



Dr. M.T. Pope House, 511 S. Wilmington Street, facade



Dr. M.T. Pope House, 511 S. Wilmington Street, south and rear elevations



Dr. M.T. Pope House, 511 S. Wilmington Street,
Interior showing front entryway and original furniture



Dr. M.T. Pope House, 511 S. Wilmington Street,
Interior showing first floor hall and original furniture and furnishings.
Doorway next to bookcase was entrance to Dr. Pope's examination room.



Dr. M.T. Pope House, 511 S. Wilmington Street,
Interior showing living room and original furniture



Dr. M.T. Pope House, 511 S. Wilmington Street,
Interior showing kitchen, looking into space that was Dr. Pope's examining room.



The Pope House is full of artifacts from the Pope Family's life, including medical equipment used by Dr. Pope, beautician's tools used by Mrs. Pope, and personal papers, photographs, and memorabilia. Original furniture and furnishings likewise remain in the house.

All photographs taken in June 2011 by Cynthia de Miranda,
MdM Historical Consultants.

Statewide Significance Context Summary

Dr. Manassa Thomas Pope was one of a small group of African American professionals who established their careers in Reconstruction, contributed to the political successes of the 1890s, and stayed in North Carolina to push back against the Jim Crow laws of the early twentieth century. Pope was one of the founders of the Old North State Medical Society, a statewide organization that aggressively fought segregation and discrimination and, at the end of his career, he ran for mayor of segregated Raleigh in an organized attempt to increase voter registration and participation by African Americans.

The Career and Achievements of Dr. M. T. Pope

Dr. Manassa Thomas Pope (1858-1934), a physician and business owner, was a leader in the statewide African American community during the tumultuous periods of post-Reconstruction progress and early twentieth-century segregation and disenfranchisement. One of his most significant accomplishments was the founding of the Old North State Medical Society, which grew into an important statewide organization that aggressively fought segregation and discrimination while working to improve health conditions of the African American community. Pope also participated in politics with the Republican Party in the 1890s and later with voter rights groups. In 1919, he undertook the dramatic and very public political act of running for mayor of segregated Raleigh in an organized effort to galvanize African Americans into registering and voting.

Dr. Pope marked a number of firsts in his life and medical career: he was in the first graduating class of Shaw University's Leonard School of Medicine in 1886; he was (along with two medical school classmates) among the first African American physicians licensed to practice in North Carolina, also in 1886; he cofounded the first African American-owned drugstore in North Carolina, the Queen City Drug Company at 227 E. Trade Street in Charlotte (not extant) in 1892; and he was the first African American to run for mayor in Raleigh, in 1919.¹

Pope founded the Old North State Medical Society in 1887 with three medical school classmates: Dr. John Taylor Williams, Dr. Lawson Andrews Scruggs, and Dr. Aaron McDuffie Moore. They did so in response to being barred from joining the all-white North Carolina Medical Society, the state constituent

¹ Kenneth Joel Zogry, "The House That Dr. Pope Built: Race, Politics, Memory, and the Early Struggle for Civil Rights in North Carolina" (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2008) 47, 75, 185; Thomas Ward Jr., *Black Physicians in the Jim Crow South* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2003), 105. Zogry, it should be noted, wrote the National Register of Historic Places Nomination for the Pope House in 1999. Since that time, his further research uncovered Pope's significant activities and achievements, detailed in his dissertation and summarized here.

of the all-white American Medical Association. The society has played an important role in improving the health of and health care for the African American community in the state. This was particularly true in the 1950s and 1960s, when the society aggressively fought segregation in all aspects of the medical field, from the exclusive membership practices of the North Carolina Medical Society to the illegal segregation in federally financed hospitals and in the state's medical schools to the exclusion of African American doctors in public health policy making. The society continues its work today, focusing on wellness programs targeted to the African American community, such as tobacco-use cessation, diabetes management, and healthy-lifestyle advocacy. The society also continues to hold annual conventions for continuing medical education and networking.²

