

Henry Clay Helm

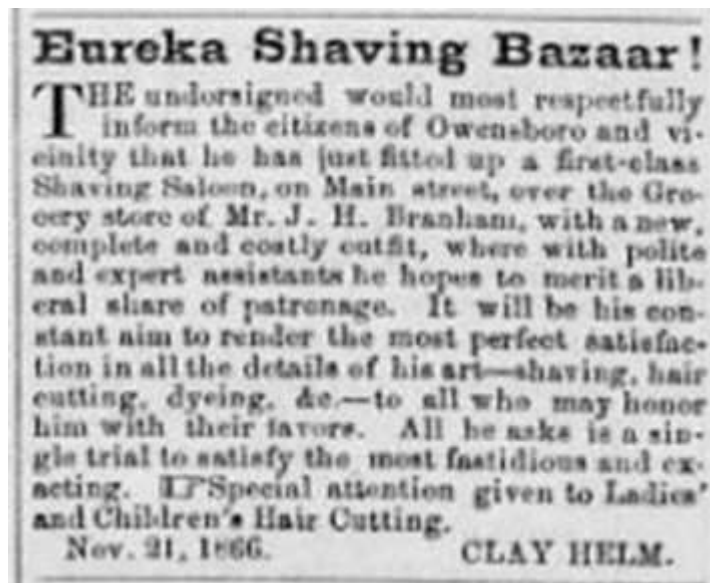
(c1842-1926)

By Jerry Long

Henry Clay Helm was the first black in Owensboro, Daviess County, KY to make a run for any city elective office. Early newspaper reports show that in March 1875, former slave H. Clay Helm was the first black man to run for public office in Owensboro, getting 96 votes in an unsuccessful race for city councilman. Another 110 years will pass before the Rev. Richard L. McFarland (1917-2002) becomes the first African American elected to the city commission in Owensboro in 1985.



Owensboro Monitor, Owensboro, KY, Monday, 21 November 1866, p.3:



Eureka Shaving Bazaar!

The undersigned would most respectfully inform the citizens of Owensboro and vicinity that he has just fitted up a first-class Shaving Saloon, on Main street, over the Grocery store of Mr. J. H. Branham, with a new, complete and costly outfit, where with polite and expert assistants he hopes to merit a liberal share of patronage. It will be his constant aim to render the most perfect satisfaction in all the details of

his art – shaving, hair cutting, dyeing, &c. – to all who may honor with their favors. All he asks is a single trial to satisfy the most fastidious and exacting. Special attention given to Ladies' and Children's hair cutting.

Nov. 21, 1866. CLAY HELM.



Owensboro Monitor, Owensboro, KY, Wednesday, 30 October 1867, p.3:

Clay Helm, at his new and cozy shaving saloon, has a word to say in our advertising columns to-day. He can, with his right bowers, John Fields, Ben Wall and other assistants, shave a fellow closer than a money changer, and still leave you less poorer, or convert the ugliest specimen of an old bachelor into a gay and handsome looking lady-killer. Clay has the finest shop extant, and it is a luxury to get into the hands of himself or assistants. Give him a call.



Daviess County, KY 1870 Federal Census:

p.262 – Owensboro

Helm, Clay	28	Black	barber	KY
			real estate \$3,000, personal property \$900	
Sarah	28	Black		KY
Mury	3	Black		KY
Harris	2	Black		KY
Georgiana	3/12 Feb	Black		KY
Daily, Susan	16	Black		KY
McClarty, Polly A.	32	Black	domestic servant	KY
Thomas, Calvin	23	Black	barber	KY

