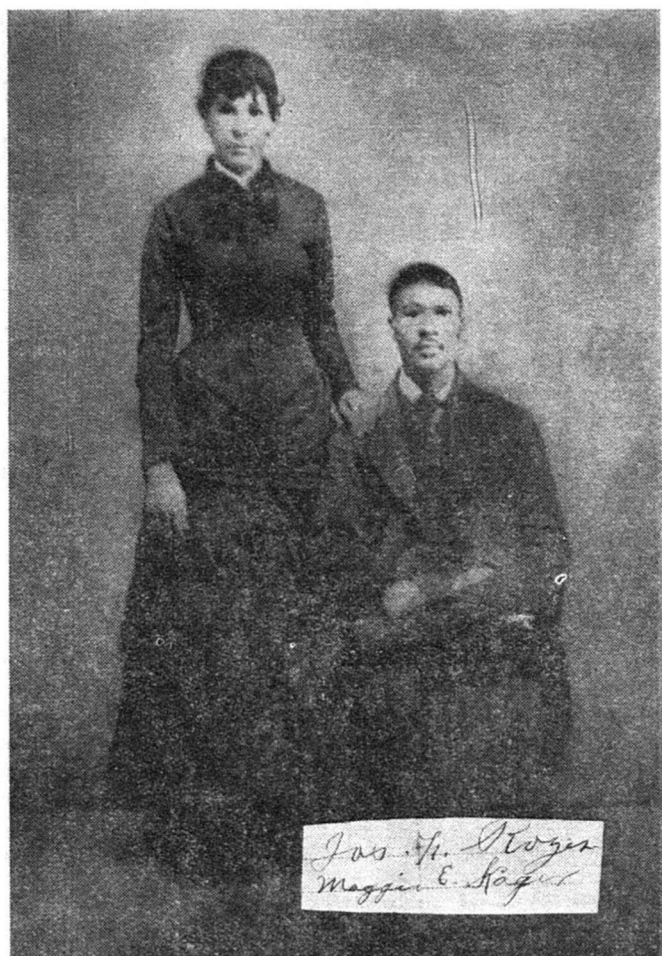


THE HOUSE OF KOGER



BY A. B. KOGER



My Father & Mother at the time
of their Marriage

THE HOUSE OF KOGER

By A. B. KOGER

In the days of slavery it was a common practice for a master to own a husband and an entirely different master, perhaps several miles away, to own the wife. Marriages of this sort had to have the consent of both masters. The respective masters retained their slaves in every way but at stated periods allowed the husband to visit with his wife. Usually a pass was given which stated that he must be back by a certain time. The respective slaves retained the family name of their masters. Moreover the children born to such marriages were the property of the master of the wife and such children took the family name of the master of the wife.

By an arrangement of this kind my grandfather, one Benjamin Finney then living in the vicinity of Horse Pasture, Virginia and about five miles distance from the Koger plantation, was married to my Grandmother, one Sallie Koger. The Koger plantation was in Henry County. For many years prior to the Civil War these two eked out a miserable existence such as slaves of the period and time.

Little is known of my Grandfather and as he died many, many years prior to the Civil War and as there were no property rights involved there are no records available concerning him. My father did not remember him at all, but his mother told him that Grandfather Ben was a hugh black fellow, exceedingly hard to handle and always trying to study up plan to run away to freedom. Often had he been threatened with sale down South and he bore many scars from brutal beatings and harsh treatment.

From this union there were four children in all. Daniel, Briscoe, James Fountain, my father, and a girl Kitty Mae. The dates of their birth are unknown. My father however after emancipation returned to his old home place and tried to establish records. He did find an old *record of some sort, badly worn and stained. He deciphered the date January or June 19, 1852. Personally I do not credit the record as my father could remember so many experiences and incidents prior to the Civil War. He always celebrated June 19th, however as his birthday.

