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### Profiles

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Happy Founders’ Day, Brothers.

As our beloved Fraternity’s founding coincides with the centennial of the armistice ending World War I and Veteran’s Day, the International History and Archives Committee presents this deep dive into the events and Brothers who served and fought for our country for what was called “the war to end all wars.”

This period represents an inflection point in Omega’s history. When the U.S. entered the War in April 1917, Omega had three Chapters with its most recent, Gamma Chapter, being established only a few months earlier. Membership was estimated at 184 Brothers, and a plan for growth was in flux. The War provided the platform for these courageous Brothers to display the values of the Fraternity to the American public while creating a path for growth of the Fraternity. In the five years before the War, Omega established three Chapters. In the five years following the War, 45 Chapters were added. Founder Frank Coleman describes this in the May 1924 Oracle as “a second and greater birth ----- a tremendous step, making the organization an effective agency for furthering the principles on which it stands.”

The genesis of this progress is rooted in the Brothers who served, the leadership they displayed, and the progressive thinking of the Fraternity in establishing two War-time temporary Chapters to leverage the tremendous opportunity the Fraternity found itself in at the 17th Provisional Training Regiment at Ft. Des Moines and Instructors Camp for the Student Army Training Corp held at Howard University that was the source for future growth in Omega.

This retrospective looks at the challenges overcome by Brothers to establish an officer training camp for African American men despite discrimination, prejudice, and treatment as second-class citizens. It highlights the recognition of opportunity and wisdom from the leaders of Omega for future growth. It examines the war years of one of our Founders and the highest of highs he achieved followed by tragedy and sorrow. It provides a detailed look at a 24-month period of the highest ranking African American officer in the military and how perseverance and patriotism was his cornerstone. It lists all 125 Brothers who served in the War which represented an estimated two-thirds of the Fraternity’s membership at the time. And it provides you with pictures, documents, and memorabilia that adds context to the narrative.

Let us take this time during the celebration of our founding to honor these Brothers who laid the foundation for what Omega is today recognizing their “Service and Sacrifice.”
A little over 100 years ago, on April 2, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson went before a joint session of Congress requesting a declaration of war against Germany. Within the next few days, Congress approved Wilson’s declaration entering the United States in its first major military engagement since the Civil War: World War I. For an adolescent fraternity called Omega Psi Phi, this would prove to be a catalyst for displaying its leadership, courage, and an unintended growth young organization which proved to be a defining point in Omega’s history.

This two-part series pays homage to this milestone event through providing an insightful narrative on Omega’s footprint in the Great War and the broader implications it had on another War being waged domestically against segregation.

The Beginning

Many African Americans saw the War as an opportunity to advance civil rights by contrasting their loyalty, service, and bravery in military service against the racism, segregation and unjust environment at home. Anticipating war, in 1916 a movement began by several Black college Presidents and advanced by Dr. Joel Spingarn for the admission of African Americans to officer training camps. Recognizing that an integrated officer training camp would never be approved, Spingarn, a white professor of literature at Columbia and one of the founders of the NAACP, asked President Wilson and the War Department in December 1916 for a Black officer training camp. A month later, Spingarn received a letter from General Leonard Wood, commander of the Eastern Department of the Army, assuring him that an officer training camp would be established if he could secure 200 African American collegiate men or those with degrees. On February 15, 1917, Spingarn wrote an open letter to all Black newspapers, colleges and universities announcing the segregated officer training camp, the qualifications required, and the number of applicants needed (200) for the establishment of the camp.

At the time of this effort, Omega was in its infancy at five years old. At the end of 1916, the membership roll of the Fraternity was approximately 135 Brothers across its two Chapters and its third Chapter, Gamma, was just organized in Boston on December 13, 1916, by Brothers from Alpha and Beta Chapters. The recently elected Grand Officers were James Crawford McMorries, Grand Basileus, Alan Lowery Dingle, Grand Keeper of Seals, and John Gordon Dingle, Grand Keeper of Records (the Dingles were biological brothers.
and McMorries’ brother, John, was initiated into Omega through Alpha Chapter in 1913). While Omega was young, it demonstrated leadership as its members’ response was swift and immediate. Jesse Solomon Heslip, a Howard University senior, editor of the Howard University Journal, and Omega man, published the Spingarn letter and wrote an op-ed in the February 16, 1917 issue noting “there is much good for us to derive out of military training, and much service that we can render to our country and ourselves as a result of it.” This ignited activity on Howard’s campus.

Spearheading the charge to sign up men on Howard’s campus was George Edward Brice (Alpha Chapter 1914). Brice was the big man on Howard’s campus as he was president of his class at Howard, star Quarterback for the varsity football team, and third baseman on the baseball team. Inspired by Spingarn’s letter, in March 1917, Brice exchanged a series of letters with him stating his support for the cause and outlining his efforts in signing up men. He arranged, with the support of Howard’s President, Stephen Newman, for Spingarn to speak to the student body at their Chapel service on March 20, 1917, and meet with the President, faculty, and students afterward. He distributed applications to students including other Greeks on Howard’s campus and, while traveling that spring with Howard’s baseball team, recruited students at other black campuses to apply. Brice authored an editorial that appeared in the Baltimore Afro American on March 17, 1917, that notes “The colored man has always been loyal to America and has never faltered when called upon to defend his country even under the most trying circumstances. If in this crisis the white man is too small to forget his prejudices, we should be large enough to do our duty and fit ourselves to defend our homes and country against a common enemy. I hope each and every colored youth will avail himself of this opportunity and support Dr. Spingarn’s proposition.”

Brice’s effort did not go without acknowledgment. An editorial in the school paper states “The special efforts that the Howard men are putting forth to secure a military training camp for colored men are bound to have an effect and good result. This determination is not luke-warm; it is boiling hot. Messrs. Brice, Curtis, and Goodloe are putting forth every effort to meet and converse with Congressmen on this issue.”

Additionally, the Oracle praised Brice’s work: “Every American of color and especially every Negro officer who trained at Des Moines should acquaint himself with Mr. Brice’s work, for to him they owe an immortal tribute.”

Through Brice and others’ efforts, well over 250 quality applications were secured by March 31, 1917. Unfortunately, Brice had a physical disability (missing right index finger) that prevented him from being a candidate for officer training camp. Brice went on to be a chartering member of Alpha Omega Chapter and served as its Basileus from 1941-44.

On April 28, 1917, Spingarn withdrew leading the effort to establish an African American officer training camp as he reported to Madison Barracks, NY for officer training (Spingarn achieved the rank of Colonel during the War). With Spingarn’s departure, a formal initiative and leadership structure emerged immediately between students, alumni, professors, and administrators. On May 1, 1917, Howard University’s president, deans, and 32 students met to organize and contribute money for a centralized entity to advance the cause of a black officer training camp. So concerned with this effort, the president gave leave of absence for those 32 students involved. This organization was known as the Central Committee of Negro College Men. They quickly established a position brief, put together a plan, and divided into subcommittees to execute various aspects of the initiative. From the monies raised, delegates were dispatched to various schools to introduce the Committee, update students on the status of the training camp initiative, and establish a point of contact at the institution. As a result of this effort, within ten days of launching, applications received...
National Parks.

Sequoia and General Grant (now Kings Canyon) superintendent of a national park, overseeing

He also served as the first African-American professor of tactics and military science.

included a post at Wilberforce University serving to Liberia. Youn's diverse military career (Haiti and the Dominican Republic) and later

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age with a commission of second lieutenant. Young served nearly his entire military career with the all-black 9th and 10th Calvary regiments. During his career, he served on the western frontier, saw combat in the Philippines, commanded the 10th Calvary as they participated in the celebrated charge up San Juan Hill, and rode with WWI General of the Armies John "Black Jack" Pershing in Mexico in an attempt to capture Francisco "Pancho" Villa. He was the first African American to serve as a United States military attaché, first to Hispaniola (Haiti and the Dominican Republic) and later to Liberia. Young's diverse military career included a post at Wilberforce University serving as a professor of tactics and military science. He also served as the first African-American superintendent of a national park, overseeing Sequoia and General Grant (now Kings Canyon) National Parks.

The 17th Provisional Training Regiment at Fort Des Moines

While location and time were set for the officer training camp, no commanding officer was set. The Committee made a strong recommendation that a black soldier should command this regiment. The choice advanced by the Committee was Lt. Col. Charles Young.

Lt. Col. Young's record was impeccable. He was the third African American to graduate from West Point in 1889 with a commission of second lieutenant. Young served nearly his entire military career with the all-black 9th and 10th Calvary regiments. During his career, he served on the western frontier, saw combat in the Philippines, commanded the 10th Calvary as they participated in the celebrated charge up San Juan Hill, and rode with WWI General of the Armies John "Black Jack" Pershing in Mexico in an attempt to capture Francisco "Pancho" Villa. He was the first African American to serve as a United States military attaché, first to Hispaniola (Haiti and the Dominican Republic) and later to Liberia. Young's diverse military career included a post at Wilberforce University serving as a professor of tactics and military science. He also served as the first African-American superintendent of a national park, overseeing Sequoia and General Grant (now Kings Canyon) National Parks.

Recognizing Col. Young's achievements and example of the Fraternity's Cardinal Principles, Lt. Col. Young was elected an active member of the Fraternity through Alpha Chapter on February 28, 1912, along with Founder Ernest Everett Just.

At the start of the War, Lt. Col. Young was the highest ranking African American in the military being promoted to the rank of lieutenant colonel in July 1916. In early 1917, Lt. Col. Young was serving as Second Squadrond commander at Ft. Huachuca in Arizona. Young commanded white officers in his capacity which did not sit well with them. His promotion to colonel and above would increase dramatically the possibility of Lt. Col. Young commanding white troops. Upon his promotion physical exam in June 1917, he was diagnosed with high blood pressure and Bright's disease. In July 1917, Lt. Col. Young was medically retired by the War Department as a result of his illness and promoted to Colonel in recognition of his distinguished Army service. To protest his early retirement and to demonstrate his fitness, Col. Young rode on horseback from Wilberforce, Ohio to Washington, D.C. Afterwards, the Secretary of War gave Young an informal hearing but did not reverse the decision. Col. Young would have no demonstrative role in the Great War. A white officer, Colonel Charles Ballou, was assigned command of the 17th Provisional Training Regiment. However, Col. Young would later be a great source of uplift for the men at Ft. Des Moines.

Another problem occurred before the start of camp. The War Department changed its age criteria for acceptance into Ft. Des Moines. Initially, the minimum age was 18. The vast majority of applications collected from Black college men fell between the age of 18 and 25. Now the War Department requested that black officer candidates be between the age of 25 and 40. The Committee had to hustle to recruit new applicants for the ones that were disqualified in less than 30 days. The Committee used black newspapers, friendships, and networking to fill the ranks and would easily have enough applicants for the 17th Provisional Training Regiment. However, the consequence of this action is that many capable Omega men on campus were disqualified in participating at Ft. Des Moines.

Fort Des Moines opened its doors on June 15, 1917, to 250 noncommissioned officers and 1,000 civilian candidates. College-educated black men from all over the U.S. were represented. Walter Mazyck (Alpha Chapter 1916) noted in the Oracle that "there assembled
at Fort Des Moines, Iowa, in June 1917, probably what is the largest number of college men which will be grouped together in many years.”

Up to the start of camp, at no time in Black history has this large of group of educated African Americans assembled.

Fraternally, 16 Omega men were accepted as candidates at Ft. Des Moines:

Frank Coleman
Edgar Amos Love
William Isaiah Barnes
Francis Morse Dent
Thomas Marshall Dent, Jr.
Warmoth Thomas Gibbs
Charles Young Harris
Jesse Solomon Heslip
Campbell Carrington Johnson
Linwood Graves Koger
John Wesley Love
Walter Herbert Mazyck
Mosby Bradley McAden
William Stuart Nelson
John Henry Purnell
Levi Edgar Rasbury

Also at the camp were over 30 members of Alpha Phi Alpha and about a dozen members of Kappa Alpha Psi including one of their founders, Elder Watson Diggs who was a classmate of Founders Love and Coleman during their freshman year at Howard in 1909.

The Brothers immediately galvanized in true friendship. Many candidates founded organizations at Ft. Des Moines based on their common interest. Among these was a chapter of the NAACP, the Freedmen’s Aid Society, and the 17th Provisional Training Regiment’s Lawyers’ Association. Recognizing this, Brothers immediately petitioned Grand Basileus McMorries to establish a Chapter at Ft. Des Moines. Permission was granted, and The War Chapter was officially chartered in late June 1917. Jesse Heslip served as its Basileus.

Their first order of business was the initiation of Francis Dent into the fold of Omega. Dent, who’s biological brother Thomas was at Ft. Des Moines and initiated into Omega through Alpha Chapter in 1916, was scheduled to be initiated into the Fraternity through Gamma Chapter in the Summer of 1917 but was called to Ft. Des Moines before initiation. Once the War Chapter was organized, he was initiated into the Fraternity in July 1917 though he is commonly recognized as being Gamma Chapter since that’s where his initiation process began. Dent went on to charter Nu Omega Chapter in 1923, serve as its Basileus from 1924-25, help acquire the historic Omega House in Detroit in 1942, and served as the 10th District District Representative in 1933.

While Francis Dent was the first initiation held at The War Chapter, it was far from its last. During its four-month existence, two more initiations were held. During the initial weeks of Camp, Brothers had an opportunity to get to know other men in their Company. In August 1917, six men were “taught the purity and benevolence of Omega” by being selected and initiated into the Fraternity. They were:

- David Alphonso Lane, Jr., - a graduate from Bowdoin College right before the start of Camp, he later went on to become one of the organizers of Kappa Chapter at West Virginia College Institute in 1920.
- Oscar Godfrey Lawless - similar to Lane, graduated from Talladega College right before the start of Camp in 1917.
- Osceola Enoch McKaine – one of the Brothers responsible for chartering Epsilon Chapter following the War in 1919 and served as its first Keeper of Records. He was also elected as the 2nd Editor-of-the-Oracle at the 8th Grand Conclave in Boston.
- Charles Elliott Roberts
- James Carroll Wallace – a 1912 graduate of Wiley University, Wallace earned his M.D. from Howard University in 1916.
- Carter Walker Wesley – as with Lane and Lawless, Wesley graduated from Fisk right before the start of Camp where he was captain of its championship football team in 1916. He served as the first Basileus of Sigma Chapter (Chicago) in 1921.

