The call for reparations for those who suffered under the blight of slavery and its aftermath is one increasingly heard today, but this call is hardly a new one. Rather, the notion of reparations, or in earlier terms, ex-slave pensions, was something argued for and against throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries. While the discipline of history traditionally records this story, archaeology can help fill in the gaps and illuminate this past in a unique way. One vital link to this past is contained in historic cemeteries, where the mortal remains of those who lived and died under slavery and the first decades after emancipation now lie.

The first historic period burials excavated archaeologically in the United States were almost exclusively those of Native Americans, but by the 1970s the graves of other ethnic groups were treated as archaeological resources, exhumed due to developmental impacts such as the construction of highways and other public works projects. Many of these projects were associated with African Americans, with the largest being the Freedman’s Cemetery, in Dallas, Texas. The Freedman’s Project was begun by the Texas Department of Transportation due to the expansion of North Central Expressway in downtown Dallas. Approximately one acre of the cemetery had been paved over in the 1940s by the construction of North Central Expressway and Lemmon Avenue, and this marked desecration was revealed during subsequent expansion of these roadways in the early 1990s. The project’s focus, Freedman’s Cemetery, was the burial ground for African Americans in Dallas from 1869 to its closure in 1907. Between 1991 and 1994 excavations encompassed nearly an acre and resulted in the exhumation and analysis of 1,150 unmarked graves.
When excavations began, the graveyard was without markers. Hundreds of tombstone fragments were later uncovered beneath Calvary Avenue, bordering the cemetery. During its initial paving in the 1920s when the Ku Klux Klan had returned to national and local prominence, city workers dragged away the remaining gravestones and broke them up for use as paving materials, burying them under layers of concrete and asphalt.\(^6\)

Among the nearly 1,200 graves, “Burial 303” at first seemed typical, consisting of the remains of an anonymous adult male wearing a coat, pants, and dress shirt. Although his identity was unknown, his age was estimated as 55 years (or older) at the time of his death. This burial was dated to the “Late Period,” an eight-year interval spanning 1900–1907, and in an elaborate chronology this date range was refined to the estimated single year of 1907.\(^7\) We know the man in Burial 303 was born at least as early as 1852 and likely was in his teens or older when Juneteenth and emancipation came to Texas.

The most distinctive artifact associated with the man was a badge made of pot metal and pinned to the front of his coat. This small badge was in the form of a crescent moon and star with an additional metal element in the form of a ribbon, attached by a single chain link. Across the ribbon-shaped piece were the initials, “I.O.N.I.C.,” while the words “WASHINGTON, D.C.” were embossed on the face of the crescent moon. Finally, the words “Of USA” were cast into the star (Figure 1). The badge was originally identified as a possible, albeit unknown, fraternal organization, with the first two letters presumed to stand for “Independent Order,” common to such organizations, and its form bore a superficial resemblance to some Masonic group emblems.\(^8\) Intriguingly mysterious, the badge suggested membership in an organization headquartered in the District of Columbia. The revelation of what this object was and what it represented took over a decade of research and involves both the local and national ex-slave pensions/reparations movements.

To contextualize the archaeology, extensive archival research was conducted, including scanning the daily Dallas *Times Herald* newspaper from 1 January 1900 through 26 July 1907, collecting death notices and articles on everyday life in black Dallas. It was during this research that the little badge from Burial 303 was identified. On 8 October 1903, an unusual meeting was held downtown in a tent on Crowder Street, and later at the courthouse. The *Times Herald* reported:

> An effort is being made to form an organization of ex-slaves in Dallas by Negroes from Washington, D.C. and Arkansas. A meeting was held last night at the courthouse for the purpose of effecting a permanent organization to be a branch of the *National Industrial Council* (emphasis added), the purpose being to secure legislation by Congress to pension ex-slaves. The leaders of the movement are S. P. Mitchell, Washington, D.C., president of the council, and Rev. I. L. Walton of Arkansas.\(^9\)
Figure 1: Pot metal badge associated with the National Industrial Council and recovered from an excavated burial in Freedman’s Cemetery, Dallas, Texas (drawing by Clete Rooney, scale in centimeters).

