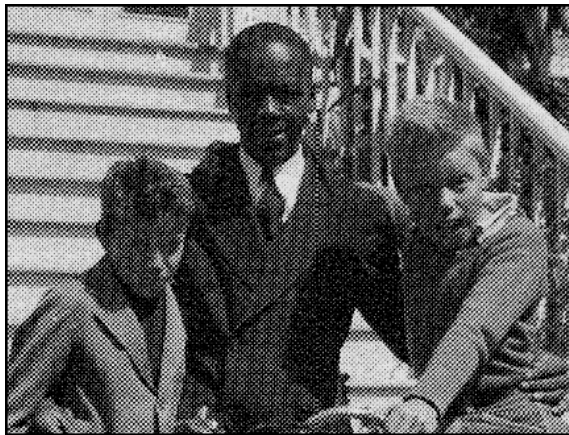


result of his winnings, possibly a product of a bet placed by his trusty chauffeur, the GM executive bought his wife a diamond and emerald bracelet, a piece of jewelry she prized as her favorite. FDB also placed a framed drawing of the eventual Hall of Fame horse near his bureau. In 1931, *Twenty Grand* won the Kentucky Derby and the Belmont, but missed the Triple Crown by placing second to *Mate* in the Preakness, run that year a week before the Derby.

In 1937, the Donaldson Brown family, including 12-year old Greta, moved from the hustle and bustle of the New York area to the sedate countryside of Cecil County. Here FDB purchased *Mount Ararat*, a dairy farm and an estate on the cliffs high above the Susquehanna River just south of Port Deposit. Charlie and Beatrice Burkett, with fellow servants Roger and Robert Lacy along with Roger's wife Mildred, made the move to *Mount Ararat* with the Browns. At first, the owners lived in the "Manor House" and planned for a larger mansion, the "Ark", to be built a couple of years later. Since living space was tight, the Lacy Family moved to Girard Street in Havre de Grace. Their house was situated half way

Page 4

between the Stansburys and Joneses who were at opposite ends of the same block.



Robert Lacy (c) with the Donaldson Brown sons Vaughn (l) and Keene (r)

Charlie Burkett - The Lacys - Horses - Havre de Grace - Colonial Hotel – Donaldson Brown Family; how does this all connect to "Mr. Leo" becoming the "Unofficial Black Mayor of Havre de Grace"? Stay tuned for more of the story, next week in Part 3.

Greta Brown Layton's book *Memories*, privately published, 2005, served as the basis for this pamphlet.

Page 5

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African American History of Harford County, Maryland

A Weekly Publication

John Leo Jones

(1893 – 1973)

Part 2

Pamphlet 0009

March 4, 2016



Bringing Communities Together Through Sharing History



In the early 1930's, John Leo Jones, among other activists in Havre de Grace, sought to aid Clayton Stansbury in his efforts to require equal treatment of black residents in City schools and libraries. Around the same time, some 200 miles north, in a posh northern suburb of New York City along the Hudson River, chauffeur Charlie Burkett, a man of proud African and American Indian heritage, drove several young children home from school. In a future instance of fate, the lives of Jones and Burkett would eventually meet up in Havre de Grace, most probably at the Colonial Hotel, and help change the local political landscape.

During the ride home, the kids were chanting nursery rhymes from school when they started one Burkett had not previously heard them sing. The rhyme went, "Eenie, meenie, miney, moe, catch a nigger by his toe...". Upon hearing the racial slur, the driver immediately pulled the car to the shoulder of the road, turned to face the children, and demanded, "Don't you ever let me hear any of you use that word again." He then lectured the children about how their Mother and Father were a fine lady and gentleman, and expected their

children to grow up in the same fashion. The parents Burkett spoke of were General Motors financial executive, Frank Donaldson Brown, Sr. (FDB) and his wife, Greta du Pont Barksdale Brown. One of FDB's children in the car, Greta Brown Layton, recalled that event in her 2005 book *Memories*, noting that, "she has never used that word since and it makes her jump if someone else does". Most likely, a serious discussion about the *eenie, meenie, miney, moe* incident later occurred between the parents and Charlie Burkett.



Frank Donaldson Brown Sr. (l)
Charlie Burkett (r)

The loyal and trustworthy Charlie Burkett was a long-time employee of the Browns from sometime prior to the 1920's until FDB's death at age 80 in 1965. Burkett and his Louisiana-born wife Beatrice, a well- educated and dignified lady, in Greta Layton's memory, always lived on site with the Brown family. As the chauffeur, Mr.

Burkett was in the position of coordinating the family schedules in order to accommodate their riding needs. He was also the 'go between' for the servants, trying to keep ahead of any last minute changes that would affect their duties. But most of all, Charlie Burkett was a family confidant. In a daily routine, family members shared messages, dilemmas and personal feelings in the presence of their driver. Undoubtedly, there were also times when they sought personal advice from the chauffeur. Referring to Burkett, Greta Brown Layton affirmed her belief, "that, in many ways, he was my father's closest friend." Because of FDB's busy schedule, Ms. Layton also maintained that Mr. Burkett was, in some ways, a second father, taking an active role in raising the Brown children and having a positive influence on all of their lives.

Charlie Burkett's association with Donaldson Brown carried over to their shared interests involving horses. Before working for FDB, young Charlie Burkett exercised race horses for Pierre du Pont's brother-in-law, Rodney Sharp. Daughter Greta knew for a fact that Burkett placed bets on behalf of her father. One time FDB must have won big on a horse named *Twenty Grand*. As a