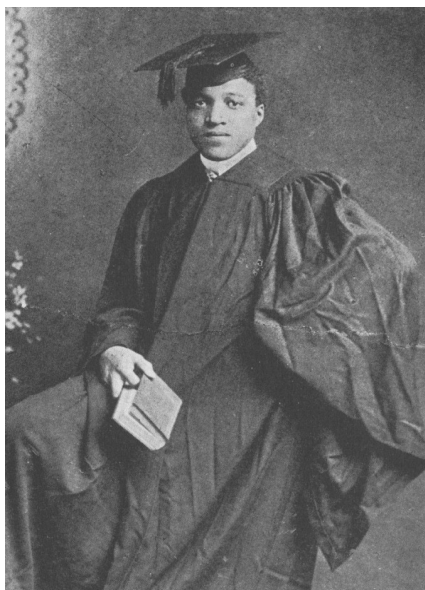




Philip Anthony (1876-1917)

"Father of Harlem," c. 1914



James Warren (1877-1902)

Yale Graduation, 1900



Edward Samuel (1882-1912)

Yale Yearbook, 1906



Susan A.W. (1875-1953)

Westfield Normal School, 1895

The Payton Family of Westfield:

An African American Success Story,
1845-1954

ROBERT T. BROWN



Editor's Introduction: *Westfield, like the rest of Massachusetts, has historically been a community with few citizens of color. Colonial Westfield records note a handful of African slaves, and church records of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries record a few names, along with births and deaths that can be identified as African American, both slave and free. Census records beginning in 1790 document a small number of people of color in each decennial count. Along with being few in number, the African American community was composed of individuals in the lowest economic categories. Where occupations are known, they consist of laborer, servant, or housekeeper.*

It was not until the late nineteenth century that this pattern changed. Then, for a brief period, Westfield's African American population increased to 1% of the total community of 10,000. Among them was one family who provided a striking example of the "Talented Tenth," a term popularized by W. E. B. Du Bois that designated a leadership class of African Americans in the early twentieth century.¹

This article explores the lives of Westfield's most prominent and successful African American family, the Paytons. Philip A. Payton Sr., born to a slave family in the south, journeyed north after the Civil War and settled in Westfield. All four of his children were extraordinarily successful: real estate tycoon Philip Jr. proudly bore the moniker "Father of Harlem," two other sons attended Yale, and his daughter graduated from the Westfield Normal School and became a teacher and later a prominent philanthropist in Harlem. Dr. Robert Brown is a local historian and former professor at Westfield State University. Additional research and background information was provided by the editor.

* * * * *

SOUTHERN ROOTS

Philip Payton Sr. was born in Washington, North Carolina in 1845.² This eastern North Carolina county seat was on the Pamlico Sound near Cape Hatteras. His parents, Crias and Winni, were probably slaves, although the area had a free population noted for its high degree of literacy and occupational skills. Philip had at least one older and one younger brother—Warren and James. His second child was named after them (Warren James).³ Although we are not certain about Philip's status, his older brother was described as a literate slave. Most likely Philip was too.⁴

The Civil War came to Washington, North Carolina in February 1862 when General Ambrose Burnside led the Union Army to occupy eastern North Carolina.⁵ The 27th Massachusetts Regiment, from Western Massachusetts, and especially Company F, heavily recruited from Westfield, was based in the town of Washington for nearly two years. In 1863, while under attack from Confederate soldiers, the 27th enrolled local African Americans in an armed militia. In 1864 when the 27th was ordered to Washington, DC, some of those militiamen went with them. Although there is no evidence that Philip served in the militia, it is believed that the nineteen-year-old Payton was on the transports.⁶ One can only speculate that this would have been an exhilarating experience for a young man who had grown up under slavery.

The next few years provide only limited perspectives on Philip's life, and those details are only recounted in his 1908 obituary.⁷ He supposedly attended Wayland Seminary, a Baptist-run school for freedmen founded in Washington, DC in 1867. In the 1870 Federal Census he is recorded as living in Manhattan, New York, working as a barber and as a member of an African American Masonic lodge. According to his obituary, he came to Westfield some time in 1872. Why he chose Westfield is not clear, but it is logical to

assume some connection to the soldiers who lived for two years in his native home and who may have encouraged his move.⁸

In February of 1874, Philip Payton married Annie Maria Hammond Ryans of Baltimore in the Methodist Church of Westfield.⁹ She was twenty-seven and had been married before. She was already an accomplished ladies' hairdresser and could weave human hair into wigs and toupees. They would have four children: Susan A.W. born in 1875, Philip Anthony Jr. in 1876, James Warren in 1877, and Edward Samuel in 1882.¹⁰ Tragically, all three sons died relatively young (between the ages of 25 and 41); daughter Susan lived to age 78 and maintained lifelong ties to Westfield. Three children were highly successful academically while the fourth, Philip Jr., achieved a national reputation in the African American community. Before that time, however, Philip Sr. achieved his own remarkable success as a local businessman.


PAYTON'S "HAIRDRESSING & BATHING EMPORIUM"

Initially, Philip Sr. was employed in the barbershop of Philip Gemme on Elm Street, the main commercial street in Westfield. In the early 1870s Westfield was a town of 6,000 people, an agricultural community with a small industrial base of cigar making and buggy whips. Two railroads connected Westfield to Boston in the east and to Hartford/New Haven—and ultimately New York City—to the south.¹¹ The African American population was no more than fifty at that time. Most people lived close to their workplaces, and the Paytons were no exception, living first above, and then next to, the barbershop.

Westfield would have been a new and very different environment for Philip, born in North Carolina, where one-third of the population was African American and then having lived in Washington, DC and New York city within large, African American communities that included many recently-freed slaves. He probably retained his southern accent throughout his life, another marker of his distance from his Yankee neighbors, both white and black. Yet he had achieved an education, acquired the skill of barbering, and seems to have procured an important benefactor(s). His ability to succeed within a predominantly white world was a skill he would pass down to his children. Unfortunately, none of Philip's letters or other written documents—which might give us more insights into his complex personality and experiences—have survived.¹²

By 1878, within a short four years of his arrival, Philip struck out on his own. That year's city directory included a large and elaborate display ad for "Payton's Ladies and Gents Hairdressing and Bathing Emporium."

Payton's Ladies and Gents' Hairdressing and Bathing Emporium.



Sole proprietor
of PAYTON'S

Celebrated Vegetable Hair Vine. Also, keep in stock a full line of Raynaud's Extracts and Toilet Articles in general. Hair Work and Cutting Ladies and Children's Hair a specialty. Also, Hair bought and sold. None but first class artists employed.

Marvin's Block, Elm Street, WESTFIELD, MASS.

Ad, Westfield City Directory, 1878-79

Payton's very first ad portrayed a modern, upscale, and well-equipped establishment with two African American barbers, both dressed in vest and bow tie, serving white customers.