Another report two days later noted that the meeting in the county courtroom was convened “to hear a sermon by J. C. Stiles, a preacher of their race, and Rev. I. L. Walton, a colored organizer of the order called the National Industrial Council. . . .” 10 The council claimed to have a membership of some 75,000. 11 Both the president of the National Industrial Council (NIC), Stanley Mitchell, as well as Walton, the group’s general secretary and business manager, were present at the Dallas meetings in December 1903. 12

This is the first reference to suggest when the ex-slave pension organization, the National Industrial Council, first arrived in Dallas and began soliciting members, and it is this organization that is represented by the badge recovered from Burial 303. It is unknown how successful the NIC’s efforts were in Dallas that fall, but the Times Herald did report there were at least two levels of membership: “The plan is to assess each ‘financial’ member $1.50, a part of that sum to be spent in securing the necessary legislation. Others are allowed to join as ‘social’ members, without the payment of dues.” 13

By the summer of 1904 an ex-slave pension group was again organizing in the city. Referred to in the press as the “National Association of Ex-Slaves,” the group had a meeting and parade. 14 It is far from certain if this group was the same or related to the National Industrial Council that met in the city one year earlier, but it is clear that the NIC was back in Dallas in December 1905. According to an account in the Times Herald, this event was the “eighth annual session of the Independent Order of the National Industrial Council of America . . . , presided over by P. E. Williams of Fort Worth . . . [and] B. D. Boone of Dallas.” 15
After 1905, I found no reference the National Industrial Council, or any other ex-slave pension group, in the pages of the local Dallas newspapers; if the movement at the state or national level was still flourishing or even viable, from this vantage point I have no further insight. Although not directly reported in the Dallas papers, by the first years of the 20th century unflattering stories regarding the ex-slave pension movement generally and the National Industrial Council directly were appearing with alarming regularity in the national press. These pension movements were more often publicly denounced as “criminal” than as a positive or productive means to establish a desperately needed economic safety net for increasingly elderly men and women who were formerly enslaved.

But what of the man in Burial 303? He almost certainly attended the 1905 meeting, and as an NIC member in the days prior to his death in 1907 was aware of the ongoing assaults by the federal government and the national press on the organization in which he claimed membership. His faith must have remained unshaken despite such charges, for otherwise why would he have retained the badge and proclaimed his membership up to the moment of his death? And, if viewed as fraudulent by Dallas’s black community, why would his family or friends have dressed him in his finest suit and as the final flourish—to be seen by dozens of mourners—pinned to his coat a symbol displaying his membership in the Independent Order of the National Industrial Council of America, certainly a questionable or perhaps disbanded and disgraced organization by 1906? Although we cannot know with certainty, a fundamental truth revealed by this question may well lie in a clearer understanding of the origin and history of the ex-slave pension movement generally, and specifically the NIC. Far from a minor or peripheral organization, the National Industrial Council in its various incarnations should be considered one of the most important and influential ex-slave pension movements in the United States. Its leader, Stanley P. Mitchell, met on more than one occasion at the White House with President Theodore Roosevelt, and before the group’s demise formed an independent political party and ran an African American candidate for President of the United States. Far from the innocent victim of a confidence scheme, before his death the man in Burial 303 must have been an active participant in a major black political movement.

THE EX-SLAVE PENSION MOVEMENT IN THE LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURIES

Until 2005 relatively little had been written on the ex-slave pensions movements, with the earliest substantive study published in 1910 by historian Walter Fleming. These limited sources describe how many of these organizations operated in the 1890s through the 1910s, and how they were inevitably viewed as “fraud-
ulent” by federal officials.17 Recently, Mary Frances Berry added substantially to our knowledge with her 2005 book My Face Is Black Is True: Callie House and the Struggle for Ex-Slave Reparations. Through Berry’s work it became possible to contextualize the small and seemingly non-descript badge found with the man in Burial 303, giving insight into the ex-slave pension movement on the national level. However, Berry’s work is a biographical portrait, focusing first on Callie House, and the history of one group—the National Ex-Slave Mutual Relief, Bounty and Pension Association, founded in 1898 and of which House was an integral part.18 In contrast, the history of the National Industrial Council, whose badge was recovered from the burial in Dallas, has never been fully documented.19