Near the close of Camp, another initiation was held where four men were “brought into the fraternal spirit of Omega.” They were:
Russell Crowe Atkins – a 1910 graduate of Hampton Institute, Atkins two Brothers were also Omega men: Francis Louguen Atkins (Beta 1917) and Jasper Alston Atkins (Camp Howard Chapter, August 1918), who became Omega’s 9th Grand Basileus from 1921-24. Atkins father, Simon Green Atkins, founded the Slater Industrial Academy in 1892 which is now Winston-Salem State University.

Nello Birpath Greenlee

George Ignatius Lythcott – a graduate Claflin College, Lythcott received his M.D. from Boston University in 1913. From 1921-22, Lythcott served as Grand Keeper of Seals. He was also instrumental in establishing Xi Omega Chapter in 1923 and Phi Psi Chapter in 1933.

Wade Hampton Powell

The Chapter met when they could as there was a strict and disciplined daily routine in the training of these future officers. According to Warmoth Gibbs, “this Chapter met at least twice, and that was hard because there were ten different companies and these people were scattered around in those ten different companies, and we had to meet at a time we could all meet.”

During the time of the Camp, two historic racial incidents happen that had a profound effect on the Camp: the July 2, 1917, East St. Louis riot and Houston riot at Camp Logan in late August 1917. To provide encouragement, the Camp commander, Col. Ballou, along with the YMCA, invited influential speakers to talk and help motive the officer candidates. One such speaker was Lt. Col. Charles Young. Lt. Col. Young visited Ft. Des Moines on July 17 and 18. He inspected the barracks and held informal conversations with the candidates about his experiences. Several non-commissioned officers who were candidates at Ft. Des Moines served with Lt. Col. Young in the 10th Cavalry during the Philippine-American War and Mexican Expedition just a year earlier. During his visit, he gave a speech to the entire Camp. A.B Koger, who was initiated into Omega through Pi Omega after the War, was an officer candidate at Ft. Des Moines and gave a recount of Lt. Col. Young’s visit in the June 1932 issue of The Oracle:

“I saw Col. Young only once. It was at Fort Des Moines, Iowa, during those terrible days in 1917. If you recall the Government had just played its infamous part in the lynching of thirteen of her own black soldiers to satisfy the demand of blood by those Southern hoodlums. A pall and gloom hung over the entire Officers’ Training Camp. These candidate officers were wretched, disillusioned, discouraged and sick at heart. Sedition and Mutiny, if not actual murder and treason, lurked within the heart of practically every student officer here. Seemingly the Government sense the situation and then suddenly along came Col. Charles Young.

He spoke only twenty minutes, but with such sincerity and feeling! His personality was there to sustain him. He had suffered; his soul...
During Meuse-Argonne offensive, 1LT Thomas Marshall Dent, Jr received orders to advance from Vienne-le-Chateau in northeast France. Dent led a platoon within Company M, 368th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Battalion, 184th Infantry Brigade, 92nd Division. From September 25-30, 1918, the 368th Infantry was involved in the advance against the Germans. During that time, Dent's Company commander, Captain R. H. Williams, notes that Dent's "conduct was at all times characterized by fearlessness and initiative." Dent's platoon captured a German automatic rifle which freed up a key bridge crossing. Lt. Col. Allen Greer said that Dent "displayed courage and leadership, and his conduct should be an example to other officers of the Division."

Dent received a commendation for special bravery and heroism. He was promoted to Captain and assigned commander of Company L of the 368th. However, there were those white officers in the military who were not happy with an African American officer receiving this type of praise or advancement. After Dent returned to the U.S., he was administered a fitness evaluation by the Army’s Board of Officers for possible entry in the regular Army. The scope of this evaluation covered intelligence, leadership, and other attributes. The Board denied entry citing that he was "unqualified by reasons of qualities inherent in the Negro race" that "Negroes are deficient in moral fiber and force of character rendering them unfit as officers and leaders of men."

Regardless of this ploy, Dent received the Silver Star for "gallantry in action" and "his brilliant leadership" on June 3, 1919. That same month, the inaugural issue of The Oracle was released. The Brothers of Omega recognized Dent's heroism as they featured a full page picture of him opposite the Introduction page with the caption "who on the battlefield of France, brought glory to himself, his Fraternity, and his race."
Proceedings of a Board of Officers appointed by paragraph 8, Special Orders No. 34, Headquarters, Camp Meade, Maryland, February 6, 1919, to investigate and make recommendations relative to the fitness of:

- Dent (Surname)  Thomas (First Name)  Marshall (Middle Name)  Capt.  36th Inf. (Rank) (Organization)

for appointment in the Regular Army.

The Board met 1:00 P.M., February 26, 1919.
(Hour) (Month) (Day)

Present: Colonel Charles R. Hoyes, 17th Infantry,
Lieutenant Colonel Sloothan Yard, 17th Infantry,
Major Marshall H. Quesnberry, 17th Infantry.

The Board examined all available witnesses and records and awarded the following ratings:

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<th>Leadership</th>
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<th>Value</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
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<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
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The Board, therefore, recommends that

- Dent (Surname)  Thomas (First Name)  Marshall (Middle Name)  Capt.  36th Inf. (Rank) (Organization)

be not examined for appointment in the Regular Army.

Reason - Unqualified by reason of qualities inherent in the negro race. An opinion of the Board based on the testimony of five white officers serving with the 368th Infantry. Negroes are deficient in moral fibre and force of character rendering them unfit as officers and leaders of men.

Charles R. Hoyes,
Colonel, Infantry,
President.

Slothen Yard,
Lieutenant Colonel, 17th Infantry,
Member.

Marshall H. Quesnberry,
Major, 17th Infantry,
Recorder.

A TRUE COPY:

[Signature]

Adjutant.
In any organization's history, there exist inflection points that serve as critical historic markers of change for that organization. Omega is no different. One of those markers is the creation of a temporary Chapter, Camp Howard Chapter, that was established for less than a month during late summer of 1918.

By the early spring of 1918, the U.S. was fully immersed in World War I. Hundreds of thousands of troops were being hurriedly trained and sent overseas to battle the Germans. The War and its demand for soldiers exposed a major issue that existed in the military: it was woefully unprepared for military officer training. In response, the War Department established the Student Army Training Corps (S.A.T.C.) which purpose was to provide 6-8 weeks of technical military training to college men on their respective campus. A total of 157 colleges and universities, including 13 HBCUs, were contracted by the War Department to host S.A.T.C. for its male student population. Howard University was not only contracted to host S.A.T.C. but lobbied to secure a special Camp where select African American students and faculty members from over 70 colleges and universities were to be provided training for military instruction. Upon completion of the program, these individuals will serve as S.A.T.C. instructors at their respective institutions. In total, 457 students and professors attended this special S.A.T.C. Instructor Camp which ran from August 1 through September 16, 1918.

Several Omega men were selected by Howard and Lincoln Universities to attend the Instructor Camp. They were Eugene Ellis Alston (Beta Chapter), William Justin Carter, Jr. (Alpha Chapter), William McKinley Peterz (Beta Chapter), Wendell Marion Stevens (Beta Chapter), and Julius Albert Thomas, Jr. (Alpha Chapter). Additionally, three Omega men, First Lieutenants Campbell Carrington Johnson, John Wesley Love, and John Henry Purnell, who received their commissions at Ft. Des Moines a year earlier, were assigned to the command at the Instructor Camp.

On the heels of the success of the War Chapter at Ft. Des Moines a year earlier, the officers of the Fraternity realized another special opportunity presented itself for growth. The Grand Chapter, led by the 6th Grand Basileus, Clarence F. Holmes, Jr., appointed Julius Thomas and Clarence Osceola Lewis, who taught Math at Howard, to investigate the feasibility of organizing a special temporary Chapter during the Camp’s existence. After providing a positive report, they were then tasked with selecting possible candidates for initiation from the participants of the Camp. After several days, they provided a list of thirty men for consideration. On the evening of Sunday, September 1, 1918, 28 men consisting of 22 students and 6 faculty instructors from nine different schools were initiated into the fold of Omega at the Alpha Chapter Fraternity House located at 322 T St. near campus.

On Monday, September 9, 1918, Grand Basileus Holmes, who at the time was in his final year of Dental School at Howard, called the first and what was likely the only official meeting of the Camp Howard Chapter. At the meeting, Julius Thomas was elected Chapter Basileus, and newly initiated Bros. Louis Gans and J. Alston Atkins were elected Keeper of Records and Keeper of Seals, respectively. A week later, Camp concluded but not before the Chapter held a farewell reception at the Alpha Chapter Frat House to “sustain the good fellowship and fraternal association that already existed.” According to the June 1919 Oracle, “each Brother had an opportunity to express his views and ideas” while listening to words from Lieutenants Johnson, Love, and Purnell.
At the close of the reception, the life of Camp Howard Chapter came to an end.

The impact of Camp Howard Chapter was profound and immediate. Four months after the close of Camp, on January 22, 1919, the Omega men from Camp Howard Chapter who were from Fisk and Meharry established Delta Chapter in Nashville, TN. Zeta Chapter was established at Virginia Union University in part by Camp Howard Chapter Bros. Victor Smith, Henry Hucles, and Melvin Walker in the home of famed Richmond entrepreneur Maggie L. Walker, Melvin's mother, on October 30, 1919. Eta Chapter was then established by those from the Camp Howard Chapter who were from Atlanta University and Morehouse in December 1919. Additionally, in 1920, Kappa Chapter was founded at West Virginia Collegiate Institute (now West Virginia State University) by Albert Brown and Dennis Smith, both of Camp Howard Chapter, and David Lane, who was initiated through the War Chapter at Ft. Des Moines. In 1921, Rho Chapter was established at Biddle University (now Johnson C. Smith University) by James Seabrook and Rudolph Wyche after a prolonged battle with University officials and faculty. In the seven-year period from 1911 through 1918, Omega established only three permanent Chapters. In the three year period of 1919 through 1921, twelve Chapters were established with five of the twelve established by those initiated through Camp Howard Chapter.

The men from Camp Howard left their mark on Omega and society as well. J. Alston Atkins became Omega's 9th Grand Basileus in 1921. He, along with Charles Chandler was part of the chartering members of Chi Chapter at Yale University in 1921. Both George Brantley and Clinton Warner were District Representatives. In 1921, Joseph Berry helped organize Sigma Chapter (which eventually became Sigma Omega Chapter in 1923) in Chicago then, in 1923, Iota Chapter at the University of Chicago. Charleston Cox was one of the founding Brothers of Zeta Phi Chapter in Indianapolis in 1925. Douglas Jenkins served as Delta Chapter's first Basileus in 1919 and helped organized Omicron Phi Chapter at Columbia, SC in 1926. William Wethers served as Basileus of Upsilon Phi Chapter in Newark, NJ and Vice Basileus of Xi Phi Chapter in New York. Richard Wyche was Keeper of Records for Epsilon Chapter in 1923 and Basileus of Pi Phi Chapter in 1934-35. Lawrence Harper was Dean of Men at Paine College for 30 years and served as Basileus of Psi Omega Chapter in Augusta, GA. Henry Hucles is a famed football, basketball, baseball, and tennis coach and Athletic Director at Virginia Union and Prairie View A&M for 50 years. James Seabrook was President of Fayetteville State Normal School (now Fayetteville State University) from 1933-56.

The inflection point of Camp Howard Chapter began Omega's expansion not only in the South but nationally.
Tribute is paid to the Brothers who courageously represented our country, race, and Fraternity. On April 2, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson went before a joint session of Congress requesting a declaration of war against Germany. Within the next few days, Congress approved the President's request entering the United States in its first major military engagement since the Civil War. At the time of the U.S. entry into World War I, Omega was in its infancy at five and a half years old with three Chapters and approximately 173 initiated and 11 elected (honorary) members. Given this, Brothers answered the call.

In total, 125 Brothers of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity served our country during World War I:

- 58 enlisted, drafted or were already in the military
- 38 were initiated into the Fraternity through either the War Chapter (10) at Ft. Des Moines or the Camp Howard Chapter (28) during Student Army Training Corps (S.A.T.C.)
- 6 were YMCA Secretaries who served troops at military camps in the U.S. and abroad
- 23 enlisted through the participation and completion of their local S.A.T.C. camp at their college

The following is a list of the 125 Brothers who served in World War I:

**Commissioned Officers**

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Commissioned at Ft. Des Moines</th>
<th>Initiated War Chapter</th>
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<tr>
<td>COL Charles Denton Young</td>
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- CPT Thomas Marshall Dent, Jr.
- CPT Campbell Carrington Johnson
- CPT John Henry Purnell
- 1LT William Isaiah Barnes
- 1LT Frank Coleman
- 1LT Francis Morse Dent
- 1LT Linwood Graves Koger
- 1LT John Wesley Love
- 1LT Walter Herbert Mazyck
- 1LT William Stuart Nelson
- 2LT Warmoth Thomas Gibbs
- 2LT Mosby Bradley McAden
- CHAPLAIN Edgar Amos Love

**Non-Commissioned Officers**

- SGT Samuel Joseph Baskerville
- SGT George Clayton Branch
- SGT William Tunnel Burke
- SGT Robert Green Harrison
- SGT Dean Ethaniel Hart
- SGT Oliver Livingstone Johnson
- SGT Charles Talmage Kimbrough
- SGT Henry McClellan Marlowe
- SGT Thomas Henry Miles, Jr.
- SGT Robert Nichols Owens
- SGT Louis Henry Portlock
- SGT Thomas Augustus Williams
- SGT Ulysses Simpson Young, Jr.
- CPL Samuel Alfred Allen
- CPL Charles Gardner Archer
- CPL Edward Thomas Batey
- CPL Clarence Wilmor Cruse
- CPL De Witte Talmage Ford
- CPL William Barrington Jason
- CPL Moses Lafayette Kiser
- CPL Myers Erskine Proctor
- CPL Walter Arnett Simmons

**Privates & Other**

- PVT Cato Wesley Adams
- PVT Darlington Labarre Asbury
- PVT Claude Wesley Blackmon
- PVT Harsha Flemister Bouyer
- PVT William Edward Bush
- PVT Harlan Allen Carter
- PVT Junius Edward Fowlkes
- PVT Gordon Vincent Green
- PVT Henry Myrtle Hall
- PVT Emory Albert James
- PVT Clavius Winfield McNeil
- PVT David Gladstone Morris
- PVT Theodore O'Fischel Randolph
- PVT Guy Stephen Ruffin
- PVT William Gerald Smith
- PVT Charles Wilson Thompson
- MUS 1Cl James Churchman Cooper
- Matt3c Linton Carter Ellis (Navy)
S.A.T.C.
S.A.T.C. - Instructors Camp @ Howard University (Camp Howard)
PVT Eugene Ellis Alston
PVT William Justin Carter, Jr.
PVT William McKinley Peterz
PVT Wendell Marion Stevens
PVT Julius Albert Thomas, Jr.