p.329 – Uppertown Precinct

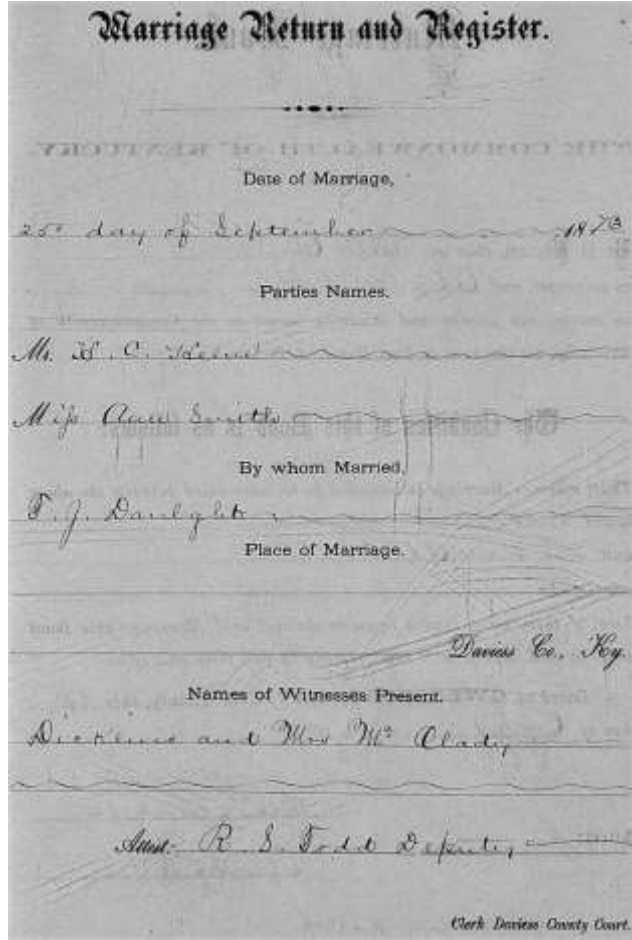
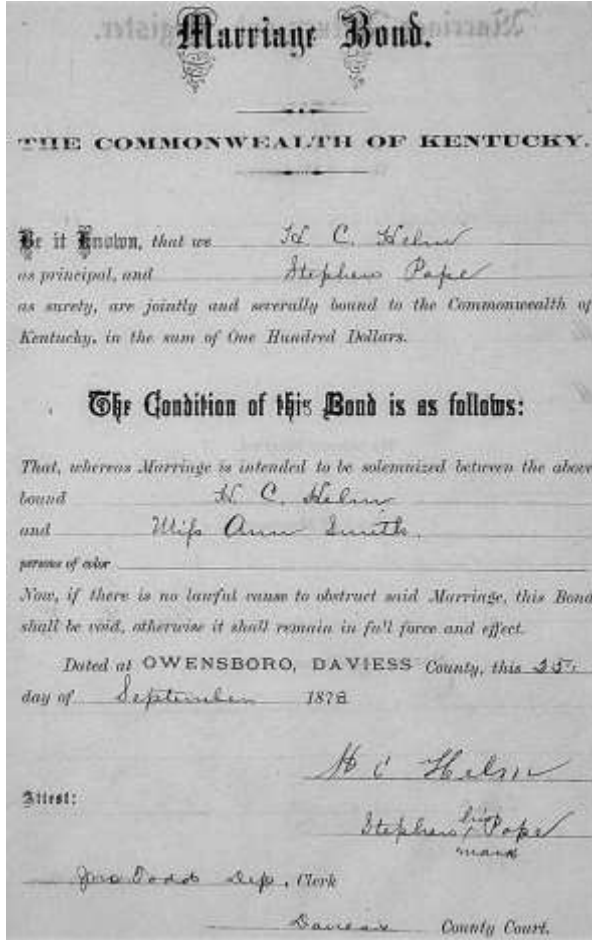
Dailey, Daniel	47	Black	farmer	KY
Joicey	40	Black		KY
Annie	27	Black		KY
William	22	Black		KY
Amos	20	Black		KY
Manda	17	Black		KY

Jimmie	15	Black	KY
Mollie	12	Black	KY
Charles	8	Black	KY



Daviess County, KY Negro Marriage Book C, pp.88-89:

Henry Clay Helm married Miss Ann Smith, 25 September 1873



Owensboro Examiner, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 26 March 1875, p.5:

Mr. H. Clay Helm, a gentleman of the colored persuasion, has seen fit to announce himself as a candidate for councilman. Nobody will deny his legal right to take this step, but we think it bad taste in him to thrust himself upon the white people by seeking a place where he would be uncomfortable if elected,

and render himself odious to his old friends and customers among the white people. As he has seen fit to take this step, he may expect the white citizens to do all in their power to defeat him. If his business is damaged by this adventure of his, he will have nobody to blame but himself...



