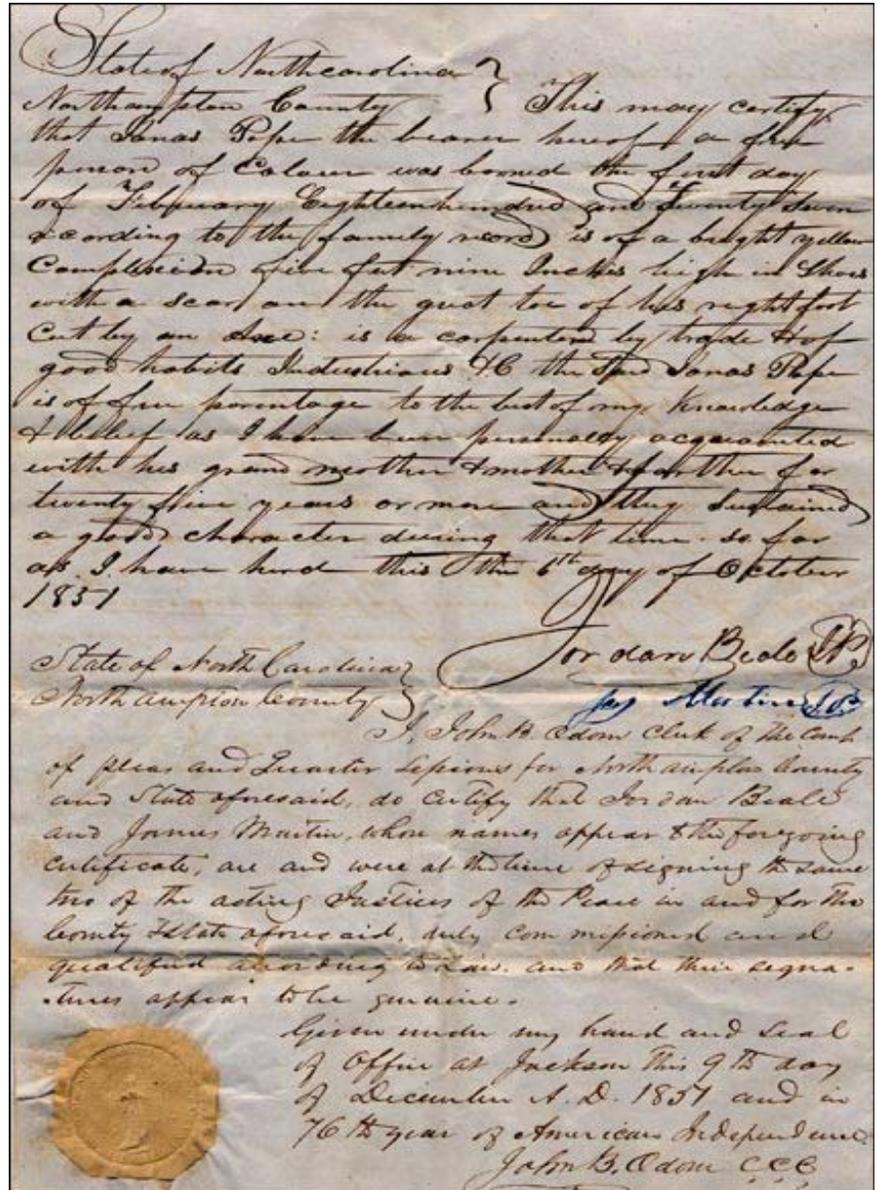


## Historical Context for the Pope Family

Manassa Thomas Pope, builder of the Pope House, was born near Rich Square, Northampton County, North Carolina, in 1858. Both of his parents were free people of color, and in fact the family may have been free as early as the eighteenth century. Manassa's father, Jonas Elias Pope (1827- 1913) was a carpenter by trade, and owned a significant amount of land in Northampton and Bertie Counties, some of which was rented to sharecroppers for the production of cotton. Jonas Pope was a Quaker, and well-educated for the era. He was described as being of "bright yellow complexion," indicating that he was of multi-racial heritage. Nothing else is currently known about Manassa's mother, though evidently she too was born free and was of multi-racial ancestry.

