



# Storer College: An American Phoenix

**Gallery 2**

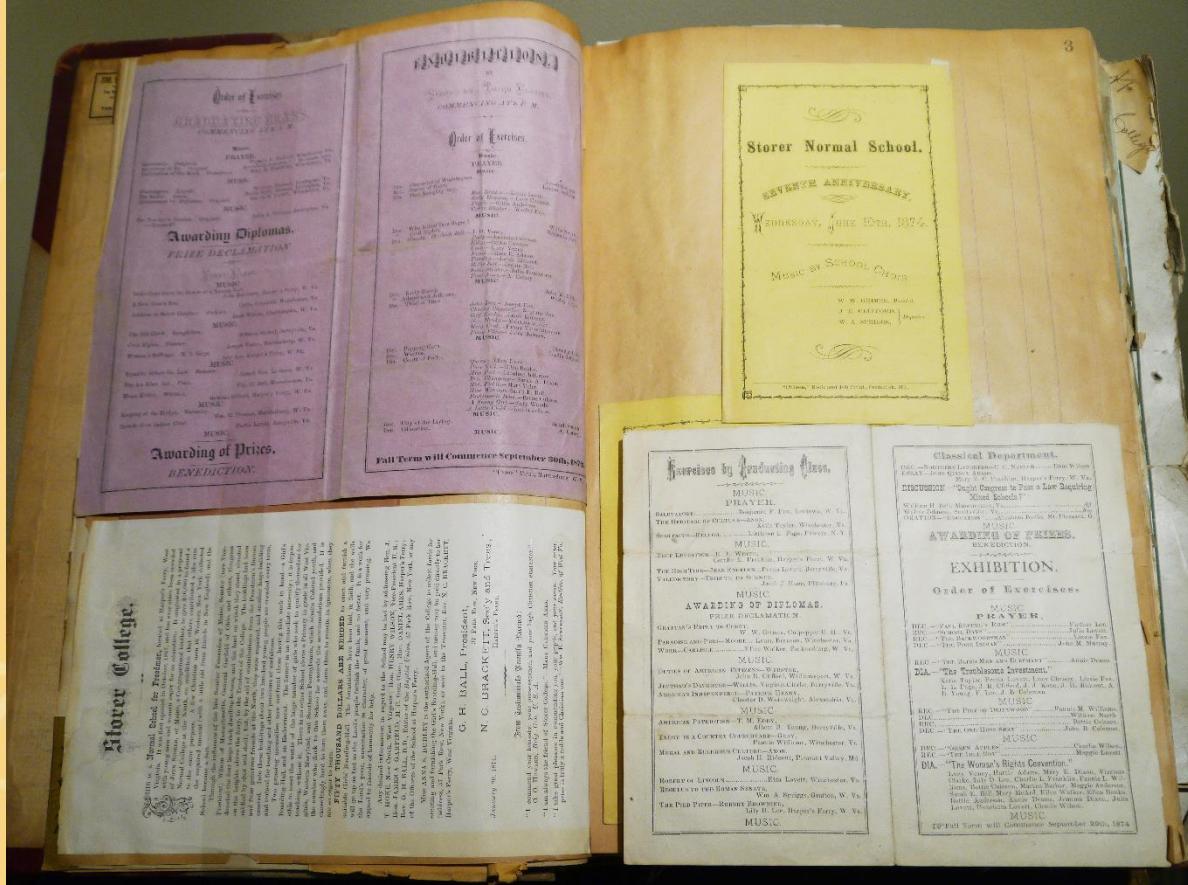
*West Virginia Day Exhibit, 2015*

*West Virginia & Regional History Center*

*WVU Libraries*

# Storer College Scrapbook, 1870-1915

This bountiful scrapbook contains a wealth of ephemera regarding current events at Storer from about 1870 to 1915. The scrapbook reveals that a vibrant program of concerts, lectures, exhibitions and other activities flourished at the institution during this period.



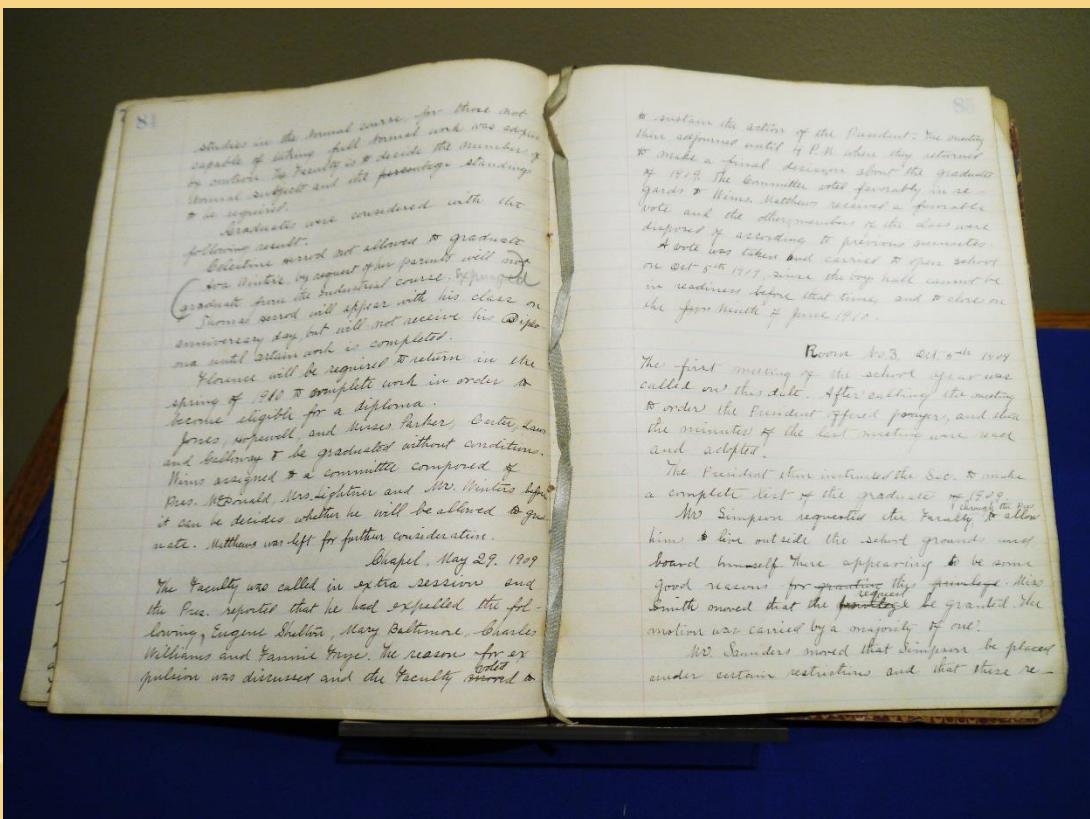
# Storer College Singers, 1873



This early Storer musical ensemble went on tour in 1873 and presented concerts in forty cities. From left to right in the upper row standing are Robert Trent, Portia Lovett, Mary Ella Dixon, and Charlie Hale. Sitting from left to right are Walter Johnson, Alberta Redmond, Hamilton Keys, and Mertia Lovett.

# Storer Faculty Record Book, 1892 -1909

Members of the faculty and administration met throughout the year to deal with the college's academic and behavior issues. During an extra session in May 1909, decisions were made by vote regarding the expulsion of three students and also in regard to which students were to be graduated in June.



