

Nannie Marie Locke (1868-1944)

By Jerry Long
c.2026



Nannie Locke, a missionary, who served in Kentucky, Virginia and Georgia, provided an example of church leadership, and was an inspiration for many. The Nannie Locke Housing Project at 805 Jackson Street, in Owensboro, was named in her honor.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Wednesday, 2 February 1944, p.8:



Nannie Locke, prominent Baptist missionary died at the home of her niece, Lelia Crowe, at 2:30 p. m. Monday. For many years she was a representative of the American Baptist Missionary board, serving in Kentucky, Virginia and Georgia. Surviving are four and five nephews. Funeral services will be held at the Fourth Street Baptist church at 2:30 Thursday, with the Rev. O. M. Locust, pastor, officiating. The body will lie in state at the church from 9 a.m. to 2:20 p.m., Thursday. Burial will be in Elmwood cemetery.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Thursday, 3 February 1944, p.5:



Funeral services for Nannie Lock, respected colored resident of Owensboro, who died at 2:30 a. m. Monday, will be held at the Fourth Street Baptist church at 2:30 p. m. today, with the pastor, the Rev. O. M. Locust, officiating. The body will lie in state at the church from 9 a. m. to 2.20 p. m. She was for many years, a representative of the American Baptist Missionary board.

Burial will take place in Elmwood cemetery on the lot of Mrs. J. T. Griffith, by whom she employed for more than 50 years.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 7 April 1944, p.10:

Notice

Notice is hereby given that the following settlements have been filed in my office and set for hearing and confirmation at 9:30 o'clock A. M. April 17th, 1944....

.... Lelia Catherine Crowe, Extrx. of Nannie Marie Locke – Final Settlement.



Daviess County, KY 1870 census, p.203B

Lowertown precinct, post office Owensboro

Lock, Edward	35	black	male	common laborer	born KY
“ Mariah	31	black	female		“
“ Sipiman	11	black	male		“
“ Mary F.	10	black	female		“
“ Sarah	6	black	female		“
“ Nannie	3	black	female		“
“ Eddie	1	black	male		“



Owensboro, Daviess County, KY 1880 census, p.225A:

Simmons, ? Duke	55	black	male	laborer	born KY
“ Annie	48	black	female	wife	“
Locke, Nannie	12	black	female	granddaughter	“

[note: Miss Nannie M. Locke is also enumerated in the 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930 & 1940 censuses of Owensboro, Daviess County, KY. In 1910 & 1920 she was living with her brother, Rev. Scipio Peter Locke (1858-1937), at 1501 Sweeney Street. Rev. Locke served as a Baptist minister for 60 years. In 1930 Nannie was residing with her sister, Fannie Bartlett (c1868-1938). In 1940 Nannie was a boarder – cook in the residence of Mrs. Joshua T. (Jettie R.) Griffith, who was white. The 1920 and 1930 censuses report that Nannie Locke was working in the missionary service.]



Kentucky Death Certificate – 1944 certificate #3809:

Form T. S. 1-A
 DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
 Bureau of the Census

COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY
 Department of Health
 BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS
 CERTIFICATE OF DEATH

State File No. **3809**
 Registrar's No. **51**

Registration District No. **4102** Precinct Registration District No. **2145**

1. PLACE OF DEATH:
 (a) County **Davies**
 (b) City or town **Owensboro**
 (c) Name of hospital or institution
 (d) Length of stay: In hospital or institution **1501 Sweeney** (years, months or days)

2. USUAL RESIDENCE OF DECEASED:
 (a) County **Davies**
 (b) City or town **Owensboro**
 (c) Street No. **1501 Sweeney**
 (d) If foreign born, how long in U. S. A. **2** years

3(a) FULL NAME **Miss Nannie Locke**
 3(b) If widow, Name was **No.**
 3(c) Social Security No. **No.**

4. Sex **Female** 5. Color **Colored** 6(a) Single, widowed, married, divorced **Single**

6(b) Name of husband or wife
 6(c) Age of husband or wife if alive
 7. Birth date of deceased **March 2 1868** (Month) (Day) (Year)

8. AGE: **75** Years **10** Months **29** Days (If less than one day, min.)

9. Birthplace **Owensboro, Kentucky**
 10. Usual occupation **Missionary of the Baptist Church**
 11. Industry or business

FATHER:
 12. Name **Edward Locke**
 13. Birthplace **Lexington, Ky.**

MOTHER:
 14. Maiden name **Maria Ellis**
 15. Birthplace **Lexington, Ky.**

16(a) Informant's own signature **Lelia C. Crowe**
 (b) Address **1501 Sweeney St**