He claimed to be the “sole proprietor of Payton’s Celebrated Vegetable Hair Vine.” In addition to men’s cuts, the cutting of “ladies and children’s hair” was “a specialty.” Hair could also be “bought and sold” (for the making of wigs). The ad concluded with the claim that “none but first class artists employed.”¹³ With that declaration, Philip embarked on a 30-year career as one of Westfield’s best-known businessmen and entrepreneurs.

His heavily advertised shop was in a new location on the opposite side of the street from his original workplace. Five years later, he purchased that shop and the two adjoining shops for over \$5,000 and moved his growing family into an apartment above. This business transaction raises many questions. Five thousand dollars was ten times the annual salary of a skilled worker of the day. Barbers made about \$250 a year. Philip did not pay cash for the building but rather had a mortgage. In those days, banks were not the source of mortgages for individuals. Instead, the owners of a property would carry the mortgage themselves with the payments functioning much like rent. The Marvin family, who owned the buildings, extended the mortgage to their primary renter; indeed, he was still making payments ten years later when Mrs. Marvin sued Philip for a missed payment.¹⁴ Years later, someone else would become a patron and supporter for his children’s college educations. There is no answer as to who his financial benefactors were or why they supported him, but the evidence is clear that the Payton family was dealt with very differently than most African American residents in an all-white community could expect.

In the nineteenth century Philip A. Payton was the only African American listed in the real estate transfers of the Town of Westfield as having owned property. Most African Americans rented rooms in the less fashionable sections of town. Many lived in the center of Westfield on streets like Canal Street, a foundry street, which ran right through the center of H. B. Smith’s Steam Heating Apparatus Plant. Others rented rooms in large multiple dwellings on Meadow Street, which ran along the Westfield River and where a number of whip manufacturing companies were located. Nearly all worked as servants or common laborers. It was also an extremely transient community; in the 1800s few names remained the same from one census to the next.¹⁵ Most African Americans left Westfield seeking better opportunities elsewhere. Payton, however, became enormously successful as a business owner in Westfield.

BLACK BARBERS: RISE & FALL OF A PROFESSION

In the slave South, most barbers had been African American. Barbering was viewed as a servile occupation that was beneath white men. Although there were white barbers in the North, it was one of the few skilled professions that



P. A. Payton

Philip Payton (1845-1908)

Obituary Photo

black men could enter and, if they were fortunate, become small businessmen. This position was unique in that it provided Payton with the opportunity to develop close relationships with the town's leading white residents. In many locales black barbers only served a white clientele as most whites did not want to be shaved or have their hair cut next to black customers. However, Payton's son Philip recalled that despite his white clientele, "his barbershop [also] served as a gathering place for the small black community in Westfield."¹⁶

Payton, however, was far more than a barber. He was a successful businessman and entrepreneur who took out patents on many hair products

and conditioners. "Hair vine" was a hair pomade or dressing. Payton's patent contained grapevine sap which, it was claimed, would "doubly increase the growth and the strength of hair, if freely used." He offered bathing facilities since almost no homes had them at the time. Although this was common in nineteenth-century barbershops, his was unique in that he offered bathing facilities for women too. The city directories contain nearly twenty years of ads of numerous variations advertising his many products. In some early years Mrs. Annie Payton had her own ad for her business at a separate address.

An 1886 booklet promoting local businesses reveals the couple's wide range of products and services. Fictional character "Lena" proclaims:

Keep your body clean by patronizing Payton's Bath Rooms. Restore your mustache to its original color by using Payton's Lightning Hair Dye . . . Keep your face smooth by being shaved at the popular hair dressers . . . Buy your wig from Mrs. Payton, Importer and Manufacturer of all kinds of Hair Goods. She

shampoos ladies' hair. Her work is always complete and of the best quality.¹⁷

Although there were three or four barbershops in Westfield during these years, Payton's was characterized as the "most prominent shop in town."¹⁸ Annie Payton was a great asset in these business ventures. An obituary writer described her as a "dear woman" and noted: "It would be hard to find in town today a single lady who is not numbered among her patrons if for nothing more than the shampoo." After Philip's death and her move to New York city in 1910, Annie continued a small mail-order business of hair products. She regularly sent holiday cards and "many of her old customers kept in touch with her." Despite her ailing health, she "always looked forward each summer to spending that portion of the year here, where she loved to renew old acquaintance." Each week "she looked forward to the arrival of the *Valley Echo* and scanned the pages carefully" for news of her "old home town."¹⁹

Black barbers who owned their own businesses were among the elite of the African American community. In his 1899 study, *The Negro in Business*, W. E. B. Du Bois pointed out that although the 1890 census had reported 17,480 black barbers in the U.S., only about 300 had at least \$500 invested in large, well-furnished and ornate shops that attracted well-heeled customers. These firms were the "cutting edge of black businesses in the country at the time" and were the only black business that attracted substantial white customers.²⁰ Payton's business fell in this elite category. His very first ad in 1879 portrayed a modern, upscale, and well-equipped establishment with two African American barbers, both dressed in vest and bow tie, serving two white customers. One is shaving and the other cutting hair in a professional setting.

However, in *Knights of the Razor: Black Barbers in Slavery and Freedom*, historian Douglas W. Bristol points out that black barbering lost some of its status by the late nineteenth century among the second generation, those born after slavery: "The sons and daughters of northern black barbers were more likely than their fathers to be upwardly mobile, aspiring to become educators, physicians, and attorneys."²¹ The Payton children fully exemplified this pattern.

THE PAYTON CHILDREN

The Payton children attended the Green District School, on the corner of School and Washington streets, which served all the children who lived in the center of town. It was also the "training" or observation school for the



“A Barber’s Shop at Richmond Virginia”

Source: *Illustrated London News*, 1861



Barber Shop, c. 1910

local teacher's college (the Westfield Normal School) which was located on the opposite corner. Later, all four Payton children entered Westfield High School. Susan, James, and Edward excelled there.²²

Although Westfield offered a high school education to its children from as early as 1800—first in a private academy, and after 1855 in a public institution—very few attended. Even fewer completed the course of studies. By the end of the nineteenth century, Westfield's population was 10,000 and growing rapidly. However, in 1894 Susan Payton's graduating high school class was just 22 students, of whom 14 were in the college preparatory class and 8 were enrolled in the general business track. Susan was one of only three students (all female) who completed the Latin/Science program. Similarly, in 1896 James graduated in a class of 26 students. He was the member of the family most inclined to intellectual pursuits: one of only five students completing the Latin/Greek classical course, a class orator at graduation, and soon on his way to Yale College. His brother, Edward, graduated in 1901. His class had grown to 37 students, but 15 of those were taking the business track. Similar to James, Edward completed the Classical Program and also enrolled at Yale.²³