S.A.T.C. - Instructors Camp @ Howard University - Initiated Camp Howard Chapter
PVT Jasper Alston Atkins
PVT Joseph Alonzo Berry
PVT George Dennis Brantley
PVT Albert Grant Brown
PVT John Thomas Caruthers
PVT Charles Augustus Chandler
PVT Alfred Theophilus Clarke
PVT Charles Burton Cox
PVT Lewis Arthur Dominis
PVT Douglas Beecher Fulwood
PVT Louis Herman Gans, Jr.
PVT Frank Elmer Gerran
PVT Dennis Wilson Graham
PVT Lawrence Raymond Harper
PVT Horace Aurelius Hodge
PVT Henry Boy Hucles
PVT Douglas Kelis Jenkins
PVT Christopher Lancaster Morgan
PVT Arnett Price Scott
PVT James Ward Seabrook
PVT Denis Edward Smith
PVT Harvey Miles Smith
PVT Victor Claude Smith
PVT Homer Milton Taylor
PVT Melvin DeWitt Walker
PVT Clinton Ellsworth Warner
PVT William Alphonso Wethers
PVT Rudolph Melville Wyche

S.A.T.C. - Other Colleges & Universities
PVT Francis Loguen Atkins
PVT George William Brown
PVT Stanley Moreland Douglas
PVT Benamin F. Dyer
PVT James Louis Harris
PVT Clarence Albert Hayes
PVT Howard Lancelot Hucles
PVT Edward Ruffin Jefferson
PVT Albert Alexander Kildare
PVT Jesse Henry Lawrence
PVT Charles Herbert Marshall, Jr.
PVT Isaac Newton Miller
PVT William Erskin Morrow
PVT John Prescott Murchison
PVT Robert Nelson Cornelius Nix
PVT Frederick Allen Parker
PVT Charles Henry Parrish, Jr.
PVT Randolph David Ragsdale
PVT John King Rector
PVT Russell Viley Rice
PVT Percy Scott Richardson
PVT Vernon Cornelius Riddick
PVT Bruce Columbus Williams

YMCA Secretaries
Matthew Washington Bullock
George Edgar Hall
James Crawford McMorries
Robert Allen Pritchett
Walter Payne Stanley
Arthur Daniel Williams

Gravestones of Omega Men who Served in WWI

PVT Stanley Moreland Douglas
PVT James Ward Seabrook & PVT Rudolph Melville Wyche
PVT Isaac Newton Miller
PVT Vernon Cornelius Riddick
Frank Coleman's war story didn't start in 1917. It starts in 1909 at Howard University, and it involves one of the most important persons in his life, Mary Edna Brown.

The 1909-10 academic year at Howard University proved to be groundbreaking in the University's short history. A new Italian Renaissance-styled library was completed and dedicated on April 25, 1910, to house the University's 45,000+ books and pamphlets through a donation of $50,000 by philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. Similarly, the cornerstone was laid on a new $90,000, state-of-the-art, four-floor Science Hall in November 1909. A relatively new Instructor of English, Ernest Everett Just, was assigned to assist Professor Richard Schuh in expanding the biology course offering and teach several new classes. On Thanksgiving Day 1909, close to 2,000 fans witnessed Howard's football team defeat its rival, Lincoln University (PA), 5-0, for the first time since the contest started in 1892. But most significant event was the entry of the largest freshman class in Howard's history (53) which began classes on September 22, 1909. Unbeknownst to any of them from this freshman class, two men would go on to establish Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity at Indiana University, five women would leave one sorority and help establish a new sorority, Delta Sigma Theta, with a focus on service, and three men who were strangers on first day of class would become lifelong friends and establish a fraternity, Omega Psi Phi, based on that friendship.

Frank Coleman and Mary Edna Brown were part of this historic freshman class. Both Coleman and Brown were Washington natives though neither knew each other before that first day at Howard. Frank Coleman was the seventh of eight children born to Benjamin and Fannie E. Coleman. Coleman's father, Benjamin, worked at the Government Printing Office as a skilled laborer while his mother was a housewife. Coleman entered the famed M Street High School in Washington, D.C. in 1904 where he immersed himself into the school's Cadet Corp. As a four year member of the Corp, Coleman rose the leadership ranks from cadet to Captain of Company B during his four-year tenure receiving an award for his marksmanship. 1908 was a celebration year for Benjamin and Fannie Coleman as they saw their youngest son, Frank, graduate from high school and their oldest son, William, earn his Bachelor of Laws degree from Howard in the same year. However, pain knew the Coleman family as well as four of the Coleman children died before Frank Coleman followed his brother's footsteps and entered Howard University in 1909.

Mary Edna Brown's path to Howard was direct. She was the third of six children born to Rev. Sterling and Adelaide Brown in July 1892. In what was extremely rare for the time, both of her parents were college educated. Her father, Rev. Sterling Nelson Brown, rose from slavery to earn his B.A. from Fisk University in 1885, his B.D. from Oberlin College in 1888, and his M.A. from Fisk in 1891. A prominent D.C. theologian and pastor of the Lincoln Temple Congregational Church, he also served as a professor in the School of Theology at Howard.
from 1892 to 1929. Her mother, the former Adelaide Allen, received her B.A. from Fisk in 1891. It was at Fisk that her parents met and married in 1884. Known as Edna to her family and friends, she attended the Howard Academy, HU’s school for high school students, graduating in 1909.

Edna and Frank met that fateful day in September 1909 as they started their educational journey at Howard. While they did not know each other, both had friends from high school at Howard. Several members of the Coleman’s graduating at M Street High School attended Howard while almost a dozen of Brown’s graduating Academy class, which numbered 26 students, would attend Howard including Oscar James Cooper, co-founder of Omega Psi Phi, Ethel Alice Carr, and Jimmie Belle Bugg who both, along with Edna and 19 other women, would establish Delta Sigma Theta. During this time at Howard, the entering class took all required subjects such as English, Mathematics, Bible, and Psychology, together as a group as they matriculated toward their degree each year. Brown and Coleman got to know one another in and out of the classroom through taking shared classes together such as Ernest Everett Just’s required class, Composition and Rhetoric, and Rev. Sterling N. Brown’s required course, Biblical Introduction, together. They both were involved in extracurricular activities at Howard with Brown being a member of the Howard University Dramatic Club, writing award-winning prose, and vice president of the senior class while Coleman wrote for the school’s newspaper, the Howard Journal, and was a member of the Kappa Sigma Debating Society.

Coleman’s activities outside the classroom advanced dramatically when, in 1911, he, along with two of his best friends and classmates, Edgar Amos Love and Oscar James Cooper and their advisor, Professor Just, founded the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity based on the foundation of their friendship and the principles of Manhood, Scholarship, Perseverance, and Uplift. Brown was active with her sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha. However, growing dissension with its direction prompted the membership for change from a social organization to a service-based organization. In January 1913, Edna and twenty-one of her fellow Sorors, formed a new Sorority, Delta Sigma Theta, at Howard. It’s noted that many of the formation meetings for the new sorority occurred in the Brown’s home which was located right next to the Howard campus. In the midst of the women’s suffrage movement, Edna and her new Sorority sisters made their first public mark as an organization only two months after their founding by joining 5,000 supporters in a major women’s suffrage march on March 3, 1913 in Washington, D.C., a day before Woodrow Wilson was inaugurated as the 28th President of the United States.

Both Edna and Frank’s siblings followed them to Howard. Coleman’s younger sister, Grace, entered Howard a year after him in 1910 and was one of the first initiates into Delta Sigma Theta Sorority by Edna and her Sorors in 1913. Grace Coleman would go on to serve as Alpha Chapter, Delta Sigma Theta President and graduate from Howard in 1914. Edna’s sisters, Elsie and Helen, entered Howard in 1913 and 1916 respectively (both became members of Delta Sigma Theta while at Howard).

Edna and Frank graduated with a bachelor degree from Howard on June 4, 1913. Edna was one of two graduates earning magna cum laude honors (the other was Clarence Osceola Lewis, Alpha Chapter Charter Line). She was also valedictorian of her class. Frank received honors as well graduating cum laude being the only individual in his class receiving a B.S. degree. Both of their paths led them away from Washington after graduating. Edna headed west to Oberlin, OH to work on her Masters at Oberlin College, one of her father’s alma maters. Frank left the confines of D.C. where he lived all his life heading south to teach and head the science department at the Bricks Agricultural and Normal School in Enfield, NC. As fate would have it, by the fall of 1914, both Edna and Frank were back in D.C. and working at the same institution, the Howard Academy. After receiving her A.M. with a concentration in English from Oberlin in June 1914, Edna was hired by Howard to teach history and physiography at the Howard Academy. Frank returned from NC to teach physics and chemistry at the Academy.

It is not known when the romance between Frank Coleman and Edna Brown occurred. There may have been sparks during their undergraduate years that reigned during their reconnection at the Academy. Or maybe their romantic relationship started when they returned to Howard. Regardless of when, a romance was in full bloom during their time teaching at Howard. Edna advanced to teach English and math while Frank moved from the Academy to the University becoming an instructor of physics in 1916 (he still taught a class at the Academy in drawing during that academic year).

In early 1917, the U.S. inched closer to entering the World War that has engulfed Europe since 1914. Recognizing that war was eminent and that an officer training camp occurred for white officers in Plattsburg, NY, Joel Elias Spingarn, educator, activists, and chair of the NAACP, struck an agreement with the Army that if at least 200 qualified African American men submitted an application of interest...
then an officer training camp would be established. He launched a personal campaign through African American newspapers to recruit African American men for this historic camp. From February 15 to March 31, Spingarn was able to gather over 250 applications. Shortly afterward, the U.S. entered World War I and Congress established fourteen officer training camps for white officer candidates in late April 1914. Encouraged by the opportunity for black men to serve as officers in the military, a meeting was held at Howard University on May 1, 1917, of students, professors, deans, and even the president of the University to discuss the potential of an African American officers’ camp. Coleman recognized the challenge in fighting for freedom abroad when the rights of African Americans were systematically being denied at home. However, he saw the war as a means to make a declarative statement about full citizenship for African Americans noting

“While never acquiescing nor ceasing to protect against the many wrongs which are perpetrated against us in many localities, we are willing at this time to lay aside all personal differences and to enter with singleness of purpose into the business of fighting against a common enemy, believing that those who wish to enjoy the rights and advantages of full citizenship should be willing to bear the burden, risk and dangers and perform the duties of full citizens.”

That sentiment was felt by many who attended this meeting. As a result, an organization called the Central Committee of Negro College Men (CCNCM) was formed to advance the cause Spingarn started. They pledged to recruit over 1,000 African American college men for officer candidates. Among the six leaders of this initiative was Frank Coleman. The CCNCM was a success in lobbying Congress and pressuring the War Department to establish an officer training camp for African American men. Through a collaborative effort of the CCNCM and the black press, they were able to generate over 1,000 qualified African American applicants for the officer training camp which open at Ft. Des Moines, IA on June 15, 1917.

Coleman began taking summer courses at the University of Chicago in 1916 working towards a Masters in physics. If selected for officer training camp, his ambitious plan was to attend camp in the spring of 1917 finishing before the start of summer classes at the University of Chicago, attend summer classes then go off to war. His application was accepted by the Army, and Coleman was selected as a candidate for the officer training camp. However, due to the timing of the camp, he would put his educational pursuits on hold until after the war. Eager to serve his country, Coleman reported to the 17th Provisional Training Regiment at Ft. Des Moines on June 15, 1917, for training.

Coleman was amongst friends at Ft. Des Moines as close to 200 Howard University students, instructors, and alumni attended the camp. He also had 15 Omega men attending that included his friend and Omega co-founder, Edgar Amos Love. These brothers were granted a charter for a temporary Chapter, The War Chapter, for fellowship and initiation of new members as they recognized “that it affords her the privilege of gathering into her ranks men who were destined to be heroes.” While the intense training schedule and division of the 16 Omega men into twelve different companies at the camp made it difficult to meet, they were able to elect officers and select and initiate new members. Coleman belonged to Company 3 which included Charles Young Harris, a classmate and friend who entered Howard with Coleman in 1909 who was initiated into Omega as a charter member of Alpha Chapter in 1911, and Joseph Henry Cooper, who was the younger biological brother of Omega founder

![Frank Coleman, 1916](Courtesy of Moorland-Spingarn Research Center)

![Mary Edna Brown, 1916](Courtesy of Moorland-Spingarn Research Center)
Frank Coleman's officer candidate interest letter to Joel E. Spingarn, March 15, 1917

(Courtesy of the Library of Congress)
Oscar James Cooper, who had just completed his freshman year at Howard when he was accepted to camp. Training was intense. Coleman’s day started at 5:30 AM with reveille and ended with taps at 9:45 PM. In between, he participated in infantry drills, physical training, combat, and soldiering training, signal practice, equipment maintenance and care, trench warfare tactics, and regimental organization.

After four months of training, Coleman was commissioned first lieutenant on October 15, 1917. After receiving his commission, he reported to Camp Upton in New York where he was assigned for several months before being reassigned to 368th Infantry Regiment, 184th Infantry Brigade, 92nd Division at Camp Meade, MD. The 368th could very well have been The War Chapter II as seven Omega men, including Edgar Amos Love, was assigned to this regiment. Being closer to D.C., Coleman had the opportunity to visit and spend his off time with Edna. By the time of his transfer to Camp Meade, the two were engaged to be married. With this realization, Mary Edna Brown and Frank Coleman married at the home of Rev. Sterling Brown across from Howard on Saturday, May 25, 1918. Rev. Brown thought highly of Coleman noting in his autobiography that he was “a young man of strong character.” The wedding was not a moment too soon as the 368th Infantry shipped out to France three weeks later on June 15, 1918, via the SS George Washington (also on this vessel was the other six Omega men that were part of the 368th).