17. BURIAL, CREMATION, OR REMOVAL
 Place **Elmwood Cemetery** Date **February 3, 1944**

18(a) Signature of funeral director **Agnew & Wheatley**
 (b) Address **721 North 1st Street, Owensboro, Ky.**

19(a) **2-3-44** (Date received by local registrar) (b) **[Signature]** (Registrar's signature)

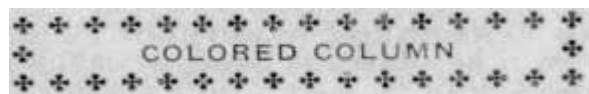
20. DATE OF DEATH **Jan. 31, 1944**
 21. I hereby certify that I attended the deceased from **Jan. 28, 1944** to **Jan. 31, 1944** and that death occurred on the date stated above **2:30 P.M.** immediately cause of death **cerebral hemorrhage from hypertension** DURATION
 Due to **Cerebral Hemorrhage from Hypertension**
 Other conditions (Include pregnancy within 3 months of death)
 Major findings:
 Of operation **83A-66B**
 Of autopsy

22. If death was due to external causes, fill in the following:
 (a) Accident, vehicle, or homicide (specify)
 (b) Date of occurrence
 (c) Where did injury occur? In or about home, on farm, in industrial plant, in public place? (Specify type of place)
 While at work (a) Name of employer
 23. Signature **R. Neblett, M.D.** (M. D. or other) Address **626 Elm St** Date signed **2/2/44**

Miss Nannie Locke died 31 January 1944 at 1501 Sweeney, Owensboro, Davies County, KY; died of cerebral hemorrhage, certified by Dr. R. Neblett; age 75 years, 10 months, 29 days; missionary of the Baptist Church; colored; single; born 2 March 1868 Owensboro, KY; father – Edward Locke born Lexington, KY; mother – Maria Ellis born Lexington, KY; informant – Lelia C. Crowe of 1501 Sweeney St., Owensboro; funeral director – Agnew & Wheatley; buried February 3 at Elmwood Cemetery. [note: Nannie Locke was buried in the Joshua T. & Jettie Griffith family plot, section D, lot #105, at Elmwood Cemetery in Owensboro.]



Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 8 October 1905, p.14:



... Mrs. Ike Henderson and Miss Nannie Locke went to Winchester last week to attend the Woman's Home Mission convention...



Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 25 October 1953, p. 9D:

**Negro Housing Project Set
For Occupancy By Year-End**

The new Negro housing project of the Municipal Housing Commission will be ready for occupancy by the end of the year, Miss Martha Baker, executive director of the commission, has reported. Fifty units are included in the project.

Miss Baker also said that 100 units of the white project will be completed by March 1, 1954. Another 100 will be finished by June 1 and the remaining 76, by Sept. 1, she said.

A deadline of Sept. 2, 1954, had been set for completion of the housing.

Applications for tenancy in the houses are being taken at the housing commission office, 316 Hale Ave.

The low-rental homes for white tenants will be called "Rolling Heights." Name of the colored housing development will be "Nannie Locke Homes," named after an Owensboro Negro woman outstanding the fields of missionary and social work. A committee headed by Prof. M. J. Sleet, Negro educator, chose this name.

Limits have been set on who may live in the houses according to income brackets. The annual incomes of persons applying for the housing may not exceed the following approximate maximums, according to Miss Baker: Two persons, \$2,600; three or four persons, \$2,700, and five or more persons, \$2,900.

Children are not included in the above maximums. One hundred dollars more income will be allowed for each child. The approximate figures were made following a survey, conducted by Miss Baker, of the prevailing income of unskilled and semi-skilled labor in this area.

Rent is also based on family earnings. Average rental for the Negro housing will be \$25 per month and \$24 per month for the white housing. Units for some families will run as low as \$15 per month.

The Negro project, located at 8th and Jackson Sts., will include the following units: Eight with one bedroom, 24 with two bedrooms, 12 with three bedrooms and six with four bedrooms. In the white project, at 18th and Leitchfield Rd., 36 units have one bedroom, 132 have two bedrooms, 76 have three bedrooms and 32 have four bedrooms.

Exterior of both housing developments is face brick, with the interior walls and ceilings plastered and painted. Flooring will be asphalt tile on the ground level and oak on the second story. The kitchen of each unit will be equipped with an electric refrigerator and a gas stove, and gas space heaters will be used for heating.