Founding the society—as a reaction to segregation—was a political as well as a practical act, but it was only the start of Pope's political activism on behalf of African Americans in North Carolina. In fact, he was politically involved throughout his professional life. Pope's first connection to state Republican politics was likely his college friend, the politically active and well-known James Hunter Young. Pope's appointment to assistant postmaster of Henderson in 1889 likely came in thanks for political support and possibly campaigning for Henry Plummer Cheatham, who won a seat in Congress from North Carolina's Second District that year. Pope's political associations also helped when he moved to Charlotte in 1892; he arrived with a letter of introduction from John Dancy, the state's preeminent African American politician. Pope continued his political activity in Charlotte, where he was an active member of the Republican Party and used the hall on the third floor above his drugstore for community and political meetings. Pope's service with the 3rd North Carolina Volunteer Infantry during the Spanish American War was another a political act; African Americans fought for and enlisted in the volunteer regiment in part to present a positive image of African Americans just as restrictive Jim Crow laws were being put in place. James Young, who used his political influence to get the regiment organized, served as its commander. *The Colored American* newspaper called it the “first Negro regiment in the English-speaking world to be fully equipped with Negro officers.”³

² Ward, 55-66, 189, 205-207; Hubert Eaton, *Every Man Should Try* (N.p.: Bonaparte Press, 1984), 204-206; Andrew Best, Interview R-0011, April 19, 1997, Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007), Documenting the American South, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Old North State Medical Society website, <http://www.oldnorthstatemedicalsociety.org/>, accessed July 15, 2011. Additional historical information about the society is included below under a separate heading.

³ Zogry, 57, 60-71, 73, 75, 77-80, 100-102; *The Colored American*, January 21, 1899, in the Pope Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

After the war, in 1899, Pope moved to Raleigh and established a medical practice there; in 1900, he began building the house at 511 South Wilmington Street. That same year, the “suffrage” amendment to the state constitution passed, which effectively disenfranchised most African American voters in North Carolina. Pope’s political activity in his Raleigh years reacted to this loss of civil rights. Pope registered to vote in Raleigh in October 1902, apparently in response to a registration call issued several weeks earlier by the just-formed Colored Voters League of North Carolina. Only six other African American men successfully registered to vote in Raleigh at that time. The thirty-one registered African American voters in Wake County totaled less than half a percent of the county’s registered voters. The African American community's loss of political traction and the rise of segregation that marked the early years of the twentieth century caused many African Americans to turn away from politics and toward developing businesses to serve their own community in this period, and Pope similarly focused on his medical practice and his community in the ensuing years.⁴

In 1919, the fight for voting rights and political power for African Americans went public again in Raleigh. That year, the locally established Twentieth Century Voter’s Club nominated an all-black slate for Raleigh’s municipal election, with prominent Raleigh businessmen in each of the three slots. Dr. Pope headed the slate as the mayoral candidate, Dr. Lovelace. B. Capehart ran for commissioner of public safety, and Calvin E. Lightner ran for commissioner of public works. Capehart eventually withdrew and Lawrence Cheek, editor of the African American-owned *Raleigh Independent* newspaper, replaced him. The slate was entirely symbolic—there was no hope of winning the election—but the Twentieth Century Voter’s Club meant it as an “expression of the feeling of the Negroes in the city that they ought to have greater rights than afforded them,” as Zogry’s dissertation quoted J.H. Love, local pharmacy owner and the group’s president. Zogry notes that the 1919 election added African American voters to the polls and “shook up” white leaders around the state sufficiently to initiate improvements to public education for African Americans. Calvin Lightner’s son, Clarence E. Lightner, recalled that “it showed young black people that they could run for office, and I think that is where my first interest in running for office came from as I listened to [my father] talk about these things.” The younger Lightner went on to be elected Raleigh’s first black mayor, in 1973.⁵

Pope suffered some serious illnesses in the 1920s and died in 1934, at the age of seventy-six. A newspaper clipping with his obituary, among the items in the Pope Family Papers at the Southern

⁴ Zogry, 152-157; Crow, 115-118.

⁵ Zogry, 206-216; Linda Simmons-Henry and Linda Harris Edmisten, *Culture Town: Life in Raleigh’s African American Communities* (Raleigh: Raleigh Historic Districts Commission, 1993), 64-65.