According to family lore, it was their mother, Annie Payton, who pushed education for her children. Philip Sr. demanded that the boys learn a trade as a safety net in life, preferably in a barbershop. Philip Jr. recalled that "My father was determined that each of his boys should know a trade, consequently my Wednesdays after school and my Saturdays were mostly spent in the barbershop." As a result, "I became a full-fledged barber at about the age of 15." However, Annie Payton had different hopes for her children's futures. According to Philip Jr.:

My mother would often remonstrate with my father, telling him that she didn't want her boys to be barbers, that it would make lazy men of them. My father would invariably reply, "Never mind

These two images on the left strikingly reveal the transformation in the profession of "barbering" during Philip Sr.'s lifetime. Electricity, indoor plumbing, heating and modern equipment transformed "barbershops" into upscale businesses offering a range of services. However, only the most well-connected African American barbers had access to the capital needed to make these necessary improvements to remain competitive. For example, in Boston the number of black barbers declined from 17% of all barbers in 1870 to 5% in 1900. In terms of numbers, the decline was from 134 in 1890 to 55 in 1910. Thus, at his death in 1908 Philip Sr. was among a tiny elite of successful black businessmen and barbershop owners.



Susan A. W. Payton (1875-1953) with Classmates

Outing Club, Westfield Normal School, c. 1895

I'm going to teach them the trade. The knowledge of it won't be a burden to carry. And when they become men they won't be compelled to follow it, if they have sense enough to do anything else.²⁴

As a result of Annie's wishes, Susan enrolled in the Westfield Normal School in 1895. After graduation, she briefly taught in North Carolina, then taught in New Jersey for the next 15 years.²⁵ Brother James had a far more prestigious college experience as a member of Yale's class of 1900. All surviving evidence suggests that he had a happy, successful experience there. An article that he wrote for the June 1900 issue of *The Colored American Magazine* about life at Yale mirrors the tone common among his white classmates. He described sporting events and espoused the ideals of self-help and meritocracy, failing to mention any racial tension or discrimination.

Only ten African American students had graduated from Yale College in the entire nineteenth century, James was the eleventh in 1900.²⁶ As one scholar explains, African American college students “were often trailblazers. Focused, resilient, and lacking the power of collective action, they likely bore any derogatory insults and biased attitudes silently and they tended to create spaces apart from mainstream campus life. Even so, many developed lasting affiliations with the institutions that nurtured their talents.”²⁷

In his article James did add a revealing final section directed towards “poor boys” which may have reflected some of his own experiences:

The chances at Yale, for a poor boy, are as good and perhaps better than at any other college. There are numerous ways in which a fellow can “get by” and make his “ends meet.” Board can be easily obtained by waiting on tables . . . Rooms can be obtained at very reasonable prices, on the campus, or at private houses; and very often if the latter a fellow can get his room for nothing, by taking care of the lawn or performing some similar small service.

In regards to tuition, James wrote that, “The college offers numerous scholarships and prizes of which a fairly bright fellow can always get a share.” In addition, there were:

many odd jobs at which a fellow can easily earn enough to pay the small [remaining tuition] amount. Tutoring is another lucrative method to get money and get it fast; clerking in the campus store pays quite well . . . And many other ways I could mention by which a fellow can go through college.

Writing for an elite and aspiring African American audience, James’ words imply that he recognized no barriers to black students seeking scholarships. He concluded that:

If he only has ambition and self-determination, nothing can keep him from making a successful issue. Any young man who refrains from entering college because he has not enough money to carry himself through . . . is very foolish. When I entered college all I could see before me was a long, dark way, which would take four dreary years to reach the end, but as those four years now draw to a close, I can frankly acknowledge that I must count them the most pleasant years of my life.²⁸

After graduation James returned to Westfield for a year where he tutored while looking for a full-time job. In the fall of 1901, he was hired as a professor of Latin and Greek at Wiley College in Marshall, Texas. Wiley had been founded in 1873 by the Freedman's Aid Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church "for the purpose of allowing Negro youth the opportunity to pursue higher learning in the arts, sciences and other professions."²⁹ It



James Payton, Yale Graduation Photo 1900

Published 1900-1909 (and initially located in Boston), the *Colored American Magazine* was one of the first to address an “aspirational and genteel African American readership.” Earlier African American publications were either religiously affiliated or connected to the abolitionist movement. In contrast, the *Colored American* was the first magazine “devoted to the development of Afro-American art and literature” and also focused on black history.³⁴

was the first black college west of the Mississippi River. One can imagine his parents' pride in their young scholar's academic success, only one generation removed from slavery. Tragically, in the summer of 1902, after his first year of teaching, James came home, caught typhoid fever, and died in the fall. His obituary reported that "Mr. Payton was a young man of many fine qualities. He was naturally of a bright and cheery disposition and his gentlemanly ways won for him a host of friends."³⁰

Younger brother Edward was a more hesitant and fragile personality. While his sister Susan was active in organizations at the Normal School and his brothers Philip and James were athletes in high school and involved in other student activities, Edward leaves no record behind other than good grades. He entered Yale with the class of 1905, but the death of his brother during his freshman year caused him to fall behind and graduate a year later.³¹ Through the rest of his short life (he died of tuberculosis in 1912), he was indecisive about his career, working at various jobs with titles but no responsibilities, provided by his brother Philip. Much of the time, he lived with his father above the barbershop while he pondered a career in advertising. The *Valley Echo* noted that he was "well known in the town," "possessed a quiet disposition and had an excellent memory." It also reported that he had "spoken on Booker Washington" at his high school graduation exercises.³²

It is highly intriguing that both James and Edward chose to pursue a "classical" education (as opposed to more "practical" business track) and were both able to attend Yale. Whereas Booker T. Washington advocated industrial and vocational education as the path to success, W. E. B. Du Bois believed that African Americans needed a classical liberal arts education to be able to reach their full potential in the modern world. Du Bois, whose family was from nearby Great Barrington, had been the first African American to receive a Ph.D. from Harvard in 1895. He argued that "The Negro race, like all races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men." However, he advocated that this "Talented Tenth" should pursue the scholarly training that African Americans had been denied for centuries. He wrote, "If we make money the object of man-training, we shall develop money-makers but not necessarily men; if we make technical skill the object of education, we may possess artisans but not, in nature, men."³³ The debates between Washington and Du Bois raged fiercely during the early twentieth century. Philip Payton Jr., however, took an entirely different path than his brothers and clearly landed in Washington's camp.