The housing commission is governed by a five-man board which includes Percy T. Beard, chairman; Robert Risley, vice chairman; Reid Brodie, Jr., secretary-treasurer; member, and Mayor LeRoy Woodward, member ex officio.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Thursday, 1 July 1954, p.8:

Nannie Locke Homes
To Receive First
Occupants Today

The Municipal Housing Commission's new 50-unit Negro housing project, the Nannie Locke Homes, will receive its first occupant today.

Miss Martha Baker, executive director of the commission, said yesterday afternoon that the family of Earl Moorman, a janitor, will move into the project this morning. The units are located in area of Ninth and Jackson streets.

It is expected to have the project fully occupied in the near future, with some of the residents of the first Negro housing project here, the P. G. Walker Apartments, transferring to the new units. The transfers are being made for families that have outgrown their present apartments, Miss Baker said.

Opening of the units was originally scheduled for last spring but was postponed because of inspections and last-minute finishing touches required of the builders.

The project was named after an Owensboro Negro woman who was prominent in the field of missionary work. The name was chosen by a special committee headed by M. J. Sleet, Negro educator.

In a report to the commission on the choice of the name, Sleet stated that Nannie Locke received her Christian education at Fireside School in Nashville and upon graduation was sent to Georgia and Mississippi to do mission work among her people. Later, she returned to Eastern Kentucky area, where she spent several years in the work.

Because of defective vision she was forced to retire, but after the removal of one of her eyes, she resumed her activities in and around Owensboro. In Owensboro, she organized a children's mission, where the youngsters were taught arts, crafts, and other useful activities.

"This mission is wholly responsible for some of Owensboro's good citizenship today," the report stated. "Many of her children are home owners, good mothers and fathers, and hold responsible positions. They will gladly testify as to her nobility and true worth."

Nannie Locke was at one time president of the State Missionary Convention, president of the city-wide Missionary Society, and president and organizer of the Green River Valley Missionary Institute.

She died Jan. 31, 1944 and was buried in Elmwood Cemetery in the family plot of the late Josh Griffith, who, according to the report, "recognized her sterling qualities and her service to her fellow man."



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 16 January 1955, pp.1D & 12D:

Rolling Heights, Locke Homes
Dedication Ceremony Today

By Charlotte Baumgarten, Messenger-Inquirer

The public is invited to attend a ceremony today dedicating the two recently public housing projects – Nannie Locke Homes in the 8th and Jackson Street area and Rolling Heights, at 18th and Leitchfield Road.

A special program will be held beginning at 2:30 p. m. In the auditorium of the Rolling Heights project. Guest speaker will be Nicholas Dosker, Louisville, administrator consultant of that city's Municipal Housing Commission. Invocation will be given by the Rev. J. Wallace Zink, pastor of the Zion Evangelical and Reformed Church. The Rt. Rev. Peter Braun, pastor of Sts. Joseph and Paul Church, will give the closing prayer.

Music will be played by members of the Western High School band.

Following the ceremony, one of the Rolling Heights apartments will be open for inspection.

Total Cost \$5½ Million

With the completion of these two municipal developments, Owensboro now has 502 housing units in two projects each for Negroes and whites. The first, the 124-unit Harry Smith Homes at 3rd and Hale Streets, was opened in 1950. Next came the P. G. Walker apartments, with 52 units ready for occupancy in 1952.

The first tenants moved into the 50-unit Nannie Locke Homes last July 1. By Nov. 1, the Rolling Heights project had its initial residents. This, the largest of the four housing developments, has 276 units and to date is 80 per cent occupied.

The total cost of the four projects was \$5½ million, financed through the sale of bonds of the Owensboro Municipal Housing Commission. These are secured by the federal government's pledge to make up any deficit by payment of an annual contribution to the city.

On the basis of a cooperation agreement between the city of Owensboro and the government, the bonds will be paid during a contracted-for period after which the bonding documents and projects will be turned over to the city.

The housing projects are governed by the Owensboro Municipal Housing Commission, consisting of a six-member board appointed for staggered terms by the mayor. Members are Earle W. Adams, chairman; George Baltzer, vice chairman; Reid Brodie Jr., secretary-treasurer; J. B. Arnold Jr.; Mayor Casper Gardner and Miss Martha Baker, executive director. The latter two serve as ex-officio members by virtue of their offices. The group meets monthly.

Rent Based On Income

Tenants for the project apartments, which range in size from one to four-bedroom living units, are selected on a basis of families in greatest need. Special priority is accorded to disabled veterans in need of housing. Miss Baker stated. Generally speaking, the selection depends on two main factors – families having the lowest income and those living in sub-standard homes or in the worst slum conditions.