After the War my mother just kept the family name of her master. As her husband had been dead so many years and there were no property rights involved and as all of her friends and acquaintances knew her as Sallie Koger, this is neither strange nor was it unusual. Being unable to read and write for a long time it is not surprising that some members of the family adopted a different way of spelling the name. My father spelled it K-O-G-A-R for a few years but upon his discovery that his master's people spelled it KogEr, he adapted this correct way. Hence it is that JAMES FOUNTAIN KOGER, I rate as founder of the "HOUSE of KOGER."

*This record is by no means intended as a history in its strict sense and is primarily for family use only. I feel that it will answer a very natural question which will arise in the minds of our offsprings—"From whence came we?" I have recorded what I could find and have heard in an effort to answer this.—A. B. K.

"THE HOUSE of KOGER"

CONCERNING FATHER.

My father's early life is a most interesting one. He was of the school of thought that iron bars did not make a prisoner, or chains a slave. He wanted, as did his father ahead of him—freedom. In his young mind he says, as he would ride a horse along by his very young master as the latter went to school, he would dream and picture the day when he would run away to freedom. The War increased that determination. As late as 1864 he made a break to join some Union forces which he heard were passing through. The plot was discovered and to escape his pursuers he turned back and escaped among friendly slaves in the vicinity of Reidsville across the lines in North Carolina. "Better to be discovered and sold by 'pata rollers' as he called them, than to be returned to a tyrant of a master." Fortunately he was hidden until the close of the War and came out of hiding a free man. He stayed on with the friends who had befriended him.

Tobacco work was the only thing available here at Reidsville, save perhaps farming. Wages were practically nil, the hours long and the system rotten, yet something to live upon and somewhere to stay were the longings and prayers of these early freedmen. Quarters in shanties were provided for the single men, in log cabins grouped about on a hillside. Two or three of them stood when I was a young boy. Rations were given in lieu of wages and they cooked very largely for themselves.

My father was somewhat small in size, but with a pleasing personality and it was not long before "Little Jim" had established himself as leader of the little colony. Later he was some sort of a second "boss" in the factory. He noted the waste from scraps and made his first thrift move when he, out of his efforts, bought a tiny pig and fed it from the scraps thrown away by his fellow shanty-dwellers. This I might add, to the banta and laughter of his pals.

By Christmas he realized a nice size shoat, which he killed, sold one-half and purchased new clothing and throwing the other upon his back, hitch-hiked (style of 1868) back to Virginia and his old home with a valuable and much appreciated present to his mother. With this start and encouragement, he bought, and sold some few trinkets such as fellows of his day could afford in a colony of that sort.

In the meantime my father was taking lessons under an old free Negro and negotiated the sixth reader. With his little savings, he now entered Bennet College at Greensboro, N. C. for a few months study. Upon completion of his "college work" a miracle of that day, he returned to Reidsville, rented a cabin, brought down his aged mother and his sister where he supported both until the death of the former in 1882 and the marriage of the sister about the same time.

My father first purchased a lot in 1878 one of the three Negroes to own land within the township at this time. There is no record of his having built upon this property. Later he purchased

a lot on Holderby Street which he started as his home. He rived the boards and built the three room house thereon himself.

His thrift and worth soon attracted the attention of others and it was not unusual to have a Negro on the Trustee Board, or the little committee that managed the few schools that were then being established for Negroes. My father was appointed to such a position of trust. The school was built not far from the old John Watlington Place but on the Thomsonville Road.

About 1870 a few Baptists of the county had organized some kind of a congregation which met about in houses and under groves in fairer weather. They conducted a Sunday School and while my father was not a church member at the time he taught in the Sunday School. As reading and writing were taught in such services, it is not surprising that his talents were used.

Back in that day after the laying-by of the crops and just before harvesting, great camp-meetings and revivals were the order of the day. A brush arbor, church, or school building was secured and the people for miles around came and camped and sometimes, stayed for days at these sessions. In the late summer of 1880 the Baptist church mentioned above applied for and was allowed the use of the school building for revival purposes. Among those who attended from the vicinity of Yanceyville about 28 miles away, was one Mrs. Margeret Graves and three or four children among them a blushing young and pretty daughter, age fifteen years. This young girl was later to be my mother.

