

Edward Arnold Watts (1870-1956)

By Jerry Long
c.2026

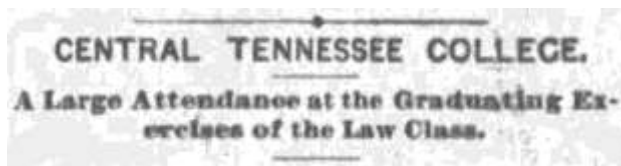


Greenwood Cemetery: 1821 Leitchfield Road, Owensboro, KY
Jerry Long (Utica, KY: McDowell Publications, 2006) pp.14-15
(list of Greenwood Cemetery Association stockholders):

Watts, Edward Arnold, 40 shares. Born May 1870 in Tennessee. He married Artie E. Buckner on 17 July 1895 in Owensboro, KY. On 3 February 1894 E. A. Watts was appointed a Notary Public in Daviess County, KY (Daviess County Order Book Q, p301). He is listed in the Owensboro City Directories from 1897-98 through the 1922-23 edition and in the 1900, 1910 & 1920 censuses of Owensboro. In these he is listed as an attorney; the 1900 & 1910 censuses show that he also was serving as a gauger for the Internal Revenue Service. In this period he was Owensboro's only Negro lawyer. The 1903-04 Owensboro Directory has Edward A. Watts, wife Artee E., attorney, residence 532 Poplar. He was the president of the corporation, E. A. Watts & Co. that laid plans for the development of Greenwood Cemetery in 1906. He was the company's president and principal stockholder owning 40 of the initial 98 shares of the Greenwood Cemetery Association. He last appears in the Owensboro Directories in the 1922-23 volume, he was residing at 624 W. 3rd. By 1925 he was residing in Manhattan in New York City, where he was counted in the 1930, 1940 and 1950 federal censuses. In 1927 he was an employee of the U.S. postal service. The 1930 and 1940 censuses gave his profession as lawyer. His mother-in-law, Jane (Miller) Buckner, widow of Alfred, died in Owensboro on 14 January 1947 and was buried in Greenwood Cemetery. Mrs. Buckner's obituary reported that her daughter, Artie Watts, was a resident of New York City. The following month Edward A. & Artie signed and transferred their interest in a lot in Owensboro that had been willed to her by her mother (Daviess County Deed Book 175, p279). Edward A. Watts, 85, died on 22 March 1956 in Manhattan, New York City. His wife, Artye Watts, died in Manhattan on 2 June 1963. They were the parents of John, Edward A., Jr. and Katherine Watts.



Nashville Banner, Nashville, TN, Wednesday, 24 May 1893, p.4:



Last night the chapel of Central Tennessee College was crowded with students and friends witness the eleventh annual commencement of the law department. The exercises opened with an anthem by the choir, and Rev. H. W. Key, of Memphis, led in prayer. After another anthem the opening address was made by John Calhoun Hill, salutorian. His thesis was: "Medical Jurisprudence."

John Wesley had as his subject: "The Mutual Relations of Government and the Citizens."

A duet, "The Swallows Homeward Fly," was rendered by Misses Howard and Scruggs.

Edward Arnold Watts, valedictorian, spoke on "Criminal Law."

After a chorus by the choir the Dean of the law department, Mr. J. H. Dismukes, introduced Hon. A. S. Colyar, who delivered an excellent address to the graduating class. He also congratulated the race on the wonderful progress that it had made since the emancipation.

Prof. Dismukes then presented the class to President Braden, who conferred on the graduates the degree of Bachelor of Laws,

The President announced that the annual meeting of the Alumni Association would be held at 7:30 o'clock. The audience united in singing the doxology and Rev. A. Phillips pronounced the benediction.

[ed. note – Central Tennessee College was a black college in Nashville, active from 1865 to 1925, that primarily served freedmen. Founded by the Methodist Episcopal Church, it was known as Central Tennessee College from 1867 to 1900, later becoming Walden College before closing.]



Owensboro Messenger , Owensboro, KY, Thursday, 29 June 1893, p.5:

Daviess County Circuit Court: **Edward A. Watts** and N. P. Taylor were sworn in as members of the bar....



Owensboro Messenger , Owensboro, KY, Wednesday, 20 July 1895, p.4:

LOCAL LACONICS.

E. A. Watts, the colored lawyer, and Miss Artee Buckner were married Wednesday afternoon at 5 o'clock.



Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Thursday, 24 March 1898, p.4:

Local Dashes

Messrs. H. A. Moore, **E. A. Watts** and W. F. Mastin have been appointed storekeeper-gaugers.