NANNIE LOCKE PROJECT consists of 50 units in the 8th and Jackson Street area. This photo shows the modern new brick residential buildings, contrasted with sub-standard dwellings across the street.



Prospective tenants are interviewed by Mrs. Phyllis Coomer, right, management aide for the Nannie Locke and P. G. Walker Negro housing projects. Here she talks with Mrs. J. R. Gordon, a Locke tenant. The picture on the wall is of the late Miss Locke, donated by her niece, Mrs. Lelia Crowe. A staff member of the housing commission visits the home of each prospective tenant following the initial interview.

At present there are two vacancies in the Locke homes and some 50-odd smaller apartments remain to be rented at Rolling Heights. The Harry Smith and the Walker projects are filled. After a personal interview with an applicant, a member of the housing commission staff makes a personal visit to each prospective tenant's home before selection is final.

In the two older projects, vacated apartments are filled from a waiting list "within the length of time that it takes to do the paper work," according to Miss Baker. It is anticipated that the newest developments will follow a similar pattern once all units are occupied.

Rent, including utilities, is based on the family income. Limits range from \$2,600 to \$2,900, depending on the size of the family. An additional \$100 is added for each child. An increase of approximately, 20 per cent in income is allowed before tenants are required to move from the project, Miss Baker said.

The units are heated by automatic gas-fired furnaces. Kitchens are equipped with electric and gas refrigerators, gas stoves, automatic hot water heaters and spacious wood cabinets. The first floors are covered with asphalt tile. The upper levels have hardwood flooring.

Projects Have Playgrounds

A playground area is provided for each project and equipped with slides, swings and other stationary recreational fixtures for children. Play areas in the Locke and Rolling Heights developments will be ready by summer time.

Each project has an assembly room in its office building, completely equipped with kitchen facilities. Tenants may use these as a meeting place for entertainments or such activities as church and Scout groups. Brownie and Girl Scout troops have been organized at two of the projects, under

the sponsorship of the Business Professional Women's Club and the Younger Woman's Club. Additional troops for both Boy and Girl scouting are planned for the other projects.

The Owensboro-Daviess County Health Department conducts a free well-baby and immunization clinic at the projects. At Rolling Heights, the assembly room is equipped with a stage and a dressing room for play-type programs.

All but the Rolling Heights units were named in the memory of deceased civic leaders. The Harry Smith Homes commemorate the late mayor, during whose term from 1942 to 1946 the first municipal, housing commission was appointed. The Walker apartments are named for the late Dr. P. G. Walker, a Negro physician who served the community for 25 years, beginning in the early 1900's. He spearheaded the building of Dunbar Grade School in the east section of the city, and took the lead in many other civic projects for the local advancement of his race.

Named For Negro Missionary

Miss Nannie Locke, a Negro missionary, returned to her native Owensboro when blindness forced her to retire from a career of service in the Appalachian and Eastern Kentucky mountain area. Back home, she carried on her life's work, establishing the Green River Missionary Institution and a mission for city Negro children. At her death in 1944, she was buried in Elmwood cemetery in the family plot of the late Josh T. Griffith, a pioneer white resident who long ago recognized the selfless woman's worth in the community. In her honor, Mr. and Mrs. Jerome J. Lighton will be among special guests at today's dedication. Mrs. Lighton is a daughter of the late Josh Griffith.

The name Rolling Heights was chosen by present commission members since it best describes the lay of the land in the natural valley area in the southeast section of the city.

Miss Baker, a Hancock County native, has been with the housing commission since August, 1950, shortly before the Harry Smith Homes were opened. A native of Hawesville, she started as a clerk, she moved up through the positions of bookkeeper and accountant to the post of executive director in February, 1953, on a board appointment. Her staff includes Mrs. Phyliss Coomer, management aide for the Locke and P. G. Walker projects; Mrs. Charles Hughes, clerk, and Mrs. Florence Payne, tenant selector at Rolling Heights; Mrs. Ruth Goff, clerk-stenographer and Miss Ann Barnhill, accountant. The executive offices are located in the Smith project.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 13 March 1955, p.13D:



ANNIVERSARY – On their organization's 41st birthday, members of the Missionary Institute of the Green River Valley District honored their founder, Nannie Locke, Friday afternoon. Ceremonies included testimonials on the accomplishments of the missionary, who traveled through Georgia, Virginia, West Virginia, and Eastern Kentucky before returning to Owensboro. A climax to the ceremonies was the unveiling of her photo at the Nannie Locke Homes auditorium by her niece and great-niece, Mrs. Lelia Crowe (left), and Mrs. Louise Caldwell. The program was under the direction of Mrs. Q. E. Sullenger, president of the organization.



