



AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF CLAY COUNTY, FLORIDA

THE FRANCIS FAMILY OF GREEN COVE SPRINGS

Francis • Copeland • Lycurgus • Robinson • Forrester
Family Histories Collection



The late Mrs. Carolyn Francis, joined by her son, Ken Francis, in celebration of a past Mother's Day.

CAROLYN CLAIRE COPELAND FRANCIS

Family • Education • Service • Community

The Francis name is widely known, especially within the African American community of Green Cove Springs. Less widely known are the family's historical connections to the Lycurgus and Forrester families, as well as to other prominent community members through blood and marriage.

Carolyn Claire Copeland Francis was born in 1924 in Green Cove Springs to Viola Lycurgus Robinson and Willie C. Copeland. Quiet, astute, and courageous, Carolyn was a lifelong member of historic Mount Zion A.M.E. Church, where she served in many roles. She graduated with the Old Dunbar School Class of 1942, when the school stood on the site now known as Augusta Savage Friendship Park, or Tot Lot. Valuing education, she matriculated at Bethune-Cookman College, now Bethune-Cookman University.

During World War II, Carolyn worked at Westinghouse Electric in Bridgeport, Connecticut, supporting the war effort. She later worked for the Clay County Health Department for more than 33 years, beginning as a janitor and retiring as a dental assistant. According to the family history, she was the first African American to hold that position. During her 93 years, she lived to know and influence her children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and many members of the community.

EARL LESTER FRANCIS & A LEGACY OF EDUCATION

Carolyn's marriage to Earl Lester Francis lasted 65 years. Earl was known as the original bus driver during segregation for Black children from Orange Park, Maxville, Penney Farms, and Middleburg, transporting them to Green Cove Springs. He later worked in procurement for the school system. Carolyn and Earl had three sons: Kenneth Earle, Wayne Dwight, and the late Eugene Lester. Earl's youngest sister was Vera Francis Hall, for whom a park on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard is named; the site had once been a blighted city dump on State Road 16.

THE NEXT GENERATION

Ken credits his mother and the lessons he learned at Dunbar High School for his success. His career included administrative work with the City of Green Cove Springs at the Neighborhood Facilities Center and service with Clay County Schools. He became principal of R. C. Bannerman Learning Center, an alternative school formerly known as R. C. Bannerman Elementary School. He later served as principal of Green Cove Springs Jr. High, which, according to this family history, became the first school in Clay County to receive an "A" rating; he repeated that achievement eight times during 12 years of service before retiring. Wayne followed his father into the school system and worked in procurement. Eugene worked as a workforce development practitioner and later became an independent management consultant and history researcher.

A FAMILY OF SERVICE & ACHIEVEMENT

The Francis family story reflects generations of commitment to education, public service, faith, and community life in Green Cove Springs and Clay County.

ARCHIVAL NOTE: Grammar, punctuation, and formatting have been edited for readability while preserving the substance of the submitted family history.