Manassa Pope came to Raleigh in 1874 to attend Shaw University, a college for Negro men established by a white minister, H. M. Tupper, in 1865. He finished his undergraduate education and then began study at the Leonard School of Medicine at Shaw, the first four-year medical college in the state of North Carolina (black or white).

Dr. Pope graduated in 1886, and in 1887 he married Lydia Walden of Winton, NC. The Popes moved to Henderson, NC, in 1888, where Dr. Pope served as assistant postmaster (a political appointment) until they moved to Charlotte in 1892. In Charlotte Dr. Pope not only practiced medicine but was a very active businessman, helping to establish the Queen City Drug Company and the People's Benevolent Association (an insurance company).



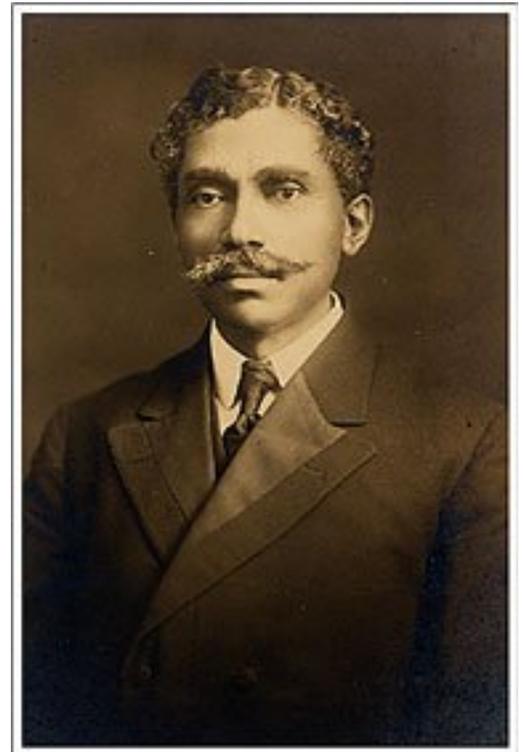
Jonas Pope's 1851 Freedman Papers



Shaw Medical School, Class of 1886

The early 1890s were exciting and optimistic times for African Americans in North Carolina, as many people like Dr. Pope took full advantage of new opportunities and participated in society as equal citizens. This participation included having a political voice, which was strengthened by the so-called “fusion” of the Republican party with the Populists. Most politically active people of color in the nineteenth century identified themselves as Republicans, which had been the party of Abraham Lincoln and the party that had advocated the abolition of slavery. Conversely, the Democratic party generally included former slave owners and the new elite of the South, comprised of wealthy merchants and textile and tobacco factory owners. Disaffected whites, particularly small farmers, gravitated toward third parties such as the Farmer’s Alliance, which promoted among other issues changes in the nation’s financial system to help ease their economic strain. By the late 1880s, it was clear that with state and national tickets split three ways, the Democrats would always maintain a majority. As a result, the Republicans joined with the mostly white third parties, which were broadly known as Populists. For the first time in American political history issues of class took precedence over race, and the fusion of the Republicans and the Populists defeated Democrats across the southeast. In North Carolina fusion candidates were most successful in 1896, when Daniel Russell, a white Republican, was elected governor. In that election several African American men were also elected to public office, including George White to the United States Congress, and three men to the North Carolina State Legislature (including James H. Young, editor of the Raleigh Gazette, who was a former classmate and good friend of Dr. Pope)