PHILIP JR. – FATHER OF HARLEM

The Payton's eldest son, Philip, was an entirely different case from his siblings. Education was not for him. His father took him out of Westfield High when he was in the tenth grade because he was "forming some undesirable associations."³⁵ He was sent to Livingston College in Salisbury, North Carolina, the founder of whom was an "old friend" of his father.³⁶ He spent a year there and then returned home where he re-enrolled in his high school junior year. Football was the one thing that Philip liked about school. He was a good player, but in a game that autumn he broke his wrist and promptly dropped out of school again, never to return.³⁷ For the next two years, he worked in his father's barbershop, which he hated. In 1899 he left town for New York City, where all he found for work was a series of menial jobs. In early 1900 he returned to Westfield and married Maggie Lee, a Westfield servant girl, also originally from North Carolina. Her presence in Westfield may provide further evidence of a network of connections formed between Westfield and eastern North Carolina during the Civil War years. Philip and Maggie immediately set out again for New York, where he was determined to make his mark on the world.³⁸

To properly understand the role played by Philip Payton Jr. in the making of "Negro Harlem," both the man's personality and the social context within which he operated must be considered. Payton was an extrovert, a real estate hustler, a showman and public relations genius inclined to exaggeration and self-promotion. Similar to many before and since whose fortune was in real estate, he used other people's money and a lot of smoke and mirrors to build an empire that rested on shaky financial grounds. Audacity was his by-word as he "coined race prejudice into dollars."³⁹ In 1905, he was invited to give

Payton Edward S., student Yale college, h 79 Elm
Payton James W., prof of Latin and Greek, Marshall, Texas, h
79 Elm
Payton P. A. Madame, hair work of all kinds, h 79 Elm
Payton Philip A., Jr., real estate, New York, h 79 Elm
Payton Philip A., fashionable shaving and hairdressing and bath
rooms, 83 Elm, h 79 Elm
Payton Susie A. W., teacher, Bordentown, N. J., h 79 Elm

Source: 1902 Westfield City Directory

the commencement speech at Tuskegee College. He told the story of his company and of his approach to the white business world.

If I have a business proposition I want to present to an influential capitalist . . . I present my card. . . . When it reaches its destination, the man . . . whispers, "colored man" . . . The capitalist is curious, wants to see how I look . . . he thinks I am the biggest man in the business . . . [As a result] I get on where the white real estate man is turned down. This is the social economic view of the race prejudices matter which accepts the unpleasant fact and turns it to account.⁴⁰

Payton's initial business success was associated with, and sometimes subordinated to, Booker T. Washington's "Tuskegee machine." Washington had built a nationwide network of small business and professional men in the African American community. Financially backed by Andrew Carnegie, Julius Rosenwald, and other white patrons, Washington advocated a policy of economic development within a separate black community instead of supporting a broad goal of institutional integration. The Payton family had connections with him through the person of Samuel Courtney, Washington's physician and representative to the Republican Party of Massachusetts. Courtney had lived in Westfield for years where he attended the Normal School in the early 1880s.⁴¹ When Washington's National Negro Business League was founded in Courtney's home in Boston in 1901, Philip Jr. was present. By 1903 he and Courtney were two of the four directors of that organization, a position he would continue to hold and exploit for the rest of his life.

Most of what we know about the personal details of Payton's life comes from an interview he gave to the Washington organization that was printed in *The Negro In Business*, a book supposedly written by Washington, but in actuality written by Timothy Fortune, a business partner of Payton's who also served as Washington's ghost writer.⁴² In the interview, Payton described arriving in New York with his wife in 1900, determined to make it in real estate. His intention was to find rental units for the rapidly growing African American population in the city. Racism restricted housing opportunity for African Americans to badly overcrowded slums in the southern tip of Manhattan. Meanwhile, north of Central Park, there were vast new brownstone suburbs that had become the home of the massive new white immigration. His first enterprise seeking rentals quickly failed, and for a brief time he and his new wife were homeless. In his usual manner, he exaggerated

the tale by claiming that things were so desperate that their pets starved to death.⁴³ But in 1902, with the aid of the Tuskegee men, he soon bounced back. Eleven of them formed a partnership called the African American Realty Company, a joint stock corporation dedicated to acquiring apartment blocks to rent to their fellows.

The corporation's program was a simple one. They would approach the white owner of a building and offer to lease the property at a higher rate of return than he was getting from his current renters. If he agreed, they immediately evicted the white tenants (most people rented by the week or month at that time) and replaced them with black tenants who were willing to pay higher rents than usual to improve their housing situation. The corporation made a profit on the difference, ideally paying dividends to the stock holders as well as the salaries of the officers, who included Philip. The plan was successful enough that Philip went from homeless in 1901 to owning his own brownstone on West 131st street in 1903 and bragging that he had spent \$5,000 furnishing it.

The corporation's block-busting practices soon drew the attention of the national press. A Cleveland newspaper described a "shrewd scheme of these Negroes" but speculated that "there must have been some Yankee brains at its head." It explained that "A wealthy and refined white family, finding its next-door neighbors are to be disreputable colored people, will pay liberally to be rid of the nuisance, and by this scheme of practical black mail-and black female-the organizers of the company will add very materially to their bank accounts."⁴⁴ A Florida newspaper commented in a far more hostile and threatening fashion: "Filling a long felt want is the province of the African American Realty, Co., but filling a waiting grave is what some of its backers are likely to be doing before long if the organization keeps up its activity."⁴⁶

By 1905 the realty company had control of at least ten apartment buildings with a street value of \$250,000. But it had also attracted negative publicity, which alienated Booker T. Washington, who always tried to avoid public confrontation with whites. Most of the investors and directors in the company were his men, so he tried to pressure them to reduce the aggressive actions of the business.⁴⁵ Payton did exactly the opposite, however, expanding his operations and increasing the public face of the company through subway ads and promotional stories in the friendly Negro press. He was especially aggressive in the *New York Age*, the major voice of the African American community in New York. That action led to more problems with Washington because he was providing the secret financial support behind the scenes for the paper and had handpicked the editor, who was also a director in the realty company.

APARTMENT HOUSES FOR NEGRO TENANTS

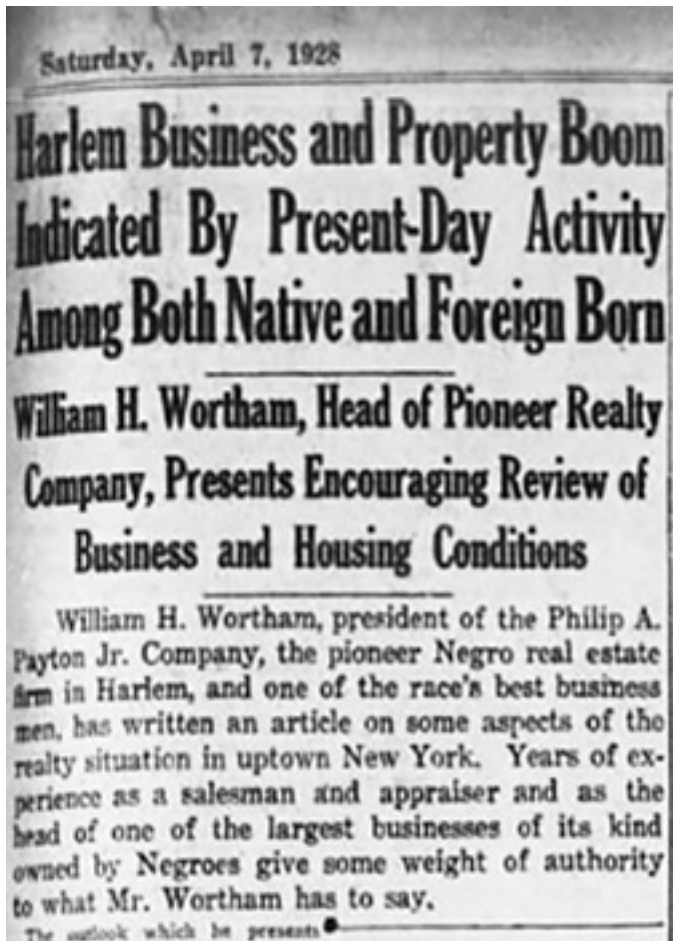
Six Big, Modern Harlem Properties, Worth More Than \$1,000,-000, Transferred.

