

Dr. Clay Eddie Simpson (1891-1951)

By Jerry Long
c.2026



Historical Marker Database (HMdb.org):

“Dr. and Mrs. Clay E. Simpson, Sr.
Owensboro Outstanding Community Service”



Inscription: “Dr. Clay E. Simpson, Sr., native of Notasulga, Alabama and his wife Mary E. Simpson, native of Fayette County, Kentucky, served the Owensboro community for many years. As a Family Physician, Dr. Simpson made numerous house calls and delivered hundreds of babies in Owensboro from 1920 until he died in 1951. His service was often given without pay.

Mrs. Simpson taught school in Owensboro and Breckinridge County and was local manager for Mammoth Life Insurance Company.

Dr. Clay and Mary Simpson also supported promising young people of the community in their pursuit of an education for the establishment and advancement of families.”

Historical marker is in Owensboro, Daviess County, Kentucky, at the corner of West Fourth and Popular Streets on the northwest corner of the H. L. Neblett Community Center property. The marker is near the former home of the Simpsons at 411 Poplar Street. The memorial was dedicated on 10 July 2010.



Clay E. Simpson, Sr.



1900 Federal Census of Notasulga, Macon County, Alabama:

Simpson, Jones	head – born March 1844 Georgia – age 56 – Black – widowed – farmer – owns farm
Simpson, Willie	son – born September 1881 Alabama – age 18 – Black –single – farm laborer
Simpson, Fletcher	son – born March 1888 Alabama – age 12 – Black – single
Simpson, Clay E.	son – born April 1891 Alabama – age 9 – Black – single
Crawford, Nathaniel	grandson – born October 1895 Alabama – age 4 – Black – single
Bufford, Camilla	servant – born September 1881 Alabama – age18 – Black – single



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 11 November 1951, p.8A:

Negro Death

Dr. Clay E. Simpson, 61, well-known Negro physician, died at the Owensboro-Daviess County Hospital at 12:25 p. m. Saturday, following a four months illness.

Dr. Simpson was born Aug. 7, 1891, in Notasulga, Ala., a son of Jones and Sarah Beasley Simpson. He attended Booker Washington, 1906, Tuskegee Institute, Howard University and Meharry where he received his degree. Dr. Simpson was a member of the Baptist Church.

He is survived by his wife, Mary Elena Smith, to whom he was married in Lexington, on Aug. 10, 1928, one daughter, Sarah Helen Simpson, Owensboro, one son, Pvt. Clay Simpson Jr.,

of Sampson Air Base, N. Y., four sisters, Ada Johnson, Owensboro, Mary Simpson and Jettie Austin, of Notasulga, Ala., Isabell Merchant, Birmingham, Ala., and several nieces and nephews.

Dr. Simpson was a 1st lieutenant in the medical reserve at Tuskegee Institute, in World War I. He served as secretary of the John Andrew Clinical Society since 1927. He was a member of the Masons, K. of P., and the UBF, and past president of State (Blue Grass) Medical Society.

The body was taken to the Griffith Funeral Home, 721 W. 4th St.

[Note – Dr. Clay E. Simpson is first found in the Owensboro, KY city directories in 1922 (p.271). He was then practicing his profession at 812 West Fifth Street and was residing at 411 Poplar Street. He is listed at the latter address in the 1930, 1940 and 1950 censuses of Owensboro, Daviess County, KY. At his death in 1951 he was living at 411 Poplar Street. The residence at this address was razed in 1971.]



Kentucky Death Certificate – 1951 certificate #21886:

Form T. S. 1-4
FEDERAL SECURITY AGENCY
U. S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE
NATIONAL OFFICE VITAL STATISTICS