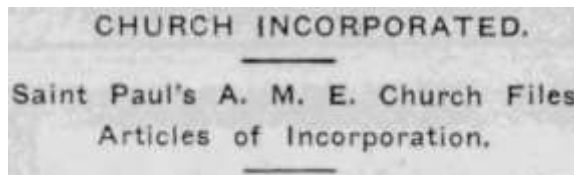
Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Thursday, 17 November 1898, p.1:

Permanent Appointments.

Collector Franks received today from N. B. Scott, commissioner of Internal Revenue at Washington the permanent and absolute, appointment of several store-keeper gaugers. These parties have been in the service temporarily. They are Hiram A. Moore, and **Edward A. Watts**, Owensboro; Jesse R, Eskridge, Hardinsburg; Newton W. Paris, Marion; William F. Mastin, Hawesville; Wm. A. Baird, Corena; J. M. Hagan, Tompkinsville; Ulysses G. McFarland, Burksville; David Browning, Dixon; Daniel, Wood, Penrod; T. Whitescarver, Baugh.



Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Tuesday, 11 November 1902, p.4:



H. C. Helm, J. Slaughter, L. Jackson, **E. A. Watts** and P. Hall filed articles of incorporation yesterday afternoon incorporating the "Saint Paul's African Methodist Episcopal church, of Owensboro, Ky." The object is to promote the cause of religion and the corporation is to be controlled by a board of five trustees and is given the same rights as all other corporations, relative to being sued and borrowing money.



Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Tuesday, 30 January 1906, p.4:

COLORED CEMETERY

Negro Citizens Buy the Loeser Place East of the City.

C. A. Payne as agent for A. Loeser, closed a contract on Monday morning for the sale of the Loeser place on the Leitchfield road. It has been bought by **E. A. Watts** for a company of local colored men who have organized as a cemetery company. The land is located on a height beyond the Chautauqua grounds and it is favorably situated for the purpose intended. The stock company has already been organized and \$3,000 has been raised for the purpose of improving the grounds. This work will be undertaken at once and it is claimed that the place will be made one of the most attractive for colored people in the state. The Colored population of Owensboro is large and comparatively prosperous and has felt, for several years, the need of a better and more attractive cemetery than the one which they now use which is east of Elmwood.



Owensboro Messenger , Owensboro, KY, Wednesday, 31 January 1906, p.5:

Bought For Negro Cemetery – C. A. Payne, Jr., sold yesterday the tract of land on the Leitchfield road near the Chautauqua park, belonging to Joe Losser, of Paducah, to **E. A. Watts & Co.** The ground will be converted into a Negro cemetery. About \$3,000 will be spent, improving the grounds and putting it in shape. [ed. note – The Owensboro Messenger of 29 September 1905, p.5, reported that Joe E. Loeser was taxed on 16 acres.]



Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Tuesday, 20 February 1906, p.1:

Greenwood Cemetery Association

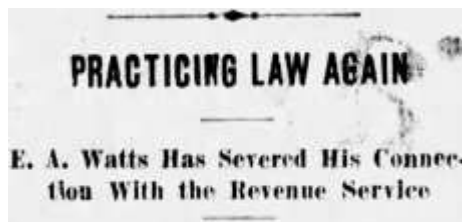
Articles have been filed in the county clerk’s office incorporating the Greenwood Cemetery association. The association is composed of the following local colored citizens, with the shares held by each: **E. A. Watts** 40, P. G. Walker 3, Peyton Wright 1, Lee Bradshaw 3, J. A. Morton 1, S. L. Baker [sic] 1, Marshall Davis 1, Joe Weaver 3, T. N. Richardson, 1, Thos. P. Fisher 1, F. E. Barnett 2, T. N. Loving 1, R. A. Saulsberry 1, D. C. Foston 1, Robert Roan 3, A. R. Helm 1, James Jewell 1, W. F. Griffith 1, William C. Orton 1, R. L. Varian 1, R. G. [sic] White 1, J. W. Gilbert 1, G. W. Berry 3, Frank Claybrooks 1, William Lewis 1, O. G. K. Barrett 4, W. H. Edwards 1, George W. Turner 1, A. O. Guthrie 1, William Gaines [sic] 4, A. D. Hurt 4, W. H. Pope 4, J. A. Agnew 3, D. A. Valentine 1.

The corporation is to commence at once and continue for 50 years. Its purpose is to establish and maintain a cemetery for colored people. The capital stock is \$4,000 divided into 160 shares of \$25 each. The indebtedness shall not exceed \$3,000.