Historical Collection in Chapel Hill, referred to him as both the “oldest Negro physician of Raleigh” and “Raleigh’s oldest physician.” Dr. Pope moved around the state and had several offices throughout his career, but the Pope House at 511 S. Wilmington Street in Raleigh is the best resource associated with his life and work. If his Henderson residence or office survives (those buildings have not been identified), it would reflect only his early achievements. The Charlotte properties do not survive, and the one surviving Raleigh office—space above the Hamlin Drug Store—does not represent the full life of professional, political, and community involvement that Dr. Pope led. The house at 511 S. Wilmington Street in Raleigh, however, not only remains but is remarkably intact. It was owned by the family for a century and has seen few changes. Original furniture, furnishings, papers, family photographs, and even personal effects and memorabilia remain, reflecting the family life and lifestyle of the Popes. The house, which Pope built after establishing a successful career and where he lived more than half his adult life, reflects the full spectrum of his productive career and pursuits.

The Old North State Medical Society

The Old North State Medical Society is a state-wide organization founded in 1887 in reaction to the exclusion of African American physicians from membership in the all-white North Carolina Medical Society, the state constituent of the all-white American Medical Association. The society has provided continuing education and networking opportunities for medical professionals—including pharmacists and dentists—as early as 1889, when the society held its first annual session. Throughout its history, the society has also worked to improve the health of African Americans in the state by increasing access to health care and to wellness programs. Especially in the first half of the twentieth century, higher rates of poverty, sub-standard living conditions, and the limited accessibility to quality health care facilities meant that the African American community suffered more from preventable communicable diseases than did the white population.⁶

Annual conventions predictably held sessions on medical issues and practices, but the scope of the society’s work soon broadened: as early as 1932, sessions also included such topics as “The Future Outlook for Negroes in the Professions” and “How Can We Improve our Economic Status in the Professions?” The society had a Legal and Civil Rights Committee as early as 1951, which oversaw many legislative and legal initiatives to advance the civil rights of African Americans as medical professionals and as patients. The committee monitored activities and practices in North Carolina hospitals and other

⁶ Annual Meeting programs of Society, various years, Special Collections, Health Services Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Ward, 55-66, 189, 205-207; Eaton, 204-206; Best interview; John Zaven Ayanian, “Black Health in Segregated Durham, 1900-1940,” Honors Thesis, Duke University, 1982; Old North State Medical Society website, <http://www.oldnorthstatemedicalsociety.org/>, accessed July 15, 2011.

facilities that were in apparent violation of federal antidiscrimination laws. Committee members reported instances of non-compliance with such laws to members of Congress and lobbied to end segregationist and discriminatory practices in hospitals. The society was active in supporting Medicare when it was first proposed and considered in Congress in the mid-1960s, in contrast to the American Medical Association, but was ultimately excluded from developing policies for its implementation in North Carolina.⁷

The society worked toward integration in other institutions as well. As the University of North Carolina completed construction on a new, publicly-funded, \$8 million dollar hospital and medical center in 1951, the society urged its membership to ask the state to admit African Americans to the school while the society's then-president, Dr. Charles Jordan, lobbied the legislature on the issue. UNC did admit African American students to its medical school beginning in 1955 but for a decade only admitted a single African American each year. The society also had a liaison committee that negotiated the integration of the North Carolina Medical Society in 1965, a goal achieved after years of effort and nearly eighty years after the society's founding because of exclusion.⁸

The society remains active today, holding annual conferences for continuing medical education and networking and offering wellness programs such as tobacco-use cessation, diabetes management, and healthy-lifestyle advocacy.

African American Leaders in Piedmont North Carolina, 1890s through 1920

Dr. Pope was one of a group of community leaders who were professionally accomplished and politically active during this period, but it is not likely that many properties associated with this group survive. Pope's classmates and fellow Old North State Medical Society founders, Aaron McDuffie Moore (1863-1923), Lawson A. Scruggs (1857-1914), and John T. Williams (1859-1924) were also leaders in the African American community. Scruggs and Williams were, along with Pope, the first African American physicians licensed to practice in the state. Scruggs went on to practice medicine in Raleigh and teach at both the Leonard School and at St. Augustine's, the first African American to teach his subjects at each institution. Scruggs's home at 21 E. Worth apparently does not survive; modern-day Worth Street consists of the 300, 400, and 500 blocks. Williams settled in Charlotte after medical school and soon served on the Mecklenburg County Board of Health. He won election to the Charlotte board of aldermen in 1889 and 1891. He and Pope together opened the Queen City Drug Company in 1892 and remained

⁷⁷ Annual Meeting programs, Special Collections, Health Services Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Eaton, 205-210.