Owensboro Monitor, Owensboro, KY, Wednesday, 7 April 1875, p.3:

The Municipal Election

In the Lower Ward Messrs. Brannon, Scott and Baer, the regular nominees, were elected without trouble, only having a civil rights darkie to oppose them. The vote was as follows Scott – 206, Brannon – 204, Baer – 196, **Helm, (negro) – 96**

[Note: Election was held on 7 April 1875; 3 were elected from the Lower Ward & 3 from the Upper Ward to serve on the Owensboro City Council.]



Owensboro Examiner, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 8 December 1876, p.8:

City Council

On motion H. Clay Helm was granted renewal of retail liquor license at his place of business on west side of St. Ann street, between First and Second streets when he shall have complied with the city charter and ordinances. License to date from the time old license expired, he having made application to the Council at that time, no quorum being present.



Owensboro Examiner, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 18 October 1878, p.5:

Clay Helm's new barber-shop, in Rudd's new building, St. Ann Street, is an attractive local feature.



Owensboro, Daviess County, KY 1880 Federal Census:

p.212A – Owensboro – St. Elizabeth Street

Helm, Henry C.	36		Mulatto barber	KY
Ann	34	wife	Mulatto	KY
Murry	13	son	Mulatto barber	KY
Horace	12	son	Mulatto	KY
Eugene	11	son	Mulatto	KY
Georgie	10	daughter	Mulatto	KY
Henry C.	9	son	Mulatto	KY
Jerome	6	son	Mulatto	KY
Florence	5	daughter	Mulatto	KY
Alfred R.	3	son	Mulatto	KY
Virgie	2	daughter	Mulatto	KY
Annie	4/12	daughter	Mulatto	KY

p.254B – Owensboro

Dailey, Daniel	65		Black attends gardens	KY
Joice	64	wife	Black	KY
William	23	son	Black tobacco stemmer	KY



History of Daviess County, Kentucky, Inter-State Publishing Co., Chicago, IL, 1883:

Chapter XVII – Benevolent Societies

- p.390 The Union Benevolent Society, No. 2, was organized in the winter of 1876-7, with a membership of about twenty-five. The first president was H.C. Helm, and the first Secretary was A. Berry.
- p.400 The United Brothers of Friendship, No. 7, was organized in the winter of 1866-'7, with a charter membership of about twenty-five... The present officers: H. C. Helm, Master...



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Tuesday, 27 May 1884, p.4:

Clay Helm, colored, is a candidate for sheriff.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Thursday, 9 April 1885, p.4:

Clay Helm will remove his shop to Laurence Grouse's old stand.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Saturday, 28 November 1891, p.4:

The "Afro American Association" is the title of a corporation that has been formed to carry on a general merchandise business. The incorporators are W. H. Hunter, J. H. Saulsbury, J. M. Peters, O. G. K. Barrett, W. G. Henderson, H. C. Helm and Calvin Johnson. The concern will do business especially among the colored people.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Thursday, 9 June 1892, p.1:

PAID \$2,000 IN GOLD.

The O. and N. Railway Company Settles With Clay Helm For Injuries to His Son.

The first settlement made by the attorneys for the O. and N. railroad with a victim of the wreck of Sunday was with Clay Helm, colored, for his son Jerome Helm, who lost one leg and a part of the foot from the other leg. He was paid \$2,000 in gold, and the railroad company will besides pay all bills for medical attention. This is probably as much as would have been awarded by a jury but in view of the tedious delays, attorney's fees and uncertainties of court trials, it was considered by Helm a fair settlement. Negotiations with the others wounded are in progress.

