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# Montgomery County historians seek artifacts from early Black fraternal organization in Conroe

Sondra Hernandez, Staff writer

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Margarette Stewart, buried in the Conroe Community Cemetery on 10th Street was a member of the Daughters of Tabor.





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Historian and retired professor Ann Meador stands by the belief that history is a perishable commodity.

“Unfortunately once history is gone, it’s gone forever,” she said.

She’s afraid that might soon become true of the early Black fraternal organization The Knights of Tabor’s history in Conroe.

In an effort to preserve the history of the organization, and as the coordinator for the History Task Force of the Montgomery County Historical Commission Meador is seeking information, artifacts and memorabilia about The Knights of Tabor which was thought to be active in Conroe from about 1900 to 1915 or 1920.

On YourConroeNews.com: [Montgomery post office ledger gives glimpse into early history](#)

“We’re hoping maybe someone will see the article and realize that their ancestor was a member of The Knights of Tabor or maybe they have information at the bottom of a trunk or dresser somewhere,” she said. “Often times when an older person passes the kids come in to clean out the home if they’re not interested in it or don’t know what it is it gets tossed. All we’re asking is to pay attention to what they have. Even if they don’t think it’s important, bring it to someone’s attention because someday somebody might want to know something about it.

Just because something is old, it doesn't mean it's not worth anything. There are groups studying these types of things who would love to have this material."

The journey to learn more about The Knights of Tabor began at the Conroe Community Cemetery during its restoration. Great strides have taken place in the past few years to preserve and restore the final resting place of many of Conroe's early Black citizens on 10th Street.

Many of the graves are unmarked, but about 30 or 40 graves are identified. On the grave of George Pruitt the gravestone included "43 yrs 777 333 Sir Knight Boaz Temple 47 K&D Tabor 10012." Three graves of females were marked with "DTR" or Daughters of Tabor.

Meador had never heard of the Knights or Daughters of Tabor and she began to research the group.

Four tombstones in the Conroe Community Cemetery hint at the existence of a local African American group that once was a vibrant, community-involved organization, but seems to have died out in the early 1920s, she said.

The only tangible evidence discovered so far of its existence are the memorial tombstones of Sir Knight George Pruitt and three Daughters of Tabor including Margarett Stewart, Carrie Johnson and Eliza Evans.

"It is not currently known exactly when the organization first formed in the Conroe area, but it apparently was active there during the late 1800s and through the 1920s. The men's group was called a Temple and the women members belonged to Tabernacles. There were also separate groups for young men and women called Tents," she said.

Meador researched the group and wrote an article on The Knights of Tabor to be included in a booklet that will be paired with the upcoming Montgomery County Genealogical and Historical Society's African American Cultural Roots Conference May 14 in the San Jacinto Room, Lone Star Convention Center 9055 Airport Road, Conroe. Featured speakers include noted genealogists Sharon Gillins, Tim Pinnick and Shamele Jordan. Visit [www.mcgandhs.com](http://www.mcgandhs.com) for more and to register for the conference.

On YourConroeNews.com: [Dogs help identify unmarked graves at Montgomery cemetery](#)

According to Meador's research Rev. Moses Dickson, born in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1824, was the founder of The Knights of Tabor.

Dickson organized a group of 12 men who met in St. Louis in 1846 to devise a plan to end slavery, by armed insurrection if necessary. By 1856, he is said to have enlisted over 47,000 members of the Knights of Liberty all over the South who stood ready to fight for freedom, her article on the organization reads.

In 1856, he also formed a smaller secret group called the Knights of Tabor - Order of the Twelve, in honor of the 12 original members of the Knights of Liberty. However, when the Civil War broke out, the Knights of Liberty, no longer needed in an armed insurrection and disbanded with many of their members enlisting in the Union Army.

"After the war, the fraternal Order of Twelve - Knights and Daughters of Tabor membership grew particularly in the former slave states where it offered members burial insurance and weekly sick pay benefits," she said.

One of the most notable Knights of Tabor projects was in Mound Bayou, Mississippi, where the group built a regional hospital for members. This was part of the Taborian general mission to provide services to their members. The Mound Bayou hospital in the Mississippi Delta region opened in 1942, providing the only health care in that region specifically for the Black population until it merged with the county hospital system in 1983 and that building was closed.

In 2012, a successful restoration project was begun on its building and in 2016 it reopened as the Taborian Hospital Urgent Care Clinic.

"The Manual of the International Order of Twelve of Knights and Daughters of Tabor" written by Dickson in 1891 outlined the elaborate, colorful regalia required to be worn at meetings and burial ceremonies.

Also according to her research there were newspapers published by The Knights of Tabor.

According to the 1913 N.W. Ayer & Son's American Newspaper Annual and Directory as quoted in her article, a Taborian Banner newspaper was being published in Conroe in that year with a circulation of 2,000. Research has not yet been able to locate an existing copy of this paper, but it is believed that it was printed in Conroe for a few years from about 1909 to at least 1913, she said.

The graves in the Conroe Community Cemetery are from 1912, 1913, 1914 and 1915. She's unsure what happened to the organization in Conroe after 1915.

While the group seemed to decline in the Conroe area after 1920, larger groups in Galveston, Corsicana and other Texas cities remained well into the mid-century.

Now she's turning to family history to learn more about the Conroe group.

The Taskforce can be reached at [HistoryTaskforce9@gmail.com](mailto:HistoryTaskforce9@gmail.com) if anyone has family information about the Knights and Daughters of Tabor that they would like to share.

*shernandez@hcnonline.com*