A Place Called Homecoming:
Memories of Celebration and Tradition by Successful African-American Graduates of Lincoln University in Missouri from 1935 to 1945

By Shirley Marie McCarther, Donna M. Davis, & Loyce Caruthers

It was the second week in October, 2010. This year was like many in the past, where for decades, everyone convenes to continue traditions and preparations that have centered on a single, special event. This special event or celebration contextualizes the academic and social experiences of successful graduates of one HBCU located in Jefferson City, Missouri. In the subsequent paragraphs, we utilize the literary devices of *prologue* and *flashback* to contextualize the rich history behind the Lincoln University Homecoming tradition.

Airline reservations are in hand. Cars are filled with gas. All suitcases and carry-on bags are ready to be transported. Passengers on Amtrak and Greyhound buses are about to board. From the north, south, east, and west—they come. They come year after year after year, since the mid-1930s. They come to converge up on

Shirley Marie McCarther, Donna M. Davis, and Loyce Caruthers are professors in the School of Education at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, Kansas City, Missouri.

the old Hill at the Quad. All the hustle and bustle signals the annual pilgrimage back to a place called Homecoming. They are young and old and all ages in between. They come with former sweethearts, now wives. They come as once gridiron teammates and Tiger cheerleaders. They come as previous members of the Student Council or the *Clarion* Staff; as officers of the R. Nathaniel Dett Choral Society; or the "L" Club (athletes who earned letters in one or more major sports); or the History Club. They come as past participants in Orchesis (national dance society), or the Cartesian Oval Club (mathematics majors). They come as ex-Carver Chemistry Club members; or as longtime Tau Sigma Rho enthusiasts (debating society). They come with younger siblings, children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and neighborhood kids.

Some are beginning their professional journeys while others have retired from successful careers. They are doctors, lawyers, nurses, philanthropists, teachers, judges, principals, college professors, journalists, businessmen and women, entrepreneurs, pilots, members of the armed forces, artists, musicians, scientists, authors, TV anchors, actors, inventors, preachers and bishops, astronauts, farmers, and the like. They come because they must. They come in good economic times and bad. They come wearing the blue and white—to meet up with old friends, assemble in familiar places, recall days gone by, hug, eat, laugh, dance—and most of all, to honor the memories of the way they were as they became who they are. They come because that is what Lincoln University alumni—or Lincolnites—do. They come to celebrate, to pass the torch to those next in line. They come to give back to future generations.

Lincoln, O Lincoln! We Thy Proud Children Are

The Senior Edition of the Lincoln University newspaper, the *Lincoln Clarion*, has as its tagline, "…and someday my chance will come" (Madison, 1937, p. 1). This quote from President Abraham Lincoln illustrates quite effectively the overall philosophy of the institution, established in 1866 as the Lincoln Institute and initially funded by Civil War soldiers in the 62nd and 65th colored infantry units (see Appendix A). Together, these two units contributed a total of $6,400 to establish an educational institution in Jefferson City, Missouri, for the express purpose of being "a special benefit to the freed African Americans," and with an emphasis on combining labor and study (Lincoln University, 2009, p.1). The institution expanded this emphasis to include a number of new courses of study:

> In 1869, Lincoln Institute moved to the present campus, and in 1870 it began to receive aid from the state of Missouri for teacher training. College-level work was added to the curriculum in 1877, and passage of the Normal School Law permitted Lincoln graduates to teach for life in Missouri without further examination. Lincoln Institute formally became a state institution in 1879 with the deeding of the property to the state. Under the second Morrill Act of 1890, Lincoln became a land grant institution, and the following year industrial and agricultural courses were added to the curriculum. (Lincoln University, 2009, p. 1)

In 1921, the Missouri Legislature approved changing the name of the Institute

to Lincoln University, and a board of curators was established. Accreditation from North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools came in 1926 for the teacher-training program, and in 1934 for the four-year College of Arts and Sciences. "Graduate instruction was begun in the summer session of 1940, with majors in education and history and minors in English, history, and sociology. A School of Journalism was established in February 1942" (Lincoln University, 2009, p. 1). In 1954, with the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling, Lincoln opened its doors to all applicants that met its admissions criteria. Today, the university's mission statement asserts that, "Lincoln University of Missouri is a historically Black, 1890 land-grant, public, comprehensive institution that provides excellent educational opportunities including theoretical and applied learning experiences to a diverse population within a nurturing, student-centered environment," (Lincoln University, 2009 p. 1).

Purpose, Method, and Conceptual Framework

Our work investigated the origins of the institution to discover why it is that so many individuals continue to converge on the Hill at Lincoln every year. To address this fundamental question, we conducted oral histories of African-American women graduates in the late 1930s and 1940s primarily to learn why Lincoln was so special and why its graduates were so successful. We found that the colored soldiers' initial plans and dreams for African Americans were being realized. In addition, we suggest that through our listening to the voices of some longtime alumnae who also dreamed for a better future, we can identify the characteristics of one historically Black university where individuals engaged in solid and supportive educational experiences as a result of a deep belief that every student should be valued. Further, Lincoln graduates speak about the university's Homecoming in a mystical and somewhat reverent manner. For Lincolnites, Homecoming seems to be much more than a series of weekend activities or even an event to attend in the fall. Whether age 33 or 93, these graduates make it their business to go back for Homecoming each and every year. For observers who are non-Lincolnites, this persistent doggedness became the object of study.

What we took away from the group of women we interviewed, who studied so long ago, is that there are strategies we can employ in many of today's schools whose students may be struggling to find their voice and to achieve. Further, while we interviewed these graduates about their academic and social lives at the university level, we found that there were certain characteristics about Lincoln that are important for any school at any level. These characteristics include a very close adherence to what Vanessa Siddle-Walker terms *institutional caring*, where every student is valued and where everything that happens at the school is student-centered. Her work involves a critical analysis of segregated schools in the south and she asserts that teachers had a commitment to the community, held professional ideals, demonstrated an ethic of care, and related the curriculum directly to student needs (Siddle-Walker, 2001, p. 769-771). Institutional caring was and is at the core

of Lincoln University, and we rely on this framework to identify precisely how educators today can capitalize on this rich history.

For this inquiry, we focused on the experiences of four women who today remain close friends and provide a very clear picture of student life at Lincoln University during the 1930s and 1940s, both academically and socially. We used oral history combined with the traditions of narratology (Chase, 2008; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and phenomenology (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen) to examine their stories. Lewenson and Herrmann (2008) suggest that oral history is, "a micro-history, or a "history from below," foregrounding history from a micro rather than a macro perspective: the experience of people in their ordinary, day-to-day lives" (p.81). Further, the authors assert:

> Oral history seeks to oppose presentation of history as the grand narrative, which often represents the perspectives of the most powerful, the most influential and socially dominant or ruling groups to the exclusion of the stories of the less powerful, the ordinary people, or the marginalized ones. Moreover, oral history can provide evidence of people's work and life experience of which little other written material exists. (p. 81)

Aligned with our approach, Chase (2008) suggests that a narrative is "an extended story about a significant aspect of one's life such as schooling, work, . . . or participation in a war or social movement" (p. 59). Phenomenology, through the use of in-depth interviews, supported the search for what van Manen (1990) described as the "internal meaning structures of lived experiences" (p. 10).

At the time of the study, three of the four women lived in the same senior living complex, where we conducted a focus group session to gather holistically initial memories of their experiences and to build trust. We interviewed the one participant who lived independently at her home using the same set of preliminary questions. Information from the focus group and the single interview provided a framework for developing follow-up questions. Finally, for all participants, we conducted semi-structured interviews with contextualized questions within their homes over a six month time period. Our intent was to determine whether and how their stories might serve to illustrate the characteristics inherent in caring institutions. We also examined archival data, including yearbooks, newspapers, newsletters, photographs, and personal letters from these participants. We believed it to be critical to document the lived experiences of these women as one valid method for understanding not only what it meant to be an African-American scholar in the early part of the 20th Century, but what overarching themes might be evident between and among them. Thus, we analyzed all data and identified significant themes that supported the tenets of institutional caring, including student support, academic rigor, and social advocacy. Ultimately, our goal was to make meaning of their stories in order to acknowledge the importance of the work undertaken by the men and women at this historically black university and how their legacies can impact future students matriculating through this institution and other similar institutions.