My mother often laughed in telling the impression the first time she caught a glimpse of the man she wed. As a custodian of the building he was quite self conscious and officious. Parading up and down the aisle of the school building which was now being used as a church, dressed in a "doeskin" Prince Albert coat, new shoes and carrying upon his left arm a shining beaver hat. To her he presented a comical sight and so she giggled, giggled and giggled. They met and kept company during the entire meeting in March 1882, they were married amid elaborate wedding ceremonies. He led his blushing bride to his home and the House of Koger had been properly established.

MY MOTHER'S BEGINNING.

My grandmother was born in the near vicinity of Winchester, W. Va. way back in the dark days of slavery. Her name was Margeret and her owner's name was Boyd. Boyd died when she was a mere girl and she was willed to an unmarried daughter, her mother and two other sisters going to other members of the family. Her father had died shortly after her birth. Financial difficulties soon followed and she was ordered sold. The first and real lasting impression of her mother was seeing her down on her knees begging her master to purchase her little daughter so that her family would not be divided. My grandmother to be was bought by one Major Henry Graves of Yanceyville, N. C. and she accordingly grew up in the Graves' household.

In time she married one Henry Graves and from this union eight children were born. (see table). My mother was the baby of the lot. She was born February 27, 1865.

It developed that her mother and two sisters were sold down the river at a much later date to one Davis and all took this name. And she never saw any of them thereafter. By way of parenthesis I may add that in later years my mother heard that they moved into Clarksville, Tenn. and that her grandmother Sallie had died leaving her two daughters (spinsters), Judith and Louise. They exchanged a letter or two clearly establishing the true relationship and then both aunts died without ever seeing any member of our household.

About 1878, my grandfather on my mother's side, secured an old and wornout farm of about 75 acres in Caswell County and eked out a miserable existence and this was finally lost by foreclosure. He died about 1895, my grandmother died in 1904. The boys, all now grown, migrated to near by farms and to Reidsville. They all were of that high spirited and proud "issue type" with more aristocracy than money to support it. The girls all being very good looking, married early. They all received some schooling and my mother negotiated the 7th reader, though she read extensively and was a student all her life. I believe, looking back over the situation, that she was about the best informed woman of her age that I have ever met with in the south.

THE HOUSE OF KOGER ESTABLISHED.

My father and mother were married on March 14, 1882 in Yanceyville, N. C. and my father brought home a blushing bride to a three room cabin of pine boards. He had "rived" the boards himself and done all of the building. He had bought the half-acre lot.

Together now they labored to establish a home. Children in those days were accepted as being a very large part of such duties, and a glance of the chart elsewhere will show that in this capacity, they did more than their share. The first home was struck by lightning and the family escaped with only a trunk; another house was built and soon after this a lot diagonally across the street was purchased and the old nest established there. Here as a basis for forty years the family experienced its life. Its joys and sorrows; children—eleven of them in all; all of the common children diseases; all of the younger school problems and fights and fancies of youth; here we built our air castles and saw many a tragedy of youthful failure. Here we climbed to a degree of success and saw partial financial reverses.

My father, high strung, hard and energetic, though noble and kind, was blustering and sometimes cold in his manner. My mother being deeply religious and pious, with a keen appreciation for justice, the beautiful, and true, made an ideal companion for my father. She was the great balance to the team and while my father

was not of the type to ever admit it, he had the utmost respect for her opinions and advice and grave fear for her prophecies and warnings.

Together they pulled in all of his undertakings. In a little pioneer business venture as merchant; in the saloon business; a pool room, barbershop; meat market; back into the general store; an excursion or so into farming and trucking and back into the store and market business. A climb to a degree of success as beautiful as fiction.