Although there had been a debate on compensating formerly enslaved workers in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War, the first ex-slave pension movement is believed to have begun with a white man, former Confederate captain and native of Alabama Walter R. Vaughan, who increasingly argued that the federal government owed a debt to the former slaves.20 Between 1890 and 1903 Vaughan was instrumental in persuading congressmen from Nebraska, Illinois, Kansas, Alabama, North Carolina, and Ohio to sponsor bills in the U.S. Congress (all containing essentially identical language) proposing an ex-slave pension. To promote his cause, Vaughan formed a fraternal organization, “Vaughan’s Ex-Slave Pension Club,” with membership open to any African American over sixteen years of age. Each member paid an initial fee of 25 cents, and 10 cents monthly thereafter, with the funds generated to be used for lobbying Congress for passage of the legislation. In this, Vaughan’s motivations and sincerity are unclear.21

Writing in 1910, southern historian Walter Fleming believed Vaughan was “ill balanced mentally,” but also thought his goal was not to defraud elderly African Americans out of nickels and dimes, but was based on a genuine desire to help.22 Mary Frances Berry points out that at best Vaughan’s motives were mixed. He actually believed that slavery had benefited African Americans, and saw ex-slave pensions as a way to inject capital into a region still recovering economically from the Civil War, since the formerly enslaved pensioners would be spending those pension funds largely in white-owned businesses.23 Certainly, most white Americans’ sentiment might be summed up by an editorial railing against the notion of an ex-slave pension: “They have been taught to labor, they have been taught Christian civilization, and to speak the noble English language instead of some African gibberish. The account is square with the ex-slaves.”24 Still, at least one branch of Confederate veterans in 1903 actually endorsed the idea of an ex-slave pensions.25

Vaughan’s Ex-Slave Pension Club may have been one of the first organizations formed to obtain ex-slave pension legislation, but it was far from the last. In an unsuccessful attempt to ward off imitators, in 1897 Vaughan actually went so
far as to denounce them publicly in an open letter to numerous American newspapers. It stated that any African American promoting an ex-slave pension and not working for him was inevitably a “confidence man” or woman intent on defrauding elderly black men and women. Of the ex-slave pension associations after Vaughan’s, one of the most prominent was the National Ex-Slave Mutual Relief, Bounty and Pension Association, founded in 1898 by African Americans Isaiah Dickerson and Callie House, along with several black Baptist ministers. Dickerson had worked for Vaughan’s Ex-Slave Pension Club and used the skills learned there to his personal advantage. Dickerson and House’s organization was often subjected to criminal investigation and accused of mail fraud and other crimes by federal authorities.

THE EMERGENCE OF THE NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL COUNCIL

The organization that issued the badge unearthed in Freedman’s Cemetery was the National Industrial Council of America, also referred to variously in the press as the “Independent Order of the National Industrial Council of America” (or I.O.N.I.C.), the “National Negro Industrial Convention,” and the “National Industrial Association.” The use of “Industrial” for the organization may have been influenced by the circulation of the newspaper, the National Industrial Advocate, which was the official publication of the other major ex-slave pension association, the National Ex-Slave Mutual Relief, Bounty and Pension Association. Some name differences may be actual changes through time, a calculated strategy to stay one step ahead of the U.S. Post Office’s mail fraud charges, while others may be due to casual mistakes made in the newspapers. These groups were clearly earlier incarnations of the same organization that evolved into the National Industrial Council because of two men who were involved in its founding and who were consistently listed with the subsequent name changes, Stanley P. Mitchell and Isaac Walton.