As Coleman prepared for war, Edna was active in the war effort. With the U.S. entry in war on the horizon, the women of Howard University organized a chapter of the American Red Cross on March 21, 1917. Over 90 women from the faculty and student bodies of Howard and its Academy joined the newly established chapter to help the Red Cross provide comfort to soldiers and those effected by the war. Known for her leadership acumen, Edna was elected vice chairman of the chapter. Edna’s sister, Elsie, who was completing her senior year at Howard, was also part of the chapter serving as a captain. The chapter’s goal was to sew 1,000 hospital garments for donation to the Red Cross. They initially met weekly where during their first meeting, they completed 64 garments. The group secured a donation of needles, thread, buttons, and other sewing materials from a local department store to complete another 100 garments. With the U.S. entering the war, the enthusiasm of the group grew. They began to meet daily versus weekly and by the end of the spring semester, they had reached their goal of 1,000 garments. They also arranged a series of entertainment programs for African American soldiers that included musicals, literary readings, and speakers during the summer of 1917 and sent Christmas gifts to soldiers during the holidays. A reporter recognized the contribution this group of Howard women noted that “this organization is pointed to as an earnest of the true intention of colored women to be serviceable patriots to the U.S. in the time of war stress.”

Racism traveled with the African American soldiers. En route to France, an officer in Coleman’s regiment that travel with him noted that “our (African American) officers were assigned to 2nd class state rooms on D deck and the other fellow (white officers) was placed in 1st class state rooms on A & B decks. We were given the 2nd class dining
but I just wish to mention the humiliation our officers had to go through leaving home to fight for democracy.” On Coleman’s ship, the barbers refused to shave the black officers, and they were required (ordered) to move to the other side of the ship when the band played because they were “consuming entirely too much space on the deck.”

After arriving in the port city of Brest, France on June 27, 1918, Frank Coleman and the 368th Infantry traveled over 500 miles to Bourbonne-Les-Bains to begin intense training with the entire 92nd Division. This was the first time all brigades of the 92nd were together. After a few weeks, the 92nd was moved 60 miles northwest to the Vosges Mountains where they, along with the French 87th Division participated in the occupation of the St. Die Sector on August 23, 1918. The 92nd assumed complete control on August 30 through September 20 of the Sector. Coleman, who was assigned to Company F of the 368th, was involved in patrolling and raiding parties where skirmishes were frequent with the Germans. After being relieved by the French 20th Division, the 92nd Division proceeded to the Argonne Forrest to link up with other divisions for the Meuse-Argonne offensive which would be a major part of the final engagement of the War. It was also the bloodiest offensive of the War.

The 368th Infantry was detached to work with the French 11th Cuirassiers (Calvary) as part of the offensive. The mission of the 368th “was to keep the enemy under surveillance and maintain contact, assure liaison to both flanks and, in case of enemy withdrawal, pursue.” The results from this engagement, which occurred from September 25-30, 1918, was mixed at best. Poor terrain assessment (i.e., understanding of the trench systems and tunnels), ill-equipment companies (lacking cutters for barbed wire and maps), no artillery support, and weak communication resulted in a compromised result. Nevertheless, Company F, headed by Captain J. W. Jones, Coleman’s superior officer, performed well receiving praise from Regiment commander, Colonel Fred Radford Brown, noting in his report that “Company F” made excellent advances, two platoons reaching the Tirpitz Trench, killing 3 (Germans), capturing 1 prisoner and 1 machine gun.” It’s worth noting that on the morning of September 26, a platoon led by Coleman joined with a platoon from Company K that was led by 1LT Linwood Koger (Alpha Chapter 1915). Coleman had advance two kilometers before encountering a machine gun nest halting his advance. Koger provided support to Coleman as he continued his advance. As a result of the success of Company F and Coleman’s effort, he advanced to commander of Company H. Overhearing the order at regimental headquarters the day before, Edgar Amos Love provided the Coleman with the unofficial news. He also received a commendation.

After the withdrawal of the 92nd Division from the Meuse-Argonne offensive, they received orders in mid-October to proceed to the Marbache sector near the Moselle River in northwest France to help hold the line and harass the enemy. The 368th provide support in a reserve role to the other regiments. Coleman’s battalion was ordered to take a small town when the signal came to cease fire as the war was over and the armistice signed. In a letter to his brother William dated November 12, 1918, Coleman writes:

“The end of hostilities found me with my Company, with an order to take a certain little town that afternoon. It was a beautiful autumn morning,
and the shells had whistled all night over the house (ruined by shell fire) in which we slept, and left a sulfurous odor in the air. We were busy distributing ammunition and getting ready to get into it. I had the cooks make the coffee extra strong, and I drank about a quart of it without sugar. The road was being shelled, and it was difficult for wagon trains to come up. The (Germans) was using sneeze gas on us, and I got a good dose of it. It isn't poison, but it just stings and tickles your throat, so that you take off your gas mask, and then they dose you with the fearful mustard gas. I didn't get any mustard.

We reported in time to hear the (Germans) bugles sounding “cease firing” and our bugles answering. Three times they answered each other and then the firing ceased. It was wonderful, probably the biggest event that ever occurred in history."

The war was over for Frank Coleman and the men of the 368th. Coleman returned from France in mid-February 1919 and was honorably discharged from the Army on March 3, 1919. Edna and Frank were eager to start their new life together. After being apart for eight months, the newlyweds began a family as Edna became pregnant shortly after Coleman returned home.

Coleman became close to the Brown family as he and Edna made a new home. Edna's brother, Sterling A. Brown, was 17 and just finishing Dunbar High School (formerly M Street High School where Coleman graduated in 1908) when Edna and Frank got married. Surrounded by five sisters, other than his father, Sterling A. did not have many male role models around him other than his father growing up. Coleman served as one of them. That fall, in 1918, Sterling A. entered Williams College in northwest MA on a full scholarship and was initiated into Omega Psi Phi Fraternity through Gamma Chapter in 1921. In 1924, he became Omega's Vice Grand Basileus, the second person to hold the office. He would go on to become one of the preeminent African American poets, educators, and literary critics of his era following in his father's and sister's footsteps by teaching at Howard for over 40 years.

Edna was still teaching English and math at Howard Academy. However, in February 1919, Howard decided to close the Academy at the end of the school year after 52 years of operation to focus its resources on its growing collegiate institution. Coleman was employed immediately after returning home in March 1919 by Armstrong Manual Training School in Washington, D.C. teaching physics. Life was good for the Coleman's with a new job and baby on the way. Unfortunately, this bliss turns into tragedy.

Edna went into premature labor and was rushed to Freedman's Hospital on Howard's campus which was not too far from where Frank and Edna made their home. Medical knowledge, expertise, and technology did not exist at this time for infants born premature or for care for the mother carrying the infant born prematurely. Sorrow met Frank Coleman on September 25, 1919, at 2:55 AM when Mary Edna Coleman passed away from complications of childbirth. She was only 26 years old. A small glimmer of hope existed in that Frank and Edna's child survived. However, that glimmer faded when, after 22 hours of life, the infant daughter of the Coleman's died.

Frank Coleman's sorrow was immeasurable. In less than 24 hours, his life was tragically changed from promise to pain. A year earlier, he was fighting for his life against the Germans amongst the rugged terrain of the Argonne Forest and came out on top. Now, pain found him. Edna's funeral was held at Andrew Rankin Chapel on Howard's campus, the place she regularly frequented for daily vespers, meetings, speeches, and gatherings as a student and instructor. Her father, Rev. Sterling Brown, officiated the funeral of his third born which occurred on Saturday, September 27, 1919. While her life was short, Edna's impact was strong. A Memoriam written in The Oberlin Alumni Magazine recognizes that "as a teacher, she was no less a marked success than as a student. Her pupils respected and loved her and she became among them the same quiet influence for good that she had been among her classmates."

Sadly, Coleman's pain visits him again just two months later. On early Sunday morning, November 30, 1919, Coleman's father, Benjamin, passed away in his home at the age of 75.

Struggling with the loss of his wife, child, and father, a troubled Coleman tried to move on. While employed full time at Armstrong, he started teaching part-time at Howard again as a physics instructor. He resumed his studies during the summer at the University of Chicago and received his M.S. degree in 1922. After several years at Armstrong, Coleman elected to leave and become a full-time Associate Professor of physics at Howard in 1923. He was elevated to full professor less than a year later. Coleman would go on to teach at Howard for 32 years rising to head the Department of Physics, chair the Board of Athletic Control (Athletic Department), and President of the CIAA from 1933-36. He maintained a strong association with the military through serving in the D.C. National Guard Reserve from 1921-26, chairing Howard's Military Committee which supervised its ROTC program, being elected to serve and chair the D.C. Selective Service Board #12, and establishing the James E. Walker Post 26 of the American Legion.

Throughout his years, Coleman never forgot his beloved Edna. For years after her death, he would post a tribute to her annually on the date of her death in the local newspaper. Even into the 1930s, when Coleman was married again to his second wife, Mabel, he and the Brown family would post in the Evening Star newspaper a tribute to Edna. Truly, a love supreme.
The Saga of Colonel Charles Young
1917-18
by Jonathan A. Matthews, 7-83-A
The success, then, of the Negro troops depended first of all on their field officers; given strong, devoted men of knowledge and training there was no doubt of their being able to weed out and train company officers and organize the best body of fighters on the western front. This was precisely what the Negro-haters feared. Above all, they feared Charles Young.

W.E.B. DuBois, The Crisis, June 1919

The Prelude

1916 was a very good year for Charles Denton Young. A West Point graduate and career military man, Major Charles Young was commanding the Second Squadron of the 10th Calvary where they were assigned to pursue and capture Francisco “Pancho” Villa as part of the Punitive Expedition in Mexico under General John “Black Jack” Pershing. Young’s leadership as part of the Expedition what so profound that it drew praise from Pershing himself including Young with a list of several officers who shown “efficiency and devotion to duty” are “active, energetic, and able,” and “shown high efficiency throughout the campaign.”

Young was promoted to lieutenant colonel on July 1, 1916, and had two opportunities to formally command the 10th Calvary during the second half of 1916: at first, due to the illness of the commander then because of the temporary absence of a commander. It was the first time an African American officer formally commanded the 10th Calvary. The Punitive Expedition marked the pinnacle of his storied career. Unfortunately, the lowest was less than a year away.

The beginning of 1917 saw the Punitive Expedition winding down and the 10th Calvary heading to Ft. Huachuca (Arizona) in mid-February 1917. The Punitive Expedition drew to an end as a result of U.S. advancement towards entry into World War I. By the time the 10th Calvary reached Ft. Huachuca, the U.S. entry into the War was inevitable, and Young knew it. He had heard and read about Joel Spingarn’s effort to establish a separate African American training camp for officer candidates. This drew fire by some African American leaders as it could potentially undermine the effort for equality. That included the Editor to the Cleveland Gazette and Young’s good friend, Harry C. Smith. In a letter to Smith that he published in the Cleveland Gazette on March 31, 1917, Young supports Spingarn while understanding Smith’s position stating

“Dr. Spingarn is right in practice, you see; as you are in theory. We are going to need leaders for the colored regiments. It does not matter how they are made, so that we have them in the hour of need. Let us not do nothing to divide our people in this hour of our country’s trials; neither let our work be negative or reactionary but constructive.”

Young encourages Smith and others that African Americans can do more to advance the race by participating in the War and showing our patriotism and courage than we can by protesting during a time of national crisis. This perspective would be reinforced by Young during the War countless times despite his situation.

Young was at Ft. Huachuca training non-commissioned officers, white and black, to be officers when the formal declaration of War was made. By this time, the idea of an officer training camp for African Americans was all but assured and Young’s name, being the highest ranking African American in the U.S. Army, was rumored to be commanding of this training camp. However, the problem of discrimination and equality that Smith was stating in his opposition to a separate camp for African American officer candidates would terribly visit Young.

“Retirement”

Young’s achievements with the 10th Calvary laid the foundation for the problem he was about to face in mid-1917. While with the 10th, both as Squadron commander and commanding the 10th, Young had white officers reporting to him. This did not sit well with several white officers under his command that they had to take orders from an African American commander. One of those was 1LT Albert B. Dockery who served under
Personal and Private.

My dear Mr. Secretary:

Senator Williams of Mississippi called my attention to a case the other day which involves some serious possibilities, and I am venturing to write you a confidential letter about it.

Albert E. Dockery, First Lieutenant in the Tenth U. S. Cavalry, now stationed at Fort Huachuma, Arizona, is a Southerner and finds it not only distasteful but practically impossible to serve under a colored commander. The Tenth Cavalry is temporarily in command of Lieutenant Colonel Charles Young, who recently relieved Colonel D. C. Caball, and I am afraid from what I have learned that there may be some serious and perhaps even tragical insubordination on Lieutenant Dockery's part if he is left under Colonel Young, who is a colored man. Is there or is there not some way of relieving this situation by transferring Lieutenant Dockery and sending some man in his place who would not have equally intense prejudices?

Cordially and faithfully yours,

Woodrow Wilson

Hon. Newton D. Baker,
Secretary of War.
Young as commander of Company K during the Punitive Expedition. A Mississippian, Dockery noted that it's "not only distasteful but practically impossible to serve under a colored commander." He took his grievance to his Senator, John Sharp Williams of Mississippi. Williams was a strong supporter of Woodrow Wilson and good friends with him. In May 1917, he took Lt. Dockery's case to President Wilson looking to see if Dockery could be transferred to another regiment. Wilson followed up with his Secretary of War, Newton D. Baker, to see if the situation can be remedied. Unbeknownst to Wilson, this was a problem that was brewing through the War Department as well.

In a personal and confidential letter to President Wilson date June 26, 1917, Baker notes that "several Senators, seriously enough one from North Dakota, have presented cases to me of your officers in the 10th Calvary who was under the same embarrassment as Lt. Dockery." He goes on to provide a solution as he looks to use "Lt. Col. Young in connection with the training of colored officers for the new Army at Des Moines, Iowa. It seems likely that I will be able to tide over the difficulty in that way for at least a while." Baker recognizes that assigning Young to command the African American officer training camp would only be a temporary solution. That sooner or later, Young would be in command of white officers again. Young was already in line to be promoted to Colonel and, after that, would be seventh in line for a promotion to Brigadier General. A lasting solution was required by Baker that would solve the problem.

Two things were occurring to Young while these things were happening behind the scenes. First, he was assigned temporary command of the 10th Calvary again for the third and final time in late May 1917. Then, on May 23, 1917, Special Orders #119 issued by the Adjutant General Henry P. McCain ordered Young to report to the Letterman General Hospital in San Francisco for "observation and treatment." This was not unusual per se as all officers in line for promotion were required to have a full medical evaluation and fitness examination. Young was in line for promotion to Colonel and thought nothing of it having gone through the process less than a year earlier for his promotion to lieutenant colonel. During his medical exam in the summer of 1916, the doctors detected the presence of albumen in his urine signaling that he may have some type of kidney problem. However, the doctors were not concerned based on its level and passed him. The doctors at Letterman would have a different interpretation.