Life History Participants

As previously stated, a total of four African-American women graduates of Lincoln University participated in this study: *Mila Helen Lewis Banks*, *Helen Gertrude Whitley Bardwell, Gladys L. Williams Bruce, and Constance (Connie) Bell Livingston Powell.* An introduction to each of these Lincolnites follows.

Mila Helen Lewis Banks graduated from Lincoln University in 1938. She grew up in Springfield, Missouri, and became a member of Delta Sigma Theta and the Pan-Hellenic Council during her time at Lincoln. Upon graduation, she taught high school English in the Kansas City, Missouri School District (KCMSD) for 47 years. She married Isaiah Banks, her Lincoln University sweetheart, who also worked in the Kansas City Missouri School District. She and Isaiah return to Lincoln year after year since graduating, and has only missed one Homecoming. They mentored hundreds of students and shepherded their Lincoln University experience, providing scholarship monies directly to students and the school, and spearheaded a fund development drive for the campus during a time of financial crisis. They were responsible for keeping the doors open to students during the 1980s (see Appendix B).

Helen Gertrude Whitley Bardwell graduated in 1939. She grew up in Kansas City, Kansas, and was involved in several activities at Lincoln, including the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Secretary Senior Class, YWCA, Choral Society, Octette, Student Forum, Second Associate Editor Archives, Pan-Hellenic Council, and the History Club She also taught in the KCMSD then became counselor and served for 47 years. Known in high school and college for her love of history and having a keen memory, Gertrude maintained that status throughout adulthood as historian for several organizations including the Twin Citians (an African American ladies club that helped to organized sit-ins in downtown Kansas City during the tumultuous 1960s). She is often called the community's historian because she keeps newspaper clippings, program booklets, and invitations of her friends and the children of her friends, and even keeps those of the grandchildren of her friends (see Appendix C).

Gladys L. Williams Bruce graduated in 1942. She grew up in Kansas City, Kansas, and was an elementary education major at Lincoln. Her activities included *Archives* (Yearbook), *Clarion* (Newspaper), Stage-crafters, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, and she was also crowned Miss Lincoln. Upon graduation, she taught total of 44 years in three states: Missouri (KCMSD), California, and Las Vegas. She returned to Kansas City three years ago after her husband died. Known as a prominent socialite, this soft spoken former beauty queen became a civil rights activist. For example, during the late 1950s in Kansas City, Missouri, she energized several African-American women's organizations and led efforts to boycott local downtown merchants who treated them unfairly. She said that her quiet refusal to accept second hand treatment was motivated by her desire to be a role model for her students and that she felt she had to demonstrate to them exactly what self-respect meant (see Appendix D).

Constance (Connie) Bell Livingston Powell graduated in1944. She was raised in Kansas City, Kansas, and became an elementary education major at Lincoln.

She was a member of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority and she taught first grade in the KCMSD for 45 years. As a member of the Twin Citians, Connie marched with her friends to integrate the downtown shops in Kansas City (see Appendix E).

Each of these women shared her own unique story and taken together, their stories and critical documents provide new opportunities to examine some of the underlying principles of Historically Black Colleges and Universities that are important lessons for all of us.

Conceptual Framework: Institutional Caring and Historically Black Colleges and Universities

As stated earlier, Vanessa Siddle-Walker (2001) provides a very clear lens with which we may view the activities that took place on many Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the early 20th Century. While Siddle-Walker's research examines the lives and work of school teachers in the segregated south and their interaction with younger students, we see real connections between what happened for school children in caring (segregated) settings and how students at Lincoln University were treated. Keeping in mind the reality that the faculty at Lincoln had themselves excelled in segregated schools and were taught by skilled and caring teachers, it becomes evident that much of their experience in what it meant to be a scholar and to achieve amidst horrific challenges they probably learned in a school that exhibited institutional caring. Siddle-Walker (2001) notes:

> African-American teachers worked in dismal, unfair, discriminatory positions, but did not allow themselves to become victims of their environments. Rather, they viewed themselves as trained professionals who embraced a series of ideas about how to teach African American children that were consistent with their professional discussions and their understanding of the African-American community. The teachers existed in a complex system where the needs of African-American children were formulated and communicated in systematic and purposeful ways. This system created, sustained, and was informed by the beliefs of the African-American teachers and the larger community; it represented a plan for the education of African-American children, the tenets of which were commonly agreed upon. (p. 773)

And so the faculty and administration at Lincoln closely mirrored this idea—that while students would be working and learning to exist in a racist and segregated world, they would also be challenged to live up to very high expectations and to excel while facing difficult odds. Indeed, what Siddle-Walker cautions is that we not limit our view of the teacher in this time to one who simply *cared*. Her definition of *caring* goes far beyond the notion of a motherly or fatherly figure passively teaching children to cope with their dismal lot in life. While there were certainly parental qualities inherent in the profession, she notes that,

> To reduce the African-American teacher's role to one in which they merely "care" diminishes the professional and community knowledge that explains their caring…[Further,] portraits of African-American teachers as passive victims of

> inequality fail to account for the resistance, resilience, and agency that was the nature of the African-American teaching act. (p. 774)

Thus, there was an activism about their professional work that we saw evidenced in our research on the experiences of students at Lincoln University. Faculty were deeply engaged in student life, were extremely highly qualified, and were dedicated to creating an atmosphere where all students could thrive.

Discussions of the Lincoln Experience

Homecoming at Lincoln: A Glimpse

To illustrate life at Lincoln and set the context of the lived experiences of the four women of our study, we provide a descriptive overview of Homecoming at Lincoln. These occurrences center around a tradition that has been held for decades and provide a glimpse into the homecoming experience at Lincoln. (see Appendices F-M for illustrations of Lincoln University campus and student life.)

Thursday Night: The Coronation

Thursday is the coronation, the crowning of Miss Lincoln and the announcement of her court. All gather in Page Auditorium. Draped in blue and white and filled with greenery from the horticulture science lab, stage lights come up and the band begins to play. Miss Lincoln is crowned as queen. Her court, consisting of a female elected representative from the freshmen, sophomore, junior, and senior classes, is named. Attending the Queen and her Court are the Sweethearts, elected representatives of each of the Greek organizations on campus, including the sororities of Delta Sigma Theta and Alpha Kappa Alpha; and the fraternities of Kappa Alpha Psi and Alpha Phi Alpha. The Auditorium erupts in applause and celebration as the Queen of Lincoln University and her royal Court exit the auditorium. Later in the evening, all return to the auditorium that has been transformed into a grand ballroom. Now, filled with paper streamers, and music from the forty-three piece Lincoln University Symphony Orchestra and Big Band, the newly crowned royals dance the evening away.

Friday: Soldiers' Memorial Tribute and Soul Food Dinner

Highlights of Friday Homecoming happenings hover around remembrances of Lincoln University's founding fathers and the savory smells of good old down home cooking, both up on the Hill and down on the Foot. On Friday afternoon across the street from the Student Union in the center of the Quad, Lincolnites gather to pay homage to the brave men of the 62nd and 65th colored infantry whose generosity and vision gave rise to Lincoln in 1866. Following the memorial tribute current students and returning alums connect with one another, formally and informally. Whether at the top of the Hill in the cafeteria or down on the Foot in one of the familiar, locals' home-away-from-home, Lincolnites cluster to meet and eat a traditional soul food meal. There is fried chicken, mashed potatoes with gravy, fried catfish, spaghetti red,

collard greens, green beans, corn bread, candied yams, macaroni and cheese, hot buttered rolls, apple pie, peach cobbler with ice cream, and sweet tea and lemonade. The food never runs out and the conversations go into the midnight hour.