The group’s founding can be traced to 1897 and was officially incorporated in the District of Columbia in February 1902 as the National Industrial Council of America. However, the earliest incarnation of the group by name can be traced to 26 December 1900, when it was announced in the Lexington, Kentucky, Morning Herald that “S. P. Mitchell, the [N]egro editor and orator, will leave the city for Washington, D.C., tonight, where he will preside over the National Industrial Council.” It was further remarked that Mitchell would “wait on President William McKinley for the encouragement of some legislation proposed by that body.” Seven months later, on 12 July 1901, in Jackson, Mississippi, a similarly named organization, the “National Negro Industrial Convention,” met to “encourage industrial education, commercial development, organize farmers, ele-
vate morals, [help] [N]egroes to keep out of the courts, save money, and buy homes.” Mr. S. P. Mitchell was named president of the group, and Mr. C. H. Andrews was appointed as secretary. An article in the Dallas *Times Herald* from 1905 noted that the “Independent Order of the National Industrial Council of America” was holding its 8th annual meeting in the city, placing the founding of the organization in 1897. This founding date refers to Isaac Walton’s previous organization—the Ex-Slave Petitioner Assembly—because it is later stated that the National Industrial Council was originally founded in Madison, Arkansas, where Isaac Walton resided and ran this earlier group.

Walton had experience in both running an ex-slave pension organization as well as being charged with fraud. In August 1899 Walton was accused by the U.S. Post Office of mail fraud, which forbade the use of the mail in his name, or that of his organization. The order stated:

Walton is an ex-slave, who is at the head of an alleged imaginary organization having for its object the collection of money to be used to petition Congress to pass a law granting ex-slaves pensions. The first remittance required of the members of this organization was 25 cents, and it appears that 12,381 Negroes, from the Southern States principally, have remitted that amount. Although this money was to start a fund for the object above noted, not one cent of it can be accounted for by the manager of the scheme.

Walton was charged with postal fraud again in 1901. It is revealing that at the earliest well-documented incarnation of the National Industrial Council (by name) in July 1901, there is no specific mention of lobbying for ex-slave pensions. Due to the amount of scrutiny by federal authorities, many ex-slave pension organizations learned to keep a low profile. Although the earliest reference to the National Industrial Council (then known as the National Negro Industrial Convention), in 13 July 1901, makes no mention of the goal of creating an ex-slave pension, by February 1902 this had decidedly changed. The leaders of this group, now called the National Industrial Association, met with President Theodore Roosevelt at the White House to present “an address urging his cooperation in securing an appropriation from Congress for disabled and decrepit ex-slaves in the South.” The delegation included S. P. Mitchell; I. L. Walton; Smith Frampton from Charleston, South Carolina; E. Adams, Chauncey, Georgia; T. J. Smith, Tallahassee, Florida; and C. W. Williams, Marshall, Texas.

When the group officially incorporated in the District of Columbia on 15 February 1902 as “the National Industrial Council of America,” however, the stated goals of the organization again did not include any mention of lobbying for ex-slave pensions. Rather, the focus was on contemporary civil rights: “[to] resist mob violence and lynch law; to restrain by legal procedure the discriminating
practices of railroads, steamboat, and other corporations against American citizens because of their color; to resist the unlawful disenfranchisement and denial of the legal right of American citizens to vote in certain portions of the United States.” The leadership is very familiar, including Stanley P. Mitchell and Isaac L. Walton, as well as Smith Frampton, Thomas Wood, Emanuel Boarman, Leona Griffith, Mary Boardman, Marie A. Wade, and Perri W. Frisbey.43

Just weeks after the National Industrial Council was formally incorporated, W. R. Vaughan’s ex-slave pension organization and newly formed political movement, christened “Vaughan’s Justice Party,” also held its first organizational meeting in the District of Columbia. Interestingly, its key leaders included a “Rev. S. P. Mitchell” as temporary chairman, and “I. L. Walton” of Arkansas. The men must have been working in concert, and Vaughan could not have failed to recognize that both were leaders of the National Industrial Council, given their national prominence and their meeting with the president.44