⁸ Ward, 55-56; 205-207; *Journal of the Old North State Medical Society*, June 1955, vol. 9, p. 8.

partners until Williams accepted appointment as consul to Sierra Leone in 1897; he served in that position until 1906 and was one of the country's first African American diplomats. The address of his Charlotte home has not been identified; it seems likely to have been near Pope's, which does not survive due to the growth of the downtown commercial district.⁹

Moore, Durham's first African American physician, was also a founder of the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company and was very active in business ventures in Durham. He was politically active in the nineteenth century and very well-connected: Moore married Cottie Dancy, the daughter of one of the state's preeminent African American politicians, John C. Dancy. In fact a number of Durham's leading professionals—John Merrick, James E. Shepard, William G. Pearson, James Whitted, and Richard Fitzgerald—were active in the Republican Party at the time, and, in 1888, Republicans nominated educators Pearson and Whitted to run for local office. The backlash from the white establishment was fierce enough to cause the men to withdraw from the race. Years later, the bitter sting of the incident remained. Encouraged to run for local office in 1896, Moore declined, recalling the fierce hostilities of 1888. Instead, he worked to improve African Americans access to health care and educational facilities in Durham and was instrumental in the establishment of Lincoln Hospital and the Durham Colored Library, now the Stanford L. Warren Branch of the Durham County Library. Likewise, other Durham leaders focused on community building rather than electoral politics in the early twentieth century, choosing to exploit whites' desire to preserve segregation to help them establish and improve African American institutions like Shepard's National Religious Training School and Chautauqua for the Colored Race (now North Carolina Central University). Most properties associated with these men do not survive. Moore's home at 606 Fayetteville Street in Durham was demolished in the 1960s, as was Merrick's and Pearson's. Fitzgerald's home burned in 1923. Shepard's 1923 house at 1902 Fayetteville Street remains on Central's campus.¹⁰

The African Americans running in Raleigh's 1919 election did so as the result of an organized effort of the Twentieth Century Voter's Club. Dr. J.H. Love, a Leonard graduate and Raleigh pharmacist, and Oberlin School principal Charles N. Hunter (ca. 1851-1931) were instrumental in establishing the

⁹ Ward, 105; *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, s.v. "Lawson Andrew Scruggs" and "John Taylor Williams"; Zogry, 103.

¹⁰ *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, s.v. "Aaron McDuffie Moore," "John Merrick," and "Charles Clinton Spaulding"; Leslie Brown, *Upbuilding Black Durham: Gender, Class, and Black Community Development in the Jim Crow South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 36, 47-48; Endangered Durham Blog entry on Dr. Moore posted October 10, 2008 and viewed July 18, 2011 at <http://endangereddurham.blogspot.com/2008/10/dr-aaron-moore-house-606-fayetteville.html>.

Twentieth Century Voter's Club as well as the *Raleigh Independent* newspaper, both around 1916. Love and Hunter "figured prominently in the new movement for African American civil and political rights" at the time and were also instrumental in establishing a local chapter of the just-chartered National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Hunter was of the same generation as Pope but he eschewed politics in the nineteenth century, favoring instead the pursuit of economic progress. In the twentieth century, however, he was committed to expanding voter participation among African Americans. Hunter lived at 204 Cotton Street as early as 1901; that house does not appear to be extant. Love lived at 416 S. Bloodworth Street in 1902 and later at 326 E. Davie Street. The Bloodworth street house was demolished around 1985. The E. Davie Street residence likewise does not survive, nor does the Love Pharmacy that stood at 126 E. Davie Street.¹¹

