her grandfather saying, "Anybody can draw a straight line."

Nixon used his position with AOI to fight for the integration of the District's police and fire departments. His obituary in the Afro-American noted that he took a personal interest in the case of Carl and Anne Bradens, a white activist couple who were charged with sedition for helping a black family buy a home in a segregated Louisville neighborhood. Nixon helped raise funds for the Bradens' defense.


Bill Brown, president of today's AOI, is delighted that Nixon's scrapbooks will be available for research. "Our point always was, this stuff has got to be out there somewhere," he said. "Let's have it not end up in the dumpster of history."

There was never any danger of that, Delores said. "I kept my grandfather's scrapbooks because he put them together," she said, "and it was our family."

"What history is in your family's scrapbooks?"



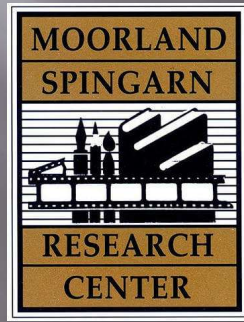
Granddaughter Delores Mounsey had preserved William Nixon's scrapbooks.



Scrapbook pages showing historical documents and photos.

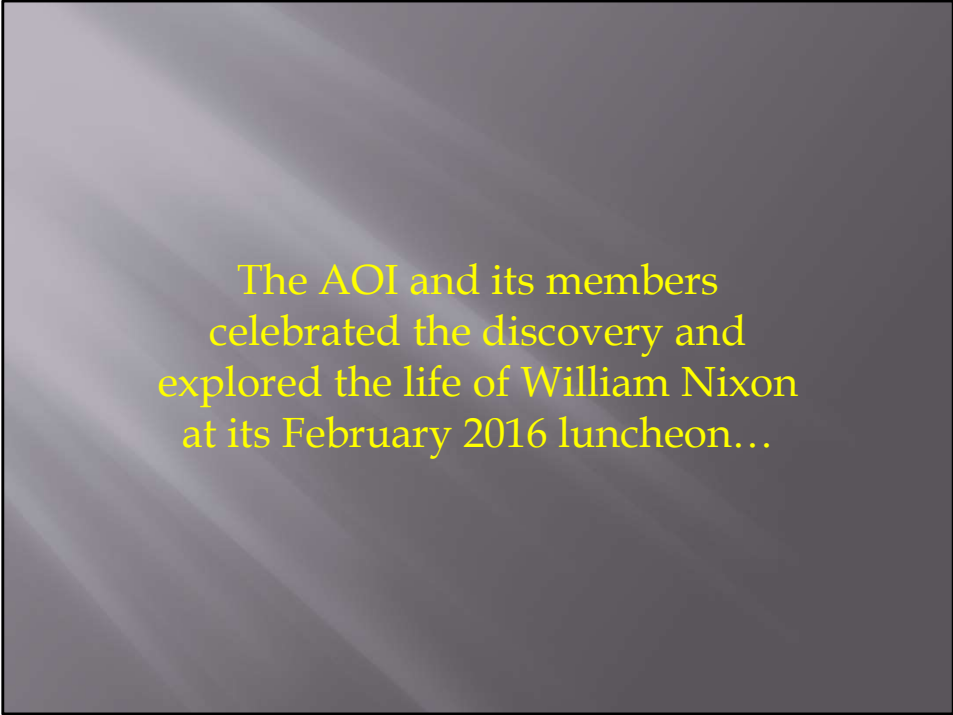
The Post's John Kelly documents the finding for posterity in this follow-up column.

**Mr. Nixon's papers are now preserved
at the Moorland-Spingarn Library at
Howard University.**



Then...

At the encouragement of the AOI, Mr. Nixon's papers are now preserved at the Moorland-Spingarn Library at Howard University. THEN...



The AOI and its members
celebrated the discovery and
explored the life of William Nixon
at its February 2016 luncheon...

The AOI and its members celebrated the discovery and explored the life of William Nixon at its February 19, 2016 luncheon...