An incident concerning the saloon venture and its ending which will suggest the influence of my mother's life upon my father:

When my father was conducting the saloon the first two children were born. He was very successful financially, so successful indeed that he made plans to open a second establishment with a brother-in-law in charge. An ardent prohibitionist, my mother was bitterly opposed to whiskey, a prejudice she carried until her death. She accordingly, had discouraged my father in his undertakings. The day he was to apply for the license is a red letter day in our family's history. My father was in the act of leaving the home when he entered the bed room to discover my mother kneeling in prayer with her two infant children about her. "Oh God," she prayed, "let my husband fail in this awful undertaking. Don't let my little children have to be brought up in the world as the children of a saloonkeeper. Don't expose them to this life, don't please!"

My father went away sick at heart. His application was refused, and in a few months he quit the saloon business. In time he was converted and became a factor in the First Baptist Church where he was a Trustee until his death in 1914.

My first impressions of my father was that of a general merchant. Full of life and enthusiasm and yet stern and straightforward, he cultivated many friends. His greatest fault, as I now see it was that he was too generous. Had our family the total collections due the estate we could live independently for several years. We lived well in that day enjoyed special favors among the townspeople, entertained in real Southern style and proved a help and blessing to the many unfortunates about us. In sickness they sent for my mother, she administered as doctor and general advisor during female troubles and child sickness. She was also indispensable about the business as she could cut meat and attend the store as well or better than my father. When in trouble with the authorities, or in need of financial aid they turned to my father. Only a proven deadbeat would be turned away.

Back in these days only a few could read and write so my parents were the official secretaries for the neighborhood and when we older children advanced we in turn handled this. One of the finest impressions my father made upon me was when I was fortunate enough to be allowed to remain about the store on a Friday evening when he conducted an "Open Forum" at his store.

He subscribed to the Atlanta (Ga.) Constitution, the Webster's Weekly, the Reidsville Review, local papers the Union Republican (Winston-Salem, N. C.) and the Richmond, (Va.) Planet, a Negro weekly. He would mark the important items and then seated upon a high stool behind the counter, he would read and tell his eager listeners just what these things meant, especially as they concerned our people. The respect and love manifested by his eager listeners and the manner of answering their questions always made a profound impression upon me. I regarded my father then, and as time goes on, I still regard him as being the finest man I have ever known. Few members of our race can appreciate this type of service rendered a benighted people during the first few years of freedom.

A general effort in real estate netted the family "fortunes" five or six lots and the seven houses built upon them, while in our day perhaps of little value, in that day were considered next to riches.

Perhaps the saddest mistake made by my father was his venture in politics. Following the general trend during Reconstruction he entered politics. This netted in the long run two mysterious fires, a few fist fights, several almost serious encounters with the whites and in the end almost the total loss of his "fortunes." He "also ran" for sheriff a time or two and for the House of Representatives. In one of these campaigns he made fourteen speeches over the county and polled a few hundred votes. One of the prizes I have in my possession is a statement over his signature and which was carried by the white weekly to the effect that any man, white or black who said that he made some statement attributed to him, was a liar and that he would be in front of the town hall at a certain day to take any such person into account. At the appointed time he is alleged to have appeared with a shot gun in his hands. No one, fortunately, accepted the challenge. As I regard this I can but revere my father for untold courage.

He organized a Republican Club and one of his prize mementos was a letter of thanks from the late President McKinley. He served two or three times on the Grand Jury also.

One other instance illustrates his temper and courage: When a boy of fifteen I wanted a new suit. Thinking that it would be better to lend me the money through a bank, he suggested that he would endorse my note for the coveted ten dollars. (I also suspect that he also figured that I would pay the bank back.) We went to the bank. When we were ushered into the private office of the president, who had his hat on, I pulled my hat off quickly. My father thereupon gave me a scound lecture. "Put your hat on. You are in a public place and on business. Mr. W. hasn't pulled his hat off to you." Feeling chagrined I gave as an excuse that there was a lady present. "You don't owe this woman any more respect than the president does and he hasn't taken his hat off to her." We got the money, and I dare say the president of that Bank and I got the finest lessons that we had ever received.