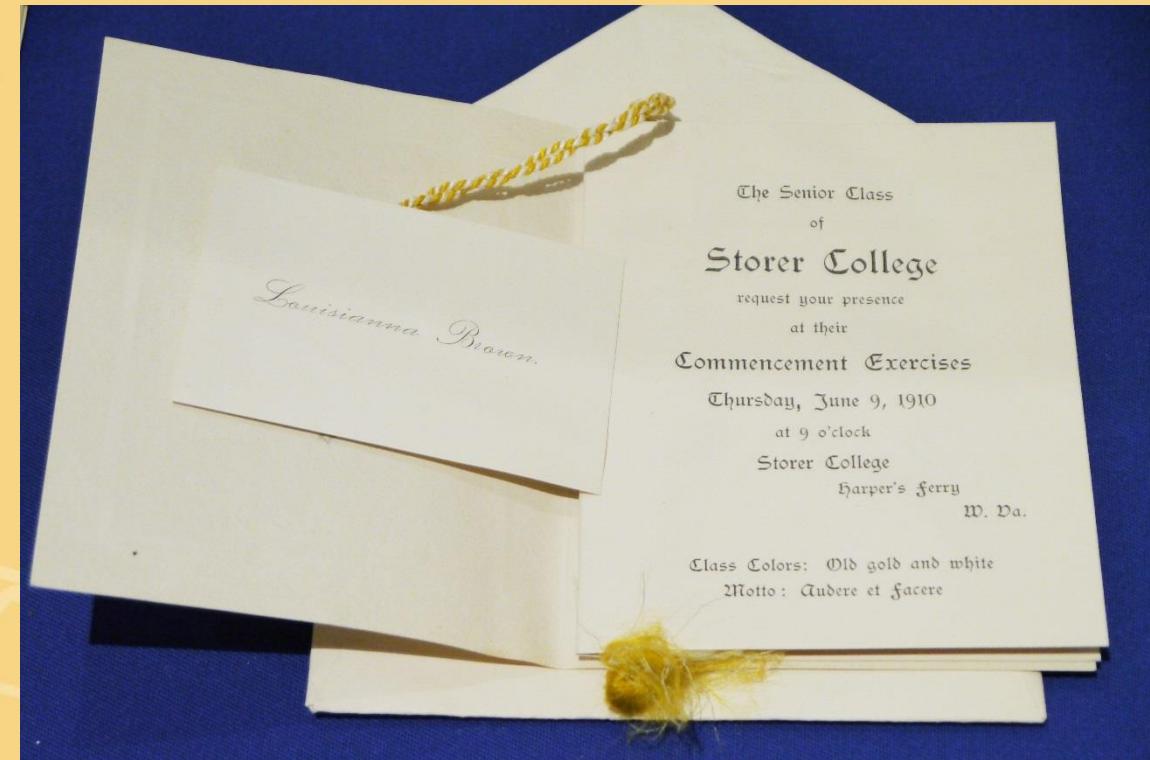
# Storer Catalogues, 1882–1936



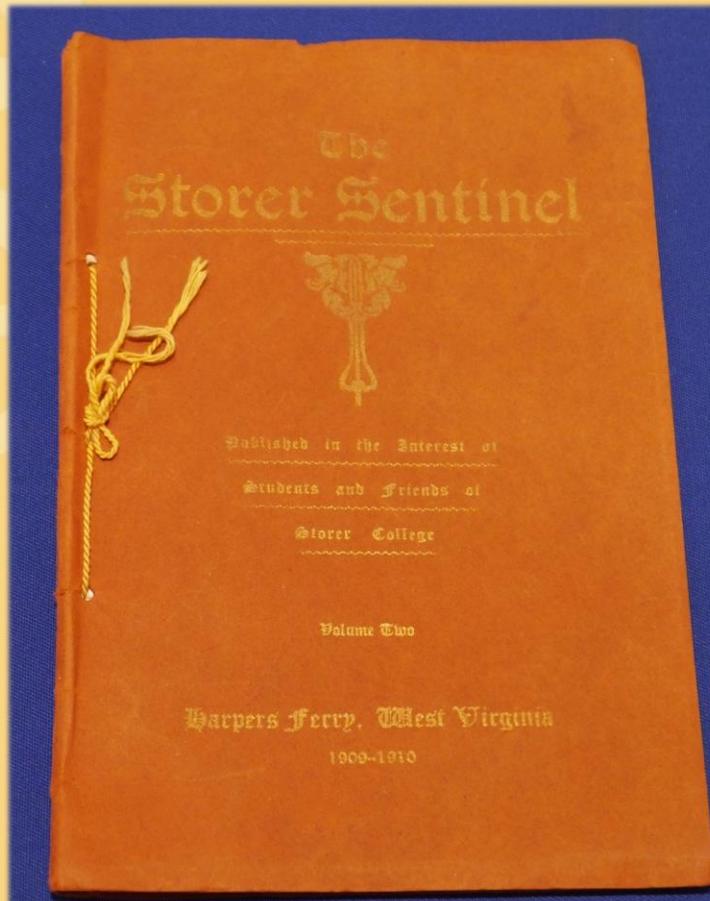
These booklets contained basic information that all potential and enrolled students needed to know in order to thrive as part of the Storer community, including academic calendars, course descriptions, course requirements, a physical description of the campus, and lists of alumni.

# Storer College Commencement Announcements for the Classes of 1902, 1907, and 1910

Eloquently designed announcements like these were created for each graduating class member

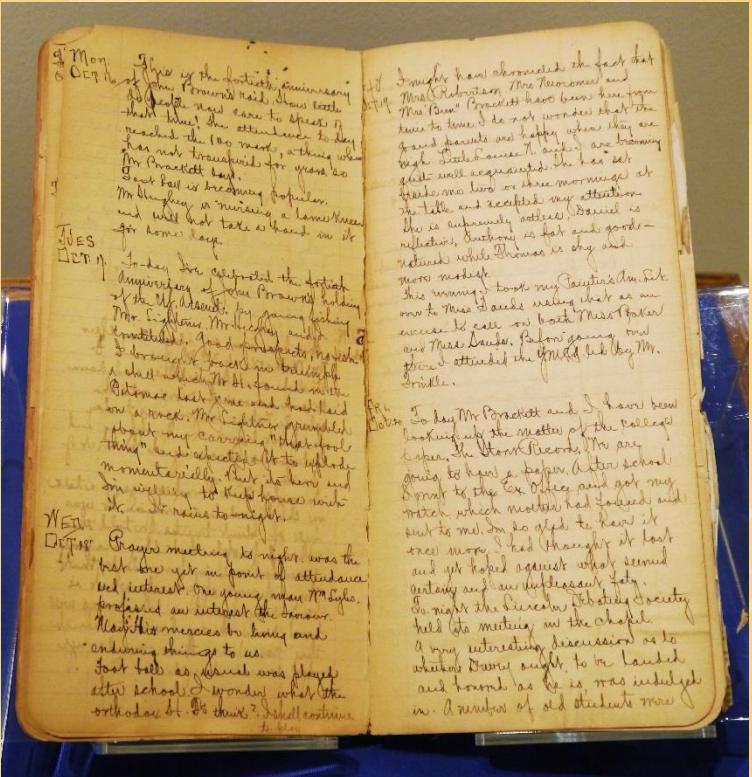


# *The Storer Sentinel* 1909-1910 Yearbook, Vol. III



# “Did my feet really press the soil of Harpers Ferry, the focal point of the early Civil War?”

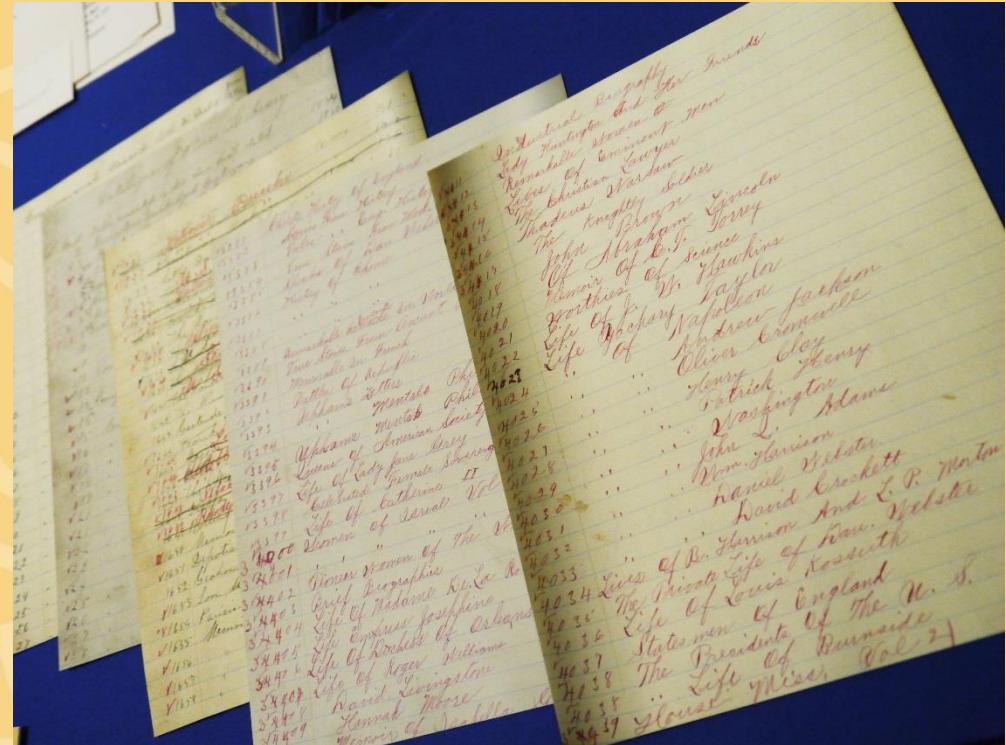
## The Henry McDonald Diary



Henry McDonald arrived in Harpers Ferry in September 1899 and kept a journal chronicling his first year as Storer's president. Awed by the historic atmosphere of the town and its natural beauty, McDonald refused to allow "the ills to overshadow the place". One of the "ills" to which he referred was that Harpers Ferry was not a "temperance town." Storer's founders abhorred liquor. McDonald served as Storer's president till 1944.