Young reported to Letterman General Hospital on June 4, 1917, where he underwent a complete battery of tests and exams. His medical report came back on June 11, 1917. The doctors found that he was...
"Physically unfitted for promotion because of chronic interstitial nephritis (Bright's disease), high blood pressure, sclerotic arteries, hypertrophy left ventricle."

The doctors informed Young that they were going to let the examining board know that his continuance in active service would "liable to endanger his life." In a letter dated June 20, 1917, to Young's good friend and confidant, W.E.B. DuBois, Young updates DuBois on his situation noting that

"I disclaimed any aliment; not having any aches or pains of any kind and no medical history or sick record whatever, except the Black Water Fever in Africa over four years ago. These surgeons found the same "high blood pressure" and I am informed, have made the same finding as the original board. Not being sick, I have officially asked the Adj't General to have their findings waived, and to allow me to continue actively with the troops during the War."

No one at the hospital found Young to be in ill health. One of the nurses commented that "this case of yours seems a joke." Young was eager to be released and be assigned to the African American officer candidate training camp at Ft. Des Moines so he could "beat those colored officers into shape." He went through the same situation a year earlier when the doctors found albumen in his urine. But they dismissed it and passed Young on for promotion. Young would have to wait to hear from the examination board to determine his fate for this promotion.

In the interim, Adjutant General Henry P. McCain, the great uncle of Senator John McCain, was notified of Young's condition. He was also aware of the situation that developed with Young commanding white officers. His office notified Secretary Baker of Young's condition who, in turn, updated President Wilson.

On July 2, 1917, Young was ordered to report to the examining board for determination of his fitness for promotion. Their findings were strong and definitive. They note "that the members (of the Board) were personally cognizant of this officer's general efficiency" and "that the members have personal knowledge of this officer's professional fitness for this promotion." They recognize the health report and recommendation by the doctors on Young's condition. However, the board decided that

"The personal appearance of this officer is astonishingly better than his physical examination indicates and his history of both health and performance of arduous duty makes it a possibility that he may be able to do full duty notwithstanding his physical condition, and the board is of the opinion that this services should be utilized during the present war."

The board recommended, "that in view of the present war conditions the physical condition of this officer be waived, and that he is promoted to the next highest grade." Feeling redeemed, on July 10, 1917, Young was ordered to go to Columbus, OH to work with state officials in organizing the 9th Regiment, Ohio Dismounted Colored Calvary.

While this appeared as vindication for Young, McCain viewed it differently. McCain felt he was not legally allowed to approve the board's recommendation. An 1890 act from Congress requires the promotion and retirement of any officer who fails his physical examination when examined by an examining board for promotion. McCain recommended to Baker the promotion and retirement of Young which he approved. On July 31, 1917, Special Orders #175 was issued by Baker and McCain promoting and retiring Young from active service because of disability effective June 22, 1917. McCain and Baker were able to use a legal means to solve the mounting problem they faced in Young commanding white officers (and eventually, white troops) and they took it despite the recommendation.

The Aftermath

The backlash to Young's retirement was swift and profound. Considered a hero to African Americans, the Black press, led by Young's good friends, Henry C. Smith of the Cleveland Gazette, and W.E.B DuBois, the co-founder of the NAACP and Editor of its monthly publication, The Crisis, questioned openly the decision of the War Department. The War Department, Army, and Congress received letters from an array of African Americans leaders to rescind the retirement of Young and restore him active service.

Young was disappointed with the action by the War Department. Despite this treatment, he remained positive, selfless, and above all, patriotic. In a letter to Joel Spingarn dated August 15, 1917, he states

"I have no other ambitions except to give all that is within me during the period of the War. This measure of devotion every man owes to his country. To that end I shall be patient, keep my temper, my health, and continue to study along professional military lines pending a need which may possibly come."

He also requested to Spingarn that "there shall be no protest and no agitation of our people in my regard." Young states this publically in a
American leaders and the press, he closes his letter by saying that recognizing that Baker and McCain are being pressured by African motive in making this direct request. "

Despite the diagnosis of the doctors, I feel as physically fit as I did during the hard service in Mexico with General Pershing. I therefore, deem it my duty to my country to inform the Secretary of War that I believe myself wholly able to assume the work of organization, training, and leading troops in the field. To help in the country's service is my sole motive in making this direct request."

This is the first time Young has appealed directly to Secretary Baker. Recognizing that Baker and McCain are being pressured by African American leaders and the press, he closes his letter by saying that he will “in no small way enhance the enthusiasm of the colored people throughout the United States.” He's providing a way for Baker and McCain to rid themselves of the pressure that they are receiving from the African American community. DuBois ups the ante by stating in an op-ed for the May 1918 Crisis magazine that “twelve million Negroes demand that Colonel Young be restored to active service.” Young receives no response from Baker. He decides that a more visible, pronounced statement needs to be made about his health and fitness for duty.

The Ride

As African American troops began to sail for France in June 1918, Young became more proactive in his approach. To demonstrate his fitness and health for active service, at the age of 54, Young decides to ride his horse from Wilberforce to Washington, D.C. covering 497 miles. This ride occurred from June 6-22, 1918. The black press followed and reported on Young's ride with excitement and anticipation. After arriving in Washington, he was able to secure a meeting with Secretary Baker through his special assistant, Emmett J. Scott (Scott, an African American, was secretary for Booker T. Washington for some years before his death). The meeting was positive as Baker noted he would see what he can do for Young. There had been talk already of him receiving a command with the newly formed 93rd Division.

Nothing of consequence came after the Baker meeting. Young reached out to a former instructor of his from West Point, George Goethals, who worked in the Chief of Staff’s office to see if anything can be done. Goethals responded on July 7, 1918, that the Army doctors ruling "in all cases of that character are final." Young also reached out to General Pershing for support to no avail. The War Department did launch a full case file on Colonel Young's background and current situation specifically the actions taken between May and July 1917 in which the results were filed on July 17, 1918. The conclusion reached in the case memorandum was that "Colonel Young cannot be restored to the active list even by the Executive (President) himself.”

Epilogue

In the late summer 1918, Young appears to be resolved that he would not be returned to active service. Emmett Scott contacted him via telegram that he was being considered for command at the Student Army Training Corp's Instructor Camp at Howard University that started in August 1918. But as with Ft. Des Moines and the 93rd Division, those rumors held no action. Young received an honorary degree from his educational home, Wilberforce University, in 1918. And he resigned to the fact that retirement was his new profession.

On November 6, 1918, Young received orders to report to Camp Grant in Rockford, IL for duty. He was returned to active service. In a cruel twist, the order was given five days before the armistice ending the War was signed. No reason has ever been discovered or explained why the War Department decided to reinstate Colonel Young or why they did it right before the War ended. Perhaps it was the threat of Young commanding white troops diminished with the ending of the War. Whatever the reason, for Colonel Charles Denton Young, the saga of his military career was over.
From June 6-22, 1918, Colonel Charles Young made his famous ride from Wilberforce, OH to Washington, D.C. to demonstrate his fitness and health for command. This famous ride covered 16 days and 497 miles with Young averaging 31 miles a day.

In a letter to his former Wilberforce student and mentee, SGT Oscar W. Price dated July 14, 1918, Young describes his ride, its purpose, and includes a type-written itinerary for Price. This letter along with the itinerary is housed at the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture (see below).

A question looming is why did Colonel Young decide to use riding his horse as a means of demonstrating his level of fitness and health? The answer to that question starts with President Theodore Roosevelt. Understanding the importance of fitness from a young age and recognizing the rigors of combat from his days in the Spanish-American War, President Roosevelt was concerned about the fitness level of his officers. On December 9, 1908, he issued Executive Order 989 “Prescribing Regulations for Physical Examinations for Marine Corps Officers.” This required all Marine officers, as a test of fitness, to march a total of 50 miles in three days. This test was performed on an annual basis. Soon afterward, the test requirement was expanded to all other branches of the military. On July 30, 1910, the War Department issued General Order #148 which required an annual medical and fitness examination for Calvary officers. The fitness examination was for those officers above the grade of Captain. It required the officer to ride a horse thirty (30) miles each day for three (3) consecutive days.

Colonel Young was required to perform this examination annually since 1910. In selecting his method to display his health and endurance, he chose the Army-regulated standard. Rather than meet the Army standard, Young chose to vastly exceed by riding 31 miles each day for 16 days which was well above the required fitness level demanded by the Army. This achievement led to Colonel Young meeting with Secretary Baker following the ride to discuss his potential return to active service.
Colonel Young finishes long trip on horse

Colonel M. A. Young, of Wilberforce, highest ranking colored officer in the service of the United States, arrived home Wednesday from Washington, after making the trip to the capitol on horseback to convince the War Department that he is physically fit to take an active part in this war.

Colonel Young, who was retired, excepting for a position on active duty in the State of Ohio, last summer, after his attempt to organize a colored regiment in Ohio failed, is optimistic following a personal conference with Secretary of War, Newton D. Baker, and in his own words, he is "smiling a broad smile."

"I simply wanted to convince the War Department that I am still physically fit for active service and I have every reason to believe that my case will be considered favorably," said the Colonel.

Although he was not promised anything definite by the Secretary of War, who was personally acquainted with his case before the Colonel's visit, he has reason to believe that his trip will be fraught with satisfactory results and that his services will be called upon in the present crisis. Although it is understood that Colonel Young is in line for a Brigadier Generalship, the officer has no personal ambition prompting his activities to get back into service. According to Colonel Young himself, he is not prompted by any personal hope of promotion or gain and if the war was not going on at present, he would be well satisfied with his allotment. However, he is chafing under the inactivity of retirement at a time when every one should be doing his best for his country, and when it appears that a man so well versed in military training and discipline would be indispensable to the government. Merely a desire to do his part in the present crisis in his patriotic duty, is explained by the local officer as his reason for taking so definite an action as calling on the War Department.

Xenia Evening Gazette, June 27, 1918, p. 7

Colonel Young has never been ill, and is in perfect health now. He was examined by army physicians a year ago last May and it was said that he had high blood pressure at that time. But if such is the case, it has never bothered the officer and would not prevent him from considerable more active duty than he is now assigned to. Colonel Young was retired except for "active service in Ohio," last summer following an attempt to organize a colored regiment from this state, which he hoped to command.

The horseback ride to Washington is an example of the army test for physical fitness and was the method employed by Theodore Roosevelt when he was president. A ride of 20 to 30 miles a day is considered a good army rate, yet the local officer kept up an average of 31 and 1-2 miles a day for sixteen days. He walked 15 minutes out of every hour while on the road in order to be able to tell the Secretary of War that he had walked a quarter of the way to Washington.

Colonel Young left Wilberforce on June 6 and arrived at his destination last Saturday, June 22. He traveled only in the day time, stopping at night at different places along the route. His accomplishment of the feat is considered an excellent proof of his physical ability. The Secretary of War was surprised to see him, said Colonel Young today.

Colonel Young, besides being the highest ranking colored officer in the service, is also the only colored graduate of West Point.

The Washington Post, May 26, 1929, p. 14

Dolly was Young's mare. He put her and she put him to every test, during the next few days, which is required of a cavalry officer, not once, but many times. Setting out from his home in Ohio, on horseback, he rode through town and hamlet, by stream and river, over the Appalachians, through the Cumberland Gap and Harpers Ferry, and on to Washington. Colored newspaper men looked for him to cross the Long Bridge from Virginia, but he came into the city through Georgetown, and was met at the M Street Bridge, now being rebuilt, by hosts who cheered his onward march. The Georgetown Civic Association has asked that this rebuilt structure be named in his honor. He
Today, the YMCA is often considered as merely a recreational option for youth sports, swimming lessons, or adult intermural activities. However, at the dawn of the twentieth century, it served a vital role as the leading social welfare organization. And while imperfect in its racial integrations, it became a vehicle Black communities used to advance their social welfare through self-help and self-reliance. The tireless work by Omega men serving as secretaries of the Colored YMCA supported Black servicemen stateside and abroad during World War I, epitomizing their commitment to uplift.

The YMCA began in 1844 to respond to unhealthy social, labor, and living conditions of the tenement quarters arising in London post-Industrial Revolution. By 1851, the YMCA arrived in America, opening a branch in Boston. Just two years later, Anthony Bowen, a prominent Black religious leader, and educator would found the “YMCA for Colored Men and Boys” in Washington, D.C. to combat the exclusion of Black Americans barred from membership to most organizations and public accommodations.

As segregation became thoroughly institutionalized through the American separate but equal doctrine, the YMCA's national office created a “Colored Men's Department” in 1890. Though forcibly segregated, Black leaders would carry the “Y” mission across the country building their own facilities. In 1910, Julius Rosenwald, president of Sears Roebuck Company, pledged $25,000 to any Black community that raised $75,000 to construct a Y facility. Black communities, embracing the self-help movement, solidified its relationship with the Colored Y, raising funds to build 26 more branches, complete with dormitory rooms and eating facilities where visitors of color could find clean, safe accommodations, free of the demeaning exclusion that was the rule of Jim Crow.

When the United States entered the Great War, the YMCA mobilized, and its National War Work Council vigorously debated whether and how to serve Black troops. YMCA functioned as the primary social welfare organization intimately providing an essential array of recreational, educational and religious services with direct support to soldiers. It pledged to give its full might to the war effort, and concluded, “Whatever is done for white soldiers will be done in the same proportion for colored soldiers.” And while it instituted programs and facilities immediately for white soldiers, the YMCA backtracked almost immediately and treated Black servicemen as social inferiors.

Joining the war department's view that Jim Crow practices remained wholly compatible with their mission, underfunding, limited resources, “whites only” tents and other blanket discrimination practices persisted throughout the war. Despite the unsailable inequities in resources, Colored Y Secretaries remained an indispensable positive affecting the lives of their soldiers and lessening the sting of racial injustice.

Domestic Camps

Omega men, James Crawford McMorries (Beta, May 1916), George Edgar Hall, and Arthur Daniel Williams (Beta) would serve as Colored secretaries at domestic camps, preparing me for service.