Saturday Festivities: Parade, Game, Socials

First thing Saturday morning is the parade. The Queen and her Royal Court ride in cars provided by visiting alumni. There are marching bands from around the state led by the Big Blue and White and trucks and some decorated tractors move with the march. The streets are filled with students, visiting alumni, and locals who gather to watch it all including the dignitaries from the Capital, and those from the governor's office, who ride and wave in the pageant. The procession culminates at the entrance of the football field. Later in the afternoon there is the pep rally and the excitement of the big game is followed by a student concert and an alumni and student dance. In between formal activities students and alums walk around the Quad, talking, laughing, and sharing stories. There is lots of picture taking and catching-up. Another big thing to do is to go off campus to Arris' Pizza, the local pizza parlor, still operated by original family members. The off-campus trip always concludes with a trip to Central Dairy, *the* ice cream parlor well-known for the biggest scoops of ice cream in the Midwest. In all, this is a time when people come together to find and share a sense of belonging that we wanted to understand.

We Were Just Like Brothers and Sisters

The narrative that follows was developed through a weaving of the data from all of the various interview sessions. What became evident through the focus group session and the individual interviews with these Lincoln graduates is that they consider themselves—to this day—to be family, thus illustrating the theme of student support. They came from some of the most poverty-stricken communities and homes and to be able to attend a university at all in the 1930s and 1940s was considered a major accomplishment. Most worked other jobs outside of school or received small scholarships to pay the meager tuition at the time. They would also support each other in numerous ways—Gertude's aunt would give Gladys a ride to Lincoln from Kansas City, for example, and deposit her at another relative's house near the university until she could get settled in a dormitory. Mila would get a job working at the school's cafeteria to make ends meet, primarily because a friend knew the manager. Essentially, students took care of each other and faculty and the administration looked out for everybody. Gladys stated:

> Well, we were very poor, and I really thought we wouldn't be able to go to Lincoln. My father and mother were practical people. My father had a job in the shoe department, and my mother had not finished high school—they were young. As a consequence, I have been practical since I was five years old. I first went to see Lincoln when I was a senior in high school. I came back and said, 'I want to go Lincoln U!' I got a job with a lady every day washing up dishes. I saved everything from it. Then, I got a job at an office and finally I got a salary. I worked my way up through the first year and on, and that is how I got through college.

Connie added:

> We were all the same level as far as money was concerned—we were all kind of poor. I just thought that was one of the best things that ever happened to me. Everyone was on the same level. I had never been near a college of any kind. I had heard about them. I didn't know too much about college. I had an idea of what it offered and I knew that if you went to college you would have a better life, because you could get a much better job. We had a few black lawyers and doctors because they would come to Kansas City to get further training. You knew you had to go to college to be anything like that.

Gladys remembers exactly what it was like to be a part of the grandeur of Homecoming and she gets a bit teary talking about her days at Lincoln and meeting her husband there.

> I was Homecoming queen my junior year when I met my husband. We were married in secret because at that time if you wanted to be a teacher, you couldn't be married. And I wanted to be a teacher, so we didn't tell anybody. I couldn't have gone to a school that I liked more. Not only because the teachers were good teachers, but we learned how to get along with folks. I had a new roommate every year. I stayed in touch with people after I graduated. There was something about Lincoln that we were really fond of each other.

Connie stated:

> You know everyone always said, 'Don't let your Homecoming be your homegoing!' because we just had so much fun, and got so excited. We walked everywhere we went; we appreciated every little bit of money. It was just like a family. And school…You know… It was great. I enjoyed it so much.

Mila said of her time there and of Homecoming:

> I would say from 1939 to 1950 I missed not a single Homecoming. In 1950, we did miss once, but I would like to think I have made about 95% of Homecomings. Whatever I am today, I owe to Lincoln. Without Lincoln University and the Lord Jesus Christ I wouldn't be who I am. Our every need was met.

The Black Harvard—West of the Mississippi

The second theme captured in the data centered on academic rigor and high expectations. Mila remarked on the quality of the educational experiences and in particular comments on the high level of professional training among faculty members:

> The other reason we loved Lincoln so and returned every year is that Lincoln was an unusual school in that professors were highly trained, well prepared, Ph.D. and so forth, because they were Black they couldn't get jobs in other schools. And they all came to Lincoln, so that is why they said Lincoln was the Black Harvard west of the Mississippi.

Further, institutional caring, with educators going far beyond the classroom respon-

sibilities to reach students and to secure their academic success, is evidenced by their willingness to embrace their students as individuals facing tremendous odds outside the safety of the academy, and who would need to feel a sense of security and family during their time at Lincoln. Gertrude remarked:

> The professors were all interested in us and excellent. There were wonderful science teachers. A lot of them took great interest in our lives and our ability. I know Dr. Green—if he couldn't get it done in class time, he would invite the whole class to his home in the evening to complete the work we had to do. We would go there, and the students didn't miss, either. His wife was very cooperative and welcoming. Dr. Talbert got his Ph.D. at 24 years old. He taught mathematics. Oh yes, he was superb, too. Students loved him. He married about a year after he was there. Wife was nice, too. If the teacher noted a student needed help, usually that teacher would ask one of the better students to work with that other student. I believe it was in algebra a girl was assigned to work with me.

The student body came mostly from Midwestern states, but included others from all over the country, and the overwhelming sentiment seemed to be one where, no matter where students came from, they were immediately embraced and given "family" status. Mila remarked:

> The other thing that was most outstanding was the fact that we had students throughout the United States at Lincoln. My friend Cynthia was a Bostonian and she was like a bolt of lightning—very brilliant, busy, and friendly. We had one girl come from California. There were students from Palo Alto, San Francisco, Texas, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and just the other night I was talking with a friend in San Francisco and I asked her why she came to Lincoln and why she loved it so. She said never before had she had such a life change, where she was completely thrilled and happy. Soon after she got to Lincoln her father died and she talked about how lovely the other students were helping her get packed to go back home for the funeral.

In addition, the faculty seemed to instill a sense of pride and professionalism in students, holding high expectations for them and maintaining a culture of seriousness about academic achievement. However, Mila noted that this could be done with humor on the part of faculty:

> Well, the professors really were quite serious about their teaching, and yet, I think you could say each and every one had a sense of humor. One day a friend of mine named Willie said, 'Let's not go to class—it's a Friday!' I said, 'Okay,' but I knew what the reaction would be if we walked in late. Willie went in first, and Dr. Savage told him he was too late for the class. I went in, and Dr. Savage said, 'Ms. Lewis you are late for class today, however, we will let the students vote on the matter.' Well, the students voted that I be permitted. Dr. Savage said, 'Any No Votes?' He raised his hand and said, 'NO—And so ordered.'

In 1936, the student yearbook, the *Collegian* noted:

> The most progressive student body with its ablest student leaders can do little without acute, energetic, and sympathetic faculty to advise and cooperate with them…Every student of Lincoln University must needs be proud of its faculty whose members,

> as products of the best educational institutions of the nation, manifesting breadth of vision, maturity of thought, sobriety of judgment and sincerity of devotion to their students are eminently qualified to serve them. (p. 18)

Thus, there seemed to be great respect on the part of the student body regarding its faculty, not only because they were indeed, *eminently qualified*, to serve but also because these instructors took great pains to provide an atmosphere of collegiality and scholarship, while demonstrating an ethic of care that would instill in students a belief that, even amidst the deep injustices of racism and segregation, someday their chance would come.

Morning, Noon, and Always, We Are Lincolnites

In 1937, the *Lincoln Clarion* reported on the now well-known *Gaines v. Canada* case. Lloyd L. Gaines, a former Lincoln student, had wanted to attend law school in Missouri, and at the time, there were no graduate schools of law for African Americans in the state. His team argued that he be admitted to the University of Missouri School of Law. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) counsel, Charles H. Houston, appealed to the Missouri Supreme Court. Eventually, the Gaines case would be heard by the United States Supreme Court where he would prevail, but for this study, we note that the *Clarion* reported that on Tuesday, May 18, 1937, "There were many students from Lincoln University who crowded the court to hear the arguments" (Madison, 1937, p. 1).