# Holdings of the Roger Williams Library of Storer College

Storer College had an outstanding library for an institution of its size. These pages are reproduced from an inventory of books done ca. 1880 which includes more than 5,000 entries. In comparison, the West Virginia University Library held 6,000 volumes in 1889. It is quite likely that WVU, which started with only 247 books, owned fewer books than Storer when this inventory was made.



# Storer College Class of 1895



# *The Morning Star, 1895*

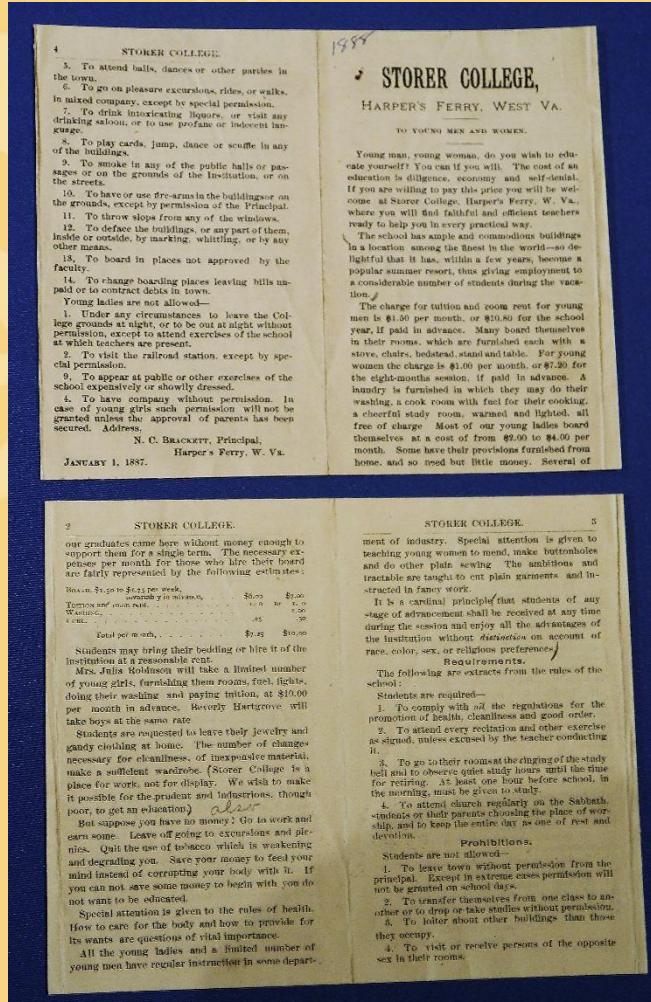
A weekly newspaper owned and published by the Freewill Baptists in New England, this organ passionately campaigned against slavery beginning with its 1<sup>st</sup> issue in 1826. After the Civil War, the paper focused on the betterment and education of African Americans. Displayed here is a facsimile of an issue featuring Storer College.



# **“The cost of an education is diligence, economy and self-denial”**

## **The Storer Code of Conduct**

Due to the high moral standards of Storer's founders, Storer's code of ethics was extremely rigorous. Both students and faculty were expected exhibit a high level of moral and pious character on and off campus. Strict requirements and rules were applied to every aspect of a student's life while attending Storer. To deviate from the rules meant disciplinary actions and possible expulsion. Student conduct requirements included the following:



*Compliance with all regulations for the promotion of health, cleanliness and good order*

*Dorm rooms were to be open at all times for inspection.*

*Lights out at 10:00PM.*

*Attendance at Sunday school and church, and Wednesday night prayer meeting. (All were responsible for possessing a Bible)*

*Prohibition included:*

*No dancing, drinking alcohol, playing cards, use of tobacco, use of profane language, loitering about the buildings after class, and no leaving town without permission.*

*No pleasure excursions, rides, or walks in mixed company without special permission.*

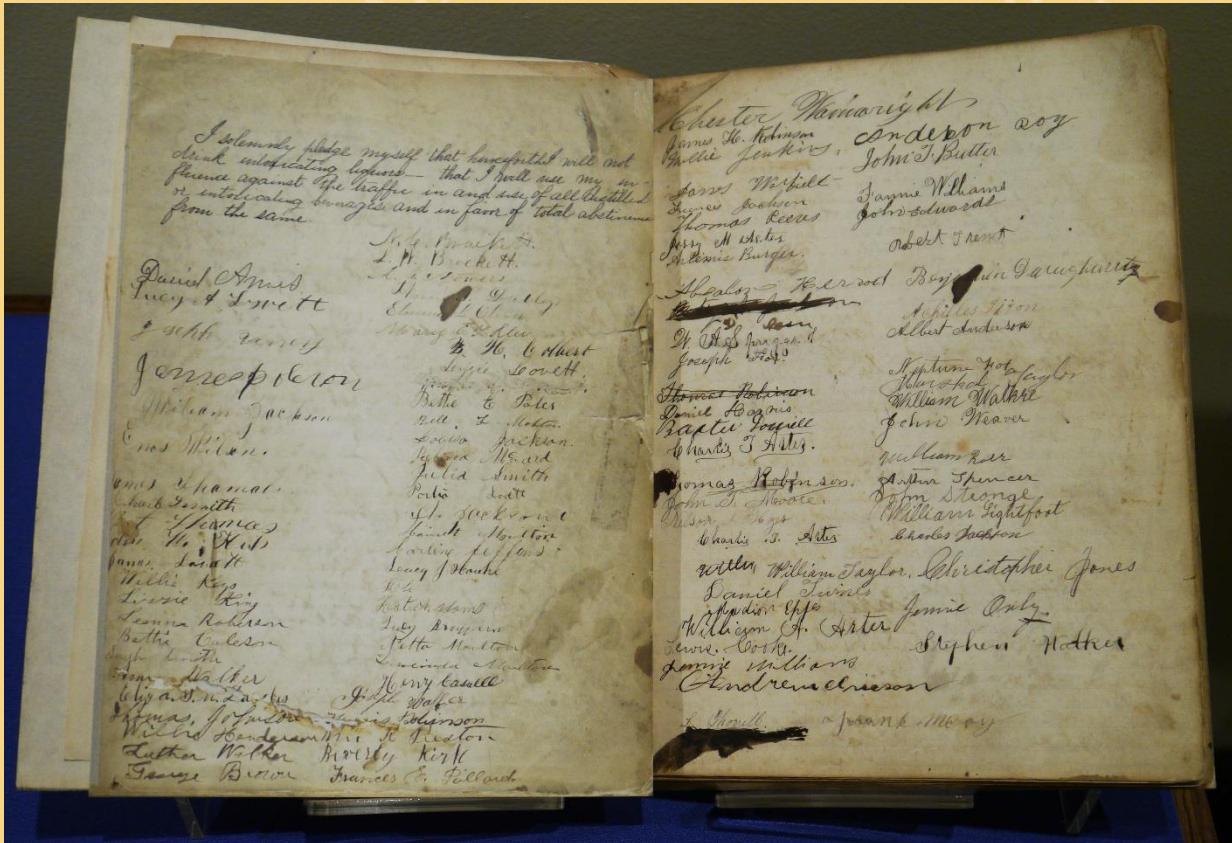
*Separate prohibitions for young ladies included:*

*Not allowed to be out of their rooms at night or to visit the railroad station without special permission.*

*Leave at home all jewelry and "gaudy clothes, Storer is a place for work, not display".*

*Excessive? Possibly, but consider this: in the 90 year history of the school, not one couch was burned (intentionally, that is)!*