McMorries, who while an undergraduate at Lincoln University (PA), presided as both the class president and the Grand Basileus, where he would authorize the establishment of War Chapter. Fraternal organizations, like War Chapter, together with the YMCA, provided outlets for the cadets to relieve the stresses of training and facilitate camaraderie. The YMCA helped the men at Fort Des Moines not only as a social organization but also as a support network for the officer candidates. YMCA held weekly services on Sundays, furnished films and social engagements, and requested influential Blacks to travel to Fort Des Moines to offer words of encouragement to motivate the officer candidates, Like Col Charles Young, Dr. Jesse Mooreland, the Fisk Jubilee Singers. The camp secretaries also worked to keep conflicts between the white civilian community and the cadets at bay.

McMorries would graduate as the valedictorian in 1918 and immediately begin working as a Colored secretary at Camp Wheeler near Macon, Georgia. This cantonment, named after a local Confederate general, serviced more than 90,000 men, including the 31st “Dixie” Infantry Division formed there. McMorries and the other colored secretaries would constantly serve to ensure that Black recruits would have access to the small comforts like coffee or cigarettes, or the larger rights like healthcare, education and dignity that white, often southern officers sought to deny in their attempts to fortify their camps in Jim Crow castes.
McMorries, who after the war would go on to obtain his Masters in Religious Education at Boston University, would serve as a religious secretary at Camp Wheeler. With its roots as an organization in Christian evangelism, the YMCA recruited many secretaries like McMorries with education and interests in theology to ensure the nurturing of the spiritual side of man, one of the sides of its logo. Religious secretaries like McMorries, maintained religious services, provided chaplain duties, and looked out for the moral well being of those in their camps.

Arthur Williams, the former Basileus of Beta Chapter, would also graduate Lincoln University (PA) with high honors. His sterling academic record would earn him numerous awards, including the Annie Louise Finney prize, the highest honor given for all-around scholarship and character, and first prize in the national college essay contest conducted by the NAACP. He too would find his calling in the ministry and would finish seminary becoming a Presbyterian pastor in Philadelphia. Williams would serve at Camp Lee at the urgent call of Dr. Jesse Moorland. Dr. Moorland surveyed the country for men like Williams, of high academic achievement, skill, and character. These Colored secretaries served not only as employees of the YMCA, but statesmen for their race, and intermediaries in race relations.

Camp Lee, another southern installation named for a Confederate general, became one of the many encampments where Black soldiers experienced extreme mistreatment, racial discrimination and physical abuse by their white officers. These troops were often degraded in rank, or prohibited from advancing. Many of the men at Camp Lee were subjected to eugenics and intelligence tests by primatologist Robert Yerkes, and analyzed in obvious racist directions, being “divided into three groups based upon intensity of color.” Black leaders like Dr. Moorland and Dean Pickens, recruited men like Williams to provide support from Black professionals at these camps.

Williams would unselfishly answer this call, giving up his position at Eddystone, “leaving behind both a lucrative salary and a tender wife.” Williams’ presence was needed as according to Pickens, Camp Lee resided in one of the worst towns in the Unites States for a colored man, there were no colored commissioned officers, no colored men with the exception of some college boys were admitted to the officers training school, and the YMCA service and accommodations for colored troops remained very inadequate. Weeks before Williams would report to service at Camp Lee, Dean Pickens would report of his visit there, that there that

George Hall, who worked as a watchman and night clerk for the War Department while enrolled in Howard Law School, interrupted his studies to answer the call for Colored secretaries. Unable to join the Army due to a physical ailment, Hall returned to the Colored YMCA, where he had served as a member of the Howard University chapter as an undergraduate. Hall would also join the effort at Camp Lee. As a special assistant, he worked as a hut secretary in both religion, education and social fields. As an educational secretary, he would provide the invaluable service of preparing troops, often from segregated rural areas with little to no educational systems for Black residents. At Camp Lee, over 60 percent of the Black men tested were deemed illiterate. Educational secretaries like Hall gave lectures and taught rudimentary writing and reading classes which provided the liberating skills that allowed them the simple ability to sign for their paycheck or send letters home. Hall, who had French language proficiency, would finish his service in the YMCA oversees in France.

The French War Front

By 1917, Matthew Washington Bullock (Gamma 1917) had an accomplished career as an educator, coach, and attorney. Though exceeding the drafting age, he still volunteered to serve, but the Army diagnosed him with athletic heart syndrome from years as a premier sportsman. Bullock would thus sail to France as a special representative of the National War Work Council in the first dispatch of Colored overseas secretaries. Bullock would spend 15 months attached primarily with the Harlem Hellfighters.
as the Physical Athletics Director, choir director and French language instructor in the combat zones, and prove courageous, both for his conduct under fire and for his audacious defense of the civil rights and dignity of Black servicemen.

In France, the military relegated most of the Black troops to demeaning manual labor, dock work, and latrine digging. They received abuse, and violent assaults from their fellow white American soldiers and their commanders issued a pamphlet warning their French hosts that Black Americans were racially inferior and prone to raping white women. Bullock arrived to find the raw and humiliating Jim Crow system exported abroad, and wrote to Dr. Moorland, “I thought I had witnessed prejudice in the south, but it is still worse in this section of France. The French people are just fine but the Americans here—most all of whom are southerners—feel that the colored man must not be allowed to associate with the French people at all.”

Bullock found a YMCA in France complicit with this mistreatment with segregated facilities and withholding services to Black soldiers. Despite these prejudices, Bullock succeeded in building a highly successful program for his men in 1918. In reference to the recreational work he organized, he plumed “We pulled off wrestling bouts and boxing bouts in which both white and colored soldiers took part.” His fellow secretaries would recount “Mr. Matthew Bullock, who had gone over the top with the 15th New York, because of his football fame at Dartmouth, was well known to the soldiers. His strong, helpful personality also counted for much in the lives of the men who visited the leave area.”

Bullock would document the racism and report the injustices back home to superiors. So vigorously did he champion the civil rights of the Black soldiers, the Army officials at Bordeaux pressed the YMCA to remove him. Carter G. Woodson, in a scathing article, tells how white commanding officers tried to run Bullock out of France for charges of disloyalty, because “he protested the maltreatment of colored soldiers who were handled as though they were slaves.” The YMCA would recall Bullock and his four other Black secretaries to its headquarters in Paris and removed them from their posts; two it ordered back to the states as persona non grata, and all further sailings of Black secretaries to France halted. Fortunately for the men, Bullock returned to continue his valiant service.

Said of Bullock and his time with the men in France, he “could be seen at all times making his way under tremendous shell fire that he might reach his men with necessary supplies; all of these men won high praise for their service in giving first aid to the wounded.” At the conclusion of the war, when the men returned home, the New York Age newspaper would proclaim Bullock, “The Uncrowned Hero of Old Fifteenth.” Quoting a letter from regiment chaplain Benjamin C. Robeson which said, “I wish to speak to you of one still plods the path of duty with an infectious smile, happy and patient because he knows time will dig her pen in the ink of justice and rightly reward him… who wears the badge of the faithful and walks in with the step of the worthy. Who, when the boys were weary, slapped them on the back and said, “carry on” and when their faith waivered threw the flaming torch of sane counsel ahead and cried, ‘Boys, go to it.’”

He told how Bullock rendered valiant service to the boys of the regiment during the September drive, risking his life almost every day. And how when the YMCA had no supplies for his Black soldiers, he would travel miles to demand provisions from the authorities, traveling many more miles to acquire them, and returned personally to the frontlines to deliver them among the belching cannons and whizzing bullets. “Men wondered why he came into the region of death… His coming and going stopped when there was no regiment to serve. He wears no Croix de Guerre upon his breast, but within his breast throbs the spirit of devotion to God, Country, and race… No Legion of Honor will proclaim his rank with the worthy, but as long as one member of this grand old regiment breathes the breath of life the name of Matthew Bullock will be heard, and its worth will be sung.”

Bullock would receive a recommended for the Croix de Guerre for service during the September-October offensive on the Champagne front. However, the commanding colonel of the regiment would not approve it for reasons of racial bias. After the war, the YMCA selected Bullock as one of six to represent it at the burial of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery.
East Africa

While the Great War contested European politics and power, it discharged unprecedented global conflict and worldwide suffering. Imperial rivalries, expansionist policies, and colonial greed embroiled the unprepared East African theater into a brutal campaign, worsened by inescapable tropical sicknesses, extreme climates, insufficient rations, and inadequate equipment. Here, Omega men Robert Allen Pritchett (Beta Charter line) and Walter Payne Stanley (Beta, Spring 1914), would serve heroically in "the hardest colonial campaign prosecuted by the Allies during the entire War," according to the National War Work Council.

Pritchett and Stanley would both graduate Lincoln University, having studied in seminary and intent on careers built around service. Thus, they accepted the unique challenge others could not endure, to minister abroad in the deadly climatic conditions of equatorial Africa. Major Charles Webster, head of the YMCA in East Africa reported European troops found it too difficult to survive, writing, "during 1916 the British learned by bitter experience that white men could not endure the hardships of campaigning in this climate, and the Allied Army now is almost entirely a black one."

The burden of European imperialism fell to those already exploited by colonialization, regimenting troops, carriers, and laborers almost exclusively from continental and diaspora Africans, along with their comrades from India. This warzone covered territory as great as the whole western front, but uniquely by force composed almost entirely of people of color. It is almost certainly, for this reason, that the American YMCA unimaginably relegated the whole of its social service function for the entire African Campaign to Pritchett, Stanley, and just five other Colored Y Secretaries.

"The special service of the American Y at the point where it was most needed was a consecrated task. The service of the Colored Y Secretaries side by side with Indian and British workers brought home the fact that even before America joined the Allies, the colored citizens of America were keen to serve colored soldiers enlisted in the Allied cause. The colored branches of the Y in America, which supported a good part of this work, brought the fellow-members of their race in Africa as well as in France in direct touch with the public spirit of millions of colored citizens and rose admirably to their great opportunity."

The difficulties in their missions would begin before they even arrived at their encampments. Pritchett sailed for Africa on the steamship "City of Athens." After nearly a month of sailing, the vessel struck a mine near Cape Town and sunk. Pritchett would survive this disaster, but at least five of his fellow American passengers on board perished. Stanley's journey would collide with a different peril. Upon his arrival in South Africa, he and another Black traveling companion, along with a Jewish family were the only ones detained on board the ship, to which they attributed to the rampant racial prejudice. Pritchett and Simmons would find that they would not escape racial oppression by leaving America for Africa.

A fellow colored secretary traveling with Stanley would record in his diary the significant stories from the Zulus he and Stanley met in South Africa. In one account he writes, "Zulus in the quarters told Stanley that they expected the colored Americans to fight against Britain rather than with her and that if they (the Americans) had done so they (the Africans) would have done the same." Stanley spent a few weeks in South Africa before sailing up the coast to present-day Kenya and Tanzania.

These early encounters with the colonial racism would only be the beginning of the hardships they would endure. Stanley, said of Dar es Salaam, "The weather here reaches 124 degrees during the day and cold enough for two blankets at night...Think of me in your prayers, so that may endure hardships like a good soldier of Jesus Christ." Disease and sickness killed more men than bullets in this region. Detailing their observation in correspondence back to Dr. Mooreland in America, they chronicled how they moved with the troops, bullets whizzing through their tents, and as "they tramped down from that part of Africa to the coast, each man was given a handful of rice per day. Some fell out, as we marched down to the coast, with no complaint, simply accepting it as their lot—burning up with fever, dying from wounds they had received in battle, simply passing away without complaint whatever. These are the qualities which must mean something in the life of the people whom we call heathen."

In addition to the health risks from bad or insufficient food, lack of water, lice, dysentery, and malaria, or fatigue from the strenuous conditions and heavy loads, their position required utmost professional flexibility and adaptation. They filled roles from chaplain to undertaker, moving picture operator, nurse, director of athletics, and teacher daily. The difficulty in meeting these demands was compounded by the extreme diversity as the war brought together a multitude of tribal groups and cultures for the first time. In a prelude to Pan-Africanism, many languages and cultures collided, forcing secretaries with little linguistic training to exceed normal expectation and make immediate and constant cultural adjustments relying on quickly acquired diplomatic skills.

A significant aspect of their work in East Africa was the training of indigenous leadership. Feelings of affinity with their African constituents became a major difference between the Colored
secretaries and European missionaries regarding training Africans for leadership positions.

Racial animosity by white colonials and European missionaries socially isolated them. And though they enjoyed some commonalities with the African and Indians, cultural differences heightened their codependence, fostering and encouraging the development of a strong bond. For this reason, the tragic death of Pritchett and his co-workers gave the other secretaries even greater resolve to establish a permanent work in East Africa so that their lives might not have been lost in vain.

Pritchett would die in service on the shore of Africa attempting to save his brother from drowning. The military inquest which inquired into the circumstance of their death reports, “that there was no doubt that Mr. Pritchett had died in a very gallant attempt to save his comrade.” Messrs. Lloyd, Pritchett, and Ballou were bathing together at high tide when the latter who could not swim, was carried on his feet into deep water. Mr. Lloyd was with difficulty rescued by the throwing of a long rope after he had exhausted himself to help his two friends. The deaths had a greater sadness as the two secretaries were awaiting a boat to India on their way back to the States.

Stanley would send a letter back to their alma mater reporting the heroic death of his friend, nicknamed “Honest Bob” and beloved by all. The June 1919 Oracle would print “Thus, an Omega man had been tried by the supreme test of friendship and was not found wanting.”

“Pritchett died trying to save a fellow Colored Y Secretary. On that fatal afternoon, September 21, 1918...Lloyd and Ballou and Pritchett had been swimming, teaching Ballou...Lloyd then attempted to bring the pair to shore, a physical impossibility, for which he also nearly paid by being drowned...The sight of Pritchett with face buried in sand, Ballou still clutching his arms, still on his back, will perhaps never be erased from my memory...Natural death is startlingly painful and impressive, but unnatural death is soul gripping and terrifying. But we enlisted for such battles, and the God of Battles will not test us beyond our strength. As I write, I am unashamed as tears fill my eyes.”

Pritchett received a funeral with military honors draped in the American flag. All of the fellow-secretaries, two chaplains, two motor drivers from the ASC, and a native Christian teacher formed the pall bearers; his casket draped in the American flag.

To realize the extreme difficulty in the service these men gave, of the seven Colored Y Secretaries to serve in the East African Campaign, two drowned, two were shipwrecked, and one was permanently shaken by African fever.