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

FILE NO. 116
 51 21886
 ASSISTANT'S NO. 571

Registration District No. 4101 Primary Registration District No. 2145

1. PLACE OF DEATH a. COUNTY <u>Daviess</u>		2. USUAL RESIDENCE (Where deceased lived immediately before death) a. STATE <u>Ky</u> b. COUNTY <u>Daviess</u>	
b. CITY (If multiple corporate limits, write RURAL and give township) <u>Owensboro</u>		c. LENGTH OF STAY (in this place) <u>7</u>	
d. FULL NAME OF HOSPITAL OR INSTITUTION <u>Good-Daviess Hosp</u>		4. STREET ADDRESS (If rural, give location) <u>411 Poplar</u>	
3. NAME OF DECEASED a. (First) <u>Clay Eddie Simpson</u> b. (Middle) <u>W</u> c. (Last) <u>Simpson</u>		4. DATE OF DEATH (Month) (Day) (Year) <u>11-10-51</u>	
5. SEX <u>M</u>	6. COLOR OR RACE <u>W</u>	7. MARRIAGE STATUS <u>MARRIED</u>	8. DATE OF BIRTH <u>Aug 7-1900</u>
9. USUAL OCCUPATION (In kind of work done) <u>Physician</u>		10. KIND OF BUSINESS OR INDUSTRY <u>77</u>	
11. FATHER'S NAME <u>Oliver Simpson</u>		12. MOTHER'S MAIDEN NAME <u>Sarah Besley</u>	
13. WAS DECEASED EVER IN U. S. ARMED FORCES? (If yes, give year or dates of service)		14. SOCIAL SECURITY NO. <u>4200-081-17</u>	
15. INFORMANT <u>Mary Gene Simpson</u>		16. CITIZENSHIP OF WHAT COUNTRY?	
18. CAUSE OF DEATH State into one cause per line for (a), (b), and (c) I. DISEASE OR CONDITION DIRECTLY LEADING TO DEATH (a) <u>arterio-sclerotic H.D.</u> ANTECEDENT CAUSE II. OTHER SIGNIFICANT CONDITIONS III. MAJOR FINDINGS OF OPERATION		19. INTERVAL BETWEEN ONSET AND DEATH <u>3 yrs</u>	
20. DATE OF OPERATION <u>4200-081-17</u>		21. AUTOPSY? YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
22a. ACCIDENT (Homicide, Suicide, Homicide)	22b. PLACE OF INJURY (In e. to or about home, farm, factory, street, office, etc.)	22c. (CITY, TOWN, OR TOWNSHIP) (COUNTY) (STATE)	
23a. TIME OF INJURY	23b. INJURY OCCURRED WHILE AT WORK <input type="checkbox"/> NOT WHILE WORK <input type="checkbox"/>	23c. HOW DID INJURY OCCUR?	
24. I hereby certify that I attended the deceased from <u>1949</u> to <u>1951</u> that I last saw the deceased alive on <u>11-10-51</u> and that death occurred at <u>11 A</u> m. from the causes and on the date stated above.			
25a. DATE SIGNED <u>11-12-51</u>	25b. ADDRESS <u>330 Allen Owensboro</u>	25c. SIGNATURE <u>John Beumgard</u>	
26a. REGISTRATION DISTRICT <u>4101</u>	26b. DATE <u>11-14-51</u>	26c. NAME OF CEMETERY OR BURIAL PLACE <u>Notasulga</u>	26d. LOCATION (City, town, or county) (State) <u>Notasulga - Macon Ala</u>
27a. DATE RECORDED BY <u>1-13-1952</u>	27b. REGISTRAR'S SIGNATURE <u>Walter C. Russell</u>	27c. FUNERAL DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE <u>Lee R. Griffith - 721 W 4th</u>	



Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Monday, 12 November 1951, p.12:

Time of Funeral

Dr. Clay E. Simpson, 2 p. m. Tuesday at Fourth Street Baptist Church, the Rev. Q. L. Jones officiating, assisted by the Rev. E. H. Smith. Burial in a Notasulga, Ala., cemetery.



Saint John Baptist Church Cemetery
Notasulga, Macon County, Alabama

Dr. Clay E. Simpson's parents, Deacon Jones Simpson (1844-1933) & Sarah Ann Beasley (1850-1900) were married in Macon County, Alabama on 31 October 1865. They have tombstones in the Antioch United Methodist Church Cemetery, Notasulga, Macon County, Alabama. A Macon County, Alabama death certificate records that Jones Simpson was the son of Peter Hayes & Judie Simpson. Judy Simpson (age 55, born Georgia) is listed in the 1870 federal census of Macon County, Alabama.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Monday, 13 February 1956, p.10:



"Negro history in an era of changing human relations" is the theme of National Negro History Week which is being observed February 12 to 19. The purpose is to recognize the part played by members of the Negro race in both the present and the past.

.... And in Owensboro tribute has been paid to Dr. P. J. Walker, physician and philanthropist, and to Nannie Locke, missionary, for the fine work done among their people in years past. Both have gone on, but the naming of the Negro Housing Units for them attests that their people have not forgotten. Dr. Walker was from Maryland, but Miss Locke was a native of Owensboro. Also among those no longer living who accomplished much for their people may be named Dr. C. E. Simpson, a native Alabaman, who lived in Owensboro for about 30 years, and Stirman Wheatley, business man, a native of Owensboro, who was active in both a civic and religious way....



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 24 March 1968, p.8C:

**Owensboroan
Receives Ph.D**



Clay E. Simpson, Jr.

Clay E. Simpson Jr., son of the late Dr. Clay E. Simpson, a longtime practicing physician in this city and Mrs. Mary S. Matthews, of Itta Bena, Miss., received the Ph. D. degree in Preventive Medicine and Public Health from the University of Oklahoma Medical Center at the end of the past fall semester.