# “I solemnly pledge . . . I will not drink”

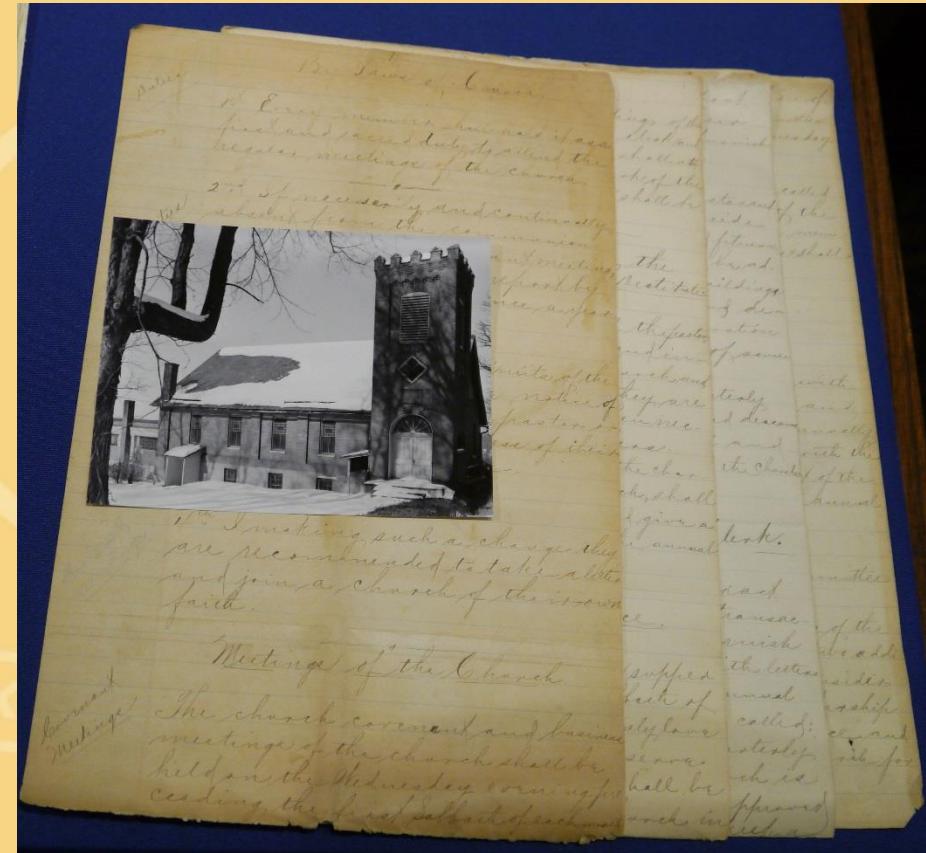


Abstaining from drinking intoxicating liquor was a fundamental requirement for anyone associated with most Christian institutions such as Storer. This volume records the pledge taken by members of the Storer faculty, administration and the student body. Each added their signature to this ledger binding their promise.

# Curtis Freewill Baptist Church and Bylaws

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Located adjacent to the Storer College campus, the Curtis Freewill Baptist Church served as a place of worship for both the Storer community and local residents. The funds to complete the building of the church were donated in 1895 by the family of Silas Curtis who played a prominent role in the founding of the college.



# Niagara Movement Leaders



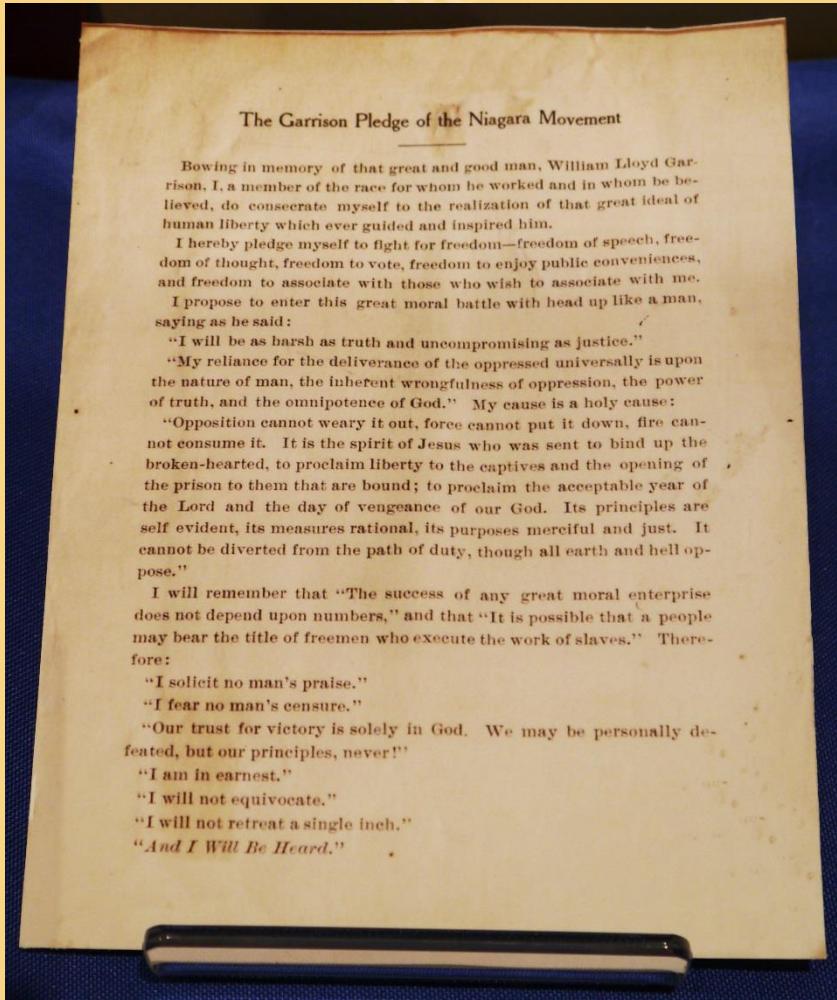
W.E.B. DuBois (seated) and  
(left to right) J.R. Clifford,  
I.M. Hershaw, and F.H.M.  
Murray at Harpers Ferry,  
1906

# Women at the 1906 Niagara Movement Conference at Harpers Ferry

Mrs. Gertrude Wright Morgan (seated) and (left to right) Mrs. O.M. Walker, Mrs. H.F.M. Murray, and Mrs. Mollie Lewis Kelan, Mrs. Ida D. Bailey, Miss Sadie Shorter, and Mrs. Charlotte Hershaw

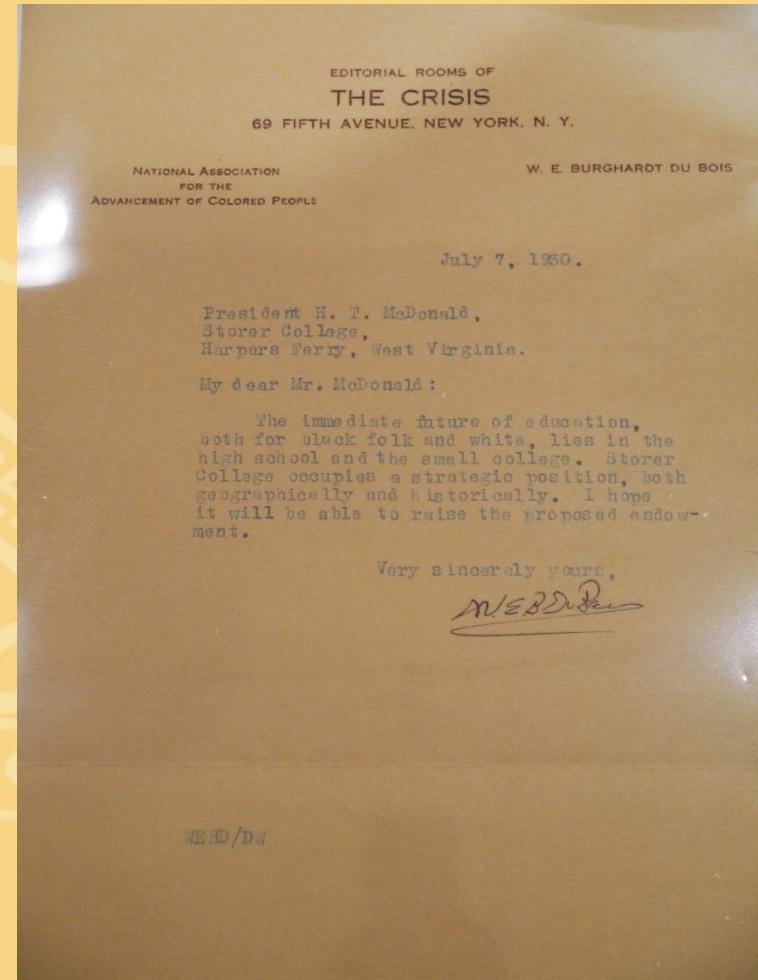


# Niagara Movement at Storer College



On August 15-18, 1906, Storer College hosted the first African-American meeting of the Niagara Movement, the predecessor to the modern National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The group met for the first time the year before on the Canadian side of the border, and called for an end to segregation and disenfranchisement and resisted Booker T. Washington's philosophy of conciliation and assimilation.