[Jerome Helm, son of Henry Clay Helm, was injured in a wreck of the Owensboro Nashville Railroad near South Carrollton, KY. Five were killed in the accident and 25 injured.]



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Thursday, 29 November 1894, p.4:

Some Barber Shop Changes.

A general change is taking place in the barber shops in the central part of the city. Clay Helm has purchased Grausz's shop on Third street, and will discontinue his Frederica street house.



Owensboro, Daviess County, KY 1900 Federal Census:

p.93B – 812 West Fourth Street

Helm, Clay		Apr 1844 (56)	Black	barber-owns house	KY
Ann	wife	Sep 1852 (48)	Black		KY
		(married 27 years, 13 children)			
Jerome	son	Jun 1875 (24)	Black	porter	KY
Florence	dau.	Sep 1876 (23)	Black	school teacher	KY
Alfred R.	son	Sep 1878 (21)	Black	barber	KY

Virginia	dau.	Feb 1879 (21)	Black		KY
Roxey D.	dau.	Jul 1875 (14)	Black		KY
John	son	Nov 1886 (13)	Black		KY
Daniel P.	son	Jan 1887 (13)	Black		KY
Norman D.	son	Apr 1888 (12)	Black		KY

p.72B – 917 Lewis Street

Parks, Henry		Oct 1860 (39)	Black	teamster	KY
Amanda	wife	Jan 1864 (36)	Black		KY
Daly, Daniel	f-i-l	Jan 1820 (80)	Black		VA
Daly, Joycie	m-i-l	Feb 1818 (82)	Black		KY



Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Wednesday, 20 February 1901, p.1:

Nearly Ninety Years Old

An old negro woman known as Aunt Joycie Daily, who is nearly 90 years of age, died Tuesday and was buried this afternoon. She was the mother of Clay Helm, the barber.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 5 April 1903, p.13:

FOR THIRY YEARS

HENRY CLAY HELM HAS BARBERED IN OWENSBORO
He Learned the Trade When a Slave and Has Kept It Up Ever Since.

Henry Clay Helm, the colored barber on Frederica street. near Third, is one of the few men who have been in business in Owensboro for over thirty years. He came to Owensboro in 1865 from Louisville, and when he arrived in the city the site of his present business house was occupied by a hog pen while immediately in front of his present place was a large meadow.

Helm was a slave in Breckenridge county when the war broke out. At the dose of the war he went to Louisville. He had barbered when a slave, and turned to this work when he went to Louisville. A business man from this city knew him well and induced him to come to Owensboro to start a barbershop. He did and was soon doing a satisfactory business. Every one of his first customers are now dead, but there are several in the city still who have been his customers for nearly forty years. He has been in his present quarters for the past thirty-one years.



Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Tuesday, 8 September 1903, p.7:

LEGLESS BICYCLE RIDER.

Clay Helm Pushes the Pedals With Excellent Skill.

Owensboro possesses a curiosity in the shape, of a legless bicycle rider, but although Clay Helm, a negro boy, has been seen riding on the streets for many months few people could detect the fact that the wheel is propelled by artificial feet.

About ten years ago Helm was Injured In a wreck on the O. and N. railroad. At the time of the wreck a dozen or more persons were killed and for a time it was thought that Helm could not recover. He finally pulled through, however, but suffered the loss of both legs. They were severed from the body just above the knees. For many months Helm lay a helpless cripple, but through the aid of his father an eastern concern made him a pair of cork legs and they were fitted to his body. At first he experienced much pain in attempting to walk, but at last was able to get about with apparent ease. For a time his infirmity was slightly noticed, but even this gradually wore off. One day he expressed a desire to ride a bicycle, but his friends laughed at him and insisted that he would never be able to master the wheel. He didn't give up, however, and despite many discouragements he determined to do or die. His first efforts were ridiculously futile, but he persisted and at last had the satisfaction of surprising bis family and friends by riding home on a wheel. Since that time Helm has developed into quite a sprinter and he is not the least fatigued after riding a long distance. Helm can be seen on the street every day riding his wheel to and from his work and the speed he makes clearly demonstrates that he is a cyclist of no mean ability.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Thursday, 4 May 1905, p.7:

A new front will be put in the building occupied by Clay Helm's barber shop on Frederica street. The building is owned by the Hathaway estate



Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 3 November 1905, p.1:

AMOS DAILY

The Well Known Colored Barber, Die's from Accidental Fall.
Had Lived In Owensboro Twenty-six Years and Was a Good Citizen.