February 19, 2016, Celebrating William D. Nixon

Delores Mounsey (deceased) and her sister Mera Mounsey Archenbaugh address recount their grandfather's life before 63 luncheon attendees at the Capitol Skyline Hotel, Feb. 19, 2016.

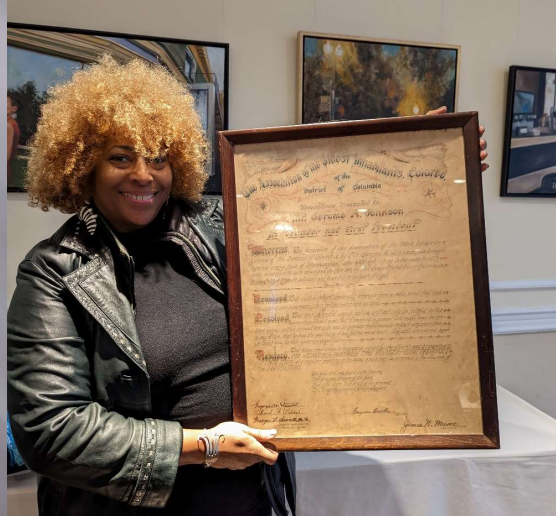


Bill Brown & Nelson Rimensnyder with William Nixon's granddaughters Mera Mounsey Archambeau & Delores Mounsey (deceased).

Then, in October 2022, new AOI member Sherri Sewall shared that she had come into possession a family artifact of a framed resolution from the AOI (Colored) Incorporated. The Resolution, honoring AOI Colored's founder and first President Jerome Johnson, was signed by Sherri's Great-grandfather Dr. George T. Sewall...

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Sherri Sewall and the framed resolution

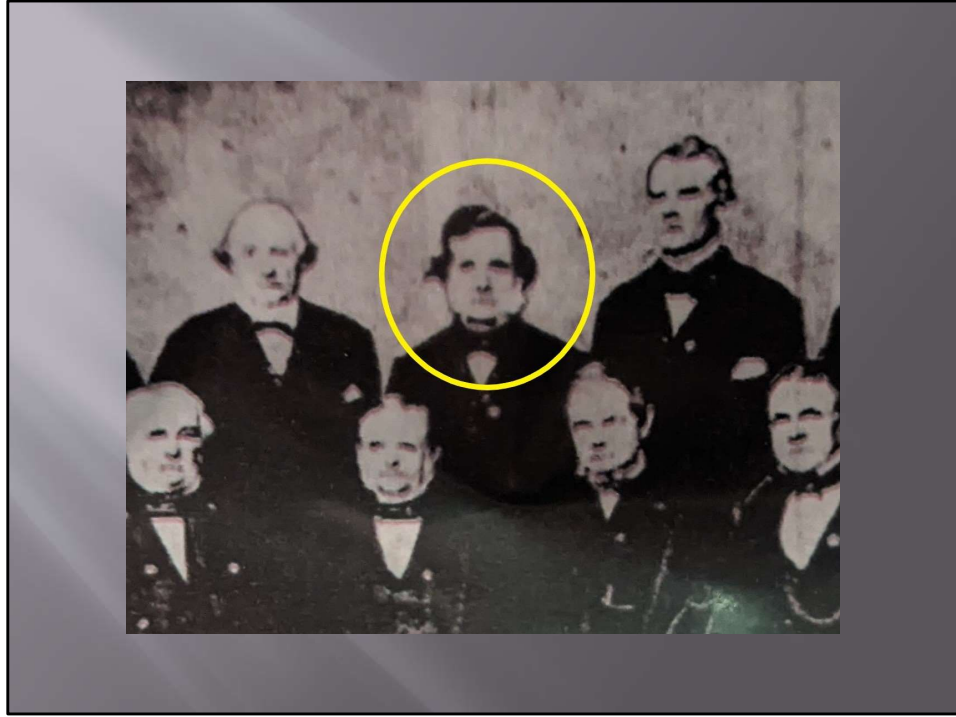
Sherri Sewall and the framed resolution with her Grandfather Dr. George T. Sewall as a signatory.