The most important transaction in the history of this city for the housing of negroes was closed yesterday when six of the best elevator apartment buildings in upper Harlem were purchased to be occupied by negro families. The property is assessed at more than \$1,000,000, but as other property was given in part payment the aggregate value of the realty involved was about \$1,500,000.

The six Harlem houses include the three buildings at 117 to 143 West 141st Street and three similar structures abutting at 130 to 148 West 142d Street. Each of the 141st Street houses has a frontage of 125 feet, a total of 375 feet

New York Times, 1917

Some of the Tuskegee-oriented investors followed Washington's demands and filed suit against the corporation, charging financial irregularities by Philip. By 1906, after many of Washington's supporters resigned, Philip became president and majority owner of the business and brought his brother Edward in as vice president. He struggled to raise enough cash to buy off the other investors and creditors but to no avail. He was declared bankrupt in 1908. By that time, however, he had already slipped away and formed a new corporation he controlled independently and named PAP for Philip A. Payton Realty, Company.⁴⁷



New York Age (April 7, 1928)

From this point to the end of his life in 1917 (ten years later), it is hard to be certain of the truthfulness of any of his publicly announced achievements. Everything to him involved public relations image. According to news stories about him, which he released, he "owned" dozens of properties worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. He was said to be an investor in Long Island and New Jersey real estate in addition to many properties in Harlem. After 1910 he was estranged from his wife, who continued to live in the brownstone on 131st street while he purchased a home on the beach in Allenhurst, New Jersey. In 1913, after his brother Edward died, his sister Susan resigned from her teaching job and came to live and work with him,

serving as a bookkeeper.⁴⁸ His mother also spent part of every year with him after Philip Sr. died in 1908. In the summer of 1916, various newspapers reported that he had concluded the biggest real estate deal of his life, “buying” six buildings on 141st and 142nd streets in Manhattan, valued at two million dollars. He died suddenly a few months later of kidney disease, less than two years after his mother’s funeral.⁴⁹

From that point on, facts about his business affairs totally disappear in a cloud of conflicting stories. According to some accounts, two of his ex-employees took over PAP holdings and developed them into a realty company that in a few years was collecting a million dollars a year in rents. Another news source says that PAP holdings were purchased by Watt Terry, a black businessman from Boston who wanted to rescue African American tenants from Payton’s notoriously high rents.⁵⁰ Some sources claim that William Wortham (1887-1958), a Payton employee who married Susan Payton in 1916, continued to manage PAP into the 1940s.⁵¹ In a 1928 article in the *New York Age*, at the height of the “Harlem Renaissance,” Wortham proudly noted that:

Today Harlem is composed of the cream of the Negro world, in art, literature, music and along most of the cultural lines. . . . In Harlem will be found the flower of Negro genius and achievement in art, literature, business, and perhaps commerce, such as few Negro communities, or states even, of modern or medieval times, could have boasted.⁵²

He credited Philip for creating the new housing opportunities that allowed for the creation of this cultural mecca in the north.

SUSAN PAYTON WORTHAM (1875-1953)

What we know for certain is that all the family’s Westfield property on Elm Street was sold by 1915, during Philip’s life. His Harlem brownstone was sold in 1919, and widowed Maggie Payton moved to Long Island City, where she died in the early 1950s.⁵³ Susan, now Susan Payton Wortham, continued to live in Harlem in one of the buildings of her brother’s last real estate venture. Her husband, William, became a wealthy and successful businessman in his own right. She became active in local churches and social organizations, a supporter of African American theatre and arts, and was described by one historian as “one of Harlem’s most active and charitable women.”⁵⁴ The National Urban League’s journal proclaimed her “well

known in New York City as a civic worker” when she was elected as the “first colored woman” to the board of a local orphanage in 1939.⁵⁵ Meanwhile she established contact with North Carolina relatives and for a time provided a home for an infant cousin who was named after her brother Philip as well as a niece from North Carolina.⁵⁶

The plight of African American children remained a cause close to her heart. She was affiliated with W. E. B. Du Bois’ short-lived children’s magazine, *The Brownies’ Book*, published in 1920 and 1921. According to the Du Bois’ archives website, “Du Bois had long worried that African American children had no place to turn . . . for stories about members of their race. [He] wanted to offer an alternative: a magazine written by black authors for black children.”⁵⁷ In its pages Susan described the Hope Day Nursery where she was chairwoman of a fundraising committee. She wrote that “The object of the nursery is to lessen the burden of the working mother by caring for her babies and small children while she is away from home during the day.” She may have also become more directly politically active during the 1920s “Harlem Renaissance.” In 1929 she sent a note to Du Bois “regretting that neither she nor Mr. Wortham will be able to attend the Pan African Congress.”⁵⁸



Susan Payton Wortham

New York Age (1926)

Neither archival nor internet sources reveal much more about her long life. We know that she occasionally returned to Westfield for Normal School reunions (the last in 1952), kept her mother’s subscription to the Westfield *Valley Echo* newspaper, and continued the exchange of cards and letters with “family acquaintances.” When she died in 1953, her husband brought her body back to Westfield to be buried in the family plot in Pine Hill Cemetery. At that time, the last piece of the story of the Westfield Payton family was played out.⁵⁹

CONCLUSION

The Payton family had a relationship with the larger Westfield community that was unique for its time. An African American family of an ex-slave appears to have had a comfortable life in the town. They were members of

the Methodist church and, although it is doubtful that they were members of other white social organizations, they were able to take advantage of opportunities that were offered to excel in business and in education. Some evidence of their place socially is revealed in newspaper community notes where attention is paid to the comings and goings of members of the Payton family. In addition, the obituaries of Philip Sr., Annie, Susan, and her brothers were all respectful, making mention of their community ties and their numerous “friends” in Westfield. Only one account of racial prejudice and discrimination has survived. In a 1954 article on Philip Payton, Jr. it was reported that:

Battling against prejudice all his life and other parts of the country, [Philip] Payton encountered the evil only once in Westfield. This was on the occasion of the death of a member of the family [Edward in 1912], when Payton and relatives returned after an absence of some years and attempted to find lodging at the Park Square Hotel. The clerk, unfamiliar with the local background of Payton, refused the group admittance. It was one of the worst blows in the family history.⁶⁰

Despite this blow, which occurred at a time when race relations were worsening throughout the country, the family’s ties to Westfield remained remarkably strong. Most significantly, during their lifetimes no mention was made of their race at any time in the local newspapers. In 1954, when William Wortham brought Susan’s body back to be buried, the *Westfield News Advertiser* ran a story about the family. It mentioned that Philip Jr. was “intensely loyal to Westfield” and claimed that he “was often heard to remark that he never knew that he was a Negro until he left this city.”⁶¹ Although the family and its place in Westfield has been forgotten locally, in the larger world, Philip Payton Jr. is known as the “Father of Harlem,” even if the honorific is a bit exaggerated.⁶²

EDITOR’S AFTERWARD:

When Philip Payton Sr. died of a heart attack on October 15, 1908, he was described in his obituary as being well-liked by a “host of friends.”⁶³ However, one can only wonder about the exceptional upward mobility of the Payton family and must remind oneself that most African Americans did not share in their success. For example, in 1885 only ten of the forty-two African Americans who had been listed in the 1880 census appear to have remained

in town.⁶⁴ Since their names did not appear in death records, one might assume that many had left Westfield for opportunities elsewhere. In 1895, despite this high fluidity of the black population, the community reached its apex. At this time, the Massachusetts Census listed 101 African Americans as residing in the community.⁶⁵

However, by 1905, this number had again declined to sixty-six members. In 1895, African Americans comprised 0.95% of the total population. In 1905, they comprised only 0.48%.⁶⁶ Geographic mobility due to poor economic opportunities is one plausible explanation for such a decline. At the same time, the social and economic condition of African Americans was growing worse throughout Massachusetts in the early 1900s. In the 1920s, the Ku Klux Klan became active in the Commonwealth and targeted Catholics, Jews, and blacks.⁶⁷ Nearly one hundred years later, in 2010, Westfield's African American community remains small, standing at 1.6% of the city's population. The Payton family's success is even more remarkable in light of the great challenges which African American communities faced across the Commonwealth.⁶⁸

HJM

Notes

1. W. E. B. Du Bois described what he called "The Talented Tenth" in an influential essay of that name published in 1903. His vision was that one in ten black men would become leaders of their race, through methods such as business and professional success, the achievement of higher education, writing, and/or becoming directly involved in political activism and social change.

2. Editor's note: In the 1870 U.S. Census Philip gave his place of birth as Maryland. In 1876 (on his oldest son's birth certificate) he gave New York, and in the 1880 census he gave Washington DC. Only on his youngest son's birth certificate in 1882 does North Carolina first appear as his birthplace (and again in the 1900 census). This may be due to sloppy census takers who maybe mistook or else mis-recorded "Washington, NC" as "Washington, DC." However, it may have been that in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War emancipation appeared precarious; freed men and women who had made it to the North may have sought to guarantee their freedom by claiming a northern birthplace. Note: 1900 is also the first census that asked for the month and year of birth (as opposed to "age") and is where the birthdate of June 1845 first appears.

3. *United States Federal Census Records, 1870, 1880, 1920; Massachusetts Vital Records, 1840-1911, Massachusetts Deaths, 1841-1915.*

4. "Six Generations of Episcopalians: Mr. Warren Payton and his Great-Great-Great Grandchildren," undated, Tarboro, North Carolina, pamphlet given to the author by a descendent of the Warren Payton side of the family. Although Philip Payton Sr. has no living descendants (since none of his children bore children), many of his brother's descendants continue to reside in eastern North Carolina.
5. Wayne Durrill, *War of Another Kind: A Southern Community in the Great Rebellion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990). This is a history of Washington County, North Carolina and the Civil War there.
6. W. P. Derby, *Bearing Arms in the 27th Massachusetts Regiment* (Boston: Wright and Potter, 1883). Philip's obituary reported that he "went to sea" at some point. The 27th traveled from Washington, NC to Washington, DC by sea. Philip's name never appears in any of the records of the Westfield G.A.R., although the names of two other African Americans who settled in Westfield appear. They are described as ex-slaves.
7. "Death of Philip A. Payton." *Springfield Republican*, October 16, 1908, 10; "Death of Old Resident," *Valley Echo*, October 17, 1908, 2.
8. Although it was not common, some freed slaves followed Union soldiers north. See, for example, the wonderful book by Janette Thomas Greenwood, *First Fruits of Freedom: The Migration of Former Slaves and Their Search for Equality in Worcester, Massachusetts, 1862-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).
9. *Massachusetts Marriage Records, 1840-1915*. It appears that they knew each other in New York city and may have already been living together as a couple, or else Philip may have been a boarder. In the 1870 New York census Philip Payton (age 25), Annie Hammonds (23), and a Richard Bowen (26) are listed as sharing an apartment.
10. U.S. Census Records.
11. Details of Westfield history from Edward Janes and Roscoe Scott, eds., *Westfield Massachusetts, 1669-1969* (Westfield: Tri-Centennial Association, 1968). The *Westfield City Directories* track the residences, the employers and the business advertising of Philip Payton Sr.
12. In addition to a lack of personal documents or letters, no surviving photo exists for Annie Payton and there is only one extant photo of Philip Sr. from his newspaper obituary. None of his children had children of their own to pass family photos and mementoes down to.
13. *Westfield Directory, 1878/79*, (R. S. Dillon, 1878), 16.
14. *Springfield Republican*, October 19, 1894, 6.
15. Michael Camerota, "Westfield's Black Community, 1755-1905," *Historical Journal of Massachusetts*, Vol. 5 (1): Spring, 1976. Although this article is dated and was originally written as an undergraduate paper for the History Department at Westfield University, it remains an important starting point.