The state’s wealthy and powerful Democratic leaders, many of whose families had owned slaves before the Civil War, felt that the loss of elected and appointed offices to Republicans of African American ancestry added insult to the injury of defeat. Though men of color had held office during federally mandated Reconstruction (1867-1877), this time the election results were considered far more serious because it suggested a permanent shift in political and racial power. Furnifold Simmons was made state party chairman, and was instructed to use whatever means necessary to bring the Democrats back to power. Between 1898 and 1900 Simmons mounted what was termed a “White Supremacy Campaign,” which sought to discredit men of color and to woo the white farmers back to the Democratic party. The campaign was vicious, ranging from racist editorials and cartoons in sympathetic newspapers to deadly violence against prominent blacks. The most infamous incident of violence occurred in Wilmington in November of 1898, when a mob of white Democrats, led by Alfred Moore Waddell (who had lost his seat in Congress to a Republican) staged a bloody coup d’etat, wresting control of the city’s government away from the duly elected Republican alderman and killing at least a dozen people in the process. On the propaganda front, Simmons’s most effective ally was Josephus Daniels, the young editor and publisher of the Raleigh News & Observer. Daniels ran a steady barrage of stories and editorials during this three-year period which denigrated African Americans and Republicans in general, and promoted White Supremacy and the Democrat’s cause. As many of the whites the Democrats wanted to reach were illiterate, Daniels hired a professional cartoonist, Norman Jennett, who drew vile and false images of supposedly incompetent African Americans politicians who lusted after young white women (including Dr. Pope’s good friend, State Representative James Young).



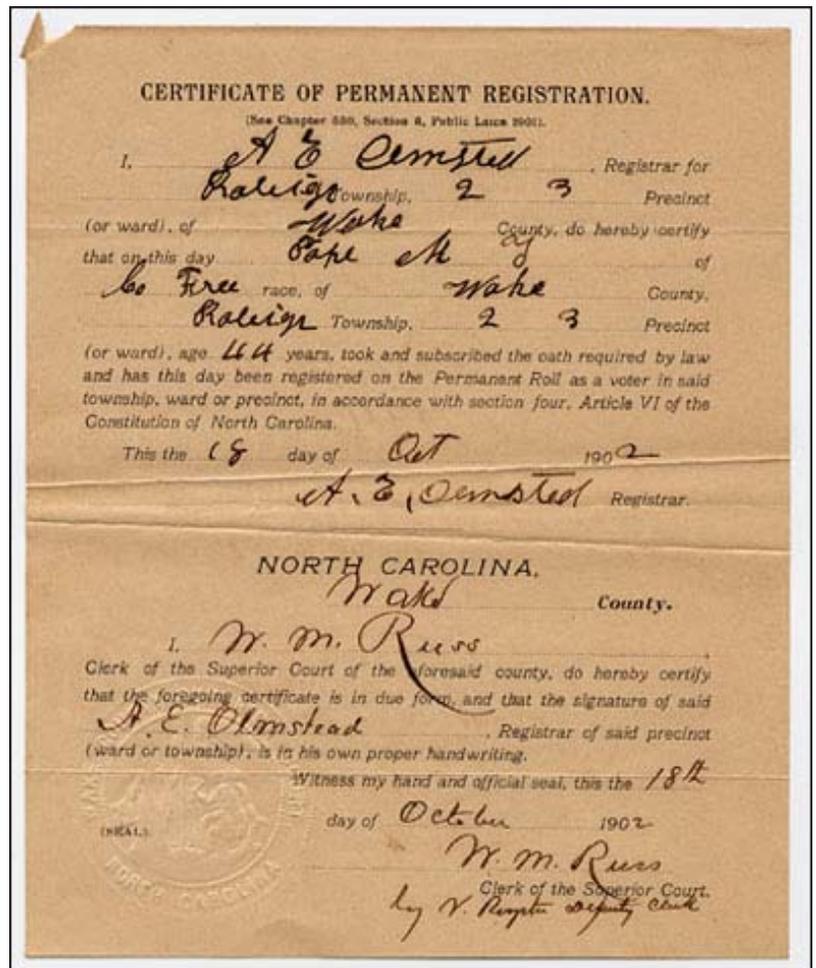
**Dr. M. T. Pope, ca. 1900**

The White Supremacy Campaign was successful in 1898, and Republicans and Populists elected on the fusion ticket were swept from office. Within the next two years, African Americans in North Carolina were to lose many of the privileges extended to them by the federal constitution. The first order of business for the new Democratic state legislature in 1899 was the passage of Jim Crow segregation laws, initially separating the races on public transportation. Though it is not well understood today, segregation was not codified in the South until the 1890s (it did not exist in the ante-bellum South; people of color were either slave or free). Furnifold Simmons’s next move was to disfranchise African American men (and thus the political opposition)