Another adventure entered into by my father was the operation of a number of excursions. Back in those days trains were chartered and fights, cuttings and occasional shooting were the order. I have seen my father leave the house with two guns strapped to his side and to return with three or four hundred dollars in money as evidence of his nerve and frugality.

In all matters of racial development he usually led. He drew the petitions and usually was spokesman. For better schools; for street lights; for better streets; for longer school terms, and more teachers, and when water was given the town, for fire plugs and protection.

To follow his fortunes through reverses during the Cleveland Administration when he went almost broke and his gradual climb back to the fair liver would make interesting reading matter to his off-spring at least. These suggest however, the type and nature of the founder of the House. Stern and a strict disciplinarian where his children were concerned he was proud to see each in turn espouse the things and fights that he loved so well. Courageous, generous, a helper and champion of the weak and racially loyal, almost to a fault; thrifty and frugal and yet a believer in the doctrine that children will stay about their own home when it is inviting as the other fellow's home. He was not too stingy to provide us with good clothes, some home comforts and pleasures.

My father and mother were faithful workers in the church, where my father was a Trustee for years and my mother regarded as one of the mothers. They enjoyed the Sunday School and religiously made us attend each Sunday. How well these lessons went home may be judged in a way when I record one Sunday School superintendant and three teachers within the immediate family.

In all of the affairs of our family my mother was the faithful and trusting type, who found within my father the head of the house. She asked and learned little of the affairs of his business—a mistake which proved costly, I dare say when she had to assume the leadership.

My father died after about a year's illness, on May 9th, 1914: was buried with pomp and honor in our little burial lot at Reidsville and my mother was left to carry on as the head of the clan. The older five children by this had scattered and the other five were small and had to be educated and provided for. This struggle and fight, as gallant and heroic as ever was made, would within itself prove interesting. Along with this came the World War and three of us had to go there. With such burdens upon her heart my mother found much time to give to civic work and served as president of the Auxiliary to the Red Cross Chapter at her home.

In 1925, believing now that she must get nearer to a school that the others might be better prepared, the family moved to Baltimore where Linwood and I had started our Law practice. Here she watched over her girls until all were schooled and had found jobs.

Literally worn out now but with the deep satisfaction of see-

ing her very large family fairly well established in life, Mother faced the setting sun.. "My work is done now," she often repeated, " and I am tired! I but wait my call home."

She wanted to return to Rejdsville and spend her latter years with her old friends and acquaintances. She did and after about a year on September 13, 1938 died at the Provident Hospital in Baltimore where she had been rushed in a last effort to prolong her life. Amid floral tributes galore and the profused testimonials of friends, her remains were deposited along by her former companions. Her six sturdy sons served as pall bearers. Beautiful even in death, she lay in stateliness, still the aristocrat. Her work was done. She had reared ten children to man and womanhood—all proud and courageous and all believing and knowing that their lives had been made beautiful and full because of the faith, courage and stamina of a great father and gentle and noble mother.

They both had high ideals and lofty thought; they believed in and valued truth and honesty; they preached and lived Christianity and they believed in their children and in the greater day that would be theirs.

I salute the heads of the "House of Koger!"

"Oh God to us may strength be given to follow in their train"

TO FATHER:

Thy life is like a high, high hill,
With rugged crags and length,
And every one who climbs thy trails,
May grow in pow'r and strength!

TO MOTHER:

Thy life is like a deep, deep well,
With water pure and cold,
And everyone who seeks a draught
May quench a thirsty soul!