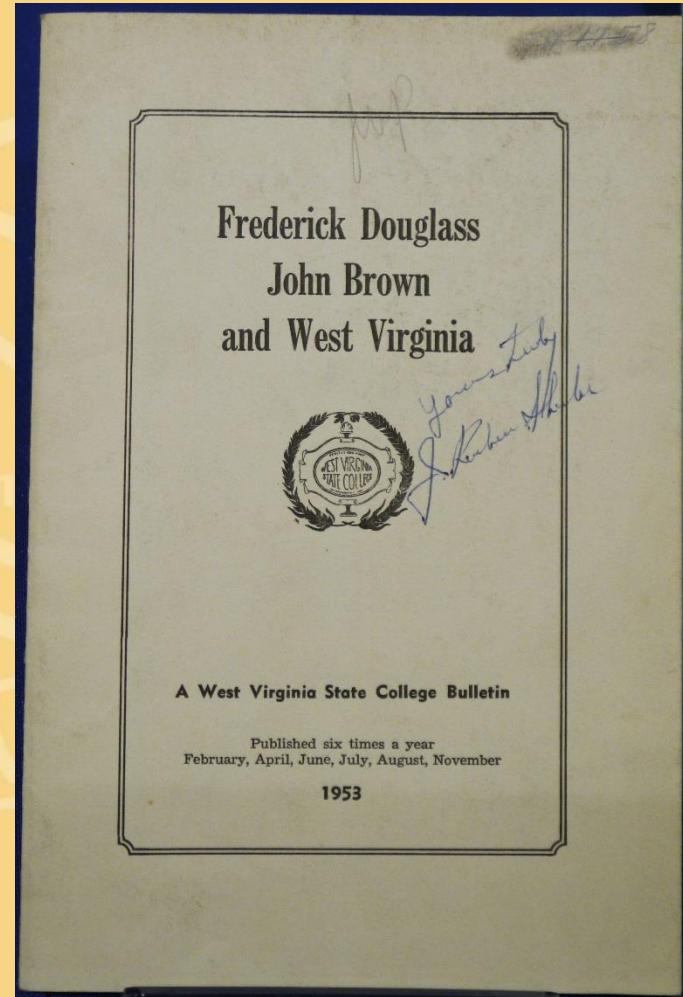
West Virginia's first African-American lawyer and Storer College graduate, J.R. Clifford, organized the local arrangements at Storer. At the national meeting, DuBois launched a call for the unimpeded right to vote; the end of discrimination in public accommodations; the right to interact with all people without interference; the federal government to take action against illiteracy; and justice. In 1905, in honor of the centenary of abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison's birth, W.E.B. DuBois penned the Garrison Pledge of the Niagara Movement that was dedicated to "the realization of that great ideal of human liberty."



# Frederick Douglass, John Brown, and West Virginia

On May 30, 1881, Frederick Douglass delivered an address on John Brown at Storer College. He had written the speech and presented it in several northern cities before donating the text to Storer to be published. Proceeds from the sale of the publication would go to an endowment to support a

John Brown professorship at the school. John Reuben Sheeler, the first known African American to receive a Ph.D. from WVU in history in 1954, wrote the introduction to this reprinting the address and signed the cover.



# Niagara Movement and John Brown's Fort

The Engine House in which Brown and his men had taken refuge became known as John Brown's Fort. In 1891, the building was sold and moved to Chicago as an attraction for visitors to the World's Columbian Exhibition. The building returned to Harpers Ferry in 1894 and was reassembled on a local farm. Several years later, a fundraising drive was begun by Storer College to purchase the building and move it to the college's hilltop campus.

In August 1906, Storer College hosted the second meeting of the Niagara Movement which led to the founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) three years later. During the meeting, the attendees made a special pilgrimage to John Brown's Fort. W.E.B. DuBois and others removed their shoes and socks upon entering the Fort, which they considered hallowed ground.



# The Journeys of John Brown's Fort



The United States Armory Engine House, later dubbed “John Brown’s Fort,” has a wanderlust type history. The sole armory building to remain unscathed during the Civil War, the edifice was likely spared because it was used as a stable by both Union and Confederate troops.

In 1892, the building was dismantled and shipped to Chicago, where it was exhibited in conjunction with the 1893 World’s Fair. Receiving only a handful of visitors, the exhibit closed after just eight days.

The building was subsequently dismantled and destined for the junk pile until Kate Field, a Washington, DC journalist, interceded, raising funds to move the fort back to Harpers Ferry. The edifice sat in a field near Storer College until Trustees raised money to install it on the Storer campus in 1909.

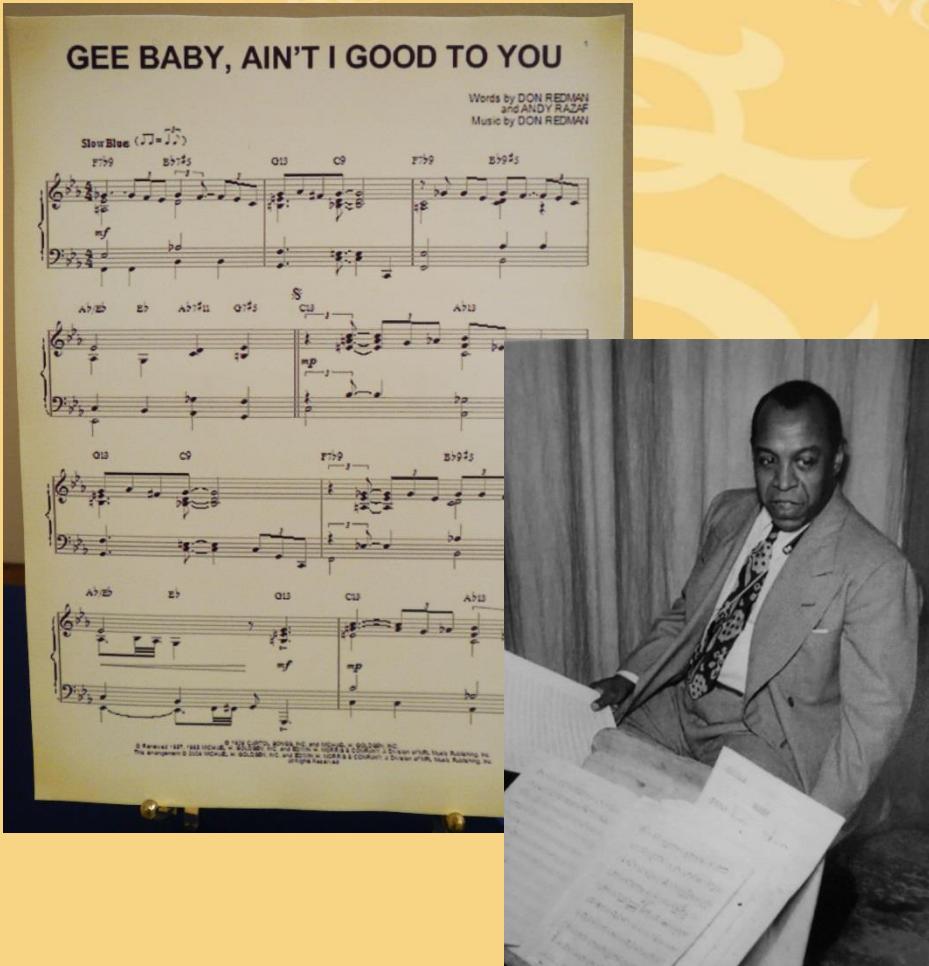
When Storer closed in 1955, the little fort was orphaned once again. This time, the National Park Service came to the rescue, moving the structure back downtown, near its original location.

# Storer College Orchestra, ca. 1920

The Storer College Orchestra frequently played at Mountain View and Island Park, two nearby vacationing spots in the Potomac River near Harpers Ferry, WV.



# Storer's Musical Traditions



Storer College had a long tradition of vocal and musical training. In its early days as a mission school, Storer's teachers recognized the singing talent of many of their students, and sought to hone their abilities. Storer boasted a skilled vocal quartet which formed in 1870. Initially called the Union Chorus, later known as the Harpers Ferry Singers, the quartet was renowned for its talent and recruited members who could perform *a cappella*. Later, the quartet became an octet and embarked on a fundraising tour for the College in 1895.

During the 1905-1906 term, a musical department was added to the curriculum. All students received vocal lessons. Those who were interested in further training could take part in private classes for an additional fee. In 1906, students paid \$6.00 per term to take piano or organ lessons. Offerings in musical training expanded over the years as styles changed and student interests shifted.

Several distinguished musicians graduated from Storer College, notably Don Redman (pictured). Redman, class of 1920, played in Storer's band and later became one of America's foremost jazz musicians and composers in the 1920s and 1930s.

# College Sports Teams

Clockwise from top left:  
Baseball Team, 1911.  
Girls Basketball Team, 1920.  
Track Team, circa 1920.  
Football Team, 1922.



# College Athletics: The Golden Tornadoes



Physical education and athletics reinforced Storer College's mission to teach students to be self-reliant citizens. The Storer College Catalogue of 1897-1898 asserts that "body and mind must be developed together." According to that Catalogue, all students performed exercises accompanied by music three times per week and were required to march in military columns to and from their recitations. While these practices are not mentioned in later catalogues, athletics played an important role in Storer's educational mission.

Organized sports teams developed around the turn of the century, although no funding was officially appropriated for them. An independent and student led Athletic Association financed Storer's Golden Tornadoes by collecting subscription fees from members. The old Robinson Barn served as the gymnasium for many years. As sports gained popularity and participation, the need for suitable athletic facilities spurred fundraising efforts in the 1920s and 1940s.

A football team was organized around 1900 and played its first game against West Virginia Institute in Charleston in 1901. Baseball, track and field, and men's and women's basketball teams came about in the early 1900s as well.

These Storer teams primarily competed against high school teams from Washington, D.C. and the Baltimore area. In 1932, Storer College joined the Middle Atlantic Athletic Association. Its chief competitors in this conference included African-American normal and industrial schools and state colleges in the region.