once and for all by adding a mis-titled “suffrage” amendment to the state constitution. This amendment called for a literacy test for voting, which required any person who appeared at the polling booth to pass a reading and comprehension exam about the United States Constitution—judged by a racist Democratic polling official. To not disfranchise illiterate white men, a so-called “grandfather clause” was added to the amendment which stated that anyone whose father or grandfather could vote prior to 1867 (the start of federal Reconstruction, which gave freed slaves the vote) would be exempt from the literacy test.

The suffrage amendment was put on the ballot in 1900, and the Democrats, including Daniels and the News & Observer, went into full battle mode to guarantee its passage. Prominent men of color, who had seen this coming for two years, tried to get out the Republican and Populist vote to defeat the measure. James Young vehemently defended himself and his race in his paper, The Raleigh Gazette, calling the N&O “the Police Gazette,” charging that it and other “negro howling sheets...[are run by] blatant foul mouths ...[who appeal to] Democratic pie suckers.” Young not only fought back in print, but sought to show that North Carolina did in fact have a large group of well-educated, refined, patriotic men of color by forming an all-black volunteer regiment to fight in the Spanish-American War. Though the regiment never saw action, the Third Regiment certainly made a strong statement about the character of the state’s African American elite.

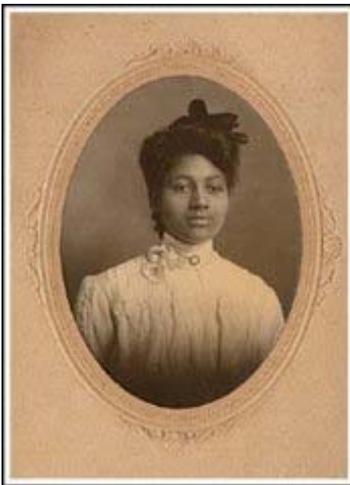
Dr. Manassa T. Pope found himself in the middle of this turmoil. He was a classmate and apparently good friend of James Young, and served as the latter’s first lieutenant and first assistant surgeon in the Third Regiment, enlisting on July 4, 1898. After mustering out in 1899, Dr. Pope moved to Raleigh. It is unclear why he did this, but he may have wanted to help his friend James Young in some way. In Raleigh he established his medical practice on East Hargett Street (which was rapidly becoming the central black business district), and in 1901 he built a substantial brick residence at 511 South Wilmington Street. Ironically, Josephus Daniels, editor and publisher of the “Police Gazette” (as James Young called it), lived not more than two hundred yards away from Dr. Pope in a neighborhood that was becoming predominately African American. Thus Dr. Pope was living within sight of the home of the man who was trying to disfranchise his race and implement segregation--not to mention vilify his good friend James Young. Though the Democrats won the war to disfranchise African American men with the passage of the constitutional amendment in 1900, Dr. Pope won a personal battle. Because his father, Jonas Elias Pope, was a free person of color and could vote, Dr. Pope was able to meet the nearly impossible requirement of the grandfather clause. He marched down to the registration office in 1902, when the new law took effect, presented his father’s 1851 freedman papers, and was issued a voter registration card (these are perhaps the most important two documents in the Pope Family Archives).



**Dr. Pope’s 1902 Voter Registration Card**

Dr. Pope thus became one of only 7 men of color in the entire city of Raleigh to be eligible to vote; one of only 31 in Wake County (½ of 1% of the county's registered voters). The final satisfaction for Dr. Pope must have been the fact that though he was the only man of African American heritage to be able to vote in the Third Ward (the most heavily black district in the city), he and Josephus Daniels shared a polling place.