Indeed, what we learned from our interview subjects was that students at Lincoln not only took great interest in the political events of their time, they openly sought avenues to become aware of the struggle against injustice that they would one day need to bear, which supported the theme of social advocacy. Gertrude noted, "Well, I learned about the problems that people had and I learned how to solve them, since there was a lot of organizations down there, and we were able to join and be a part of helping other people." These women would carry these important lessons with them throughout their careers. Each of them became educators and community leaders, and they also engaged in protests against injustice in metropolitan Kansas City in the years leading up to the Civil Rights Movement. Gladys noted:

> I was teaching here (in Kansas City) at the time, and some of the cafeterias, we had to stand up when we went shopping. I resented it. We couldn't try on hats, or eat the same as other people. It was degrading. We were buying nice hats and nice clothes in the stores. I talked to the club and said, 'We need to do something about that.' We made signs and walked downtown. We went to the churches and some of them volunteered to help. It was a remarkable thing that it was my idea to do something about it, and people volunteered. A lot of people were cooperative and it worked out, because we finally got to sit down.

In essence, these Lincoln graduates, now teachers themselves, felt a responsibility to live up to the ideals of fellow alums like Lloyd Gaines, and with the advent of the Movement, they firmly believed they had a place and voice that would be heard. Their teaching styles also closely matched what they had been exposed to at Lincoln.

Mila stated:

> There are many ways to encourage students to do better. One of the pages [in the Lincoln yearbook] has a picture of the top of five students. Gertrude was on that list. It was years later, I was looking through the book I saw the *Big Five*, While I was teaching here in Kansas City, I had a home room. I announced that we were going to have a *Big Five*. Some were so serious about becoming a member of the *Big Five*. I can remember one student who will still call me and bring up that he was a member of the *Big Five*. He has encouraged his children and grand children to do the best they can in school.

She went on to comment on the fact that she considered every student of hers to be capable of reaching their highest potential, and that she developed an overall philosophy of teaching with this in mind and because of her experiences at Lincoln. In a farewell column in the *Clarion* from the class of 1937, the editors wrote:

> We perhaps do not realize fully the significance of graduating from college. We do understand, however, that we are expected to go forward with those principles of good citizenship and high moral standards which were so firmly impressed upon our minds in earlier youth. May we take this opportunity to express our appreciation and thanks to the faculty and student body for the advice, assistance, and loyal support you have tendered us throughout this school year. We believe that these four years in college have been the most profitable of any in our lives, and we anxiously await an opportunity to prove ourselves worthy of carrying our part of the great responsibility of living. (p. 1)

As we write this, the Lincoln University website is already blasting its "Homecoming 2012: Save the Date!" some nine months in advance. However, Mila Banks would say this is not too soon—with parking being difficult and hotel rooms hard to get, it is important to reserve space as soon as possible. She'll make the trip again, and since she was Miss Lincoln, 1939, she'll probably be given the royal treatment because everyone recognizes her significance as a role model. But she will not be returning to receive accolades or to accept an award or to wave in a parade. She will be going to see great friends and family and to remember the good times and what it meant to achieve and have people believe in her. She will be going home.

Conclusions and Implications

We began this work with the intent of learning more about the journey of four successful African-American women who graduated from a historically Black university in the late 1930s and 1940s, through giving voice to their stories. The overarching question of our inquiry was: What magnetizes these women and others year after year, compelling them to return to a place called homecoming–Lincoln University? We believe our findings revealed an action agenda of advocacy that can be used to support institutional caring for the success of African-American students in HBCUs and Non-HBCUs as well as in public school settings. Advocacy suggests change in practices, a need for empowerment, political debate, and

active collaboration (Fay, 1987; Heron & Reason, 1997; Kemmis and Wilkinson, 1998). Educators interested in a social justice agenda should consider the following takeaways as they strive to create meaningful educational experiences:

- These African-American women believed their academic and professional successes were attributed to being taught by highly skilled and caring teachers.
- Their stories depicted professors' planned and intentional opportunities to structure relationships with students that included informal gatherings, tutoring, mentoring, and modeling positive behaviors. They were viewed as trained professionals who embraced students and their life experiences.
- High expectations as an established norm for academic success were expressed by the faculty. The women understood that achievements were expected, recognized, and celebrated. Further, any academic deficits could be overcome.
- All of the women expressed the importance of acquiring tools to make a difference in their worlds and described acts of giving back to their communities through volunteer work, philanthropy, and as agents for social change.
- Tales of involvement in the life of the institution through a variety of academic, social, and physical activities suggested that students were supported and nurtured in all aspects of their lives.

Siddle-Walker (2001) suggests that institutional caring is at the core of student success, particularly for students of color and for those who face difficult educational and/or social challenges. Indeed, this notion of caring that includes a focus on social advocacy and social change is critical for overall achievement and academic success. One way to determine whether institutional caring is in place is to listen to voices of students. Too often these voices are silenced and their stories go unheard. Thus, we sought to look back in time to draw from the experiences of a group of women whose legacies serve as a model for the very best of what can be achieved when socially just structures are in place.

A brief review of the literature reveals several areas for further inquiry, including a focus on the experiences of Black men in the academy (Brown, 2008; Byrd & Edwards, 2009; Garibaldi, 2009; Palmer & Young, 2009); an analysis of the lives of contemporary students at HBCUs (Kim, 2004; Kim & Conrad, 2006; Price, Spriggs, & Swinton, 2011); and a look at the experiences of faculty currently serving at HBCUs (Hooker & Johnson, 2011; Minor, 2005). By taking each of these lines of inquiry a step further, the one central question would examine the underlying premise of institutional caring and its connection to student achievement and life success. Ultimately, we hope the takeaway from our research is that every student who aspires to reach her or his highest potential experiences the same sup-

port, academic excellence, and legacy of advocacy illustrated by the four women in this study. Further, every student would, as stated in the *Clarion* (1937), "prove [themselves] worthy of carrying [their] part of the great responsibility of living."

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Appendix A

The Lincoln Clarion, June 2, 1937.

Senior Edition

LINCOLN CLARION

"... and some day my chance will come."—Lincoln.

VOL. 6 — LINCOLN UNIVERSITY, JEFFERSON CITY, MO., WEDNESDAY, JUNE 2, 1937 — NO. 12

PARTING WORDS TO STUDENTS

Charles W. Florence Extends Wishes for Success in All Endeavors

The school year which is coming rapidity to a close has been an interesting one. Like every other year in the long history of Lincoln University it has produced achievements of which all Lincolnites might well be proud. It has revealed also areas of our college life where improvement can and must be made.

The completion of Allen Hall and Damel Hall added greatly to the effectiveness of the physical plant. The continual addition of books to the library, equipment to the laboratories and materials to the teaching equipment are evidences of substantial progress.

The appropriation recommended by the Governor and the Tax Commission will make possible the equipping of Damel Hall and the construction of a new dormitory

GAINE'S CASE IN SUPREME COURT

L. U. Graduate Has Appealed to High Tribunal on M. U. Matriculation Bar

The case of Lloyd L. Gaines, former Lincoln University student, was appealed before the Missouri Supreme Court on Tuesday, May 18. The case was handled by Charles H. Houston of New York, who is counsel for the N. A. A. C. P., and S. R. Redmond of St. Louis who argued that Negroes as citizens were entitled to equal educational opportunities. They argued that funds given to the students wishing to study outside of the state were not sufficient; that Negroes could not obtain graduate work at Lincoln University and are put to a disadvantage when they are forced to attend some other school outside of the state. They said that Missouri University stresses Missouri law, and that a student wishing to practice in Missouri after studying in some other state institution was at a

PARTING IS SUCH SWEET SORROW

Seniors Bid Adieu to Old Friends and to L. U. Campus

The time has come for the Seniors to bid Lincoln University adieu. It seems only a short while ago that we left our respective high schools to come to Lincoln in search for higher goals.

