

JAMES CHARLES PITTS, SR. 1876-1966



James Charles Pitts, Sr.

JAMES CHARLES¹ PITTS (George^A) was born between 1871^[1] and 1876^[2] in Montgomery County, Texas, to George Pitts and Jane Glover.^[3] He died 26 September 1966 in Midland, Midland County, Texas.^[4] He married first Louise L. Sanderson in Montgomery County, Texas, on 19 January 1901.^[5] Louise (Sanderson) Pitts died before 1910.^[6] He married second Ollie Kathryn Holland in Madison County, Texas on 20 June 1912.^[7]

James Charles Pitts was born in Montgomery County, Texas,^[8] sometime between 1871^[9] and 1876,^[10] the third child of George and Jane (Glover) Pitts.^[11] His father was a farmer,^[12] so it is likely he helped his father with running the farm while going to school. By 1900 he was working as a teacher,^[13] having graduated from Prairie View State and Normal College.^[14]

In 1900 the City of Conroe built a new four room schoolhouse for the white children. The old school was given to the black children of the town^[15] and this is probably where James Pitts worked.

On 19 January 1901 he married Louise L. Sanderson.^[16] She died sometime before 1910.^[17]

On 3 October 1904 the Colored High School opened with 152 students in Jefferson, Marion County, Texas. James C. Pitt was the first principle of the school.^[18] On 23 November 1904 he was elected as president to the newly formed Colored Teachers Institute for Marion County.^[19]

During his time as principle of the Colored High School and with the Colored Teachers Institute, James C. Pitts appears to work tirelessly to advance the education of African American children in Marion County, Texas. During the Institute meetings he would teach seminars on Advanced Methods of teaching.^[20] He was also a commissioner for the Texas State Colored Teacher's Association.^[21]



Colored High School, Jefferson, Texas.

By 1910 his first wife, Louise, had died, but he had been able to purchase a farm for himself and had no mortgage.^[22]

James C. Pitts was also a member of the fraternal order, Knights of Pythias in 1911.^[23] The Knight of Pythias is a fraternal secret society that was formed in Washington, D.C. in 1864. The organization was formed based upon the friendship of Pythias and Damon who were students of the school of Pythagoras. The organization's motto is "Friendship, Charity, Benevolence."^[24]

In addition to the Knights of Pythias, James C. Pitts was also a member of Bruce Masonic Lodge No. 154, the Court of Calanthe, and the American Woodmen.[25]

James C. Pitts belonged to the Macedonia Episcopal Church in Jefferson, Texas.[26] It is probably there that he married his second wife, fellow teacher,[27] Ollie Kathryn Holland, on 20 June 1912.[28] Ollie was born August 1886, and was the adopted daughter of Richard and Josephine [-?-] Dean.[29] Ollie Kathryn (Holland) Pitts died in 1942, probably in Jefferson, Marion County, Texas.[30]

By 1919 J. C. Pitts was a minister[31] in addition to his duties to the Colored High School, and by 1923 he was the director of debate for the Texas interscholastic league.[32] Under his leadership the high school for which he was the first principle had increased its enrollment to 620 and had increased its teachers from five in 1904 to sixteen by 1941.[33]

In 1942 James C. Pitts was recognized across Texas as a leading educator for African American children. James C. Pitts stated that his method of education may seem “old-fogeyish,” not one of the students who passed through the school’s 41-year history have ever run afoul of the law. He would start each school day with a prayer, a song, and a reading from the Bible before continuing with the daily education. The author of the article stated this is, “well worth consideration by schools for white youths as well.”[34]

James Charles Pitts was the principle of the Colored High School from 1901 to 1960.[35] He died on 26 September 1966 in Midland, Midland County, Texas, where he lived with his son since 1962.[36]

Children of James Charles Pitts, Sr. and Ollie Kathryn (Holland) Pitts:

2. i. JAMES CHARLES² PITTS, JR., b. Jefferson, Marion County, Texas, 31 January 1918, d. Smyrna, Cobb County, Georgia, 30 December 2000.[37]

[1] 1880 U. S. Federal Census, Montgomery County, Texas, pop. sch., Precinct No. 4, E.D. 124, p. 65B (stamped), dwelling 15, family 15, line 49, J. Pitts, black male, 9 years old.

[2] Texas Department of Health Certificate of Death, no. 61071 (1966), James Charles Pitts, Sr., Texas Department of State Health Services, Austin, Texas.

[3] 1880 U. S. Federal Census, Montgomery County, Texas, J. Pitts. See also 1900 U.S. Federal Census, Montgomery County, Texas, pop. sch., Precinct No. 4, E.D. 112, p. 155A (stamped), dwelling 210, family 211, line 40, George Pitts household. See also Texas Department of Health Certificate of Death, no. 17364 (1918), Marion Pitts, Texas Department of State Health Services, Austin, Texas.

[4] Texas Department of Health Certificate of Death, no. 61071 (1966), James Charles Pitts, Sr.

[5] Montgomery County Marriage Records, vol. 7, p. 113, James C. Pitts to Louise L. Sanderson.

[6] 1910 U.S. Federal Census, Marion County, Texas, pop. sch., Precinct 3 (Part of), E.D. 105, p. 3B (penned), dwelling 62, family 54, line 59, James Pitts, 40-year-old mulatto, widower.