Then, during AOI's winter 2022 hiatus, Sherri had lunch with AOI members and sisters Patricia Tyson and Theresa Saxton of the Military Road Preservation Trust. She shared with them a photo she had uncovered in her aunt's family clippings of a 1931 *Evening Star* article featuring an 1868 photo of the AOI's leadership, including then President John Bond Blake along with 12 other AOI members...

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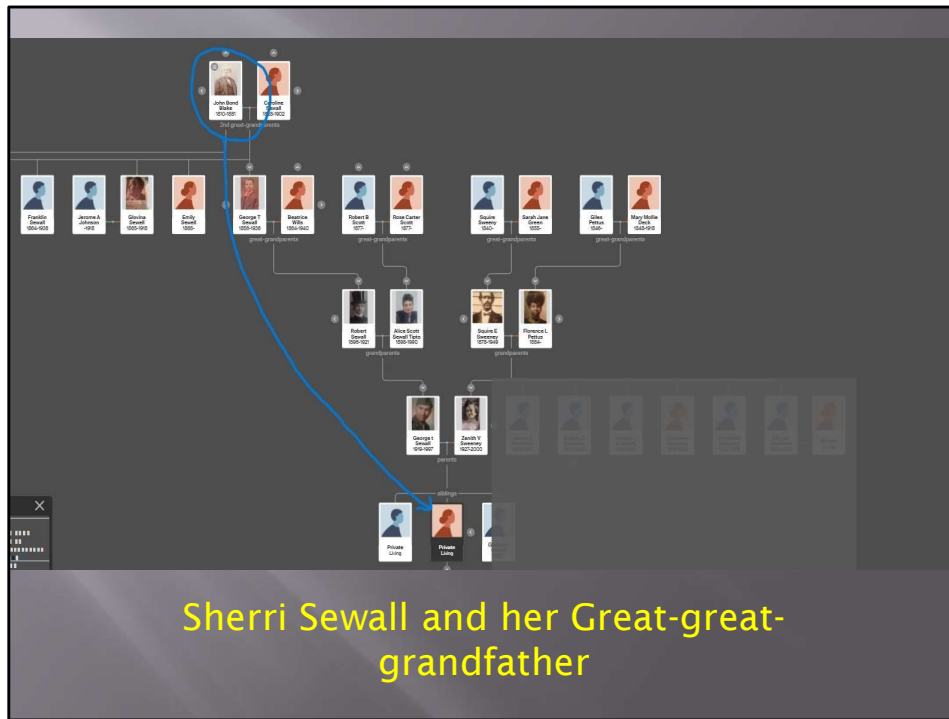
Dr. John Bond Blake is circled here in this Evening Star article of Dec. 6, 1931 from a photo of Nov. 6, 1868 when Dr. Blake was AOI's 2nd President.



AOI's 2nd President Dr. John Bond Blake from an 1868 photograph.

It turns out that John Bond Blake, AOI's second President, was in fact Sherri Sewall's Great-great-grandfather! Sherri's research revealed that he and Caroline Sewall had nine children. Great-great-granddaughter Sherri Sewall says that John Bond Blake cared for each of their children even providing for their college educations...