The Louisville Defender, Louisville, KY, Thursday, 21 July 1955, p.4:

Funeral Services
For Kentuckian



MRS. CROWE

OWENSPORO – Funeral services were held recently for Mrs. Lelia Catherine Locke Crowe at the Center Street Baptist church in Owensboro.

Mrs. Crowe, who was the wife of Wm. N. Crowe and the daughter of the late Rev. S. P. and Louise Locke died at Our Lady of Mercy Hospital after a brief illness.

A native of Owensboro, Mrs. Crowe was active in religious and civic affairs taking an active part in the Nannie Locke Circle, and the Missionary Society so named in memory of her aunt, the late Miss Nannie M. Locke.

[note: Lelia C. Locke Crowe was born 25 October 1899, died 3 July 1955, and was buried Elmwood Cemetery in Owensboro, KY.]



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 4 December 1960, p.1B:

City's Mary Harding Home Celebrates Fifty Years Of Community Service Today

By Lizabeth Ann Wilson, Messenger and Inquirer Staff Writer

Today the Mary Harding Home will celebrate fifty years of service to the community.

In 1910 the home opened its doors to the public. It is now located on the southwest corner of 7th and Vine Streets. The lot was purchased with money raised by free-will offerings, ice cream suppers, fish and pie suppers. Later when funds were available the house was constructed.

Miss Harding was the leader and organizer of the home which bears her name. Charter members included: Nannie Locke, Mollie Edwards, Mary Jane McMickens, Ellen Valentine, Georgia Merriweather, Mary Bell Foston, Sarah Weaver, Hattie Cornelius, S. R. Guthrie and Amelia Wheatley.

The last of the charter members, Mrs. Georgia Merriweather, died at the Home in January 1958.

In the early years of the Home a league was organized by Mary Hayden to support the institution. Working with her on the league were Opie Wright, Christopher Bean, John Ayers, Mary Henderson, Millie Moran, Bettie Price, Lula McCarty, Mamie J. Hill, Mary Buckner, Annie and Will Higgs, Edith Claybrook, Virgil Bell, Elsie Robinson, Lena Arnold, Rhea Thomeson and Elizabeth Morris.

Mary (Mamie) Hill is now a guest in the Home and is enjoying the benefits of her earlier years of labor and devotion.

Of the twelve guests at the Home, two will particularly joy today's celebration. They are 103-year-old Belle Jackson and Lina Talbott. Miss Lina was closely associated with the work at the Mary Harding Home in previous years.

Not to be overlooked in all the hustle is Mrs. Mattie Scott, matron of the home for the past 15 years. Since Jan. 16, 1945 she said that she had only one 10-day vacation which was spent in Louisville. "When I got back", she said, "you'd have thought I'd been gone a year." When asked when she planned to take another day or two off for a rest and visit to friends, she said that it would have to wait until spring.

Eight years ago this sprightly widow had little or no help with the duties of the home and patient care. Now Mattie has four people who come about 8 a.m. and leave after the evening meal. They are: Jessie Houston, Edna Taylor, Jean Ella Williams and Herschel Porter.

Five of the 12 guests are able to come to the table for meals and the seven who are bedfast can feed themselves. What if there should be illness? Could Mattie do it alone, then? "Oh, no," she said, "but any of my assistants would gladly come and stay here until the load was lighter."

Guests at the home now are Mamie Hill, Herbert Mox, and his mother, Mrs. Cordelia Mox, Lee Harris, Homer Taylor, Booker Pope, Eli Smith, Romance Brookins, Belle Jackson, Lina Talbott and Mary John Fields.

The Mary Harding Home is a modern institution, licensed by the State of Kentucky. The charter was granted in 1942. Since that time the entire interior has been rebuilt and a 4-bed men's ward with bath and a new kitchen have been completed.

The board of directors of the Mary Harding Home will hold an open house today from 3 to 6 p.m. at the home.

Serving on the board are: Eddie Morrow, president; Emma E. Edwards, business manager; Rosa Lee Green, secretary, Leola Donahue, Ozetta Sleet and Mary J. Hill.



The Nannie Locke Apartments at East Eighth and Jackson streets, owned and operated by the Housing Authority of Owensboro, is in line for exterior upgrades in 2017. Fifty apartments were built in 1954 and dedicated on 16 January 1955. (Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Saturday, 31 December 2016, p.1A)



The Nannie Locke Apartments in October 2017 after exterior upgrade.