[7] "Texas County Marriage Records, 1817-1965," online database, *Ancestry*, (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 14 February 2018); citing *Marriage Records. Texas Marriages*, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Austin, Texas.

[8] Texas Department of Health Certificate of Death, no. 61071 (1966), James Charles Pitts, Sr.

[9] 1880 U. S. Federal Census, Montgomery County, Texas, pop. sch., Precinct No. 4, E.D. 124, p. 65B (stamped), dwelling 15, family 15, line 49, J. Pitts.

[10] Texas Department of Health Certificate of Death, no. 61071 (1966), James Charles Pitts, Sr.

[11] 1880 U. S. Federal Census, Montgomery County, Texas, pop. sch., Precinct No. 4, E.D. 124, p. 65B (stamped), dwelling 15, family 15, line 49, J. Pitts.

[12] Ibid

[13] 1900 U.S. Federal Census, Montgomery County, Texas, pop. sch., Precinct No. 4, E.D. 112, p. 155A (stamped), dwelling 210, family 211, line 40, George Pitts household.

[14] "Summary of Address to Graduating Class," *The Jimplecute (Jefferson, Texas)*, 16 June 1911, p. 4, col. 1

[15] Charles Christopher Jackson, "Conroe, TX," Texas State Historical Association, *TSHA Online* (<https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/heco3> : accessed 15 February 2018).

[16] Montgomery County Marriage Records, vol. 7, p. 113, James C. Pitts to Louise L. Sanderson.

[17] 1910 U.S. Federal Census, Marion County, Texas, pop. sch., Precinct 3 (Part of), E.D. 105, p. 3B (penned), dwelling 62, family 54, line 59, James Pitts.

[18] *The Jimplecute (Jefferson, Texas)*, 8 October 1904, p.1, col. 3

[19] Atkins, A.G.S., "Colored Teachers Institute," *The Jimplecute (Jefferson, Texas)*, 3 December 1904, p.4, col. 4.

[20] Pitts, J. C., "County Teacher's Institute," *The Jimplecute (Jefferson, Texas)*, 8 September 1906, p. 5, col. 4.

[21] "Negro Teachers' Meeting," *Houston(Texas) Post*, 9 October 1910, p. 16, col. 4

[22] 1910 U.S. Federal Census, Marion County, Texas, pop. sch., Precinct 3 (Part of), E.D. 105, p. 3B (penned), dwelling 62, family 54, line 59, James Pitts.

[23] *The Jimplecute (Jefferson, Texas)*, 16 June 1911, p.3, col. 4. "Prof. J. C. Pitts left last Sunday to attend the meeting of the K. of P. lodge which was held at Beaumont."

[24] "The Pythian Story," *The Pythians: The Order of Knights of Pythias*, (<http://pythias.org/> : accessed 16 February 2018).

[25] "J.C. Pitts, Sr." *Marshall (Texas) News Messenger*, 20 September 1966, p. 2, col. 4

[26] "Jefferson," *Dallas (Texas) Express*, 8 February 1919, p. 2, col. 1.

[27] 1910 U.S. Census, Marion County, Texas, pop. sch., Precinct 3 (Part of), E.D. 105, p. 7B (penned), dwelling 156, family 162, line 70, Ollie Holland, 20 year old female mulatto, teaching at public school.

[28] "Texas County Marriage Records, 1817-1965," online database, *Ancestry*, (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 14 February 2018); citing *Marriage Records. Texas Marriages*, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Austin, Texas.

[29] 1900 U.S. Census, Galveston County, Texas, pop. sch., Galveston City, E.D. 132, p. 17B (penned), dwelling 352, family 386, line 65, Ollie Holland.

[30] Find A Grave, *Find A Grave*, database with images (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/187329901> : accessed 16 February 2018), memorial 187329901, Ollie Kathryn Holland Pitts (1899 – 1942), Conroe Community Cemetery, Conroe, Montgomery County, Texas; created by Jon Edens 14 February 2018.

[31] "Jefferson," *Dalls (Texas) Express*, 8 November 1919, p. 9, col. 3.

[32] "Fifth Day Colored Teachers' Institute," *Marshall (Texas) News Messenger*, 8 September 1923, p. 7, col. 3.

[33] "Enrollment at Negro School Put at 620;," *Marshall (Texas) News Messenger*, 9 September 1941, p. 5, col. 5.

[34] "School Gets Results," *Paris (Texas) News*, 20 May 1942, p. 2, col. 1

[35] "J.C. Pitts, Sr." *Marshall (Texas) News Messenger*, 20 September 1966, p. 2, col. 4

[36] Texas Department of Health Certificate of Death, no. 61071 (1966), James Charles Pitts, Sr. See also "J.C. Pitts, Sr." *Marshall (Texas) News Messenger*, 20 September 1966, p. 2, col. 4

[37] "U.S., Social Security Death Index, 1935-2014," online database, *Ancestry*(<https://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 16 February 2018), James C. Pitts; citing *Social Security Death Index, Master File*, Social Security Administration, Woodlawn, Maryland. See also 1920 U.S. Census, Marion County, Texas, pop. sch., Justice Precinct 3, E.D. 129, p. 11B (penned), dwelling 43, family 43, line 67, J.C. Pitts household.