Robert Allen Pritchett YMCA Information
Professor Simon Green Atkins was beaming with pride and joy as he opens the Winston-Salem Journal on Thursday, October 10, 1918, to see an article in the paper recognizing three of his sons’ service in World War I. Professor Atkins was well known locally and nationally. A life-long educator, in 1892, he founded the Slater Industrial Academy in Winston-Salem, NC with him as the instructor and 25 students. As an educator, principal, and president, by 1918 he grew what was then called the Slater Industrial and State Normal School to over 500 students and an operating budget of over $33,000. A few years later, in 1925, the school would change its name again to Winston-Salem Teachers College then finally to what it’s now known as, Winston-Salem State University.

Professor Atkins success was not limited to his professional life. He and his wife, Oleona, were proud parents of nine children: six sons and three daughters. Three of Professor Atkins sons, his oldest, Russell Crowe Atkins, and his middle two sons, Francis Loguen Atkins and Jasper Alston Atkins, served in the U.S. Army during World War I. Serving in the military during WWI was not the only thread that these brothers shared. They also were members of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity.

RUSSELL CROWE ATKINS (1890-1933)

Russell Crowe Atkins was born on June 21, 1890. He attended and completed his elementary and secondary education at his father’s school, the Slater Industrial and State Normal School, after which he attended Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute where he graduated in 1910 with a degree in agriculture. After spending two years studying at Cornell University and the University of Wisconsin, in 1912 Russell Atkins landed a position as an instructor of animal husbandry at Agricultural & Mechanical College for the Colored Race in Greensboro, NC (now North Carolina A&T University). A year later, he returned to Winston-Salem to teach agriculture and dairying at his father’s school, Slater Industrial and State Normal School. In 1915, he left Slater accepting a position on the faculty of Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute teaching dairy husbandry and managing the dairy herd. He would remain on the faculty of Tuskegee for rest of his career.

After hearing about the establishment of an officers training camp for African Americans, Russell Atkins applied and was accepted into the 17th Provisional Training Regiment at Ft. Des Moines and began training on June 15, 1917. Atkins was assigned to Company 10 which included John Henry Purnell, who was initiated into Omega through Alpha Chapter in 1913. Upon the formation of the War Chapter at Ft. Des Moines, Atkins was recommended for membership and initiated into the Fraternity through the War Chapter during the summer of 1917. Upon completion of Camp, he received a commission of Second Lieutenant and assigned to Camp Grant in Rockford, IL. He sailed for France in 1918 with the 365th Infantry of the 92nd Division. Assigned to Company H, Atkins was one of the few African American that saw action during the War fighting in the Vosges, Argonne, and Marbache sectors. He was a selfless leader whose concern for his men usurped
any of his needs. In a letter to his father, Atkins notes

“I again ask for your prayer that I may be absolutely fearless in the face of my enemy. That I may never think of the interests of myself, but of my men. That I may be planning for them. Their interests are my concern. Their comforts and pleasures before my necessities – they must have two pairs of shoes before I get one – they must have water in their canteens before I drink. If I am always able to place them first, I will be satisfied.”

This attitude leads to success on the battlefield. Major General Charles Henry Martin, commander of the 92nd Division, issued General Order 37 citing Atkins and 21 other officers and enlisted men in 365th Infantry for “meritorious conduct in action” for their actions in taking the Bois Frehaut village near Pont-a-Mousson, France on November 10-11, 1918. According to Major General Martin “the advance thus made was against heavy artillery and machine-gun fire and high concentration of gas.” It was during this offensive that the order of the armistice was given midday November 11, 2018, ending the offensive and hostilities. For gallantry and bravery during the offensives in the Fall of 1918, the entire 365th Infantry was awarded the Croix de Guerre as a regiment from France. As a postscript to Atkins military career, on August 1, 1920, he was singled out for gallantry by being awarded the Silver Star for distinguishing himself in action “while serving with the 365th Infantry, near Pont-a-Mousson, France, 11 November 1918, while directing his platoon in an attack on Bois Frehaut.”

Atkins returned from France in February 1919 and was discharged from the Army several months later. He returned to Tuskegee and resumed his position on the faculty providing instruction on dairy herding and creamery. Fraternally, Atkins was active with Iota Omega Chapter in Tuskegee which was established on January 21, 1923. In 1926, he was promoted to Acting Director of the Agricultural Department which became permanent a year later. With his career advancing, Atkins married Louise Marshall from Washington, D.C. on December 28, 1929. Flourishing professionally and personally, the summer of 1933 brought triumph and great tragedy. At the beginning of the summer, Atkins was selected as acting principal of Tuskegee during the summer months while Dr. Robert R. Moton, Tuskegee’s long-standing principal, was on vacation. It was thought that Atkins was being groomed for the principal upon the retirement of Dr. Moton. On the morning of Saturday, July 1, 1933, Atkins was leaving his apartment across the street from the gates of Tuskegee Institute when a deranged man shot and killed him. Police arrived on the scene within minutes and arrested the gunman, J.D. Thompson, who was holding the murder weapon. Thompson was suspected in two other random murders in the Tuskegee area. So grieved was the Tuskegee community that Atkins body laid in state in the chapel at Tuskegee where funeral service was held the next day. Atkins’ brothers, Francis and Jasper, traveled to Tuskegee to bring him home. Two days later, a service was held in Winston-Salem where Russell Atkins was laid to rest.

FRANCIS LOGUEN ATKINS (1896-1982)

The fifth child of Simon & Oleona Atkins, Francis Loguen Atkins was born on December 6, 1896, in Winston-Salem, NC. As with his siblings before him, Atkins received his early and secondary education at his father’s school, the Slater Industrial and State Normal School, graduating in 1916 with the highest grades in his class achieving the honor of valedictorian.

Upon completion of his studies at Slater, Francis entered Lincoln University, Oxford, PA in the fall of 1916 as part of the freshman class of 51 men. Atkins thrived at Lincoln. At the end of his freshman year, he won the $15 prize for the student achieving the best work in English studies. He was selected as a member of the 3-person sophomore debate team that was victorious over the freshman team in 1917. Also during his sophomore year in 1917, he was initiated into the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity through Beta Chapter at Lincoln. This was at a time when Lincoln prohibited fraternities and secret societies on campus. A recognized leader, Atkins was elected and served as Basileus of Beta Chapter in 1919. He also served as President of the Athletic Association and manager of the Lincoln football team from 1918-20. In 1919, under Atkins management, he secured National League Park in Philadelphia, home of the Philadelphia Phillies, for the annual Howard vs. Lincoln Thanksgiving football game. Interest in the game became so great over the years that a new venue was required to accommodate the growing crowd. A record-setting 18,000 fans saw the contestants’ battle to a scoreless tie on Thanksgiving Day, November 27, 1919. The Lincoln Lions would go 8-0-1 in two seasons managed by Atkins and coached by the legendary Fritz Pollard.

At the beginning of the Fall 1918 semester, information was provided to the students of Lincoln that the U.S. Army had selected their institution for the establishment of a camp for military training of students. This initiative by the Army was occurring on campuses across the country to training college-aged men for military duty in advance in case they are needed to serve in the War effort. This initiative was called the Student Army Training Corp (S.A.T.C.). Due to his age, Atkins was not admitted to the Officers Training Camp in Ft. Des Moines in 1917. Following in Russell's footsteps, upon hearing about the SATC, he enlisted in the Lincoln camp along with 95 of his classmates. The camp began on October 1, 1918. Both class and field work was part of the training which included war aims, topography,
map making, military law, French, German, march, and drill. The camp ended on November 26, 1918, when the order was received to demobilize due to the end of the War. Atkins was discharged from the Army with the rank of Private (as was all other S.A.T.C. participants).

During his senior year, Atkins was selected as a member of Lincoln’s prestigious debate team. Lincoln’s rival was that of Howard University. The competition between the schools began on the gridiron in 1892 with its annual football rivalry contest attracting thousands of rooters. Now the rivalry extended to the debate stage where on May 14, 1920, at the Asbury Methodist Episcopal Church in Atlantic City, N.J. the schools met to debate the topic “Resolved: that compulsory arbitration of industrial disputes should become national policy.” Atkins and his team debated the negative. This contest was significant in that the two opposing leads who were debating against one another were Omega men. Leading Howard’s Kappa Sigma Debating Society was its president, Stanley Moreland Douglas. Douglas was initiated into Omega through Alpha Chapter in April 1917, the same year Atkins entered the Fraternity. A proven leader, he served as editor-in-chief of the school paper, president of his class, and assistant yearbook editor. He also was Basileus of Alpha Chapter, Grand Keeper of Seals, and Editor to Omega’s first Oracle in 1919. After a spirited debate and polished delivery on both sides, the judges unanimously awarded the victory to Atkins’ Lincoln team. Ironically, this occasion was not the first time Douglas faced a fellow Omega man or an Atkins. A year earlier, Douglas faced J. Alston Atkins, Francis’ younger brother, in a debate against Fisk. Similar to Lincoln, Fisk prevailed.

Atkins graduated cum laude from Lincoln in 1920 as arguably the most decorated student in his class. He was valedictorian of his class and won awards his senior year for debate, English, oratory, and character. After graduating, at the request of Slater’s board of trustees’ chair, Henry E. Fries, Atkins elected to forgo his desire to pursue his advance degree in ministry at Yale to return to Slater to assist his father. He taught classes and served as assistant principal of the Columbian Heights High School.

In the Fall of 1923, Atkins was accepted to the graduate program at Teachers College, Columbia University in New York. He completed his studied in 1924 and received his Master of Arts degree with a concentration in education. Upon completion, he returned to Winston-Salem where he held various teaching and dean positions at Winston-Salem Teachers College (formerly Slater Industrial and State Normal School which was renamed in 1925). After 33 years leading Winston-Salem Teacher College (WSTC), Atkins father, Prof. Simon Green Atkins, retired at the end of the spring semester in 1934 because of declining health. Upon his retirement, the Board of Trustees selected Francis L. Atkins president of Winston-Salem Teachers College on June 1, 1934. Several weeks after this promotion, Prof. Simon Green Atkins passed away on June 28, 1934.

Atkins served as President of Winston-Salem Teacher College for 27 years retiring in 1961. During his tenure, the college became accredited, the campus expanded by the addition of seven academic buildings and residence halls, and additional degree programs were implemented. He also received many accolades during and after his tenure as president including an honorary degree of LL.D from his alma mater, Lincoln University (PA) in June 1941 for his work in the field of education.

Fraternally, Atkins left a mark on Omega. While at Columbia, he was active with Epsilon Chapter in New York. Besides heading Beta Chapter, Atkins co-founded the first graduate chapter in North Carolina, Tau Omega Chapter, which covered the area of Greensboro and Winston-Salem, and served as its Basileus in 1927. He also was a charter member of Psi Phi Chapter, Winston-Salem, N.C., in 1932. Psi Phi and Mu Epsilon Chapters honored Atkins’ professional accomplishments and impact at its annual Achievement Week activities in 1954.

Francis Atkins married the former Martha Spencer, a graduate of West Virginia State College, in 1935. The two met at Winston-Salem Teachers College where Spencer taught piano and music since 1934. Two daughters were born of this union, Elinor and Frances (who died at birth). Francis Loguen Atkins passed away on January 26, 1982, after a brief illness. In celebrating his effort in establishing and advancing the nursing program at Winston-Salem State, the University named its new building for the School of Health Sciences, the F.L. Atkins Building in 1981.

Francis Loguen Atkins, 1920
If Omega Psi Phi has an Mt. Rushmore, Jasper Alston Atkins would be on it. In a vote taken by the 46 Chapters in 1927, Atkins was voted second as the “Omega man that has done the most for Omega” (Walter Herbert Mazyck, Grand Keeper of Records and Seal at the time, was voted first). Atkins founded three Chapters (Delta, Chi, and Xi Omega Chapters), served as Basileus of four Chapters (Chi, Tau Omega, Xi Omega, and Nu Phi Chapters) and Keeper of Seals for two Chapters (Camp Howard and Delta Chapters), was elected Grand Basileus in 1922 serving three terms, held numerous positions in the 6th District including District Counselor, Vice District Representative, and District Representative, created and developed the Talent Hunt program from an idea in 1945 to a national program into the late 1960s, served and chaired numerous national committees, and was honored as Omega’s Man of the Year at the 39th Grand Conclave in Cincinnati.

Born June 8, 1898, Jasper Alston Atkins, or Jack to his family and friends, received his early education through his father’s school, the Slater Industrial and State Normal School, graduating in 1915 in Slater’s largest graduating class to date. Atkins was accepted into Fisk University’s College Preparatory Department where he spent a year before entering the University proper. Atkins thrived at Fisk. A gifted speaker, during the 1917 Commencement exercises, he won a prize in the annual public speaking contest on the topic “Charles Sumner, a Eulogy.”

With the entrance of the U.S. in WWI, like his brother Russell, Jack Atkins sought to fight in the War. Carter Walker Wesley, a graduating senior at Fisk and future Omega man, help organize meetings of Fisk men after reading about the possibility of an officer training in the African American newspapers. Atkins submitted an application interest form to Joel E. Spingarn who was independently spearheading a movement for the creation of an officers training camp for African American men outside of his duties as Chairman of the NAACP. However, because of his age and experience, he was not selected as a candidate to attend the 17th Provisional Training Regiment at Ft. Des Moines in the summer of 1917. He supports the war effort in other ways donating $10 in a student fundraising campaign at Fisk on behalf of the YMCA War Work fund in November 1917 (in 2018 dollars, this contribution would be $190). The monies were donated from funds earned by Atkins the previous summer handling pig iron (oblong blocks of crude iron from a smelt) six days a week. This savings from summer work was used to pay for his education at Fisk.

Atkins would not have to wait long for another opportunity to serve his country. During the summer of 1918, Fisk was approved to have a Student Army Training Corp (S.A.T.C.) unit at its school for college men. Atkins along with several other students and one professor was selected by the University to be assistant instructors for S.A.T.C.–Fisk. He was sent to Howard University for a S.A.T.C. Instructor training school in early August 1918 for six weeks. Atkins joined over 450 other men from seventy colleges and universities for Instructor training. It was during the time that a temporary Chapter of Omega Psi Phi named the Camp Howard Chapter was established at the Instructor training school and Atkins was selected for initiation in Omega following in his Brothers’ footsteps. On the evening of Sunday, September 1, 1918, Atkins, along with 27 other men including five other students and one instructor from Fisk, were initiated into Omega at the Alpha Chapter Fraternity House located at 322 T St., NW, Washington, D.C. Atkins was elected to the position of Keeper of Seals. When the Instructor camp ended on September 16, 1918, he was certified to assist Army officers in the instruction of military drills and tactics. The S.A.T.C.–Fisk began on September 30, 1918, with 125 Fisk men enlisted for training. That is also the official date of Atkins induction into military service. The Camp demobilized on December 17, 1918, following the armistice that ended World War I approximately five weeks earlier. He was discharged at the rank of Private on December 18, 1918.