We perhaps do not realize fully the significance of graduating from college. We do understand however, that we are expected to go forward with those principles of good citizenship and high moral standards which were so firmly impressed upon our minds in earlier youth.

May we take this opportunity to express our appreciation and thanks to the faculty and student body for the advice, assistance and loyal support that you have tendered us throughout this school year.

To those who are to follow we sincerely hope that your attain-

A FAREWELL TO THE CLASS OF '37

The Pages of Life's Unopened Book Contain a History Strange and New

We all try to be prophets; some of us have success; some of us do not. Mothers and fathers give their children a last word of admonition. History is a valueless part of every school curriculum save for its purpose of enabling us to predict the future. Every graduating class has its prophet or soothsayer. But the future is an unopened book that is to be read only after death has written the final page. No one can successfully predict the course that each individual's life will take until he has passed into the great beyond. But we do know that trends are constantly shaping and reshaping society. We do know that these trends, both national and international, will invariably be a potent factor in moulding the destiny of any person who is a contemporary of the period. His-

DR. PATTERSON TO BE SPEAKER

President of Tuskegee Institute Will Deliver Commencement Address

The commencement address will be delivered by Dr. Frederick Douglass Patterson, President of Tuskegee Institute.

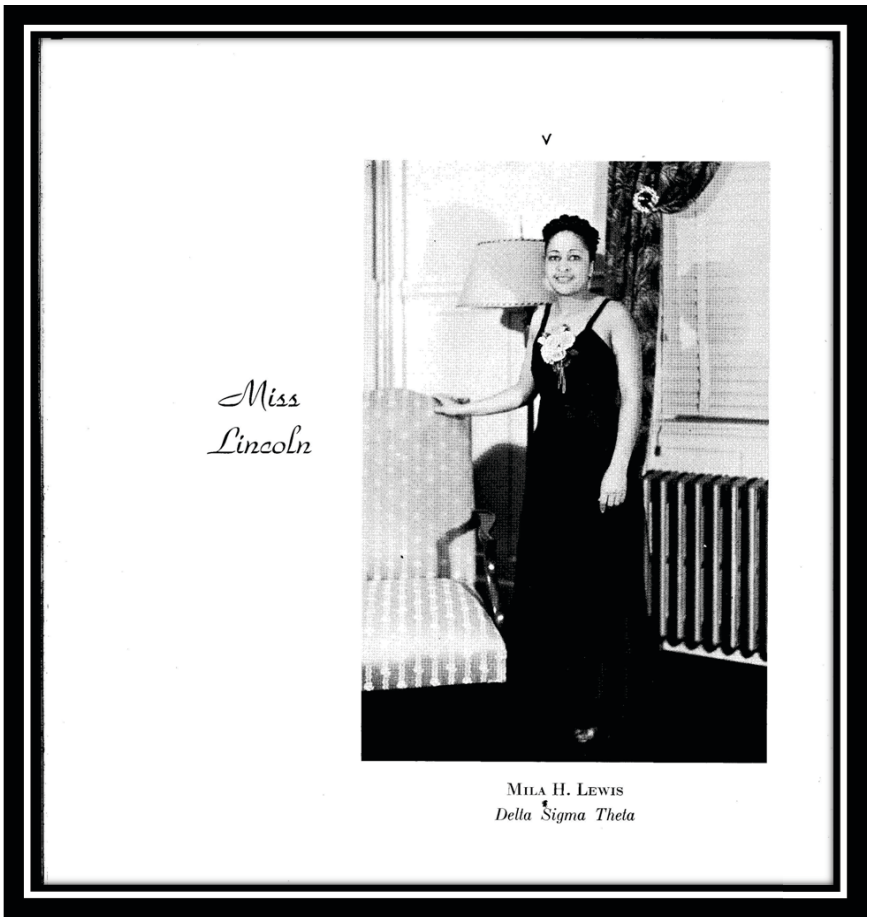
Dr. Patterson was born in Washington, D. C. Most of his early life was spent in Texas and his early education was received at Prairie View College.

After graduating from Prairie View College he went to Iowa State College at Ames, from which institution he received the degree of Doctor of Veterinary Medicine and later the degree of Master of Science.

His first teaching experience was gained at Virginia State College at Petersburg, Virginia. He left Petersburg to become a member of the staff in the Agricultural Department at Tuskegee and later became head of that department.

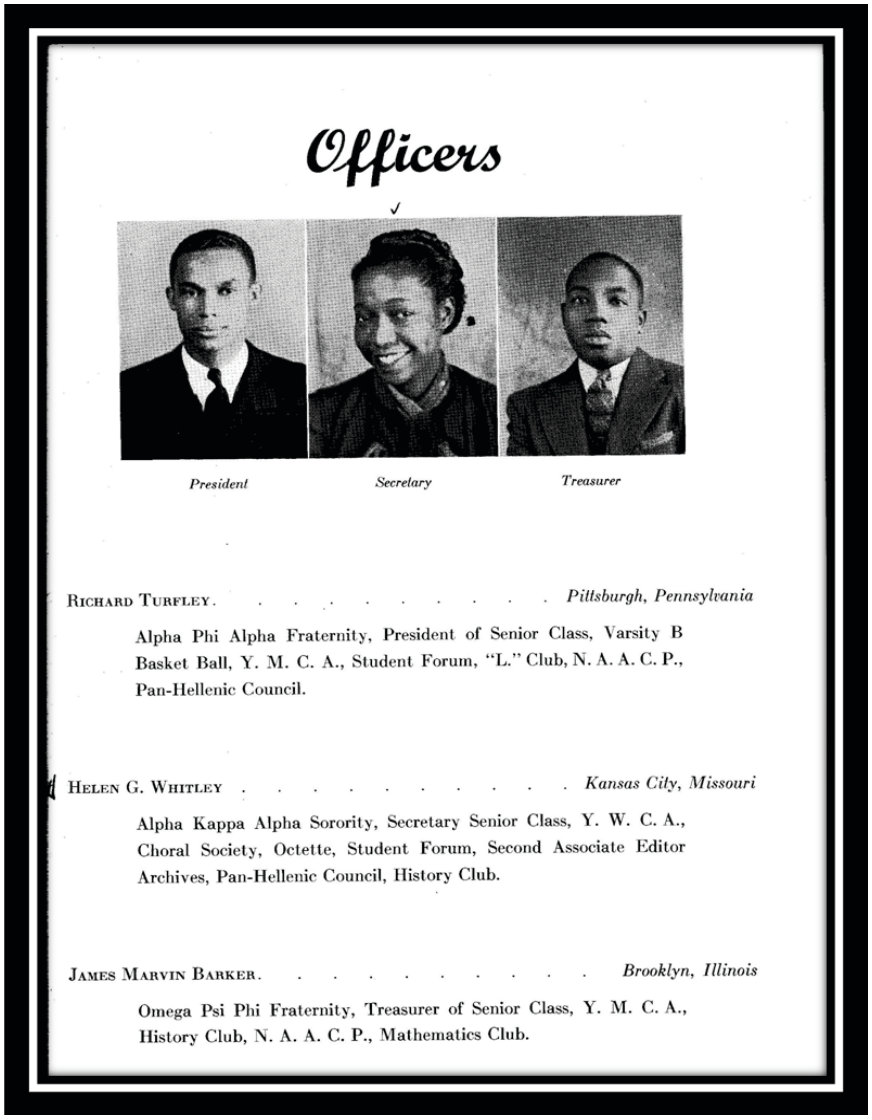
Appendix B

Mila Helen Lewis Banks, Miss Lincoln, Archives, 1939.



Appendix C

Helen Gertrude Whitley Bardwell, pictured center, *Archives*, 1942.