Active participation in collegiate sports continued at Storer College until its closure and was an important part of campus life and educational training. It inspired independence and mental strength that Storer graduates carried with them well beyond their time at the school.

# Memorabilia

The Storer College colors, old gold and white, are well represented by the student beanies and banner in this exhibit case, and the Alumni banner mounted above.

Also included are issues of a Storer student newspaper, *The Storer Record*. The publication was issued in a variety of sizes during a half century of publication ranging from 1892 to 1942. The name of the newspaper changed to *The Tornado* in ensuing years, the very last issue is included elsewhere in this gallery. The Storer College Bulletins, at left, and a license plate tag, right, are also survive in the Storer College archives.



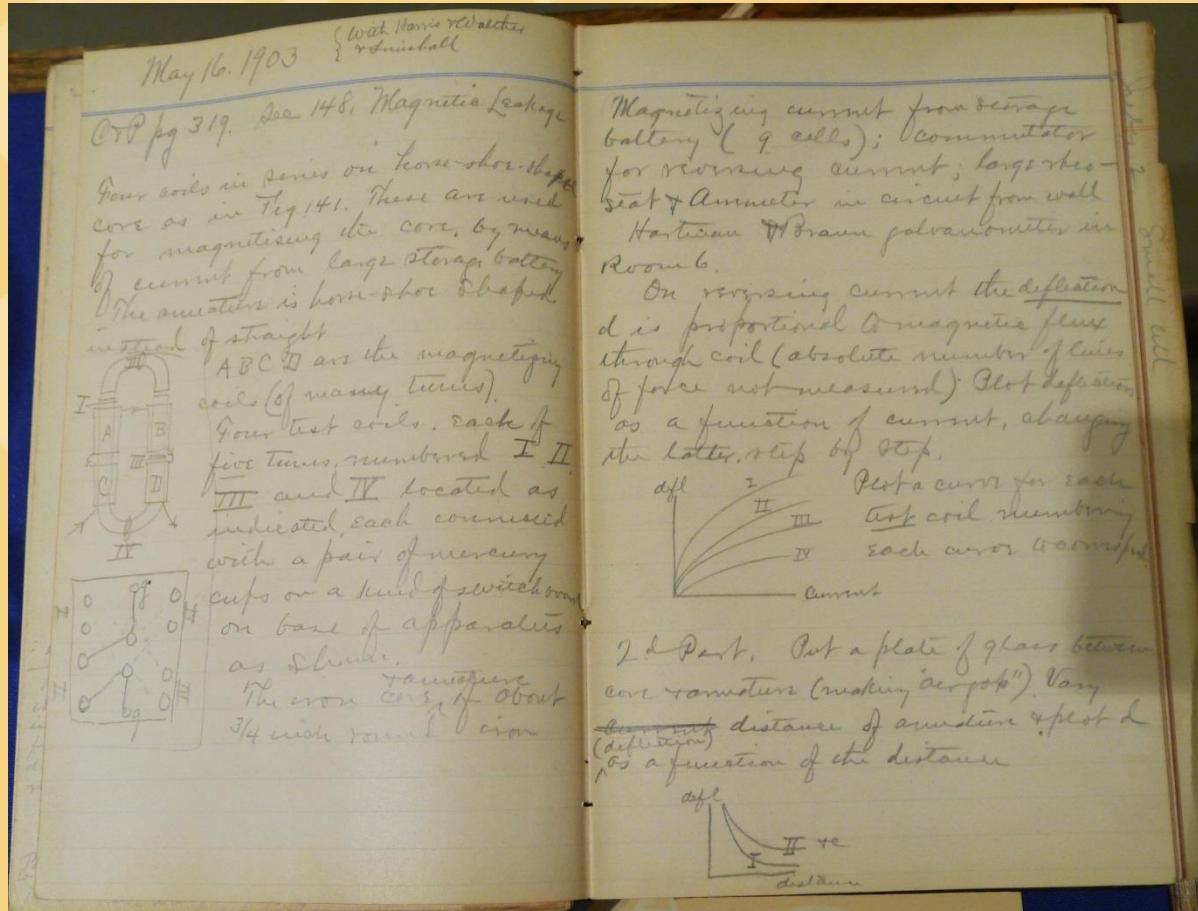
# The Loving Cup



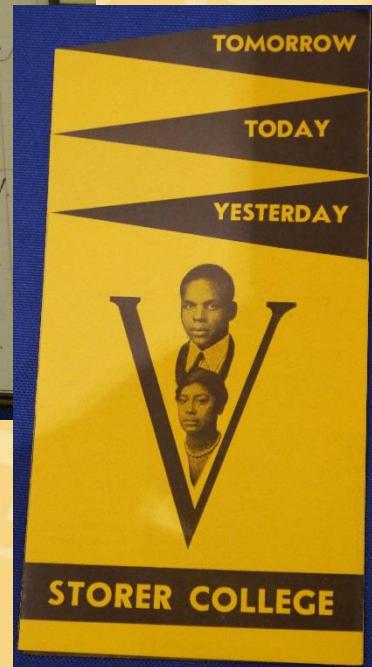
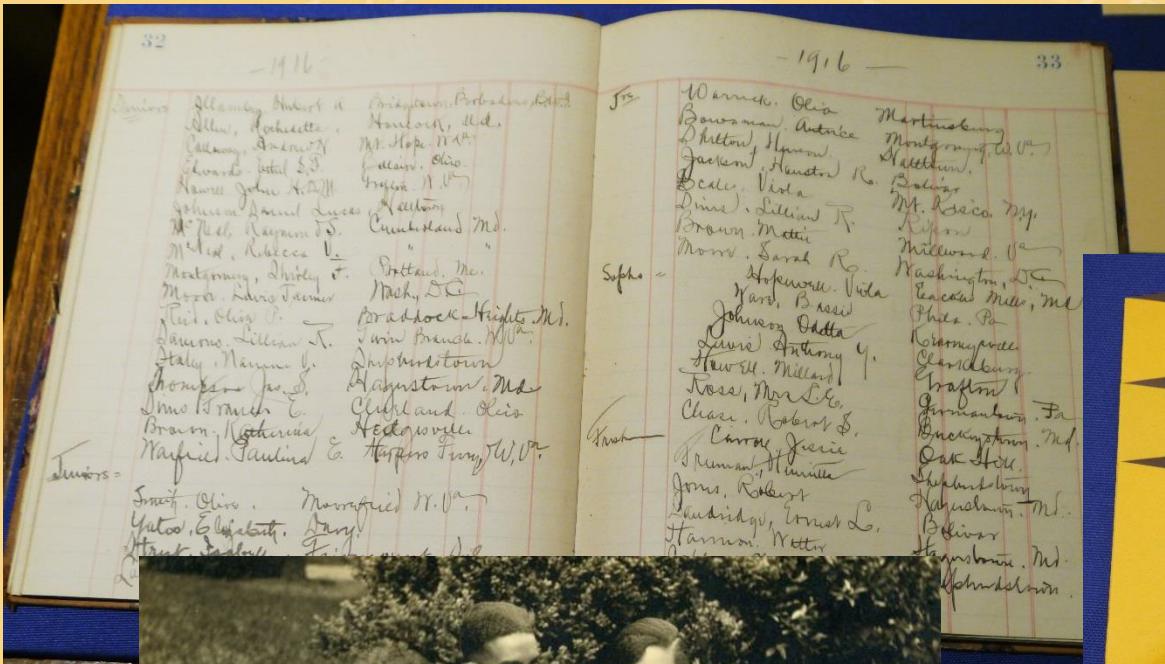
Loving Cup Donated by the  
Storer Club of Wheeling,  
1938



