

Report on the Savannah Colloquy

New York Daily Tribune

February 13, 1865

This clipping from a Northern newspaper gives an account of a meeting between black religious leaders and Union military authorities in Savannah Georgia about one month before. Major General William Tecumseh Sherman called the meeting, and the Secretary of War was also present.

On the evening of Thursday, the 12th day of January, 1865, the following persons of African descent met by appointment to hold an interview with Edwin M. Stanton, Secretary of War, and Major-Gen. Sherman, to have a conference upon matters relating to the freedmen of the State of Georgia, to-wit:

One: William J. Campbell, aged 51 years, born in Savannah, slave until 1849, and then liberated by will of his mistress, Mrs. May Maxwell. For ten years pastor of the 1st Baptist Church of Savannah, numbering about 1,800 members. Average congregation, 1,900. The church property belonging to the congregation. Trustees white. Worth \$18,000.

Two: John Cox, aged fifty-eight years, born in Savannah; slave until 1849, when he bought his freedom for \$1,100. Pastor of the 2d African Baptist Church. In the ministry fifteen years. Congregation 1,222 persons. Church property worth \$10,000, belonging to the congregation.

Three: Ulysses L. Houston, aged forty-one years, born in Grams-ville, S.C.; slave until the Union army entered Savannah. Owned by Moses Henderson, Savannah, and pastor of Third African Baptist Church. Congregation numbering 400. Church property worth \$5,000; belongs to congregation. In the ministry about eight years.

Four: William Bentley, aged 72 years, born in Savannah, slave until 25 years of age, when his master, John Waters, emancipated him by will. Pastor of Andrew's Chapel, Methodist Episcopal Church—only one of that denomination in Savannah; congregation numbering 360 members; church property worth about \$20,000, and is owned by the congregation; been in the ministry about twenty years; a member of Georgia Conference.

Five: Charles Bradwell, aged 40 years, born in Liberty County, Ga.; slave until 1851; emancipated by will of his master, J. L. Bradwell. Local preacher in charge of the Methodist Episcopal congregation (Andrew's Chapel) in the absence of the minister; in the ministry 10 years.

Six: William Gaines, aged 41 years; born in Wills Co., Ga. Slave until the Union forces freed me. Owned by Robert Toombs, formerly

United States Senator, and his brother, Gabriel Toombs, local preacher
 45 of the M.E. Church (Andrew's Chapel.) In the ministry 16 years.

Seven: James Hill, aged 52 years; born in Bryan Co., Ga. Slave up
 to the time the Union army came in. Owned by H. F. Willings, of
 Savannah. In the ministry 16 years.

Eight: Glasgow Taylor, aged 72 years, born in Wilkes County, Ga.
 50 Slave until the Union army came; owned by A. P. Wetter. Is a local
 preacher of the M.E. Church (Andrew's Chapel.) In the ministry 35
 years.

Nine: Garrison Frazier, aged 67 years, born in Granville County,
 N.C. Slave until eight years ago, when he bought himself and wife,
 55 paying \$1,000 in gold and silver. Is an ordained minister in the Bap-
 tist Church, but, his health failing, has now charge of no congrega-
 tion. Has been in the ministry 35 years.

Ten: James Mills, aged 56 years, born in Savannah; free-born, and
 is a licensed preacher of the first Baptist Church. Has been eight
 60 years in the ministry.

Eleven: Abraham Burke, aged 48 years, born in Bryan County, Ga.
 Slave until 20 years ago, when he bought himself for \$800. Has been
 in the ministry about 10 years.

Twelve: Arthur Wardell, aged 44 years, born in Liberty County,
 65 Ga. Slave until freed by the Union army. Owned by A. A. Solomons,
 Savannah, and is a licensed minister in the Baptist Church. Has been
 in the ministry 6 years.

Thirteen: Alexander Harris, aged 47 years, born in Savannah; free
 born. Licensed minister of Third African Baptist Church. Licensed
 70 about one month ago.

Fourteen: Andrew Neal, aged 61 years, born in Savannah, slave
 until the Union army liberated him. Owned by Mr. Wm. Gibbons,
 and has been deacon in the Third Baptist Church for 10 years.