This was not the only significant occurrence that happens to Atkins during 1918. Atkins, a seasoned orator, was one of the leads on the Fisk debate team that defeated Howard University on April 5, 1918, at Howard. The topic was challenging: “Resolved, that universal compulsory military training should be adopted as a permanent policy by the United States.” Atkins and his team were assigned the negative. This was an unenviable position as arguing the negative could be interpreted as not supporting the war effort which the U.S. was on the eve of entering the very next day. His opponents from Howard were two Omega men, Stanley Moreland Douglas (Alpha Chapter 1917) and Richard Edmond Carey (Alpha Chapter 1915), both skilled debaters and future attorneys. Atkins handled the negative tactfully and skillfully in crafting a positon by first agreeing that training should occur then shifting to make it compulsory for only seven years versus a permanent policy by the military. His arguments were so persuasive that he led his team to a unanimous victory over Howard. This would not be the first time Stanley Douglas would meet an Atkins on the
debate stage. Two years later, he would meet Jack's brother, Frances, on during the Howard-Lincoln debate and suffer the same result as in 1918. The one fact can be drawn from this incident. The Brothers of Alpha Chapter had gained familiarity with Jack Atkins before his participation at the Instructors training camp four months from its last. Perhaps this was one of the reasons why he was selected for initiation during the Camp.

During Atkins senior year (1918-19), he was joined at Fisk by his sister, Miriam, who entered the school as a senior in its College Preparatory Department. He also met his future wife, Maude Henrietta Smith, who was in the same class as Atkins at Fisk. Smith earned her bachelor degree in education from Fisk in 1919 and a second degree in piano from the Fisk Music Department in 1921. She taught at Fisk for a year before heading home to Charleston to teach music at her high school alma mater, the Avery Normal Institute in Charleston, SC. The two were married in 1924.

Fraternally, upon returning to Fisk from Instructors training camp at Howard, Atkins tried to set up the Fraternity's fourth Chapter at Fisk. However, like many other black southern institutions, Fisk banned fraternities, sororities, and other secret societies from its campus in 1915 citing detrimental conduct and conflicting philosophies as reasons against such organizations. However, Meharry Medical College, which was right across the street from Fisk, did allow such organization. Douglas Kelis Jenkins, who was a junior dental student at Meharry, attended Camp Howard and was initiated into the Fraternity through the Camp Howard Chapter with Atkins. So Atkins, along with Jenkins and other Omega men at Fisk, established Delta Chapter on January 22, 1919, with membership consisting of Omega men from Meharry and Fisk. Atkins was elected the Chapter's first Keeper of Seals.

Atkins graduated from Fisk magna cum laude with a bachelor degree in Chemistry on May 28, 1919. He was one of two students that gave an oration during Commencement (the other student was Alfred Theophilus Clarke, who was initiated into Omega through the Camp Howard Chapter as well). That fall, he entered Yale Law School on a scholarship. While at Yale, he was selected to serve the Board of Editors of the prestigious Yale Law Journal from 1920 to 1922. On June 11, 1921, Atkins, along with two Yale classmates who were Omega Men, Charles Augustus Chandler (Camp Howard Chapter 1918) and Mifflin Tucker Gibbs (Alpha Chapter 1919), established Chi Chapter at Yale University with Atkins serving as Basileus. It was during his studies at Yale when at the 10th Grand Conclave (Atlanta) in December 1921 that Atkins was elected as Omega's 9th Grand Basileus. He served as Grand Basileus until January 1924 when he resigned due to professional obligations. Atkins footprint as Grand Basileus is felt today. Under his leadership, the position of Vice Grand Basileus was added, Districts and accompanying representatives were created, the designated surname of “Omega” was added for graduate Chapters to help distinguish from undergraduate Chapters, and, in 1923, 19 Chapters were added to the roll of Omega increasing the number of Chapters from 28 to 47.

Atkins graduated from Yale in 1922 with honors (cum laude) making him the first African American to reach such achievement. After leaving Yale, Atkins moved to Tulsa, OK to establish a law practice. The Greenwood section of Tulsa, which was the home to many African-Americans, was rebuilding after one of the worst race riots in U.S. history just a year earlier in 1921. Atkins was joined in Oklahoma by Carter Walker Wesley, a fellow Fisk classmate and recent graduate from Northwestern University's law school. Wesley was also a member of Omega Psi Phi being initiated through the War Chapter at Ft. Des Moines in 1917. Atkins and Wesley established a successful law practice that served the African American community in Tulsa and Muskogee, OK. In 1923, the partners added Charles A. Chandler to their practice who had recently graduated from Yale Law School. Shortly after Chandler arrived, he and Atkins established Xi Omega Chapter on October 1, 1923. After his tenure as Grand Basileus, Atkins would serve as Basileus of Xi Omega Chapter.

Reaping the financial gains from building a successful law practice, Atkins and Wesley moved to Houston, TX, Wesley's hometown, to establish a new practice and develop other business ventures in 1927. The Fraternity played a strong role in Atkins professional and personal activities. Both men became members of the recently formed Nu Phi Chapter that was established in Houston in 1926 (Atkins and Wesley played a vital role in guiding the Omega men in the Houston area on chartering a chapter before their arrival). The members of Nu Phi Chapter were more than just friends. Atkins, Wesley, and several other members of the Chapter formed a real estate and property management firm, the Safety Loan and Brokerage Co. Atkins also served as secretary and section editor of the local African American paper, the Houston Informer, in which Wesley had an ownership stake and Clifton Frederick (C.F.) Richardson, an Omega man and Vice Basileus of Nu Phi Chapter in 1927, was a founder, majority owner, and editor. Atkins also served as Nu Phi's Chapter Editor, Basileus (1928-30), and Achievement Week Chair. In 1930, James Madison Nabrit, Jr., an attorney, Morehouse and Northwestern Law grad, moved to Houston and became the third partner in Atkins and Wesley's law firm. As with their prior business relationships, Nabrit was an Omega man being initiated as a charter member of Eta Chapter (Atlanta) while he was a student at Morehouse College. The firm represented many civil right cases and those of discrimination against African Americans in the Houston area. In 1935, Atkins argued the case before the U.S. Supreme Court of Richard Randolph Grove, a black Texas resident, who was denied the right to vote in the Texas
Democratic Party primary due to a rule by the Party that banned Blacks from voting in primary elections. While the Court ruled against Grovey, it would later be overturned in 1944.

Atkins left Houston in 1936 to assist his brother, Francis, at Winston-Salem Teachers College as Executive Secretary. Francis took over as president of the College when their father, Simon Green Atkins, passed away in 1934. Jack Atkins would remain at Winston-Salem Teachers College for 24 years serving with his brother and exponentially increasing the size and profile of the College.

Atkins work in Omega was far from over after his move back home. He served as Basileus of Tau Omega Chapter and was District Counselor, Vice District Representative and District Representative for the Sixth District during the 1950s. His most profound impact was the creation of the annual Talent Hunt in 1945. Implemented at first as a Chapter event for Psi Phi Chapter in Winston-Salem, Atkins developed and grew the event to be a district then a national event in 1954. He was the first national chair of the Talent Hunt Committee serving in that position until the mid-60s and chair of the Fraternity’s audit and budget committee for eight years. For his impact and dedication to Omega, Atkins was selected as Omega Man of the Year at the 1952 Grand Conclave in Philadelphia.

In 1960, Atkins retired from Winston-Salem Teachers College and moved back to Houston for several years to work again with his friend, Carter Wesley, as executive editor of the Informer newspapers (Houston Informer and Texas Freeman), the papers Wesley now owned fully. He retired in 1963 and returned to Winston-Salem where, in retirement, he challenged North Carolina’s disparate funding of post-secondary institutions through a series of lawsuits against the state seeking equal resources for state-controlled HBCUs. After 15 years of battling through the courts, in 1985, an agreement was finally reached through a consent decree which ordered the State of North Carolina “to give equal financial support to black and white institutions for current operations, salaries, libraries, summer sessions, and student financial aid.” It also provided additional funding to attain equality in facilities and the establishment of new buildings. Unfortunately, Atkins was unable to see the fruit of his labor. He passed away on June 28, 1982, of pancreas cancer only five months after his brother, Francis, died.

J. Alston Atkins legacy lives on both professional and fraternally. Winston-Salem State University host the annual J. Alston Atkins Memorial Lecture in Constitutional Law in memory of Atkins fight for equality in education funding. Additionally, the Winston-Salem Chapter of the National Association of Bench and Bar Spouses provided the Jasper Alston Atkins Legal Education Scholarship Award to a Winston-Salem State alum who is in law school. Fraternally, the Talent Hunt competition is a mandated program of Omega. Of the Chapters established during Atkins tenure as the 9th Grand Basileus, all are still in existence and active.

The Atkins Brothers legacy is strong, lasting and represents a model of Omega’s Cardinal Principals.
Both Love Brothers were select as candidates for the 17th Provisional Training Camp at Ft. Des Moines during the summer of 1917. Before the camp, Edgar Amos Love was pastor of the Fairmont Heights Methodist Episcopal Church right outside of Washington, D.C. receiving this first trial ministerial assignment in 1915. At the same time, he worked on and received his second degree from Howard University, a bachelor of divinity, in 1916. After finishing at Howard, Edgar Love resigned his position at Fairmont Heights M.E.C. to enroll at Boston University to begin work on his Bachelor of Sacred Theology degree in the fall of 1916. After a few months in Boston, he, along with four other Omega men from Alpha and Beta Chapters, established Gamma Chapter on December 13, 1916. The start of the war found Edgar Love completing his first year at BU. John Wesley Love was at Howard the same time as his brother graduating with an A.B. degree in 1916. John Love was teaching English in the Collegiate Department at the St. Augustine's Normal School and Collegiate Institute in Raleigh, NC when the U.S. entered the war in 1917.

Hearing the call of duty, both brothers applied and were accepted in the 17th Provisional Training Regiment for African American officer candidates at Ft. Des Moines, IA arriving on June 15, 1917. After completing camp at Ft. Des Moines, they both received commissions of first lieutenant on October 15, 1917. On leave before reporting to their assigned cantonment for further training, the Love Brothers attended a special program honoring the newly commissioned African American officers from Baltimore on October 23, 1917, at the Bethel AME Church in Baltimore. Over 1,000 people attended this program where a host of speakers spoke on the bravery, honor, importance, and history the officers were making in representing their race. On the lectern was Rev. Julius C. Love, father of Edgar and John. The Baltimore Afro American noted that "there was no prouder man on the rostrum, however than Rev. J. C. Love, whose two sons, Edgar A. and John Wesley,
were also there, having won commissions as first lieutenants." After the speeches by dignitaries, Edgar Love, an experienced orator, provided comments on behalf of the officers. He noted that "the Negro problem was one of the many problems with which the world had to deal, and in helping to fight for the solution of many of these problems, the Negro may find his condition ameliorated. The Negro will help in putting an end to German ambition so that righteousness and justice may prevail." After his leave, Edgar Love reported to Camp Meade near Annapolis, MD assigned to the Machine Gun Company, 368th Infantry to assist in the training of African American enlisted men. Shortly after arriving at Camp Meade, he was reassigned to the Corps of Chaplains serving the 3,600 African American soldiers of the 368th Infantry, 184th Infantry Brigade, 92nd Division. The demands on black chaplains were high as there were only sixty African American chaplains serving over 350,000 African American troops during the war. Love performed his duty diligently serving the needs of the 368th. He continued to work on his third degree while at Camp Meade and was awarded the Bachelor of Sacred Theology from Boston University on May 20, 1918 in absentia. Less than a month later, his regiment sailed for France on June 15, 1918. That September, the 368th took part in the Meuse-Argonne offensive near the Vosges Mountains where Love was slightly gassed but after first aid treatment refused to leave his unit while engaged. Also serving in the 368th was his best friend and co-founder of Omega, Frank Coleman. It was Love who delivered the unofficial message to Coleman from regional headquarters in France of his promotion to command of his Company. After the armistice was signed, he was reassigned to the 809th Pioneer Infantry in January 1919 to serve the spiritual needs of the men. Love recognized the high levels of illiteracy in the Army among African American troops. One study estimates that 51% of black soldiers were illiterate. With the war ended, he sought to extend his service beyond his current duties by organizing and teaching a school for the soldiers of the 809th. He was able to recruit thirteen other officers and non-commissioned officers to serve as faculty teaching reading, writing, math, history, and other subjects. So successful was the school that it was developed as a regular system for other units.

Love was scheduled to return from France in July 1919. But illness prevented him from returning to the U.S. After a two-week stay in the hospital, he was released and returned to the U.S. from France in August 1919. After a short stint at Camp Dix in NJ, he was honorably discharged from the Army on September 24, 1919. After his discharge, Edgar Love would go to teach history and bible at Morgan College in Baltimore. He also served as Athletic Director. In 1920, he was promoted to principal of Morgan Academy, his high school alma mater. He left Morgan in 1921 to return to the ministry.

His brother's military career took a much different course. After being commissioned at Ft. Des Moines, John Love reported to Camp Dix and was assigned to the 350th Field Artillery Regiment for training. He remained with this regiment until June 1918 when he was reassigned to the Duty Training Detachment where he was first assigned to be part of the officer command team at the Student Army Training Camp at Howard University that was charged with training 457 African American college men and faculty from over 70 colleges and universities to be assistant military instructors for S.A.T.C. camps at their various institutions. Love was not alone in this assignment at Howard as two other Omega men, 1LT Campbell Carrington Johnson (Alpha Chapter 1916), one of Love's best friends from Howard, and 1LT John Henry Purnell (Alpha Chapter 1913) served in this detachment. After the completion of the camp in September 1918, Love was assigned to be second-in-command of the SATC program at Hampton Institute. He returned to Howard in early 1919 as part of the training team for the S.A.T.C. at that institution. With the war over and a reduction of the need for officers, Love was honorably discharged from the Army on May 28, 1919.

John Love returned to Howard and joined three other Omega men and WWI veterans, Campbell Johnson, Linwood Graves Koger (Alpha Chapter 1915), and Walter Herbert Mazyck (Alpha Chapter 1916), as first-year law students. All four Omega men would graduate together in 1922 and be lifelong friends (Love, Johnson, and Mayzck would form and operate their own law firm together for several years after graduating).