

the scene with his giving, and asked that any publicity be directed away from him.

The ties between Donaldson Brown and Leo Jones that existed in the late 1930's and early 1940's, blossomed further in the mid 1940's and early 1950's. Two of Jones' daughters, Elaine and Reba, during this time went to work full time at the Brown estate. In addition, two of his sons, Morgan and Reggie, worked as bartenders at the *Ark*, Brown's newly constructed home at Mount Ararat Farm, during special events. Elaine's daughter Libby (Jones) Steward recalled going to the *Ark* during the Christmas holiday for a party with the families of all the servants. The young Libby



Elaine Jones (l) and Morgan Jones (r) were employed at the *Ark*

Pictures (1963) Courtesy of Bunny Brown, grand-daughter of John Leo Jones

would get dressed up in her Sunday best and learn to curtsy for the big occasion. She remembered also being welcomed into the main room for a talk with Mr. and Mrs. Frank Donaldson Brown, Sr. As Elaine and her daughter left the mansion, they always met Mr. and Mrs. Burkett who would ask if they had a nice time.

This pamphlet establishes the existence of a relationship between the Jones and Brown families. It further shows that, despite his busy life, the well traveled industrialist became interested in the local African-American Community, most likely through efforts of the Lacys and Burketts. Charlie Burkett seems to have been most responsible for merging the activism of "Mr. Leo" with the finances of Donaldson Brown. Pamphlet 0011 will further explore other happenings that strengthened this partnership.

Author: Jerome L. Hersl, Jr.

Reviewed: Jim Chrismer, Gwyn Howard and Joan Wiggins

AAH Committee: Evelyn Clayton, Sarah V. Robinson, Sarah Smith, Ann Waters

Contact: [harfordcampaign42@gmail.com](mailto:harfordcampaign42@gmail.com)

## African American History of Harford County, Maryland

A Weekly Publication

### John Leo Jones

(1893 – 1973)

Part 3

Pamphlet 0010

March 11, 2016



### Bringing Communities Together Through Sharing History



**In 1937, the affluent family of Frank Donaldson Brown, Sr. (FDB) relocated from a wealthy suburb of New York City to *Mount Ararat Farm* in Port Deposit. Over the next 2 ½ decades, the industrial executive developed a close relationship with the John Leo Jones family and the African-American community of Havre de Grace. How that relationship developed is still somewhat uncertain. However, if the events and likely motives are pieced together, a probable story worth further investigation emerges.**

**FDB was an extremely busy man deeply involved with the financial world of the General Motors Company. Every Sunday evening he would leave his Port Deposit estate and travel by train, alternately to New York and Detroit. The tireless executive would return on Saturday mornings to spend his precious weekend time with his family. Even after he retired in the summer of 1946, Brown remained busy at his office at *Mount Ararat* while he continued serving on the Board of Directors of both General Motors and DuPont companies. The workaholic Brown had no time to**

**be mindful of the activities in the local Black community, but always showed an interest in the well being of the servants who worked for him.**

**The efforts of the Harford County Colored PTA most likely caught the attention of Roger and Robert Lacy, both FDB employees living in Havre de Grace on Girard Street in close proximity to the Stansbury and Jones families. The PTA's efforts to push for a colored high school likely also found sympathetic ears back at *Mount Ararat* with Charlie and Beatrice Burkett. The chauffeur and his wife had each attended a black high school, and were aware of the benefits and importance of an education. Mr. Burkett's close relationship with FDB enabled him to convey to the GM executive the significance of the on-going struggle for educational rights for Harford County's black population. Because of Donaldson Brown's interest in the lives of his employees and the importance he placed on education, his conversations with Charlie Burkett may have become more than just passing.**

**How FDB became directly involved**

**with John Leo Jones and the African-American community of Havre de Grace has yet to be fully determined. What is known is that in 1944 John Leo Jones, a man of modest means, bought the mortgage of St James AME Church on Green Street. Although the exact amount is unknown, the figure was worrisome to the church leaders at the time. Former HdG City Council woman, Cynthia Laurie, a member of the committee that in 1989 wrote a history of the congregation, stated that when the money unexpectedly appeared, church members knew, but never discussed, that the funds had come from Frank Donaldson Brown.**

**Cecil Countian Grove Miller, a former University of Maryland Regent and a friend of the Brown family, also recalled FDB's philanthropy, especially his willingness to help finance local matters. He noted, in particular, one instance in which Mr. Brown donated \$45,000 to Cecil County to start a fund for social services. The fund today is estimated to have a capital worth of \$1.2 million. Miller also pointed out that FDB was always modest and behind**