Officers

President *Secretary* *Treasurer*

RICHARD TURFLEY . . . . . *Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*

Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, President of Senior Class, Varsity B Basket Ball, Y. M. C. A., Student Forum, "L." Club, N. A. A. C. P., Pan-Hellenic Council.

HELEN G. WHITLEY . . . . . *Kansas City, Missouri*

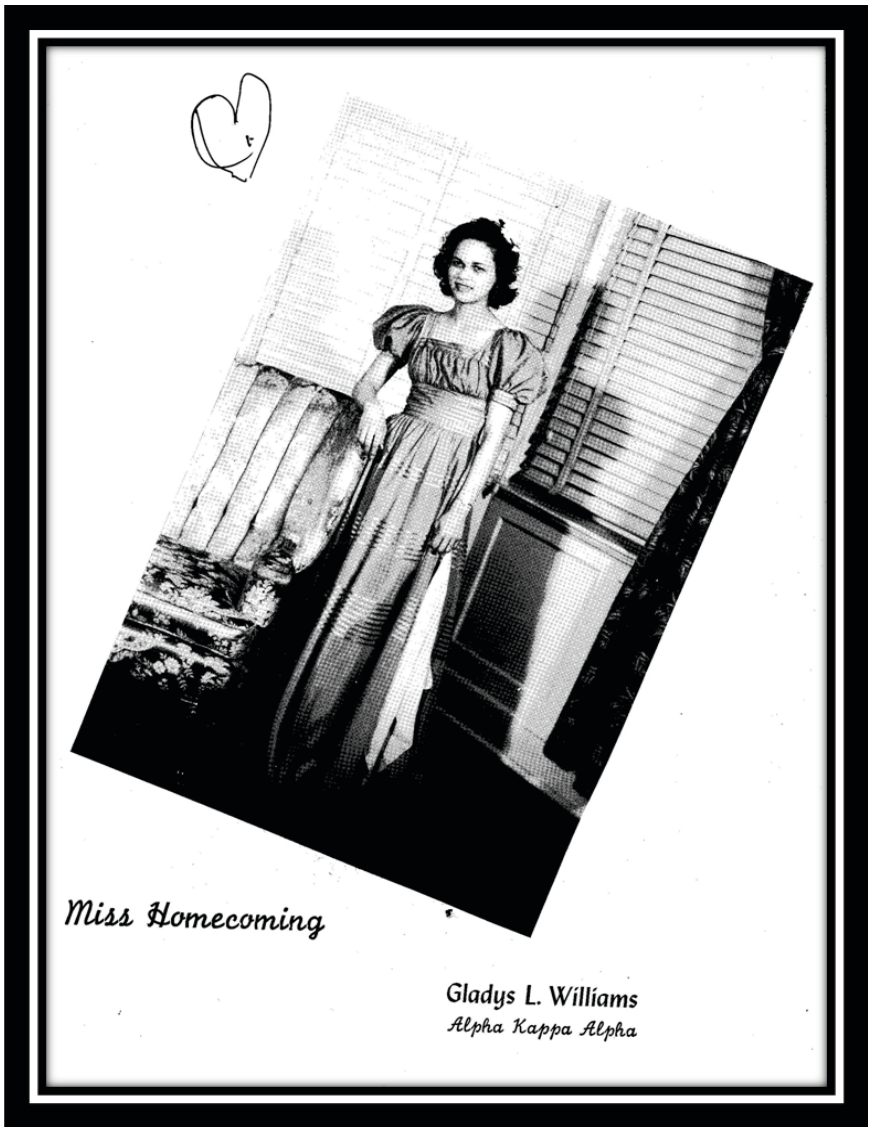
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Secretary Senior Class, Y. W. C. A., Choral Society, Octette, Student Forum, Second Associate Editor Archives, Pan-Hellenic Council, History Club.

JAMES MARVIN BARKER. . . . . *Brooklyn, Illinois*

Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Treasurer of Senior Class, Y. M. C. A., History Club, N. A. A. C. P., Mathematics Club.

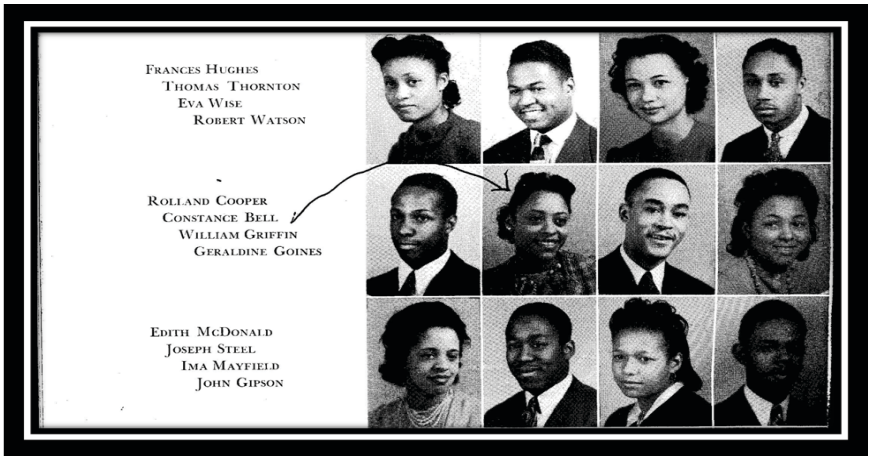
Appendix D

Gladys L. Williams Bruce, Lincoln University Homecoming Queen, *Archives*, 1942.



Appendix E

Constance (Connie) Bell Livingston Powell, *Archives*, 1942.



Appendix F

Dr. Sherman D. Scruggs, President, Lincoln University, *Archives*, 1939.

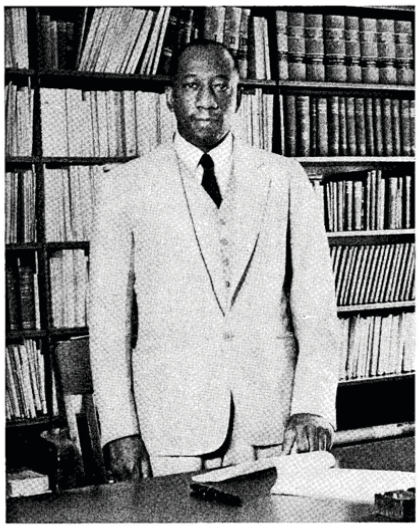
Appendix G

Archives, 1939.

"AN ACTIVE youth foretells a vigorous old age." These words were uttered by Goethe, the great German poet, in the 18th century, but they are just as true today as they were then. We should look at our physical program as being just as important as our intellectual one. After all, the most ingenious mind is handicapped if it is forced to struggle along on a crippled frame.

Appendix H

President Charles W. Florence, President, *Archives*, 1936**.**



PRESIDENT CHARLES W. FLORENCE

LINCOLN UNIVERSITY under the leadership and guidance of President Florence has made rapid progress. During his administration, Lincoln has achieved membership in the North Central Association, and an extensive building program has been inaugurated.

"I am happy to add a word of personal appreciation in dedicating this Annual and launching it on its mission. We send it forth as an ambassador of good-will from 'The College with the Forward Look.'

"Its first mission is to give to the stranger and the prospective student pictorial evidence of the fact that Lincoln University offers splendid opportunities for intellectual, moral, social, and physical development in a wholesome and healthful environment.

"It will serve also to preserve in the minds of Lincolnites the pleasant and sacred memories associated with their Alma Mater."

CHARLES W. FLORENCE, President.

Appendix I

Women's League, *Archives*, 1936.

Women's League

THE Women's League was organized late in the school year 1934-35 under the sponsorship of Miss Helen C. Harris, then Dean of Women. Most of that year was spent in organizing, drawing up a constitution and becoming adjusted. In 1935-36 we were ready for work under the sponsorship of Dean Vivian Cameron and the leadership of able officers. Each woman of the University is a member of the Women's League. The Senate, composed of the officers of the League, the highest woman official of each class, and the president of each woman's club, is the governing body.