16. Quote from by Lynne Feldman and John N. Ingham, *African-American Business Leaders: A Biographical Dictionary* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Co., 1993), 518. For fascinating accounts of the history of black barbers, see: Douglas W. Bristol, *Knights of the Razor: Black Barbers in Slavery and Freedom* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009) and Quincy T. Mills, *Cutting Along the Color Line: Black Barbers and Barber Shops in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).
17. From *Going to Housekeeping*, Westfield Edition (May 1886), 24, advertising booklet with “household hints” distributed by Allen Bros. and Loomis Dealers in Coats, Etc. (Elm St.)
18. Obituary, “Death of Old Resident,” *Valley Echo*, Oct. 17, 1908, 2.
19. Obituary, “Mrs. Annie M. Payton,” *Valley Echo*, Jan. 14, 1916, 9.
20. Douglas W. Bristol, *Knights of the Razor: Black Barbers in Slavery and Freedom* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 140 and 139.
21. Bristol, 137. Editor’s note: Across the nation, German and Italian immigrants gradually pushed black barbers out of serving white customers by the early 1900s. In Boston the percentage of African American barbers declined from 17% in 1870 to 5% in 1900 (Bristol, 164). After 1900, African American barbers often lacked the capital to invest in new equipment and technology that was becoming necessary. In his 1901 autobiography Booker T. Washington lambasted black barbers for failing to capitalize and improve their barbershops to the new standards. Moreover, whereas in the nineteenth century most men had gone to a barbershop for their daily shave, with the invention of the disposable razor shaving was greatly reduced in importance while haircutting and styling became the centerpiece of the modern “hair salon” (Mills, 118-19).
22. Westfield school records are held in the archives of the Westfield Athenaeum, Westfield, Massachusetts. Particularly important are the high school graduation programs and photographs of various classes and athletic teams in the Green District School that include the Payton children. See, for example, *The High School Herald*, (December, 1895), 7 and (January, 1896), frontis, 4.
23. Westfield High School Graduation Programs for 1894, 1896, and 1901.
24. Annie Payton and her husband’s views on education are taken from Booker T. Washington, *The Negro in Business* (Wichita: DeVore and Sons, 1907), p 199-200. Editor’s note: Annie’s comment that barbering would make her sons “lazy” is intriguing. Some African American leaders, such as Frederick Douglass, did not view barbering as respectable for black men due to its “servile” and “unskilled” character. Douglass “charged black barbers to break the cycle of unmanly labor by trying to encourage their sons to rise above the degraded positions their fathers had occupied.” Others felt that the profession was associated with an easy-going, urban lifestyle that eschewed hard work. Perhaps Annie Payton’s fears mirrored

those of these other African American leaders. Quincy T. Mills, *Cutting Along the Color Line: Black Barbers and Barber Shops in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 54-55.

25. Letter to the author from Ms. Gale Gray, local historian, August 19, 2014.

26. Numbers from Dr. Forrester A. Lee, personal email to editor 5/11/2019. Lee is the co-author of a study of the first African American student at Dartmouth, *A Noble and Independent Course: The Life of the Reverend Edward Mitchell* (Dartmouth College Press, 2018). He maintains an Ancestry.com tree of early African American Graduates of Yale College. For a similar study, see Werner Sollors (ed.), *Blacks at Harvard: A Documentary History* (NY: NYU Press, 1993).

27. Dr. Forrester A. Lee, personal email 5/11/2019.

28. James Warren Payton, "Some Experiences and Customs at Yale," *The Colored American Magazine* (Vol. 1, no. 2), 80-87. *Yale Class Book, 1900* (New Haven, 1900); and George Whittlesey, *Decennial Record of the Class of 1900* (New Haven: Tuttle and Taylor, 1912).

29. Wiley College website.

30. Obituary, "James Warren Payton," *Westfield Times and Newsletter*, October 15, 1902.

31. George Fowler, *History of the Class of 1906, Yale College, Vol 1* (New Haven: 1906); Edwin Embree, *History of the Class of 1906, Yale College, Vol. 2* (New Haven: 1911).

32. "Death of Edward Payton," *Springfield Daily News*, June 26, 1912, 9 and "Local Young Man Passed away in New York," *Valley Echo*, June 28, 1912. His graduation photo was published in the *History of the Class of 1906*, available online.

33. W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Talented Tenth," from *The Negro Problem: A Series of Articles by Representative Negroes of To-day* (NY: James Pott & Co., 1903), 33.

34. Eurie Dahn and Brian Sweeney, "A Brief History of the *Colored American Magazine*," on the website, *The Digital Colored American Magazine*, accessed 5/23/2019. James Payton's graduation photo was published in the December 1902 issue of the magazine.

35. Washington, 200.

36. Quoted in Washington, *The Negro in Business*, 200. Livingston College in Salisbury, NC was founded in 1879 by the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Zion Church to educate African American students who were denied access to other educational institutions. The school's creator and first president, Dr. Joseph C. Price (1854-93) was one of the greatest orators of his day and a leader of African Americans in the south. His death at the age of 39 cut short a career that W. E. B. Du Bois and others believed might have eclipsed that of Booker T. Washington. However, it is unclear whether Price could have been an "old friend" of Philip Sr. They were nine years apart and Philip had left the south when Price was only ten years old.

37. *Springfield Republican*, “Westfield,” November 23, 1896, 6. Although he did not complete eleventh grade, Philip Jr. had his graduation picture taken and gave it to at least one member of his erstwhile class, who included it with those of the other graduates. Westfield Athenaeum Archives.
38. Washington, op. cit., 200-201; *Westfield City Directory 1900*; ancestry.com/tree, Maggie Lee.
39. Philip Payton Jr., Commencement Speech, reported in the *Springfield Republican*, “Comment at Tuskegee,” May 29, 1905, 12. Payton became personal friends with Booker T. Washington and his wife.
40. *Springfield Republican*, “Commencement at Tuskegee,” May 29, 1905, 12.
41. Westfield State University’s Courtney Hall is named after him. Courtney (class of 1882) became a Harvard M.D. and also served as the chief northern organizer for Booker T. Washington, who sent several African American students from Tuskegee Institute to the Massachusetts “normal schools” for teacher training in the late nineteenth century.
42. Timothy Fortune was editor of the *New York Age*, a major backer of Payton’s activities and the recipient of much of his advertising dollars.
43. The chapter on Payton and the African American Realty Company in *The Negro in Business* is both laudatory and suspect. Kevin McGruder’s *Race and Real Estate: Conflict and Cooperation in Harlem, 1890-1920* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015) covers Philip’s career and provides a more authentic view of the real estate business in Harlem as the white residential areas were slowly occupied by blacks.
44. *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 26, 1904, 5.
45. *Tampa (Florida) Tribune*, September 23, 1906, 2.
46. Maceo Dailey, “Booker T. Washington and the African American Realty Company,” *The Review of Black Political Economy*, January 1978, Vol. 8 (2), 184-201.
47. These events can be pieced together from McGruder’s *Race and Real Estate*, Maceo Dailey’s article, and various obituaries.
48. The 1915 New York state census lists Susan’s occupation as bookkeeper.
49. See for instance, *Freedman*, (Indianapolis), January 2, 1909, 6; *Broad Ax*, (Chicago), December 24, 1910, 1; *Denver Post*, October 28, 1917, 37; *Duluth News-Tribune*, November 25, 1917, section 3, 4. For Philip’s obituary, see “Payton Buried at Westfield,” *New York Age*, Sept. 6, 2017, 1. At his funeral, the pastor averred that “The purpose this man had in mind was to prove the black man’s ability and capacity to conduct large business enterprises. Above his own financial interest was a passion to succeed that his race may get the credit . . . This is why he referred to himself as a missionary.”
50. *Cleveland Gazette*, October 6, 1917, 3.