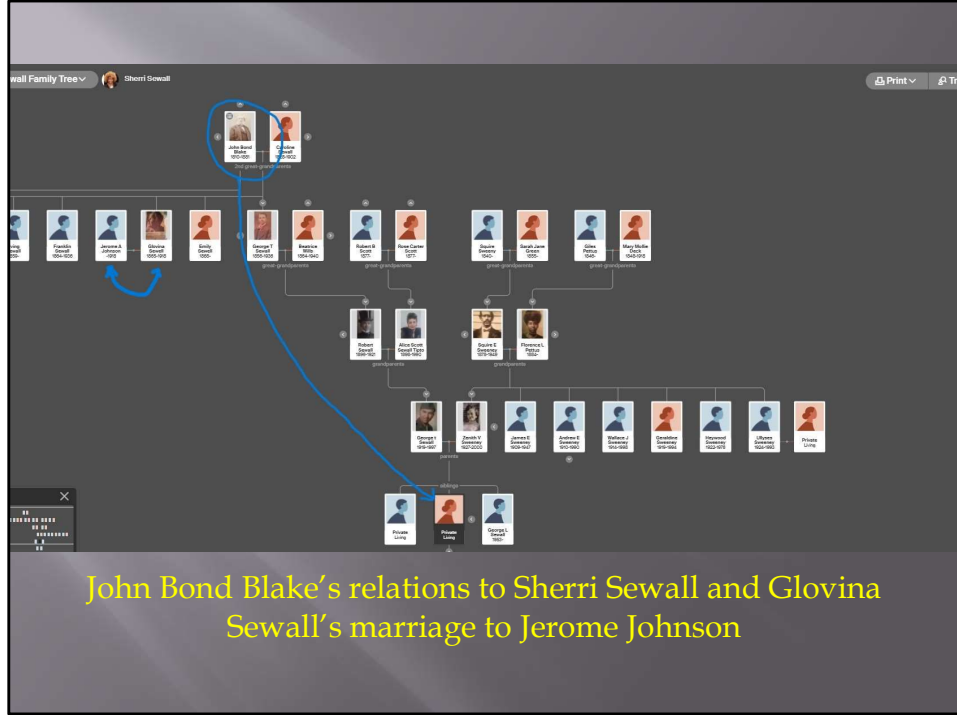
It turns out that John Bond Blake, AOI's second President, was in fact [appears to have been according to family history as there is no documented evidence of the connection] Sherri Sewall's Great-great-grandfather! Sherri's research revealed that he and Caroline Sewall had 7-9 children. Great-great-granddaughter Sherri Sewall reports that John Bond Blake cared for each of their children even providing for their college educations...



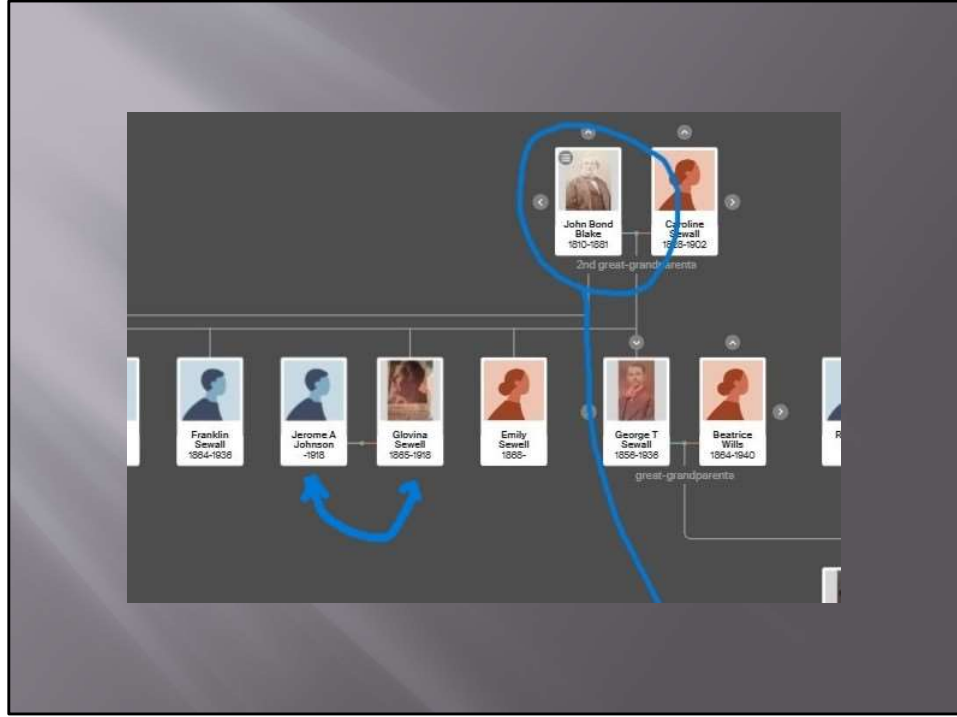
A family tree indicating the relationship between Sherri Sewall (bottom) and her Great-great-grandfather Dr. John Bond Blake...