[ed. note – three of the above stockholders names were misspelled, they appear correctly in the Articles of Incorporation as S. L. Barker, R. F. White & William Gines . On 19 February 1906 the Greenwood Cemetery Association was incorporated (Daviess County Corporation Record Book 2, pp.183-184). **Edward A. Watts**, Owensboro’s only Black attorney, was president of the corporation.]



Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Thursday, 31 July 1919, p.6:



E. A. Watts, colored, who 21 years ago entered the revenue service as gauger under Collector Franks, and who held this position continuously until July 1, when he resigned, has opened an office on North Frederica street to resume the practice of law. Watts is the only colored lawyer in Owensboro. When he first came to this city, he was admitted to the local bar while Judge W. T. Owen was on the bench. He later took the civil service examination, and was appointed gauger in the revenue service. On account of his competency, Watts was continued in the service during the entire term of Collector Josh T. Griffith. Watts has always proved to be a competent and efficient man, having an education that is far above the average colored person. He always had the respect of those he was associated with during his official life.



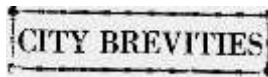
New York Tribune, New York, NY, Friday, 21 July 1922, p.17:



John H. Pierce sold for Susan S. Hall and others 54-56 Edgecomb Avenue, two four-story American basement dwellings, 18x68, to **Edward A. Watts** of Henderson, Ky., for occupancy. [sold for \$18,500]



Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Tuesday, 11 September 1923, p.10:



E. A. Watts, a well known negro attorney and storekeeper and gauger during the administrations of E. T. Franks and Josh T. Griffith as internal revenue collectors, has sold his interests in Owensboro and moved his family to New York where he is engaged in the practice of law with his son, who recently graduated from a law school in New York. Watts is well educated, and had the respect of all who knew him. He saved quite a lot of money and owned a fine farm which he recently sold.



Nashville Banner, Nashville, TN, Monday, 21 February 1927, p.10:



E. A. Watts, a prominent New York attorney, was one of those who applied last week to the New York comptroller of the currency for a new bank in Harlem, to be incorporated at \$260,000. Of this amount \$100,000 has been subscribed.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 5 June 1927, p.10:

Local Laconics

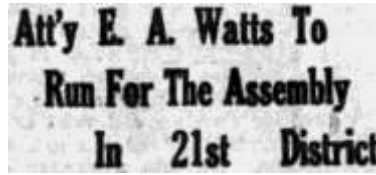
E. A. Watts, colored attorney in Owensboro several years ago, and for a number of years in the internal revenue service, arrived Saturday in Owensboro from New York City, where he is in the government postal service. Watts has many friends among white people in Owensboro, as well as of his own race. His two sons also are in the postal service in New York.



The New York Age. New York, NY, Saturday, 4 July 1931, p.1:



The New York Age. New York, NY, Saturday, 13 August 1932, p.1:



The Republicans of the 21st Assembly District have designated Attorney **Edward A. Watts** of 200 West 135th street as their candidate to oppose Assemblyman Paris, the present Democrat incumbent, in the fall election. The designation was made at the Appomattox Republican Club on Tuesday night August 2.

Mr. Watts is a graduate, of Fisk University and the New York Law School. He has been a resident of and the Harlem for about 12 years.



The New York Age. New York, NY, Saturday, 12 November 1932, p.1:

Assemblyman Stephens Reelected
For 3rd Term in Democratic Landslide

Assemblyman James E. Stephens of the 19th Assembly District will again be the only Negro member of the New York State Legislature as a result of the Democratic landslide on Tuesday. Mr. Stephens defeated his Republican opponent, Attorney Clayton T. A. French, by a vote of nearly 2 to 1. With about three quarters of the districts reported at 9 p. m., the police count gave Assemblyman Stephens 10,200 votes to 5,400 for French.

In the 21st Assembly District, Assemblyman David Paris, white Democratic incumbent, defeated Attorney **Edward A. Watts** by a vote of 5,383 to 5,097. There were still about ten election districts to report but they were mostly in white neighborhoods, and were conceded to for Paris.

Frank Crosswaith, Negro Socialist running for Congressman in the 21st Congressional District polled an unusually heavy vote, for a member of that party.



The New York Age. New York, NY, Saturday, 7 July 1945, p.1:

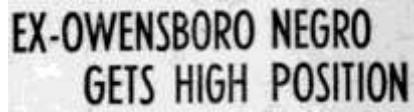
Gets State Appointment

Edward A. Watts, Sr., has been appointed a member of the legal staff of the State of New York Labor Relations Board, Mr. Watts was sworn in on July 2, and was assigned to the office in New York City.