The veteran barber, Amos Dally died at 1 o'clock this morning as the result of a fall on Wednesday night while on his way home. He was walking along the railroad track with his hands in his pockets when he stumped his toe against a tie and fell. His stomach struck a protruding tie and the shock or internal injury was such as to cause his death. He was about sixty years of age and had lived here for twenty-six years. He was a half-brother of the well known barber, Clay Helm. He was a reputable citizen in every way. The funeral will take place on Sunday afternoon at 2 o'clock from the colored M. E. church on Elm street.



Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 20 May 1906, p.16:

Colored Column

Mrs. Clay Helm, a highly respected lady, died last Sunday morning at 1 o'clock at her home on West Fourth street. Funeral services were held Monday afternoon at the Elm-street A. M. E. church by Rev. Green Price. Mrs. Helm had been a member of the A. M. E. church since its organization in this city thirty years ago. She was also a member of the Ladies' Industrial club, the members of which were present, in a body. Resolutions of respect were offered by the church and the ladies' club. She leaves a husband, Mr. Clay Helm, three daughters and eight sons, all grown.



Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Tuesday, 2 June 1908, p.3:

VETERAN BARBER SELLS OUT

H. C. Helm Has Been in Tonsorial Business for 21 Years.

H. C. Helm, the veteran barber who has long been in business on Frederica street, has sold his place to Greg Powers, who with his brother, Robert Powers, will conduct the shop. Helm has been in the barber business in Owensboro for the past 22 years having come here when the war was over and he was freed from slavery. At that time he had the only barber shop in the city. He will open a single chair shop in the room adjoining A. L. Smith's livery stable in a few days.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Saturday, 6 June 1908, p.8:

Clay Helm Opens Shop.

Clay Helm, colored, who just a few days ago sold out his barber shop to Powers Bros., has opened another shop in one of the small offices of Smith's livery stable. He has been in the barber business for the past forty-one years, having staid in Owensboro during the war the states, when no other barbers would stay here.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 29 October 1909, p.1:

Independent Club of Negro Voters

Held Rousing Meeting At Courthouse Last Night

... Clay Helm Revolts – Clay Helm, the veteran colored barber, who has always commanded the respect of white men, is in open revolt against the customhouse machine. "Solution of the Problem" is what he calls the present independent movement among his race locally. He is one who registered Independent and no one will say it was "because he had his price," as the machine henchmen are saying about the other negroes who registered that way. He believes the better negroes should elect the better men...



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 7 November 1909, p.2:

**LAST OF FAMILY OF NEGRO BARBERS
Charlie Hathaway's Father Opened Shop Before War
TAUGHT THREE OF HIS BOYS THE TRADE**

CLAY HELM A PIONEER BARBER

Lawrence Grausz Is One of the Oldest White Barbers in The City

With the recent death of Charles Hathaway there, passed from the scenes of Owensboro tonsorial life the last of a family of colored barbers extending back to the days before the war. The father of Charles was Elijah Hathaway, who opened a shop here before the war and. which was for many years the principal barber shop of the town and the only one for .several years. He taught three of his boys the trade and they continued the business after his death, which took place several years ago and their business is still in existence and, probably, exceeds in age any one establishment in the city. Elijah, Jr., was killed a few years ago in a railroad accident and the other son, Sam, died a few years later.

The old man was economical but did not invest profitably but died possessed of some real estate, the chief property being the old Hathaway house on the north side of Second street between St. Elizabeth and Locust and which was inherited by Charley and in which he died.