And... to further cement the connections between the two organizations, John Bond Blake's and Caroline Sewall's daughter Glovina married Jerome J. Johnson the founder of the Association of Oldest Inhabitants (Colored)!

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A family tree indicating the relationship Dr. John Bond Blake and his daughter Glovinia who married Jerome Johnson.



Glovina Sewall's marriage to Jerome J. Johnson.

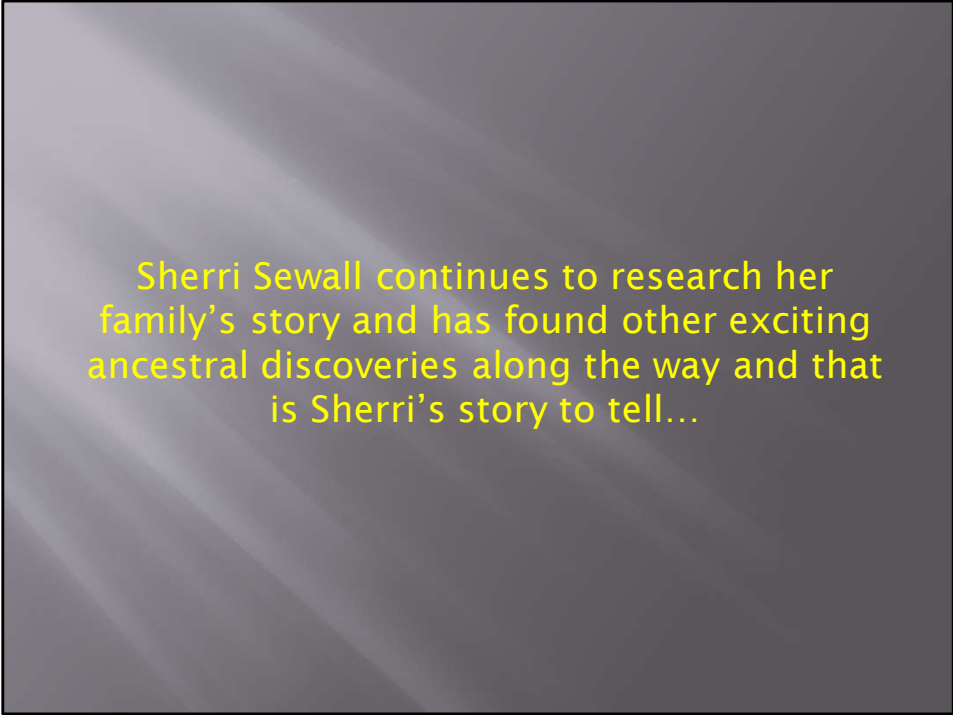
The discovery of these connections helps resolve our on-going question of why the Letters of Incorporation of the AOI of D.C. (Colored) – 1916 – were verbatim the Letters of Incorporation of the original AOI of D.C. – 1903. Sherri Sewall’s Great-grandfather Dr. George T. Sewall – one of those signatories on the 1915 Resolution – was instrumental in establishing the AOI of D.C. (Colored) based upon his father’s position as the second President of the original AOI in 1868, and...

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[Note schisms referenced in “Aristocrats of Color: The Black Elite 1880-1920” by Willard B. Gatewood regarding social striations within the Black community.]