51. Statement to the author by historian Kevin McGruder in 2017. See also Wortham, "Harlem Business and Property Boom," *New York Age*, April 7, 1928. Editor's Note: William Henry Wortham was born in Raleigh, North Carolina. He may have been from humble beginnings. The 1900 US Census lists a 12-year-old William Wortham dwelling in the Oxford Orphan Asylum. His 1917 draft registration card lists him as a Post Office clerk employed by the U.S. government (a very high-status position for an African American at this time) and the sole support for both his wife and mother. The 1930 census lists his occupation as a real estate broker. It is interesting that Susan seems to have misreported her age in both the 1920 and 1930 census by ten years, making her only two years older than her husband, rather than twelve years older. She was thirty-nine when she married, which was extremely unusual for a woman of her era.

52. William H. Wortham, "Harlem Business and Property Boom," *New York Age* April 7, 1928. Wortham was also concerned about negative reports of overcrowding and squalid conditions in many Harlem neighborhoods and offers interesting views on the new Caribbean and Latin American immigrants to Harlem.

53. Personal conversation with Kevin McGruder. Various sources say that Phillip and Maggie were separated by 1912 when Phillip moved to New Jersey. The 1915 New York census does not list her as living with Phillip.

54. Adrienne Macki Braconi, *Harlem's Theaters: A Staging Ground for Community, Class, and Contradiction, 1923-1939* (Boston: Northwestern University Press, 2015).

55. *Opportunity: Journal of Negro Life*, Volumes 17-18, 215. This journal was published by the National Urban League (NUL) from 1923-42.

56. *New York Age*, May 30, 1925, 1; February 28, 1925, 5; and *New York Age*, June 5, 1920, 8; October 30, 1926, 10. In the 1920 Federal Census, a twelve-year-old Sadie Wortham and two-year-old Philip Payton are listed as living in her household (both were born in North Carolina) although neither are listed in the 1930 census. Susan's photo and discussion of her charitable work appeared occasionally in the *New York Age*, see for example Nov. 15, 1924 (small front page photo about her YMCA work).

57. The Library of Congress' Rare Book and Special Collections Division provides online access to all but the last issue.

58. W. E. B. Du Bois Papers, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, found at www.credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/mums312-b051-i391

59. *Westfield News Advertiser*, January 15, 1953.

60. "Harlem Was Founded by Local Man," *Westfield News Advertiser* July 9, 1954.

61. Ibid. Editor's Note: The sources for this article are unclear. Were these the reminiscences of elderly residents who had known Philip Jr. in their youth and recalled his words from forty years earlier? Or did brother-in-law William Wortham convey these family stories and sentiments to the reporter? This 1954 article was

the family's last mention in the local press, which had had no occasion to cover the family since Philip Jr.'s death in 1917.

62. Gilbert Osofsky's *Harlem; The Making of a Ghetto* (New York: 1971) is the source for Philip A. Payton's reputation. It was overblown at the time of publication and remains so on various internet sites.

63. *Springfield Daily Republican*, October 16, 1908, 10.

64. *Westfield Directory for the Year 1882-1883* (Albany, 1883), 131-137. Joseph Carvalho III reached a similar conclusion in his chapter on slavery in Westfield. After emancipation, opportunities for property ownership and economic advancement were few. African American descendants of former slaves went elsewhere and intermarried and blended with other black families in other communities.

65. *Census of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1905: Population Social Statistics*, Vol 1, (Boston 1909), 51-53.

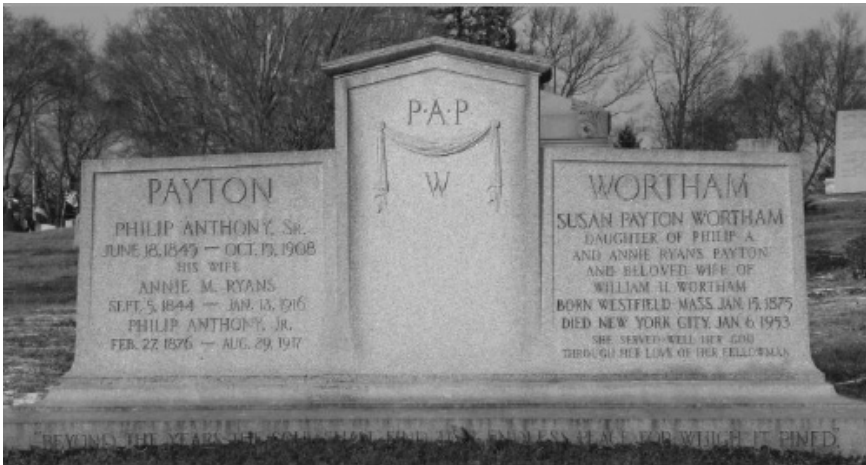
66. Ibid.

67. See Mark Paul Richard, *Not a Catholic Nation: The Ku Klux Klan Confronts New England in the 1920s* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2015).

68. There are numerous books on African American history in Boston. See James and Lois Horton, *Black Bostonians: Family Life and Community Struggle in the Antebellum North* (Teaneck, NJ: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 2000 (revised edition); Elizabeth Hafkin Pleck, *Black Migration and Poverty: Boston, 1865-1900* (New York, NY: Academic Press, 1979); Millington W. Bergeson-Lockwood, *Race Over Party: Black Politics and Partisanship in Late Nineteenth-Century Boston* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018).

Payton Family Gravestone (opposite)

The Paytons were Westfield's most successful nineteenth-century African American family. Philip A. Payton was born a slave in 1845 and migrated to Westfield in 1872. He established a barbershop that became a center for the community. Three of his four children earned college degrees. Philip A. Payton Jr. became known as the "Father of Harlem." This gravestone was erected by Susan's husband, William Wortham, in 1954. This represented the Payton family's last connection to Westfield. None had lived in the city since their mother's death in 1908. Pine Hill Cemetery. Photo by James Bianco.



THE PAYTONS OF TARBORO, NORTH CAROLINA

Whereas Philip A. Payton went north after the Civil War, his brother Warren Henry Payton (1829-96) settled in Tarboro, North Carolina. According to a family document, as a slave he had “served as valet and secretary for his illiterate master.”

After emancipation, Warren Payton became as successful as his brother. “He lived to found a school and become a brick mason contractor and brick manufacturer. He also established the Episcopal Church in his family and served as Warden of St. Luke’s Episcopal Church in Tarboro.” He married twice and fathered many children.

The northern and southern branches of the family stayed in touch and visited. One Payton relative interviewed by this author recalled as a child visiting Susan (Payton) Worthman in New York City. The family’s descendants were active in the 1960s civil rights movement. According to family lore, one was driven from his church in the early 1960s by the Ku Klux Klan and was active in the famed Highlander School in Tennessee.