# A.L. Colton's Physics Class Notes, May 16, 1903



# Storer Honor Students Ledger, 1908-1944



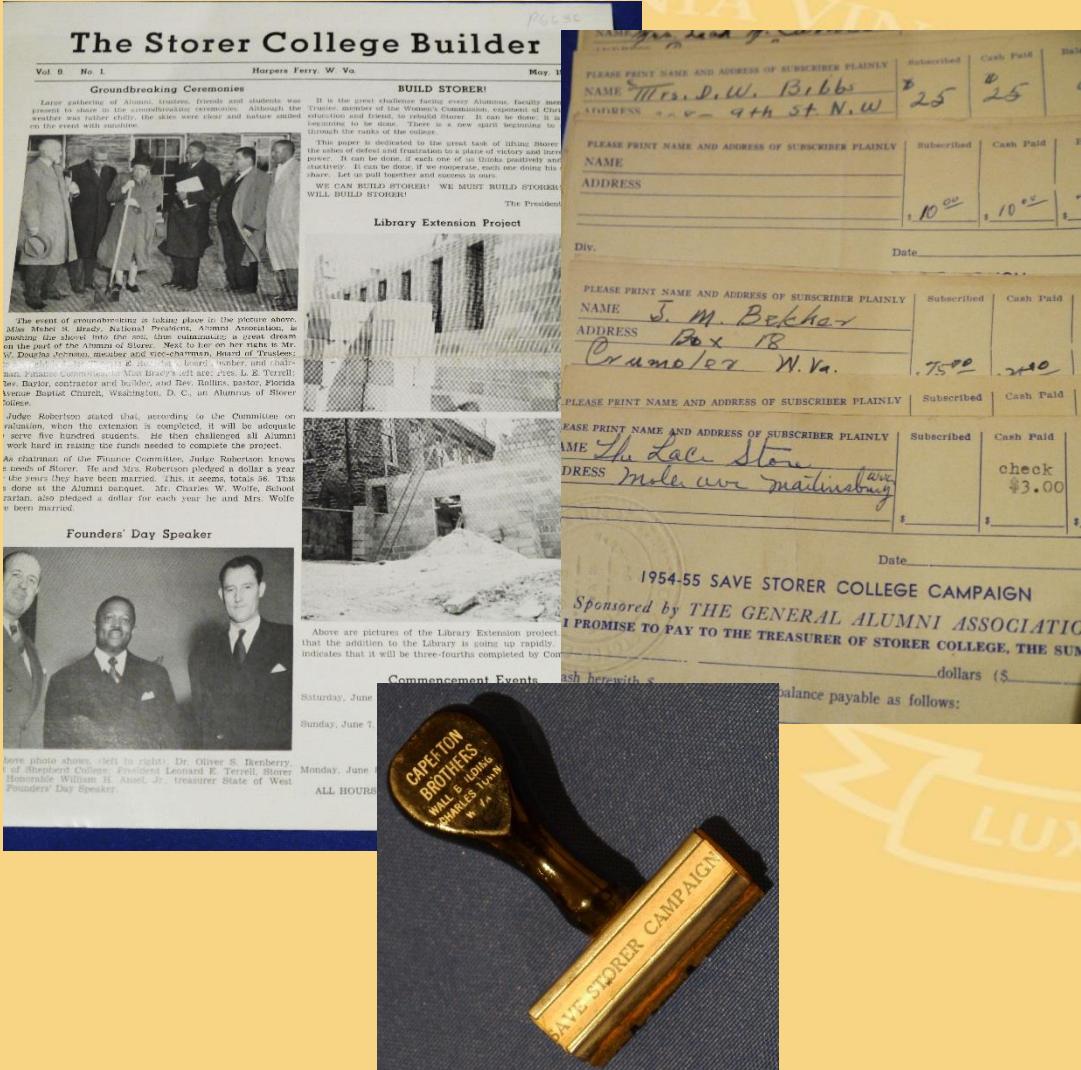
This ledger records the names of students who achieved academic excellence at Storer over a period of 36 years. The three students in the photograph in this case -- Isabelle Stewart, Raymond McNeal and Odetta Johnson -- are among those listed on these pages

# Storer Student Group, ca. 1942

Note John Brown's  
Fort in the  
background of this  
World War II-era  
photograph.



# The End of Storer



Financial hardships, low enrollment, and national legislation would ultimately lead to the closing of Storer College. Over the years, the school received funding from a number of different sources, including the State of West Virginia, Baptist Church entities, and income generated by the college from fees, sale of farm products and investments. As all sources

waxed and waned, financial security was a constant concern. By the 1920s, significant deficits existed, but tuition remained low to conform with Storer's mission to be accessible to poor students. In 1929, a plan for state annexation was approved by the Board of Trustees but failed to pass in the West Virginia House of Delegates.

Storer College would continue to struggle financially through its remaining years. In 1953, the Board petitioned the American Baptist Convention for support, but received little response except for the suggestion of a new fundraising initiative. The "Build Storer" campaign focused on growing enrollment, seeking more funds from alumni and attaining additional help from churches.

When the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision integrated schools across America in 1954, the State of West Virginia withdrew its funding as separate schools for minorities were no longer required. Enrollment decreased once again as minority students were no longer barred from other colleges. Storer managed to survive the 1954-1955 academic year thanks to the Alumni Association's "Save Storer" campaign. But no efforts were enough to sustain the school. The decision was made to close Storer College for good in 1955.

In 1958, the Board reviewed two proposals for the future of the college. The majority ultimately voted for the Alderson-Broaddus plan in which the school was closed and its assets dispersed to other Baptist affiliated colleges. Two alumni, Mary Peyton Dyson and Dr. Madison Spencer Briscoe, filed an injunction to stop the closure in 1959. The District Court in Washington, D.C. determined that they had no jurisdiction over the case and remanded it back to West Virginia courts, essentially a loss for Dyson and Briscoe. The alumni did not pursue further legal proceedings.

Ultimately, Storer College merged with Virginia Union University in Richmond, Virginia. Its financial assets went to Alderson-Broaddus in Philippi, West Virginia. In 1960, legislation placed the Storer College campus back under federal governance, eventually becoming part of Harpers Ferry National Historic Park.

# Some Distinguished Storer College Alumni



## **Don Redman (1900-1964)**

A native of Piedmont, WV, he was a jazz performer, composer, arranger and bandleader. After graduating from Storer College Redman attended the Boston Conservatory. He began his career in 1923 playing and arranging with the Fletcher Henderson orchestra where his contributions helped to define the big band Swing sound. While playing with his own orchestra he continued to perform with jazz greats Jimmy Dorsey, Count Basie and Harry James.

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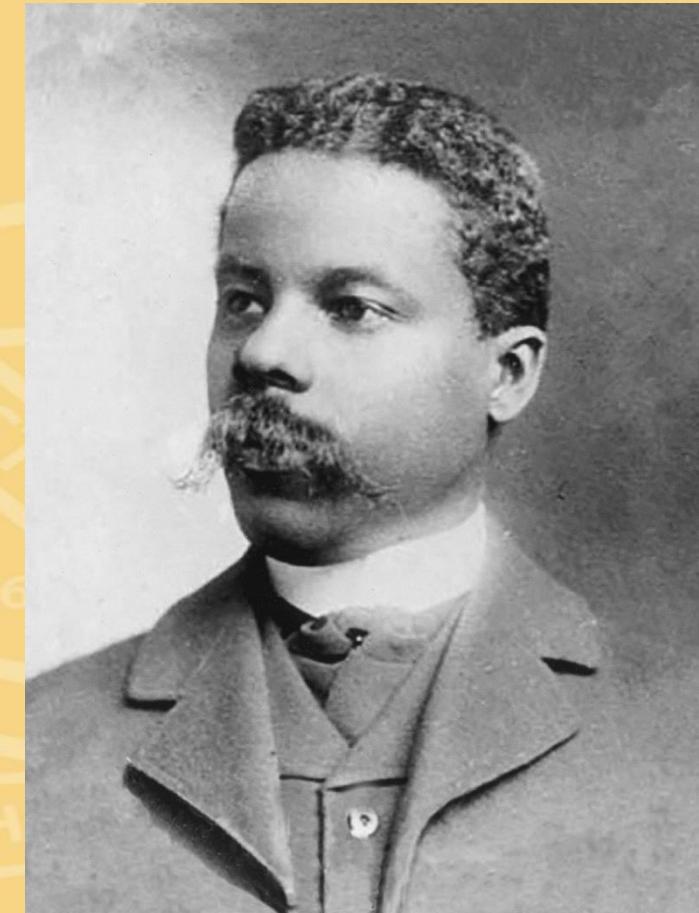
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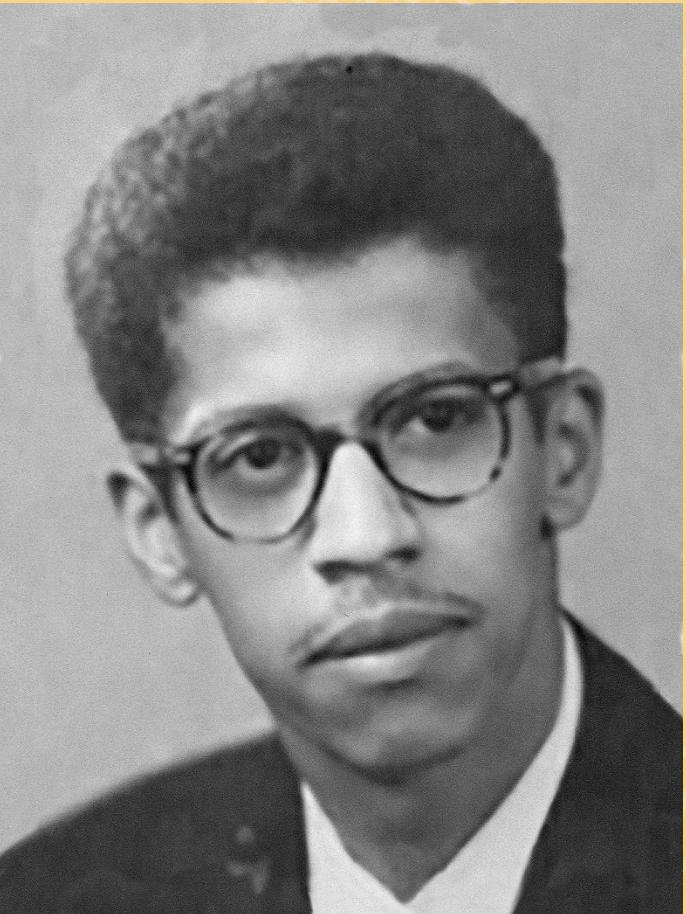
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### **John Francis Wheaton (1866-1922)**

He was a noted politician and orator. Wheaton graduated as Valedictorian from Storer College. Wheaton opened a law practice in Hagerstown, becoming the fourth African American to pass the bar and practice law in Maryland. Wheaton was the national president of the Black Elks Club, advisor to heavyweight boxing champ Jack Johnson, and counsel for Marcus Garvey. Wheaton worked in New York City's district attorney's office until his death in 1922.