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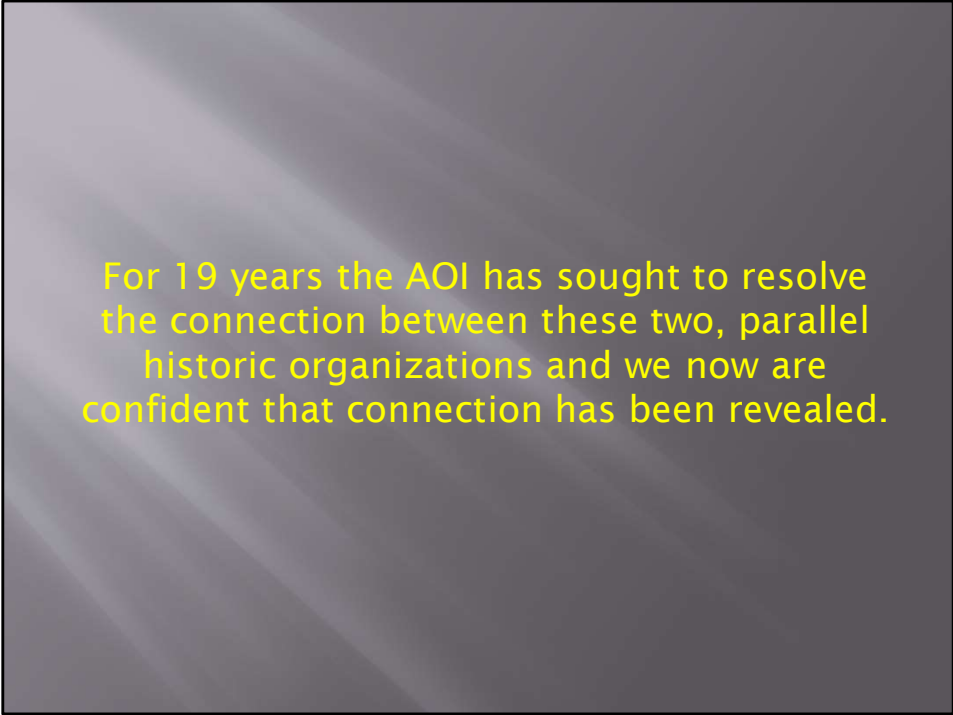
Sherri Sewall continues to research her family's story and has found other exciting ancestral discoveries along the way and that is Sherri's story to tell...

Sherri Sewall continues to research her family's story and other exciting ancestral discoveries were made along the way; however, that is Sherri's story to tell, not ours.

For 18 years the AOI sought to resolve the connection between these two, parallel historic organizations and we now are confident that we have uncovered that connection.

[Sherri's great grandfather George T. Sewall, MD helped to start AOI for colored residents along with Jerome A. Johnson who was married to George's sister, her Great Aunt Glovina Sewall Johnson.
Her great-great grandfather John Bond Blake was a past president of AOI and according to family lore, was the father of all 7 of her great-great grandmother Caroline Sewall's children.]

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For 19 years the AOI has sought to resolve the connection between these two, parallel historic organizations and we now are confident that connection has been revealed.