On 4 January 1903, the group, now described as “The National Industrial Council and Ex-Slave Congress,” began a multi-day meeting in Washington, DC. The officers were all in attendance, and included “S. P. Mitchell, Kentucky, president; Rev. C. B. Bartley, vice president; Rev. I. L. Walton, Arkansas, secretary and treasurer; and Rev. D. C. Powell, Louisiana, supreme dictator.” By this date the organization claimed a membership of 175,000 drawn from thirty-four states. This, along with other membership claims, is very likely a highly inflated figure that cannot be confirmed with independent evidence. As before, the organization claimed to be primarily a true political action group.45

On 5 January 1903, another story in the Washington Post reported on the National Industrial Council meetings, and provided additional insight into the origin of the group. The National Industrial Council and Ex-Slave Congress was reported to have been first organized in Madison, Arkansas, in 1897. The Rev. I. L. Walton was from Madison, where he ran the Ex-Slave Petitioner’s Assembly, the Ex-Slave Assembly, and later the Ex-Slave Petitioner’s Association, as noted in the stories of the 1899 and 1901 mail fraud charges. The National Industrial Council directly descended from this earlier organization.46

Another key point may be gleaned from the 5 January 1903 meeting; the National Industrial Council was discussing a potential consolidation with the rival Mutual Relief, Bounty, and Pension Association. Unfortunately, on 6 January 1903, the reports from the National Industrial Council meetings are somewhat confusing. It was reported there were two organizations sharing the National Industrial Council name: the “National Industrial Council and Ex-Slave Congress,” and the “National Industrial Council of America,” with Mitchell, Walton, and the others more clearly affiliated with the former. As for the “National Industrial Association of America,” the group’s leaders included “National
President, Rev. Smith Frampton, Charleston, S.C.; Vice President, D. C. Powell, Lettsworth, La.; Mrs. R. T. Mitchell, Secretary, Memphis, Tenn; Mrs. H. Johnson, State Secretary, Mt. Holly, S.C.; Mr. Sol Young, Chairman, Early Branch, S.C.” The two Industrial Council groups voted to consolidate into one, with the further belief that they would also unite with Isaiah Dickerson and Callie House’s Mutual Relief, Bounty and Pension Association. As one delegate at the meetings put it, “with the three organizations united, and there is every prospect that the Mutual Relief, Bounty and Pension Association will affiliate with us today . . . the efforts we are now making [have] behind [them] the strength of 150,000 colored people of the Southern states.” Despite days of negotiations and the potential benefits of such a union, the Mutual Relief, Bounty and Pension Association, led by T. C. Dickerson and R. F. Connelly, voted against their consolidation with the National Industrial Council.48

Rare surviving membership badges for the National Ex-Slave Mutual Relief, Bounty and Pension Association, from the collection of Derrick Joshua Beard and recent internet auction, depict a crescent moon and star motif, essentially identical in form and dimensions to the National Industrial Council badge recovered from Burial 303 in Dallas (Figures 1, 2).49

Figure 2: Pot metal badge associated with the National Ex-Slave Mutual Relief, Bounty and Pension Association (drawing by Clete Rooney, scale in centimeters).

Despite official statements from both groups denying any relationship between them, one group either copied the primary symbol of the other, or perhaps were secretly working together with different names, but adopting common symbols.50 The badges employed a symbol common to secret societies, which were hugely popular among African Americans in the 19th and early 20th centuries,
offering social and economic support and burial insurance, services otherwise
denied to African Americans by state, national, or industrial insurance companies.
For those who could not read or write, maintaining a continuity of symbols
between the Mutual Relief, Bounty and Pension Association and the National
Industrial Council could have been a helpful tool to generate or maintain confi-
dence in either organization, and to suggest their benefits were similar to the more
familiar fraternal orders and secret societies.51

POLITICAL ORGANIZING AND REPARATIONS LEGISLATION

During the January 1903 meetings the declared goals of the newly combined
societies of the National Industrial Council were revealed to be lofty indeed, call-
ing for nothing less than “the second emancipation of the colored race.” To
achieve this in part and after some contention, the delegation voted to create a new
political organization, the “Civil Liberty Party” (later the “National Liberty
Party”). S. P. Mitchell, serving as the chairman of the executive committee, called
for a national convention on 24 May 1903, in Cincinnati, Ohio, to formalize the
newly organized political party.52