Dr. Pope's political activity reached a high point in the spring of 1919, when, in the midst of Jim Crow segregation and at a moment of extreme racial tension in the nation, he courageously ran for mayor of Raleigh. At that time the Raleigh city council consisted of only three members: mayor, commissioner of public safety, and commissioner of public works. Dr. Pope headed a non-partisan African American slate of candidates along with Calvin Lightner (whose son, Clarence Lightner, became the first black mayor of Raleigh in 1973) and J. Cheek in the April primary. Though this bold stand by three prominent black citizens must have been the talk of the town, predictably the News & Observer chose to virtually ignore their candidacy (except for several veiled editorials stressing the need to vote for the "best men," and one article the day before the election, pointing out where the "colored" candidates appeared on the ballot). Raleigh, with a population of about 24,000, had 3,500 registered voters in 1919. Of those registered 2,550 cast ballots, with Dr. Pope receiving 126 (98 in the second division of the Third Ward, the predominately black precinct in which he lived). As Calvin Lightner later remembered "we knew we wouldn't win, and if we did win the whites wouldn't let us administer, but we did it to wake our people up politically."



**Delia Haywood  
Phillips Pope, ca. 1905**

It is difficult to understate the importance—and the risk—of Dr. Pope's run for mayor in 1919. That spring thousands of American soldiers returned from the bloody European battlefields of the First World War, including a significant number of African Americans who had served. Many of these black veterans expected to be treated differently after their patriotic service, but instead were forced to return to the status of second-class citizens. Racial tensions ran high across the country, and riots broke out in northern cities where the African American population had dramatically increased in the years preceding the war as many people of color left the South in search of a better life. In fact 1919 has the dubious distinction of being the year in which more than seventy black men, some returning soldiers in uniform, were lynched by white mobs (the highest number of lynchings recorded in any year following the end of the Civil War). Race was not the only source of conflict in 1919—gender was also a public issue as advocates and opponents of women's suffrage fought over the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution. In the South race and gender were linked, as state legislatures debated whether or not passing the amendment would allow black women to vote (as a result, North Carolina's legislature did not ratify the amendment). To take a public stand on these issues Dr. Pope and the other two men ran for office—an act of non-violent protest that pre-dated the Civil Rights Movements by several decades, and which put their very lives in jeopardy.

Outside of his political activities, Dr. Pope led a quiet family life. In 1906 Lydia Walden Pope died of tuberculosis. In 1907 he married Delia Haywood Phillips, who was born in 1880 and thus twenty-two years his junior. Though Delia's parents were both born into slavery, her family was very prominent in the area. She too came from a multi-racial background, and both of her parents were apparently educated. Her sister, Mary E. Phillips, was a well-known and well-respected educator in Raleigh, who later had the honor of having a school named for her. Though Mrs. Pope had been a Presbyterian, she joined First Baptist Church to worship with her husband. To the couple two daughters were born; Evelyn B. Pope in 1908, and Ruth P. Pope in 1910. The family belonged to Raleigh's elite colored society, counting among their friends the prominent Delany, Lightner, and Irving families. Despite being strict Baptists, Dr. and Mrs. Pope seem to have been thoroughly "modern" parents where their daughters were concerned. They freely discussed all issues with them, apparently including frank talks about human sexuality, and strongly encouraged them to pursue higher education. Both daughters received degrees from Shaw University, and both went on to earn Master's degrees from Columbia University in New York; Evelyn in library science, and Ruth in home economics.

Dr. Pope died in 1934 at the age of 76, and his wife followed him in 1955. Evelyn was by then a respected librarian at the North Carolina Central University Law School, and Ruth was a beloved home economics teacher in the Chapel Hill public schools. The two sisters, neither of whom ever married, kept up the family home in Raleigh and retired there in the 1970s. Evelyn died in 1995, and Ruth passed away in October of 2000.