



## David Abner, Sr. (1820-?)

## David Abner, Jr. (1860- 1928)

Incredibly, blacks began winning elections to serve in the Texas Legislature less than five years after they were emancipated on June 19, 1865. Most legislators represented counties which were known as the "black belt" because of large percentages of black voters, often more than fifty percent.

David Abner Sr. was the legislator from Harrison County beginning in 1874. He was fifty-four years old and a prosperous farmer. Abner was active in every movement for the progress of his race in his hometown of Marshall, Texas. He helped organize Bethesda Baptist Church in Marshall in 1867 and was instrumental in helping establish the first elementary

school for blacks in that city. Abner was also one of the great spirits behind the founding of the Centennial Academy, another school in Marshall. Abner was reportedly worth

between thirty five and fifty thousand dollars by 1876 and was signing notes, bonds and securities for thousands of dollars for whites, as well as for blacks according to Merline Pitre, PhD in her book, "Through Many Dangers, Toils and Snares".

When Bishop College opened in Marshall in 1881, Abner was one of two trustees of the college set up by the Baptist church for Negroes. His son, David, Jr., became the first graduate of Bishop and served as a professor of the college.

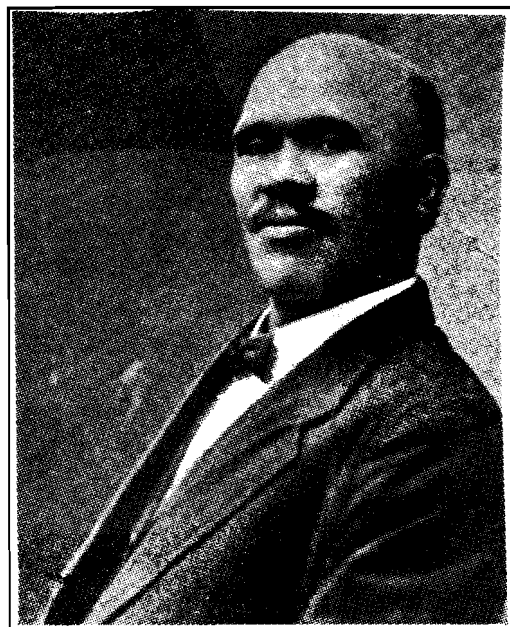
When the senior David Abner died around the turn of the 20th century, he left big footsteps for many to follow. His son, David became the first President of Guadalupe College when it opened in Seguin, Texas in 1884. A. W. Jackson, author of "A Sure Foundation", knew Abner and described him as both brilliant and congenial. After leading Guadalupe for over 20 years, Abner served as President of Conroe Normal and Industrial College and after that as President of the National Baptist Convention Theological Seminary in Nashville, Tennessee. Abner was a founding member of the Texas Colored State Teachers Association when it was organized and served as its fourth president during 1890-1891.

David Abner Jr., like his father, was active in many activities that sought the betterment of his race. He was very active in the Republican Party as his father had been and was a delegate to several Republican National Conventions.

He was one of the leaders in building the Grand Order of Odd Fellows in Texas, a fraternal organization with chapters for Negroes throughout America. In the 1890's Abner was part of a group that owned three newspapers. He married Ella Wheeler of Brenham, Texas who was also an educator and their children became educators. Daughter, Eulalia also became an accomplished musician.

David Abner Jr.'s brother, Dr. E. W. D. Abner lived in Denver, Colorado and was a outstanding physician as well as a fraternal man. He served as Supreme Commander of the American Woodsmen, a national Negro fraternal insurance organization.

The Abner brothers and their dad lived in a time when life was a struggle for all Texans. Their progress in the face of adversity is a lesson for all. They shared their intellectual, spiritual and monetary wealth with hundreds, perhaps thousands and Texas is enriched by their memory.



*David Abner, Jr. followed his father's footsteps.*