To test the new party’s potential, Walton, Mitchell, and others canvassed the
U.S. Congress to query members of the House of Representatives who might sup-
port an ex-slave pension bill. Even further action was taken on 14 January 1903
when it was reported that Mitchell and NIC officers went to the White House and
met with President Roosevelt.53 Their proposal approached the subject with
specifics; “[they asked] the President to consider the feasibility of taking from
charity institutions of the South between 160,000 and 200,000 [N]egroes, and thus
relieving Southern taxpayers of supporting these [N]egroes, who are now a bur-
den on their hands.” Roosevelt was initially dismissive, but said he would consid-
er their proposal, as “the question had never been presented to him in that light.”54
Mitchell saw the meeting as a failure, threatening political fallout from such a dis-
missal: “I will telegraph Mr. William Jennings Bryan the position the President
has taken in this matter. As President of the National Industrial Council, I control
320,000 votes, all of whom are members of the council, who joined with a pledge
to support this measure.” Mitchell also admonished the President for appointing
African Americans to token governmental positions in the South while ignoring
the true plight of those elderly former slaves.55

Mitchell’s charges were immediately admonished by the other leaders of the
National Industrial Council and he was forced to soften his rhetoric, claiming that he
never actually intended to seek “the Democrats through Mr. Bryan . . .” but would
in fact support “any man who favors the passage of House bill 11404,” the ex-slave
pension bill being considered by Congress at that time.56 Mitchell’s lobbying efforts
were partially successful on 4 February 1903, when at the personal request of Isaac Walton (on behalf of the National Industrial Council), Republican Senator Mark Hanna from Ohio introduced an ex-slave pension bill into committee.57

The details of Hanna’s bill were similar to previous efforts, providing that, “persons over fifty years and less than sixty, whether male or female, shall receive a cash bounty of $100 and monthly pensions of $8 per month; persons between sixty and seventy years old a bounty of $300 and a pension of $12 a month; and those over seventy years old a bounty of $500 and a pension of $15 per month.”58

The increased political action and very public efforts of the National Industrial Council and the Mutual Relief, Bounty and Pension Association to lobby Congress and push forward an ex-slave pension may have created a backlash in the form of arrests and intimidation of agents and the leadership of both groups.59 Perhaps to forestall any criticism of the National Industrial Council in this regard, I. L. Walton announced to the press on 7 February 1903, that “the NIC [is] not one of the organizations which are swindling [N]egroes through the ex-slave pension scheme, although it is the principle mover in the matter.”60

While Dickerson objected to the consolidation of the Mutual Relief, Bounty and Pension Association and the National Industrial Council, he at least recognized that they had similar goals. At a 12 February 1903 meeting of the Mutual Relief, Bounty and Pension Association in Washington, DC, NIC president S. P. Mitchell addressed the combined membership of the two organizations, and even had a resolution introduced into the record.61 Many black ministers, such as those gathered at the 1903 Philadelphia and Baltimore Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, as well as educated elites such as Booker T. Washington, J. Mercer Langston, and Henry P. Cheatham were publicly against the efforts of the ex-slave pension organizations, in part because of the case made against them for fraud.62

The legitimacy of Mitchell and Dickerson’s organizations is certainly an unanswered question; clearly the federal government’s view was that they were mere confidence schemes. Mitchell himself would travel and give lectures warning of fraudulent agents who might be traveling the South and soliciting funds for the ex-slave pension movement. For example, Mitchell traveled to a black church in Norfolk, Virginia, in 1903 to address a convention for formerly enslaved African Americans and warned them not to give money to anyone soliciting funds, but Mitchell was ordered out of the meeting, his protests falling on deaf ears.63 In reality, the black church officials often sent mixed messages, warning of the fraudulent aspects of the ex-slave pension movements, while at times serving as a means to legitimize their cause. For example, Isaac Walton was occasionally described as a “reverend,” and agents traveling from town to town at times claimed to be “ministers,” using cooperating local churches as meeting places for
recruiting for the pension movement. Although Senator Mark Hanna introduced the ex-slave pension bill into committee in the Senate in 1903, this was done “by request,” meaning that he did not personally advocate its content or passage. Similarly, in 1903 Congressman Spencer Blackburn introduced in the House of Representatives an essentially identical bill at the request of Walter Vaughan.