Lovelace B. Capehart and Clarence Lightner, who ran for local office along with Pope in 1919, were both successful business men in Raleigh, like Pope himself. Capehart (1863-1942) was an educator before returning to his alma mater to study medicine at Shaw's Leonard School, from which he graduated in 1907. He was a Republican but his level of activity in politics prior to the 1919 election is not known. Curiously, a 1921 biography of Capehart states that "he has never sought any political office." Capehart lived at 310 E. Davie Street in 1922 (not extant) and at 312 Smithfield Street (now 312 Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard). The latter house remains; it was purchased by Calvin Lightner for his funeral home in the 1940s.¹²

Lightner (1877-1960) was nearly a generation younger than Pope and his contemporaries, and Lawrence Cheek was even younger. Lightner attended Shaw University at the turn of the century and started successful careers in real estate and later as an undertaker, both in Raleigh. Most notably, he built the Lightner Arcade (not extant) on East Hargett Street, multi-use building that housed a hotel, offices, and shops and became central to Raleigh's African American community in the early twentieth century. Lightner's home at 419 S. East Street was demolished in 1990; the building housing his funeral home business, a former home of Lovelace Capehart, remains at 312 Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. Lightner's son, Calvin Lightner, went on to become Raleigh's first African American mayor in 1972.¹³

¹¹ Zogry, 191-194; Crow, 99, 125, 144; Tania Tulley, City of Raleigh Planning Department, e-mail to author, July 25, 2011; Wake County GIS, accessed online at <http://www.wakegov.com/gis/default.htm> on July 25, 2011.

¹² *Hills Raleigh City Directory*, 1922-23 (Richmond: Hills City Directory Company); Arthur Bunyan Caldwell, ed. *History of the American Negro and His Institutions: North Carolina Edition*, 4 vols. (Atlanta: A. B. Caldwell Publishing Co., 1921), 645; Wake County GIS records, viewed online at <http://maps.raleighnc.gov/imapsraleigh/index.html>, July 21, 2011.

¹³ Simmons-Henry and Edmisten, 58-63.

Unlike Pope and other professionals, who incorporated their political work into their careers, politics was the vocation of James Hunter Young (1858-1921). Young entered politics early in life: He left his studies at Shaw University in 1877 to work with Col. J. J. Young in a North Carolina office of the Internal Revenue Service, a position that earned him the notice of state Republican leaders. He advanced politically, garnering promotions in his government jobs and serving as a delegate to the Republican state convention as early as 1880. He campaigned for Henry Plummer Cheatham and was rewarded with more political appointments. In 1893, he purchased and began editing the *Raleigh Gazette* and it quickly became "the principal mouthpiece of black Republicanism in the state." Young helped forge the Fusionist union between Republicans and Populists that dominated state politics in the 1890s. During the Spanish American War, his lobbying resulted in the organization of the 3rd North Carolina Volunteer Infantry, a reflection of the extent of his political influence at the end of the nineteenth century. His political connections in Washington served him well in the early twentieth century, when white supremacist Democrats came back into power in North Carolina, and Young was appointed deputy revenue collector for the Raleigh district. He remained in that position until 1913, through three presidential administrations, until he was dismissed by President Woodrow Wilson. At that point, Young retired from politics and ran successful real estate and insurance businesses in Raleigh in real estate and insurance. Similarly, Henry Plummer Cheatham and other prominent African American politicians from the period do not fit the profile of men like Pope, Scruggs, Moore, and their colleagues, who were primarily professional men who were politically involved.¹⁴

Dr. M.T. Pope's long life was productive both professionally and politically. His political involvement, which tended to be quiet and somewhat private, was bookended by two public acts that had influence across the state. His participation in founding the Old North State Medical Society helped create an important resource for improving access to health care for the African American community during critical periods in the twentieth century. His run for mayor of Raleigh in 1919 helped increase voter participation in Raleigh and elsewhere and drew attention to African Americans' fight for civil rights even before the Civil Rights era. Cultural resources recognized for their associations with African Americans' contributions to North Carolina history are rare, and those relating to this period are rarer still. As a property associated with Pope's lifelong work combating the exclusion, disenfranchisement, and discrimination experienced by the African Americans in the decades following Reconstruction and before the Civil Rights era, the Pope House appears to have statewide significance in the narrative of North Carolina's history.

¹⁴ *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, s.v. "James Hunter Young."

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