In Memoriam MITCHELL YOUNG KOGER

BORN SEPT. 15, 1897

DIED FEB. 7, 1907

- SALLIE MYRTLE**, "Sister," Reidsville Graded School and Shaw University. Married Herbert E. Wilson for thirty-five years a teacher in the public schools of Washington, Nov. 24, 1904; mother of seven children; Presbyterian; property in North East Washington, seven grandchildren.
Herbert, Jr., clerk, Balto. P. O.; three sons in Taxi business in Washington, D. C.
- JAMES HENRY**, "Buddie," Reidsville Graded, A. & T. College; married to Miss Lillie M. Anderson, daughter of the late Rev. Dr. Anderson of Pittsburg, Pa. Property in East End section. Four children; Ralph the oldest now a student at Lincoln.
- EUGENE ALLEN**, "Gene," Reidsville Graded; produce and Fish business at Reidsville, N. C.; several pieces of property; wife Sallie Slade, daughter of a well known planter of the Elm Grove section; six children; oldest, Louise, a senior this year at West Va. State.
Sgt. in Army, AEF.; Commander "Jimmy Rudd Post, Am. Leg.; Mason.
- LINWOOD GRAVES**, "Horse," Howard University, "A. B., LL.B.;" for five years H. U. Alumni Secretary; 1st Lieut. Inf. during War. Wounded, received the Purple Heart and a Certificate from French Government; Lawyer at Baltimore; Vice-Commander-at-Large for 4 yrs. in Am. Leg.; Justice of Peace; in politics. Former president of local N. A. A. C. P.; 33 degree Mason and Supreme Grand Attorney for it and several other societies; founder of both the undergraduate and graduate chapters of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity (local); National Director of the Achievement Week Project for 5 yrs.; married to Miss Ruth E. Wilson, daughter of Harry O. Wilson, Balto. Banker; three children; oldest a teacher in Balto. City Schools this year; Property. Union Bapt. Elk, Ward Executive and State Committeeman. (Rep.).
- AZZIE BRISCOE**, "A. B.;" Reidsville Schools and Howard Uni. (LL.B. '24); Lawyer, Baltimore. President Md. Sunday School and B. Y. P. U. Convention; Commander, Walter Green Post No. 14, Am. Legion; Chm. Bd. Holding Co. Author "History of Negro Baptists in Maryland;" Married to Miss Zaidee De Loach of Greenfield, Mass., daughter of the late Edward and Mrs. Susie DeLoach; 1st daughter died an infant; other daughter not in school yet; property; Supt. of the Union Bapt. S. S.; 32 degree Mason. 1st Lieut. Inf. during War.
- WYNONA EARNESTINE**, "Y," Dunbar High (Wash.), Coppin Teacher's (Balto.) Extention Work; Morgan College; Teacher in Balto. System; Married to James E. Moore; one son, James, Jr. (Student in grades) (Divorcee) property; teacher of Bible Class.
- KATHERINE MAE**, "Kath;" Baltimore City schools, Coppin Teachers; Teacher at one time Demonstration and Teacher-in-Charge; married to Howard W. Jackson; one son, infant about 2.
- JOHN FRANKLIN**, "John;" Reidsville Schools; A. & T Coll. Married to Miss Elizabeth Lee, daughter of the late Mrs. Sallie Lee; bought the "Old Homestead" where he lives; two children in grades.
- EARL KARL**, "Earl;" Baltimore High; West Va. State; Editor Coll. paper; Edited a few years a weekly in W. Va.; Married to Miss Dorothy Wainsboro of Charleston, W. Va. and there are two children. Superintendent of Mutual Benefit Life Ins. Co. (Balto.).

Mother's Line

SALLIE BOYD-DAVIS

JUDITH BOYD-DAVIS }
 LOUISE BOYD-DAVIS } No issue.