In the summer of 1903 when news of agents traveling from town to town in the South, collecting fees and representing themselves as working directly for Senator Hanna got back to him, he issued the following statement through his executive secretary:

 Senator Hanna has authorized no one to collect money to aid in securing the passage of this measure, and any efforts being made along that line with the representation that it is done with his sanction are fraudulent. Senator Hanna introduced the bill by request, and on finding that the Senate committee had reported unfavorably on a similar measure in 1900, he withdrew the bill. It is not at all probable that favorable action could be secured on such a measure in the future.

With increased surveillance by federal authorities of anyone associated with ex-slave pension organizations, the renewed scrutiny was bound to fall on the leadership of the National Industrial Council. The first recorded cry of fraud against the group came from E. E. Cage, a prominent African American leader in Claiborne County, Mississippi. On 8 June 1902, Cage accused the NIC, which had been organized in Jackson, Mississippi, a year before, of defrauding elderly black men and women. The authorities and the press targeted S. P. Mitchell (NIC president) on 13 August 1903. During a trip to Georgia and parts of Florida, Mitchell visited some twelve counties collecting funds for initiation fees and monthly dues. It was reported that Mitchell represented himself as working directly for Senator Hanna. Collecting some $6,000 before leaving, he was going to consult directly with Senator Hanna regarding the bill’s status. In the Atlanta Constitution a few days later, Mitchell was described (albeit inaccurately) as “a northern Negro named Mitchell.”

At a July 1903 meeting of the National Industrial Council in Memphis, Mitchell apparently gave a speech “advising members of his race not to seek office and denouncing the position taken by Negroes arousing the antagonism of the white people, and condemning northern interference with the Negro question in the [S]outh.” Mitchell later claimed many black leaders had condemned this July speech, and that the newspaper accounts coming out of Atlanta, accusing him of defrauding black workers in Georgia and Florida, were part of a “conspiracy concocted out of revenge.” Finally, Mitchell denied having been in Atlanta, or ever claiming to be working directly for Senator Hanna. It was possible (but highly unlikely) some imposter had been using his name in an attempt to obtain these funds illegally.
Whether or not someone had been impersonating Mitchell in Atlanta, we do have evidence that in early September 1903, Stanley Mitchell, in his capacity as NIC president, was personally overseeing and organizing a meeting in the town of Thomasville, Georgia, forty miles west of Valdosta. There were also reports that Mitchell had been in Georgia in August, organizing for the NIC, but he attempted to deny the claim.71

The NIC convention for the South Georgia district convened on 1 September 1903 in Thomasville, where Mitchell announced that the group nationally was now 646,000 strong, but again this figure is highly questionable. Expecting a receptive audience, Mitchell clearly did not realize that Thomasville, Georgia, was the winter home of Senator Mark Hanna. Local African Americans who had joined or contributed funds to the National Industrial Council, growing suspicious of its claims of affiliation with the Senator, wrote Hanna for confirmation. Hanna responded that no such collaboration existed, and anyone stating otherwise was acting fraudulently.72

When S. P. Mitchell arrived in Thomasville to address the regional NIC convention, he was indicted on felony counts of “swindling ex-slaves in this county by promising them pensions under the proposed Hanna bill.” The preliminary hearing was presided over by Justice of the Peace Marshall, who found sufficient evidence to have Mitchell bound over to the superior court under a $100 bond. His lawyer, Judge S. A. Rodenbury, claimed that Mitchell was innocent and the victim of a large-scale conspiracy organized by the Republican Party and its press.