Fifteen: Jas. Porter, aged 39 years, born in Charleston, South
 75 Carolina; free-born, his mother having purchased her freedom.
 Is lay-reader and president of the board of wardens and vestry of
 St. Stephen's Protestant Episcopal Colored Church in Savannah. Has
 been in communion 9 years. The congregation numbers about 200
 persons. The church property is worth about \$10,000, and is owned
 80 by the congregation.

Sixteen: Adolphus Delmotte, aged 28 years, born in Savannah;
 free born. Is a licensed minister of the Missionary Baptist Church of
 Milledgeville. Congregation numbering about 300 or 400 persons.
 Has been in the ministry about two years.

Seventeen: Jacob Godfrey, aged 57 years, born in Marion, S.C.
 85 Slave until the Union army freed me; owned by James E. Godfrey—
 Methodist preacher now in the Rebel army. Is a class-leader and

steward of Andrew's Chapel since 1836.

Eighteen: John Johnson, aged 51 years, born in Bryan County, Georgia. Slave up to the time the Union army came here; owned by W. W. Lincoln of Savannah. Is class-leader and treasurer of Andrew's Chapel for sixteen years.

Nineteen: Robt. N. Taylor, aged 51 years, born in Wilkes Co., Ga. Slave to the time the Union army came. Was owned by Augustus P. Welter, Savannah, and is class-leader in Andrew's Chapel for nine years.

Twenty: Jas. Lynch, aged 26 years, born in Baltimore, Md.; free-born. Is presiding elder of the M.E. Church and missionary to the department of the South. Has been seven years in the ministry and two years in the South.

Garrison Frazier being chosen by the persons present to express their common sentiments upon the matters of inquiry, makes answers to inquiries as follows:

First: State what your understanding is in regard to the acts of Congress and President Lincoln's [*Emancipation*] proclamation, touching the condition of the colored people in the Rebel States.

Answer—So far as I understand President Lincoln's proclamation to the Rebellious States, it is, that if they would lay down their arms and submit to the laws of the United States before the first of January, 1863, all should be well; but if they did not, then all the slaves in the Rebel States should be free henceforth and forever. That is what I understood.

Second—State what you understand by Slavery and the freedom that was to be given by the President's proclamation.

Answer—Slavery is, receiving by *irresistible power* the work of another man, and not by his *consent*. The freedom, as I understand it, promised by the proclamation, is taking us from under the yoke of bondage, and placing us where we could reap the fruit of our own labor, take care of ourselves and assist the Government in maintaining our freedom.

Third: State in what manner you think you can take care of yourselves, and how can you best assist the Government in maintaining your freedom.

Answer: The way we can best take care of ourselves is to have land, and turn it and till it by our own labor—that is, by the labor of the women and children and old men; and we can soon maintain ourselves and have something to spare. And to assist the Government, the young men should enlist in the service of the Government, and serve in such manner as they may be wanted. (The Rebels told us that they piled them up and made batteries of them, and sold them to Cuba; but we don't believe that.) We want to be placed on land

until we are able to buy it and make it our own.

Fourth: State in what manner you would rather live—whether scattered among the whites or in colonies by yourselves.

135 *Answer:* I would prefer to live by ourselves, for there is a prejudice against us in the South that will take years to get over; but I do not know that I can answer for my brethren. [Mr. Lynch says he thinks they should not be separated, but live together. All the other persons present, being questioned one by one, answer that they agree with
140 Brother Frazier.]*

Fifth: Do you think that there is intelligence enough among the slaves of the South to maintain themselves under the Government of the United States and the equal protection of its laws, and maintain good and peaceable relations among yourselves and with your
145 neighbors?

Answer—I think there is sufficient intelligence among us to do so.
(...)

Seventh: State whether the sentiments you now express are those only of the colored people in the city; or do they extend to the colored population through the country? and what are your means of
150 knowing the sentiments of those living in the country?

Answer: I think the sentiments are the same among the colored people of the State. My opinion is formed by personal communication in the course of my ministry, and also from the thousands that
155 followed the Union army, leaving their homes and undergoing suffering. I did not think there would be so many; the number surpassed my expectation.

* Note the different biography of Mr. Lynch compared to the other black delegates to the meeting.