Dr. Simpson was born in Owensboro, Kentucky and received his early education in the local public schools. s. He attended Morehouse College and the University of Kentucky, receiving both the B. S. and M. S. degrees from U. K.

Dr. Simpson is married to the former Miss Jessie L. Johnson of Lexington, Kentucky, They are the parents of a son and a daughter, Helen Elena and Clay Eddie III.

At present Dr. Simpson is serving as Coordinator of the Health Program and guest lecturer for the School of Nursing at Mississippi Valley State College.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 1 July 1984, p.7D:

Simpson earns medical degree

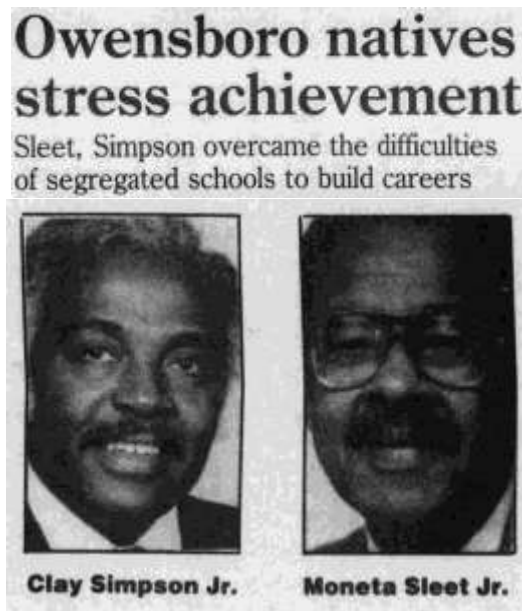
Helen Elena Simpson has continued a family tradition by earning a medical degree.

Ms. Simpson graduated recently from Tulane University Medical School in New Orleans and will soon begin her residency at Baylor Medical Center Affiliated Hospitals in Houston. She *plans to specialize in family practice.

Ms. Simpson is the granddaughter of the late Dr. Clay E. Simpson, who practiced in Owensboro for nearly 40 years, and the daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Clay E. Simpson Jr., formerly of Owensboro and currently living in Silver Spring, Md.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 20 June 1986, p.1C:



By Catherine Behan, Messenger-Inquirer

Owensboro's black students in segregated schools got the second-rate supplies. But they also got something that's in short supply now – a strong push to higher heights.

"You had to work a little harder," said Moneta Sleet Jr., a 1942 graduate of Western High School who came back to Owensboro from his home in New York to talk about how to keep local talent here.

Sleet and Clay Simpson Jr. spoke at the annual banquet of the Owensboro Career Development Association Thursday at the Executive Inn.

Sleet is a Pulitzer-prize winning photographer with Johnson Publishing Co., which prints Ebony and Jet magazines. He and Simpson, who graduated from the segregated high school in 1949, said segregation was not a good thing.

But the strong sense of community at Western gave them the strength and motivation to do their best, they said during an interview before the banquet.

"They kept me on my toes every minute of the time," said Simpson. He lives in Washington, D.C., now, where he is director of the Division of Disadvantaged Assistance, Bureau of Health Professions in the federal Department of Health and Human Services. Simpson said he thought he had been able to do a lot for medicine by working in public health, but what he had wanted to be was a physician.

A professor of his wouldn't sign the applications for him to go to medical school at the University of Louisville. "People had preconceived ideas of black people's limits."

That may not be so much the case now. His daughter is working toward becoming a doctor.

But their children are able to go to school where they want – including competitive ones such as Rutgers and Emory universities. But their parents had no choice but to go to Kentucky State University, the black college. And when they went to get advanced degrees, the state would pay their way out of state rather than have them attend state schools, they said. When they learned skills, gained more education and were prepared for professional careers, there was nothing for them in Owensboro. No one would hire a black professional.

"You didn't see yourself participating in what everyone else is participating in," Simpson said.

The negative aspects of segregation – getting the secondhand goods from Owensboro High School, being able to go to the area convenience store, but not sit on the stools – "were never allowed to dominate our lives," Sleet said.

"We were certainly aware of it," he said. "It bothered me, but I wouldn't let it turn me around."

And the attitude that the sky was the limit permeated the whole school, the men said. They were able to achieve a lot, even though the white students had the advantage of materials that often let them get a bit ahead.

Sleet said his family urged him to do as well as he could.

"If I didn't, my grandmother was going to whip me," he said. "And I was scared of that lady."

The school, neighbors, teachers, parents and friends just wouldn't let anyone slide, they said. And that's one of the biggest differences between then and now.

Both men stressed that students needed to be trained in something to make themselves marketable to local employers. But they also didn't think college was the only route.

What was imperative was for the community to work to keep local talent local, they said. "You don't want to have a bunch of frustrated people here and the community suffer," Sleet said. "Business can make a conscious effort to hire local people."