Watts is a product of southern universities, Fisk, Meharry and Central Tennessee College at Nashville, Tenn. He was formerly a resident of Owensboro, Ky., and has practiced law in New York City for the last eighteen years.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 15 July 1945, p.8A:



Edward A Watts, former Owensboro resident who for more than twenty years was in the revenue service here and has since practiced law in New York City, was last week named the Negro member of the labor relations board of the state of New York by Gov. Thomas E. Dewey. His mother-in-law Jane Buckner, 93 years old, lives at 613 West Third street, Owensboro. Watts has several times visited here since locating in New York City.



Clarksville Leaf Chronicle, Clarksville, TN, Saturday, 19 February 1949, p.5:



Home on Visit

Attorney **Edward A. Watts**, former resident of the Round Pond Community returned Friday February 18, 1949 for a brief visit to his old home for the first time in 59 years.

Having formerly school teacher in the Montgomery County school system, he desired to return to see his old home and the people he had formerly taught.

Attorney Watts now serves as city attorney for the state of New York. He has served in such capacity for the past twenty-five years.

Attorney Watts hopes to return in the near future for longer stay so as to visit all his friends he knew in this section.



Census Reports for Edward A. Watts:

- 1900 federal census of Owensboro, Daviess County, KY, 613 Sycamore Street – E. A. Watts (born May 1870 TN); gauger; married 5 years; wife Arty (born February 1878 KY, mother of 2 children); son John (born January 1896 KY); son Edward (born August 1897 KY)
- 1910 federal census of Owensboro, Daviess County, KY, 532 Poplar Street – Edward A. Watts (40, born TN); lawyer; married 14 years; wife Artie E. (32 KY, mother of 3 children; son John (13 KY); son Edward A., Jr. (11 KY); daughter Catherine B. (9 KY)
- 1920 federal census of Owensboro, Daviess County, KY, 624 Fourth Street – Edward A. Watts (48, born TN); lawyer; wife Artye E. (42 born KY)

- 1925 state census of New York City, Edgecomb Avenue – Edward A. Watts (55, born US); lawyer; wife Artye (47 USA); son John C. (27); son Edward A., Jr. (25)
- 1930 federal census of Manhattan Borough, New York City, New York, 54 Edgecombe Avenue – Edward A. Watts (59, born TN); lawyer, law office; wife Artye E. (52 KY); son Edward A. Jr. (27 KY)
- 1940 federal census of Manhattan Borough, New York City, New York, 54 Edgecomb, Avenue – Edward A. Watts (70, born TN); lawyer, private practice; wife Artye (60 KY); son Edward, Jr. (38 KY)
- 1950 federal census of Manhattan Borough, New York City, New York, 54 Edgecomb Avenue – Edward A. Watts (79, born TN); no occupation listed; wife Artye (71 KY); son Edward A. (53 KY) [ed. note: 54 Edgecomb Avenue was in Central Harlem]



New York, New York, U.S., Death Index, 1949-1965:

- Edward Watts died 22 March 1956 Manhattan Borough, age 85
- Artye Watts died 21 June 1963 Manhattan Borough, age 89



New York Age Defender, New York, NY, Saturday, 31 March 1956, p.2:



VETERAN HARLEMITES MOURNED

Funeral services were held Monday evening for **Edward A. Watts**, father of Johnny (Ebony Lounge) Watts, who died Thurs.



New York Amsterdam News, New York, NY, Saturday, 15 June 1963, p.16:



Our next Camp Fund affair will be held in Linnette's Lounge, 714 St. Nicholas Ave. on Monday, June 10. Hostess for the evening – Sophie Bryant.

AROUND OUR TOWN

It's birthday time, June 18, for Idell Dixon, Marie Ballard, Warren Jackson and Me.

For once a surprise was a real surprise. That nice warm letter from Blanche Pugh, corresponding secretary for the Winsomettes Club.

Now that we're finally having hot weather, the ever popular Flash Inn has a chance to show off its beautiful sidewalk cafe. It's the only sidewalk cafe in Harlem that features the best in dining and wining.

Red Randolph of the Shalimar is doing his best to bring back some of that old time color here by booking some great singing and musical groups who are featured in his place nightly.

The sad story is that I called John Watts, former owner of Ebony Lounge to find out the condition of his mother, Mrs. Artye Watts who had been on the critical list, and he told me she had just passed away last Sunday. Funeral services were held Thursday afternoon.

[ed. note – John Cornelius Watts, son of Edward A. Watts & Artye E. Buckner, was born 3 January 1896, died 2 January 1982, buried Calverton National Cemetery, Calverton, Suffolk County, NY. He was a former manager of the Ebony Lounge, in New York; he was not the owner.]



Former home of Edward A. & Artye Watts, 54 Edgecomb Avenue, Central Harlem, Manhattan, NY