Second Pioneer Barber

The next in time of priority in the business is Henry Clay Helm, colored barber on Frederica street between Third and Fourth, and who has been in the business continuously here for forty-four years, having come here from Louisville in 1865. He has, always been frugal and temperate and accumulated considerable property but lost much of it by going security for his friends. He is still in business and has promise of reaching the time for the celebration, of his golden jubilee in the trade. He was one of the intelligent negroes who recently registered as an Independent and counseled all of his race to free themselves from the servile bondage they, had been in, to the Republican local machine. He ran for a seat in the city council years ago and received the vote of one white man, the late Dr. J. F. Kimbley.

Cal Thomas is the other negro barber, who has been here for-many years. He is still a young man, having come here from Hartford while quite youthful. He is the real and original pioneer among those of his race in the matter of voting the Democratic ticket, which he has been doing for several years. He has also been advising his brethren to free themselves from Republican servitude and it is said he is now proud that so many of his fellows took his advice in the recent election.

Cal is another of the barbers who has saved his earnings and put them to good use and owns at least one good house and lot in the city...



Owensboro, Daviess County, KY 1910 Federal Census:

p.270B – 601 Elm Street

Helm, Clay	76	Mulatto barber – rents house	KY
		widowed – 17 children	

John	son	23	Mulatto	barber	single	KY
Norman	son	19	Mulatto	porter	single	KY
Virginia	dau.	29	Mulatto		single	KY

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Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 5 December 1915, p.8A:

Clay Helm, the veteran negro barber of Owensboro, has moved his barber shop from 317 St. Ann street to a location on West Ninth street.

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Oberlin, Lorain County, Ohio 1920 Federal Census:

p.260B – 234 North Main Street

Helm, John S.		33	Mulatto	barber	single	KY
Roxy	sister	35	Mulatto		single	KY
Anna D.	niece	8	Mulatto		single	KY
Katherine	niece	7	Mulatto		single	KY
Henry C.	father	78	Mulatto		widowed	KY

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Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 25 April 1926, p.3A:

Clay Helm, aged negro barber, known to many Owensboro people, who left Owensboro several years ago, died Saturday in Chicago. Uncle Clay conducted a barber shop for many years in Owensboro and had a host of friends among the white people.

Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 25 April 1926, p.2A:

**FIFTY YEARS A BARBER HERE
NEGRO DIES IN OBERLIN, O.**
Clay Helm, colored, age 90, died Friday April 23, at his home in Oberlin, Ohio. He conducted a barber shop in this city for more than 50 years. He was the father of 16 children, seven of whom survive. His funeral will take place at Oberlin, Monday afternoon. His daughter, Mrs. Virginia Wickliff, left for Oberlin this morning.

Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Wednesday, 28 April 1926, p.10:

The funeral of Clay Helm, colored who died Monday in Overland, Ill., and whose body arrived here Tuesday night, will be conducted from St. Paul's Methodist church, Thursday afternoon at 2:30 o'clock. Burial will take place in Greenwood cemetery.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 17 September 1954, p.8A:

Rudd Insurance firm of Owensboro celebrates 100th anniversary

... An old Owensboro Fire Underwriters rate book, of Jan. 1, 1883, still in possession of the company contains references such as the location of a saloon owned by J. H. Fisher and a drug store owned by W. T. Courtney and on the site of the present New Rudd Hotel. At 219 St. Ann, there was a queens ware and notions shop; at 221, a barber shop operated by Clay Helm and south of that was a bakery and confectionery operated by A. Oberst. and further south a harness shop, W. H. Kehrt, owner; the railroad office, the postoffice, and J. C. Rudd insurance agency.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 12 June 1993, p.5B:

Church celebrates 120th anniversary

St. Paul A.M.E. Church in Owensboro is celebrating its 120th anniversary today with a program and dinner at 6:30 p.m. at the H.L. Neblett Center. The theme will be "From Then Until Now."