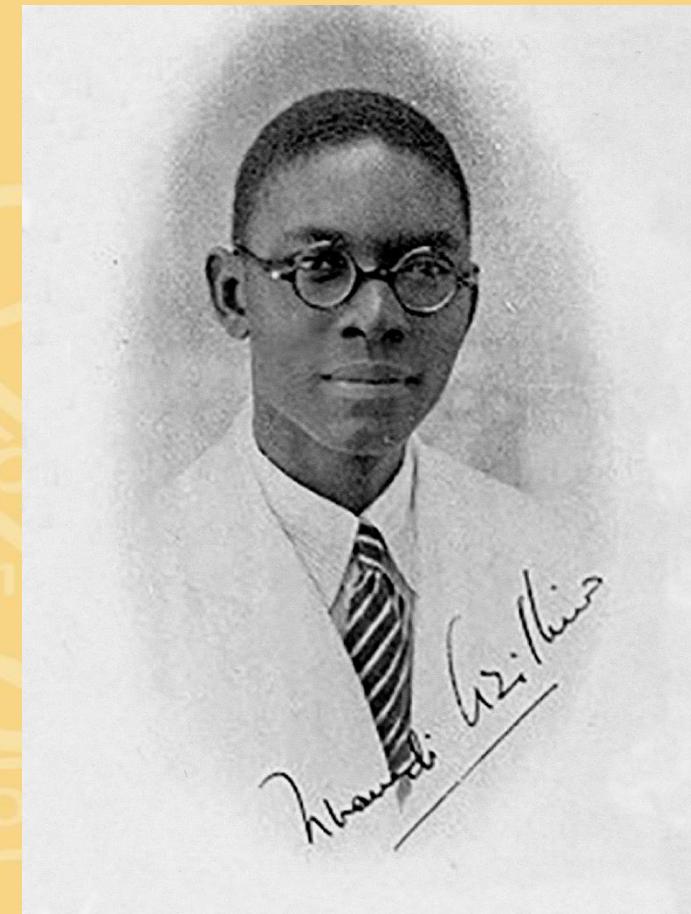
### **Henry Curtis Brooks (Houston Brooks pictured)**

He and his brother Houston left their home in Alexandria, Virginia in 1946 to attend Storer College. After graduating in 1950, Henry earned both a bachelor's degree in Divinity and a masters' degree in Sacred Theology from Andover Newton Theological School. He continued his education at Boston University, graduating with a doctorate in Psychology and Counseling. From this background he developed a course of study that is today recognized as the forerunner of spiritual-based family and crisis intervention.

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### **Benjamin Nnamdi Azikiwe (1904-1996)**

Chief Nnamdi Azikiwe was a leading figure in Nigerian nationalism. Azikiwe came to America to study, graduating from Storer College in 1926. He continued his education at Lincoln University and the University of Pennsylvania. After his return to Nigeria, a newspaper career led him into a life in politics that included appointment by Queen Elizabeth II to the Privy Council of the United Kingdom, head of state, and Governor-general and ultimately the first president of Nigeria.





### **Sylvia Bishop (1921-2005)**

Recognized as the first African-American woman licensed to train thoroughbred horses, Sylvia Bishop began exercising and grooming horses at age 17 while attending Storer College preparatory school. As a trainer, her horses raced at the Charles Town Race Track and tracks in Maryland. Bishop owned and trained thoroughbred racing horses for more than 60 years before severe arthritis forced her to retire in 2000.

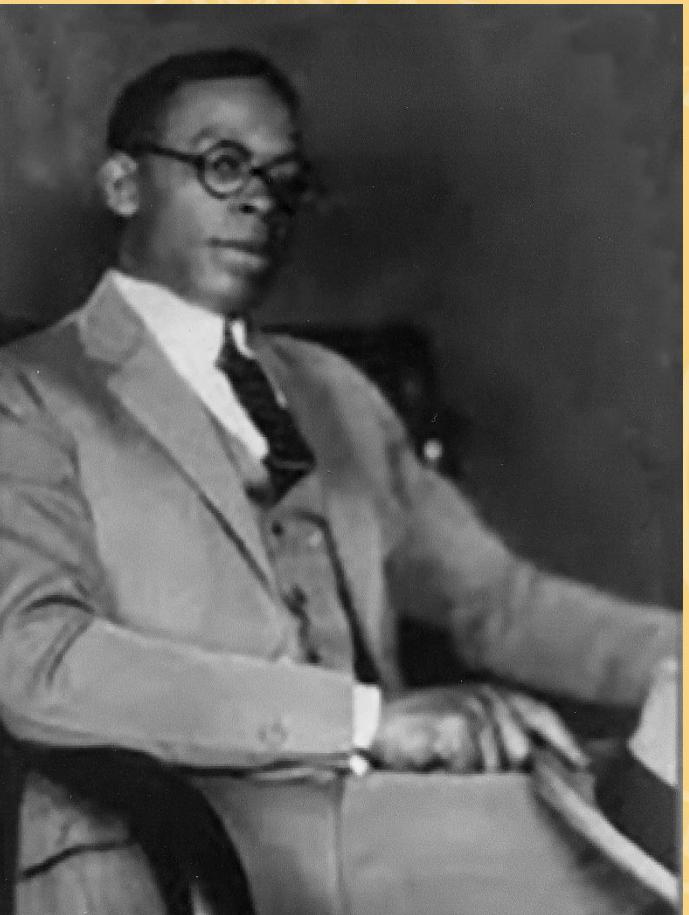


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## Coralie Franklin Cook (1861-1942)

Born into slavery, Cook became the first descendant of a Monticello slave to attend college, graduating from Storer College in 1880. After graduation she returned to Storer to teach elocution and English. She also taught English at Howard University. Cook counted reformers such as Susan B. Anthony among her friends. She was a founding member of the National Association of Colored Women and founder of the School of Expression at the Washington Conservatory of Music.





### **Allen E. Cole (1883-1970)**

Born in Kearneysville, WV, Cole was a graduate of Storer College. Cole moved to Cleveland where he met Joseph Opet, manager of Frank Moore Studios. Opet introduced Cole to photography and hired him as his assistant. After working for the studios for 6 years Cole opened a photography studio in his own home. He founded the Progressive Business League, served as its treasurer and was the first African American to be a member of the Cleveland Society of Professional Photographers.

## Ella Nora Phillips Stewart (1893-1987)

The daughter of sharecroppers living in Stringtown, WV, Stewart was the first African-American woman to become a pharmacist in the nation. She attended Storer College, graduating with a preparatory degree in 1910.

Stewart then enrolled at the University of Pittsburgh as the first African-American student to attend the pharmacy program. She became a prominent businesswoman and activist, serving as a U.S. Goodwill Ambassador to Asia and president of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs.





### **John Robert (J.R.) Clifford (1848-1933)**

He was editor and publisher of the *Pioneer Press*, the first African-American newspaper in WV. Clifford fought for the Union, serving in the U.S. Colored Troops. He attended Storer College after the war, graduating in 1877. The first African-American attorney in WV, he along with W.E.B. DuBois, was a co-founder of the Niagara Movement, forerunner of the NAACP and organizer of the Second Annual Meeting of the Niagara Movement at Storer College in 1906.

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## **Madison Spencer Briscoe (1904-1995)**

He attended Storer College, graduating with a preparatory degree. After further education at Lincoln University and Columbia University, he returned to Storer to teach both high school and college courses. An entomologist, Briscoe taught a variety of biological science courses at Storer. Briscoe became the first African-American member of the West Virginia Academy of Sciences. The author of many journal articles, Briscoe also wrote a Laboratory Manual for Biology.



# John Brown's Fort en route to Harpers Ferry, 1968

John Brown's Fort moved for a final time in 1968 when the National Park Service relocated the building to lower Harpers Ferry near its original location