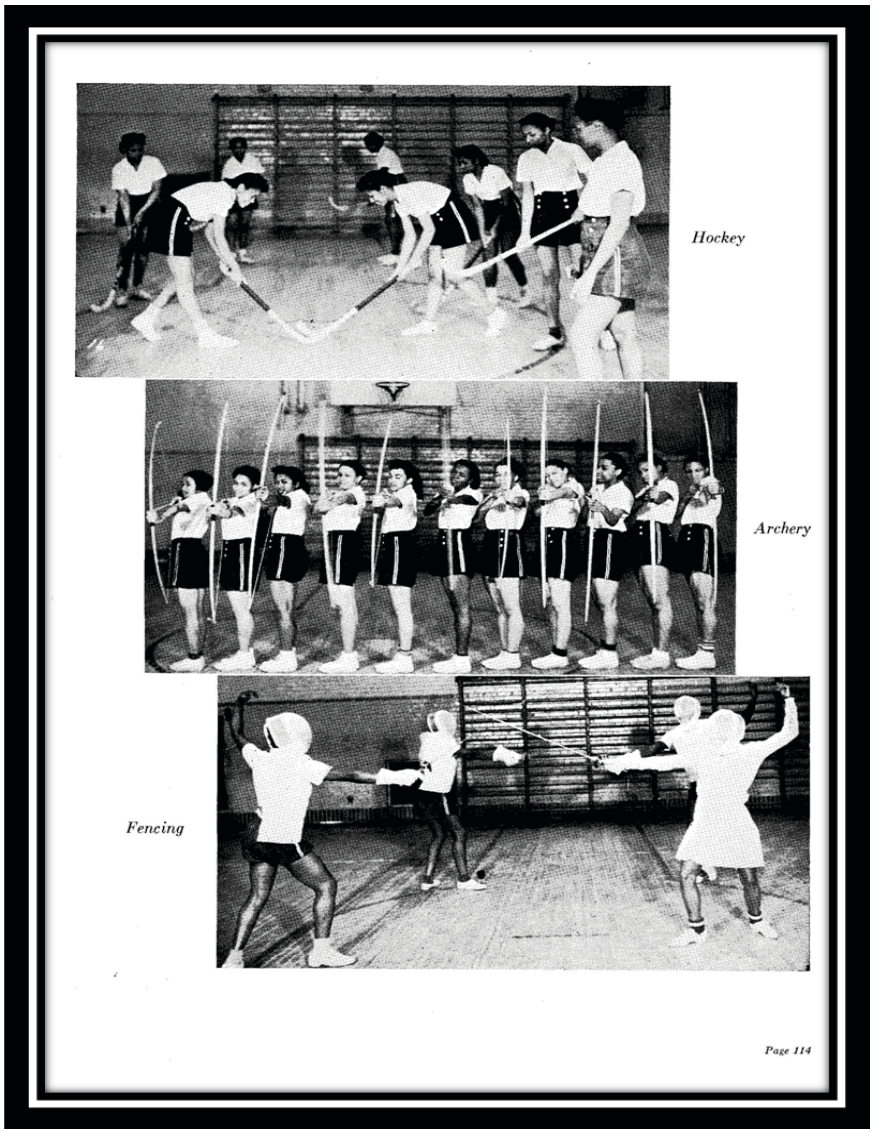
Although a comparatively new organization on the campus, the Women's League is rapidly growing in influence. Notable among our activities for the current year was the presentation of Mrs. Cook of Kansas City, Missouri, in special conferences. A tea held in her honor was one of the most beautiful events of the season. A project of note carried on by the League was the "quiet hour," a period from 9:30 to 10:30 P. M. reserved for study in the girls' dormitories. Another worthwhile project inaugurated by the League was the Browsing Room. Although at present our activities are few, they will grow as we grow, promoting better womanhood on Lincoln University's campus.

Officers: Virginia Crockett, President; Roberta Morse, Vice-President; Cornelia Strawn, Secretary; Edna Lowe, Assistant Secretary; V'Esser King, Treasurer.

Left to right—R. MORSE, E. CANNON, E. LOWE, K. MILLER, C. MAULDIN, V. CROCKETT, E. MAYFIELD, M. WHITE, M. BRISCOE, C. STRAWN, F. FREEMAN

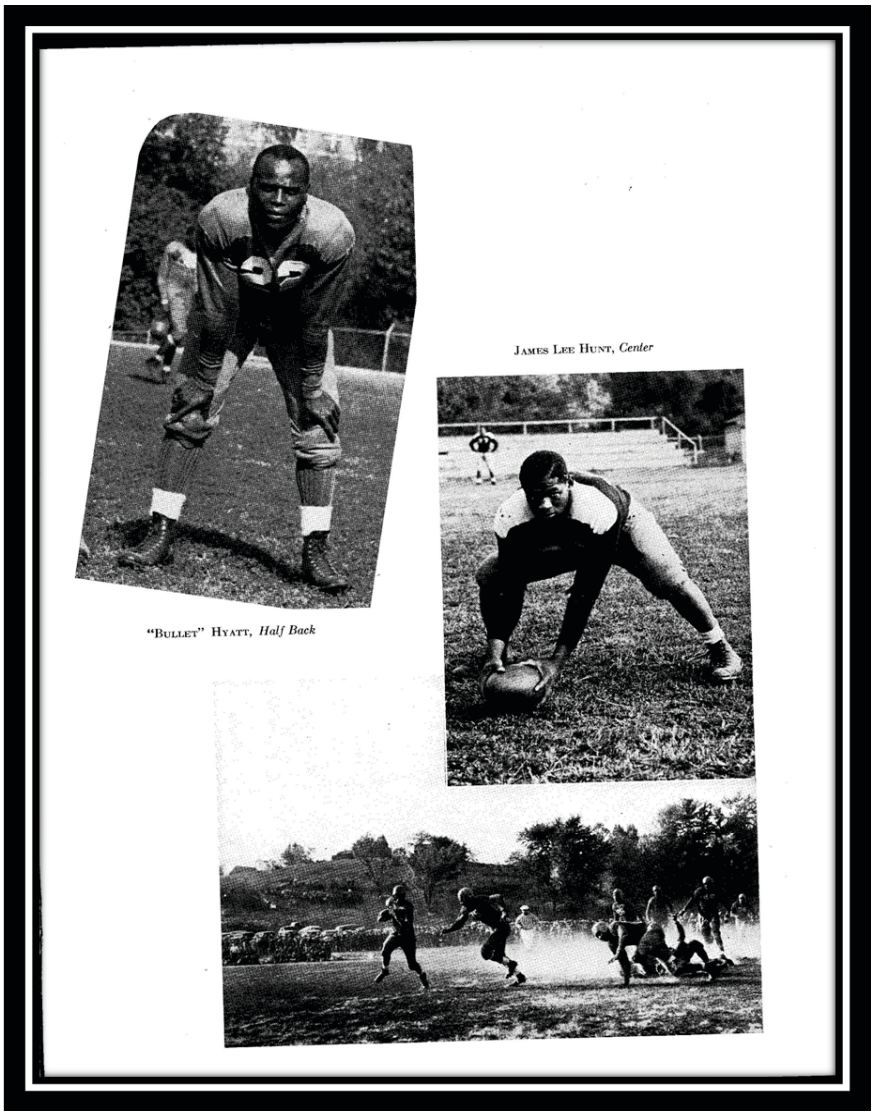
Appendix J

Women's Athletics, *Archives*, 1939.



Appendix K

Men's Football Team, *Archives*, 1939.