And the best way is to look in Owensboro first and to help give kids support to work hard.

"I just think they're not getting that support," Simpson said. "The need is everywhere; the need to coalesce around your community.

"We've got to live together and help each other. You don't have to do that much, but do a little."



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Monday, 18 February 1991, p.3C, Public Sector:

Clay E. Simpson Jr., director, Division of Disadvantaged Assistance, received along with 66 other executive-level employees the Distinguished Presidential Rank Award. He also received

\$20,000. Simpson, a resident of Silver Springs, Md., is a graduate of Western High School and is the son of the late Dr. C.E. Simpson of Owensboro.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Monday, 5 July 2010, pp.1B & 3B:

Neblett Center gift to be saluted Saturday at Western High reunion

Suzi Bartholomy, Messenger-Inquirer

Ten years ago, Clay E. Simpson Jr. and his sister, Sarah H. Thompson, donated property at 411 and 413 Poplar St. to the H.L. Neblett Community Center in honor of their father, Dr. Clay E. Simpson Sr., who had been a general practitioner in Baptisttown.

A plaque bearing the elder Simpson's image has been erected at Fourth and Poplar streets and will be dedicated Saturday when Simpson will be in town for the Western High School bi-annual reunion.

Simpson Jr. graduated in 1949, and his sister is a 1948 graduate.

Simpson, 78, who lives in Palm Coast, Fla., retired from the federal government as deputy secretary for minority health at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Thompson was a medical technician in Rockhill, Md.

Simpson said that when his father was practicing medicine, times were hard for a lot of people.

"He charged \$25 for delivering a baby, but most didn't pay him. They'd say we'll pay you Saturday, but most of the time Saturday never came."

Instead of money, Simpson said patients gave his father fresh vegetables, meat from a slaughtered hog and even opossum.

Simpson said his family lived in Baptisttown and "people thought we were rich because we had a sidewalk and indoor facilities, but I bet I ate more possum than any of them."

Simpson said his dad loved his work and was always available to his patients. He died in 1951 when he was 61 years old.

Juanita Moorman, 84, of Owensboro remembers Dr. Simpson and his kindness.

"He delivered my first baby," Moorman said. "I was having difficulty, and he sent a nurse over to stay with me."

"He was a nice person, never had a bad word for anybody," she said. "He would come to your house any time of the night."

Moorman said she and her husband moved to Owensboro in 1934 and rented from Dr. Simpson until they could afford "a bigger house."

"Dr. Simpson would do anything for you," she said.

Greg Black, executive director of the Neblett Center, initiated the effort to recognize Simpson for his dedication to his patients.

"I think it's important that the community recognize the contribution of its past citizens . Dr. Simpson served a lot of people at no charge and they need to be mindful of that."

Owensboro native Charles Brown, who is president of Western's alumni association, said that when he was growing up in Baptisttown he remembers black professionals living in the area including a couple of dentists and a pharmacist.

"In some ways integration was a two-edged sword," Simpson Jr., said. When people were free to shop where they wanted, stores in the black community began closing, he said.

Next weekend, there will be a lot of reminiscing among the Western graduates. Brown said the reunion is for anyone who attended Western.

"We don't have individual class reunions because some classes were small," Brown said.

"We're getting older, so we decided to meet every two years," Brown said. "Five years is a long time when you're our age."

"We do a lot of visiting and talking and not much drinking anymore," Brown said. "Too many of us are on blood pressure medicine."

The weekend promises to be fun for the Western graduates, and with the dedication of Dr. Simpson's plaque, it makes the reunion extra special.



University of Kentucky College of Public Health – Hall of Fame:



Dr. Clay E. Simpson, Jr.

Dr. Clay E. Simpson, Jr. (Ph.D., M.S.P.H) the son of Dr. Clay E. Simpson, Sr. was born in Owensboro, KY. He dedicated his professional career to improving the health of America's disadvantaged populations. In 1959 Dr. Simpson earned a Master of Science in Public Health from the University of Kentucky, the forerunner to the Master of Public Health that is offered in the College of Public Health today. Throughout his career, Dr. Simpson managed and helped create programs of vital importance to the development of health care practitioners from disadvantaged backgrounds and programs that gave access to underserved, usually minority populations. One such program, the Health Careers Opportunity Program, provides academic enrichment services to over 10,000 students annually in more than 200 projects throughout the United States. In July, 1995, Dr. Simpson was appointed as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Minority Health in the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and served in this position until his retirement on January 30, 1999. He also directed the HHS Office of Minority Health. This federal office is ultimately responsible for promoting programs that have the potential to improve the health status of minority populations in the United States. Dr. Simpson was the recipient of two Surgeon General's Medallions and the Superior Service Award, the highest honor bestowed by the United States Public Health Service.