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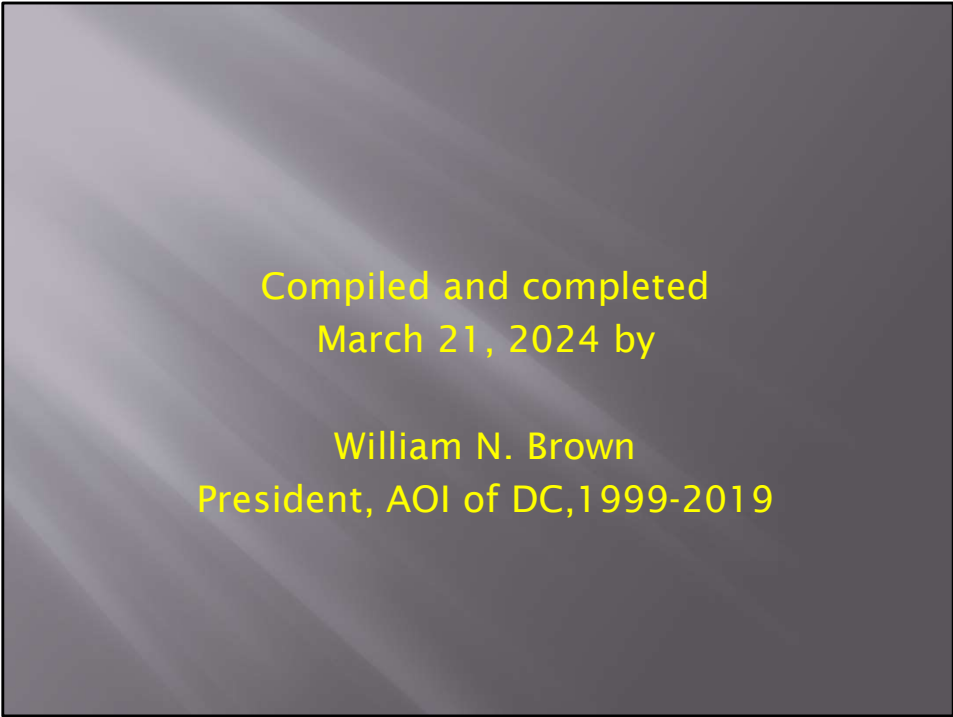
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Thank You & Acknowledgment

Dr. James Goode (Deceased)
John Kelly
Delores Mounsey (Deceased)
Nelson Rimensnyder
Sherri Sewall
Terry Walz
Anntoinette White-Richardson

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Compiled and completed
February 25, 2024 by

William N. Brown
President, AOI of DC, 1999-2019

EPILOGUE

A Ceremonial Resolution

to officially welcome and accept descendants of the
Association of the Oldest Inhabitants - Colored,
Incorporated into the Association of the Oldest
Inhabitants of D.C.

A Ceremonial Resolution
to officially welcome and accept descendants of the
Association of the Oldest Inhabitants - Colored, Incorporated into the
Association of the Oldest Inhabitants of D.C.

Whereas: The Association of the Oldest Inhabitants of the District of Columbia was founded on December 7, 1865 by 31 of the city's most prominent men as an organization dedicated to maintain and promote a lively interest in matters of local historic and cultural interest and to keep alive and preserve reminiscences of the past; and,
Whereas: The organization's membership, like those who established it, was limited to white men over the age of 60 years until on or about its centennial in 1965 when it welcomed members of all genders, race, and age; and
Whereas: The organization officially incorporated in 1903 and was recognized by the District of Columbia as an Incorporated Entity as entered into the books of the Recorder of Deeds, and whose records and filings today are accessible on various D.C. government licensing platforms; and,
Whereas: About 1905 a parallel African American organization was established which reflected those initial goals of the AOI of D.C. but was prevented from joining the original organization and was, itself, incorporated in 1916 as The Association of the Oldest Inhabitants (Colored), Incorporated; and,
Whereas: The Association of the Oldest Inhabitants (Colored), later simply "The Oldest Inhabitants, Inc.," became a more civically active organization than the original organization, advocating on behalf of the under-served of D.C., and promoting integration of the public safety agencies, schools, and government positions, while the original AOI focused on the more traditional issues of history and preservation; and,

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Whereas: There are accounts of the two organizations having met jointly in 1917 and 1919 for “pleasant exchanges of words”; however, there are no other documented instances of further interaction; and,

Whereas: While the both organizations appear to have flourished through the years, the records of the AOI (Colored) from 1942 to 1962 are the only ones ever recovered and are now housed at Howard University’s Moorland-Spingarn Library through the efforts of the original AOI’s members’ to locate and preserve those records; and,

Whereas: It was never understood why the Letters of Incorporation for the AOI (Colored) Incorporated were word-for-word those of the original organization until in 2022, when it was discovered that that the second President of the AOI of DC was an ancestor of one of the founders of the AOI (Colored), Incorporated, thus establishing the ancestral connection between the two organizations, and that today only the original organization remains active,

Now therefore be it Resolved that the Officers, Directors and Membership of the Association of the Oldest Inhabitants of the District of Columbia welcome and embrace all those who by virtue of their and their ancestors’ eligibility in the Association of the Oldest Inhabitants (Colored), Incorporated are officially welcomed into the surviving organization, The Association of the Oldest Inhabitants of the District of Columbia.