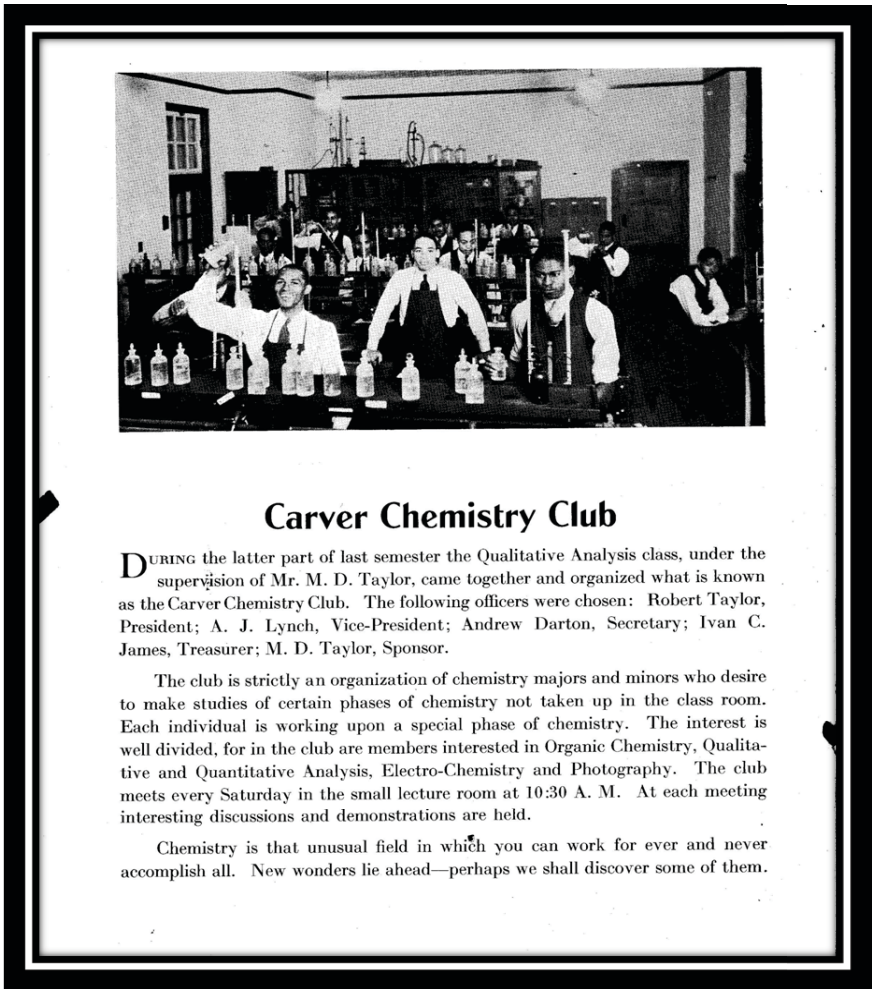


"Bullet" Hyatt, *Half Back*

James Lee Hunt, *Center*

Appendix L

Carver Chemistry Club, *Archives*, 1936.



Carver Chemistry Club

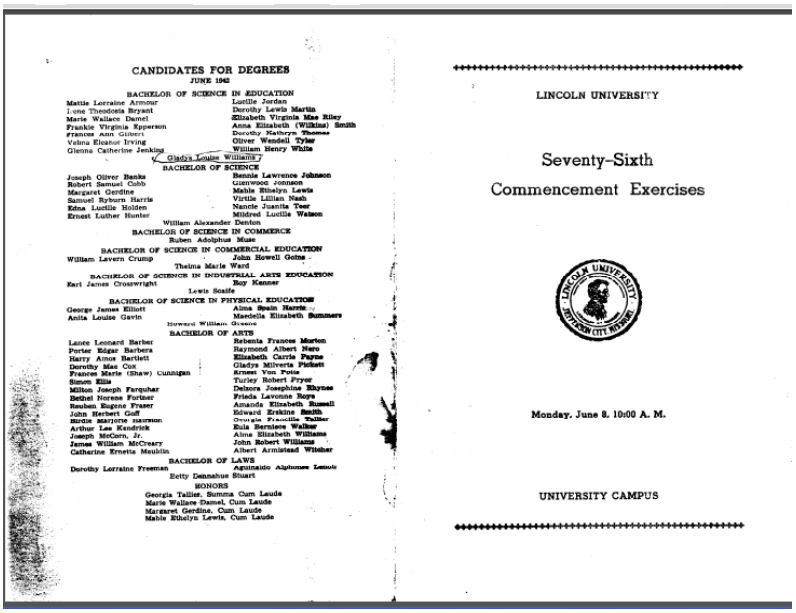
DURING the latter part of last semester the Qualitative Analysis class, under the supervision of Mr. M. D. Taylor, came together and organized what is known as the Carver Chemistry Club. The following officers were chosen: Robert Taylor, President; A. J. Lynch, Vice-President; Andrew Darton, Secretary; Ivan C. James, Treasurer; M. D. Taylor, Sponsor.

The club is strictly an organization of chemistry majors and minors who desire to make studies of certain phases of chemistry not taken up in the class room. Each individual is working upon a special phase of chemistry. The interest is well divided, for in the club are members interested in Organic Chemistry, Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis, Electro-Chemistry and Photography. The club meets every Saturday in the small lecture room at 10:30 A. M. At each meeting interesting discussions and demonstrations are held.

Chemistry is that unusual field in which you can work for ever and never accomplish all. New wonders lie ahead—perhaps we shall discover some of them.

Appendix M

Commencement Program.



CANDIDATES FOR DEGREES
JUNE 1942

BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN EDUCATION

Mattie Lorraine Armour
Ione Theodosia Bryant
Marie Wallace Daniel
Frankie Virginia Epperson
Frances Ann Gilbert
Velma Eleanor Irving
Glenna Catherine Jenkins
Lucille Jordan
Dorothy Lewis Martin
Elizabeth Virginia Mae Riley
Anna Elizabeth (Wilkins) Smith
Dorothy Kathryn Thomas
Oliver Wendell Tyler
William Henry White
Gladys Louise Williams

BACHELOR OF SCIENCE

Joseph Oliver Banks
Robert Samuel Cobb
Margaret Gerdine
Samuel Ryburn Harris
Edna Lucille Holden
Ernest Luther Hunter
Bennie Lawrence Johnson
Glenwood Jonnson
Mable Ethelyn Lewis
Virtis Lillian Nash
Nancie Juanita Teer
Mildred Lucille Watson
William Alexander Denton

BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN COMMERCE

Ruben Adolphus Muse

BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN COMMERCIAL EDUCATION

William Lavern Crump
John Howell Goins
Thelma Marie Ward

BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN INDUSTRIAL ARTS EDUCATION

Earl James Crosswright
Roy Kenner
Lewis Scaife

BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

George James Elliott
Anita Louise Gavin
Alma Swain Harris
Maedella Elizabeth Summers
Howard William Greene

BACHELOR OF ARTS

Lance Leonard Barber
Porter Edgar Barbera
Harry Amos Bartlett
Dorothy Mae Cox
Frances Marie (Shaw) Cunnigan
Simon Ellis
Milton Joseph Farquhar
Bethel Norene Fortner
Reuben Eugene Fraser
John Herbert Goff
Hattie marjorie Harmon
Arthur Lee Kendrick
Joseph McCarn, Jr.
James William McCreary
Catherine Ernetia Mauldin
Rebenta Frances Morton
Raymond Albert Nero
Elizabeth Carrie Payne
Gladys Milverta Pickett
Ernest Von Potts
Turley Robert Pryor
Delnora Josephine Rhynes
Frieda Lavonne Rupe
Amanda Elizabeth Russell
Edward Erskine Smith
Georgia Francilla Talliaferro
Eula Berniece Walker
Alma Elizabeth Williams
John Robert Williams
Albert Armistead Winbar

BACHELOR OF LAWS

Dorothy Lorraine Freeman
Agustaldo Alphonses Lemole
Betty Dannahue Stuart

HONORS

Georgia Talliaferro, Summa Cum Laude
Marie Wallace Daniel, Cum Laude
Margaret Gerdine, Cum Laude
Mable Ethelyn Lewis, Cum Laude

LINCOLN UNIVERSITY

Seventy-Sixth
Commencement Exercises

Monday, June 8, 10:00 A. M.

UNIVERSITY CAMPUS