Richard McFarland Jr. of Henderson, a member and steward of St. Paul A.M.E., will be the principal speaker at the banquet Cost for dinner is an \$8 donation. The program will include observations from the Rev. Howard S. Clark, pastor, a skit by the St. Paul youth, a gospel rap by Reuben Winstead and a historical summary of the church by Nena Lewis. Chairwoman Janice Watkins will recognize special guests.

St. Paul A.M.E. was founded in 1873 and met in a blacksmith shop near the corner of Third and Locust streets in Owensboro. The first church building was constructed in late 1873 at the corner of Third and St. Elizabeth streets on a lot donated by Clay Helm, a trustee. The cause is not known, but that structure was lost in 1893, and, while looking for a new location, the congregation worshipped at buildings on Frederica Street between Front and Main streets, and at the corner of Lewis and McFarland.

Under the leadership of the Rev. Lewis Hamilton, St Paul's present site at 624 Elm Street was purchased in 1900. The frame church at that location was destroyed by a storm. It was later rebuilt with brick, and a cornerstone was placed by Mount Pisgah Lodge No. 20 AM during the pastorate of Rev. William Ward in 1911.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 11 March 1990, p1B:

Rights advocates to be honored

A "Celebration of Achievement Reception" will be at 5:30 p.m. Thursday at The Owensboro National Bank Penthouse, honoring the Rev. R.L. McFarland, mayor pro-tem.

The program, originally scheduled for Feb. 13, will recognize local residents who have advanced the cause of civil and human rights in Daviess County. Recipients of R.L. McFarland Black History Awards will be Charles Brown, the late H. Clay Helm, the late Edward Claybrook, the late Lavetta Baker and the late Pearle Greene.

The reception, open free to the public, is sponsored by the Owensboro Human Relations Commission. Reservations should be made by Monday by calling 685-8254.



**Henry Clay Helm
Owensboro barber for 50 years**

Henry Clay Helm was born about 1842 in Kentucky. Before the Civil War he had resided in Breckinridge County, KY. Thomas D. Helm (1794-1846) in the 1840 census of Breckinridge County, KY is listed as being the owner of 16 slaves. In the 1850 and 1860 census slave schedules of Breckinridge County Thomas' widow, Sophia (Lowry) Helm was reported to be the owner of 8 and 4 slaves.

In 1865 Clay Helm moved to Owensboro, Daviess County, KY. He is listed in the 1870, 1880, 1900, 1910 censuses of Owensboro, Daviess County, KY and the 1920 census of Oberlin, Lorain County, Ohio. His mother, Joice Helm, was born about 1818 in Kentucky; there are numerous spellings of her first name. She married Daniel Dailey about 1843. Daniel & Joice Dailey are listed in the 1870, 1880 and 1900 censuses of Daviess County, KY. Joice Dailey died on 19 February 1901 in Owensboro, Daviess County, KY. Clay Helm had several Dailey half-siblings including – Annie (c1843-1913, married Charles Duncan), William (c1848-), Amos (c1850-1905, married Mollie Howard), Amanda (c1853-1917, married Henry Parks), James (c1855-1925), Mollie (c1858-) and Charles (c1862-).

Clay Helm married Ann Smith on 25 September 1883 in Daviess County, KY. Ann died on 13 May 1906 in Owensboro, KY. Her obituary stated she was the mother of 8 sons and 3 daughters. Clay Helm died 23 April 1926 at Oberlin, Lorain County, Ohio. He was buried at Greenwood Cemetery in Owensboro, Daviess County, KY. The children of Henry Clay Helm included – Eli Murray, (c1867-1892), Horace (c1868-), Eugene (c1869-), Georgia (1870-1945, married James Harris), Henry Clay Jr. (1872-1939, married Martha Davis), Jerome (c1873-1915), Florence E. (c1876- , married George W. Berry), Alfred Ross (c1878-1923, single), Virginia (1879- , married John Wickliffe), Annie (1880-), Roxa Deborah (c1885-1968, single), John S. (c1886-), Daniel P. (c1887-) and Norman D. (c1888- , married Catherine Lee Robinson).