Approved by the Membership on

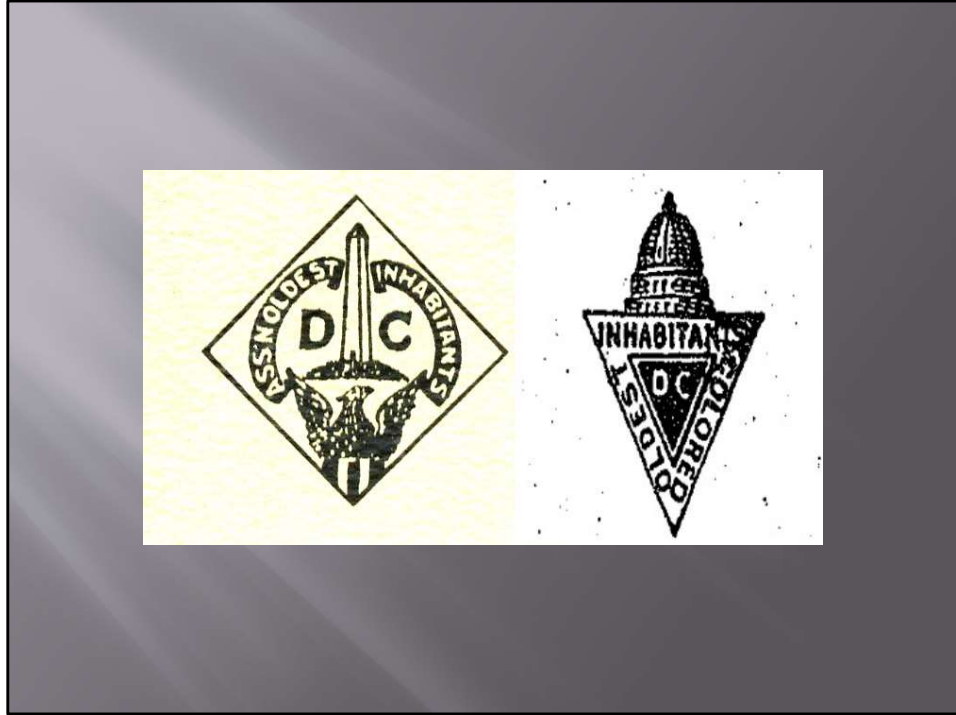
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[And we are seeking the membership’s vote of approval on the Resolution.



Old AOI logo and old Oldest Inhabitants Colored logo.

Revelations Continue!

On April 21, 2024 at a “Collecting DC History” event at the Heurich House Museum co-sponsored by the AOI of DC an attendee, Marion Woodford Simmons, shared that her Grandfather Sylvester Roy Woodfork, Sr. was Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Oldest Inhabitants, Incorporated (Colored) in... 1968!

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Mrs. Simmons provided a photo of her Grandfather along with Oldest Inhabitants, Incorporated (Colored) out-going President Paul V. Brown and Arthur Brooks. The photo was taken at the Masonic Temple at 10th & U Streets in 1968.

These are the latest references we now have to the organization.

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Mrs. Simmons states that the records of her Grandfather's regarding the Oldest Inhabitants, Inc. (Colored) are accessioned in the Peoples Archives of the D.C. Public Library's Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Library under:

Papers of Sylvester Roy Woodfork, Sr.
The Oldest Inhabitants Incorporated
(Colored)

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AOI: DC's Living Archive

AOI's Sesquicentennial Challenge Coin