MARGARET BOYD-GRAVES I
 (Henry Graves)

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|--|
| William Pinkney Graves
(Caroline Williamson) | } | Henry Walter Graves, M. D.
(Lillian Crews) | } | Thelma
Gladys
Mildred
Gertrude
Walter |
| 2 Fannie Graves-Bethel
(Jordon Bethel) | } | Robert Bethel. No issue.
John Bethel. No issue. | } | Issue |
| 3 Luellen-Dismukes-Graves
(Wiley Dismukes-Graves) | } | Charles Francis Graves, A. M.
(Hattie Chavis) | } | Chas. Rudolph
Mildred
Merlyn |
| 4 Walter Allen Graves
(Della King) | } | Harvey Judson Graves (D. D. S.)
(Rosetta Bennett) | } | No Issue. |
| 5 Bettie Elizabeth-Graves
(.....Graves) | } | Ollie Eleanor
(Rev. James A. Harrell) | } | No Issue. |
| 6 Lewis Henry Graves
(.....) | } | Albert Graves (Children)
Rev. Felix Graves (issue) | } | Effie |
| 7 Richard Thomas Graves
(Eleanora Carter) | } | Alonzo Graves (No issue) | } | (Effie Totten)
Lorenzo Graves |
| 8 Mamie-Chandler-Mayes
(Dave Chandler)
(Eddie G. Mayes) | } | (Eddie G. Mayes)
(Fred D. Archer)—deceased
Roy Mayes (issue)
Willie B. Mayes (no issue). | } | Walter—Whereabouts unknown.
Rachel—Deceased.
Carrie—(issue)
Luellen—(issue) |
| 9 Maggie Elmira Graves
(James F. Koger) | } | Mildred Daniels—(issue).
Bessie Chandler, deceased (no issue). | } | Maggie Spencer-Smith-Vaughn (no issue).
Eddie Graves Mayes (issue).
Allen Mayes (issue).
Lollie -Archer (issue).
(Fred D. Archer)—deceased
Roy Mayes (issue)
Willie B. Mayes (no issue). |
| | | | | Heads of the House of Koger.
(See chart following). |

James Fountain Koger

Maggie Elmira Graves-Koger

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <p>SALLIE MYRTLE KOGER
(Herbert Eugene Wilson)
Washington, D. C.</p> | <p>Myrtle (infant, deceased)
 Marguerite Gertrude Wilson
 (Thomas Washington)
 Herbert E. Wilson, Jr.
 Koger Wilson</p> | <p>{ Thomas, Jr.
 Shirley
 Gloria
 Melvin
 Colleen
 La Vern</p> |
| <p>JAMES HENRY KOGER
(Lillie M. Anderson)</p> | <p>Linwood Wilson
(Hattie Terrell)</p> <p>Charles Wilson
Yvonne Wilson</p> | <p>{ Linwood, Jr.</p> |
| <p>EUGENE ALLEN</p> | <p>Ralph Elliott
Anderson Henry
Margaret Cella
Lillian Myrtle</p> | |
| <p>LINWOOD GRAVES KOGER
(Ruth Elizabeth Wilson)</p> | <p>{ Louise
 Helen
 Marguerite
 Frances Alien
 Eugene A., Jr.
 James Rufus</p> | <p>{ Linwood G., Jr.
 Harry Oneal
 Ruth E.</p> |
| <p>A. BRISCOE KOGER
(Zaidee De Loach)</p> | <p>{ Beverly Lorraine (infant deceased)
 Sandra Mae</p> | |
| <p>MITCHELL YOUNG KOGER, Minor born Sep
15, 1897—died Feb. 16, 1907.</p> | | |
| <p>WYNONA ERNESTINE KOGER
(James Emery Moore)</p> | <p>{ James E., Jr.</p> | |
| <p>KATHERINE MAE KOGER
(Howard Worthington Jackson)</p> | <p>{ Anthony Worthington</p> | |
| <p>JOHN FRANKLIN KOGER
(Elizabeth Lee)</p> | <p>{ John F., Jr.
 Winifred Anne</p> | |
| <p>MISS ALIEN FRANCES KOGER</p> | | |
| <p>EARL KARL KOGER
(Dorothy Wainsborough)</p> | <p>{ Thelma
 Earl K., Jr.</p> | |



Family Group in 1936.—Boys in Order:—Henry, Linwood, Eugene, A. Briscoe, John & Earl. Girls in Order:—Myrtle, Wynona, Katherine & Alien. Mother, front.

Md. Commission On Negro History
and Culture

A. B. Koger Collection