[I]n order to stop Mitchell, some of the leaders had communicated with leading [N]egroes of this county . . . to swear out the warrants. While he was innocent of any design . . . the fact revealed that an unseen hand was behind the movement; the Republicans were alarmed because this movement was so far reaching. They saw that the [D]emocrats were ready to push the pension bill and fearing the loss of power among the Negroes they had decided to throttle Mitchell, the promoter of the scheme.73

At this hearing Mitchell declared to a packed courthouse that he was glad to have been charged with fraud since it gave him the opportunity to “show his hand.”74 Stanley Mitchell’s fraud trial convened on 7 September 1903, in Thomasville, and was over by day’s end with Mitchell found innocent on all counts. Accused of defrauding African Americans by soliciting funds for the ex-slave pension and further claiming to be an agent working directly for Senator Hanna, Mitchell declared himself an innocent man, swearing that “he was opposed to Hanna and Roosevelt. ‘Why,’ said Mitchell, ‘I made a speech denouncing Roosevelt for appointing Dr. [William D.] Crum’ [as Interim Collector of Customs]. A copy of the speech was tendered to a Judge Culpepper, who read it with evident approval, and then said: ‘In view of this speech and the contradictory evidence, the defendant is dismissed.’”75
Meanwhile, others accused of swindling elderly black men and women were not so lucky. For example, Sidney B. Webb was convicted in federal courts in November 1903 of perpetrating a fraud involving formerly enslaved African Americans living in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina. Mitchell’s amazingly quick indictment and dismissal was his first major brush with the law in the matter of ex-slave pensions, but it was not the organization’s last. That same September back in the District of Columbia, the Assistant U.S. Postmaster General, Charles Henry Robb, launched hearings to determine whether or not a charge of mail fraud should be introduced against the National Industrial Council and its leaders. It is uncertain if Mitchell himself was in attendance at this hearing on 23 September 1903, but their attorney W. Calvin Chase represented the National Industrial Council. A newspaper editor and publisher of the *Washington Bee*, Chase was also a leading member of the District’s branch of the National Suffrage League. The NIC officers listed in the *Washington Post* were “S. P. Mitchell, Washington, D.C. and Memphis, Tenn., president; I. L. Walton, Little Rock, superintending secretary; and Smith Framton, Charleston, S.C., treasurer.”

Likely in response to these attacks, a lengthy statement from S. P. Mitchell was printed in the 12 October 1903, issue of the *Washington Post*, given here in its entirety:

> While suffrage today is the hope of the Negro race, all of these indignation meetings by the Northern Negro [are] dangerous. Here in the city of Washington the Negroes discriminate amongst themselves more than whites South do between the races. One only needs to get a desk and an empty room and call it an “office,” and he won’t speak to the Negro who uses his muscles to sustain life. The whites are better friends to the Negroes than many of the so-called Negro professionals and agitators. As a race, the Negro is of no service to any political party. I think the Democrats are right in putting a qualification on the Negro’s suffrage. I hope Maryland will do the same in order that the political manipulator may not prey upon the Negro work man. I am a strong advocate of all feasible legislation enacted by the South to destroy the power of Negro manipulators.

This statement and those Mitchell made at trial were directly tied to a struggle for leadership between elements of the ex-slave pension movement (and especially the NIC) and the National Afro-American Council, the black leadership group organized in Rochester, New York in 1898. Timothy Thomas Fortune, the New York journalist, and founder of the National Afro-American League in 1891, reluctantly launched its successor, the National Afro-American Council, but for most of its life it was led by Bishop Alexander Walters, a leader in the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. Ida Wells-Barnett, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Rev. Reverdy Ransom were among the council’s elite members who denounced lynching and mob violence and criticized national Republican leaders for their failure to protect the lives and property of African American citizens and their civil rights.
The National Industrial Council and National Liberty Party, 1901–1907

The same week in January 1903 that S. P. Mitchell met with President Roosevelt, Mitchell also met with representatives of the Afro-American Council. When Mitchell left the White House, the press described his ire, including a threat to “bolt from the Republican Party . . . unless the bill is passed. . . . There are enough [N]egroes enlisted in the scheme to make trouble politically if any effort is seriously made to direct their attention in that direction.”

The relationship between the National Afro-American Council and the ex-slave pension group was at least publicly adversarial, with each vying for recognition and support among African Americans. In contrast to Mitchell and the NIC, the Afro-American Council actively lobbied for deserving black candidates to gain federal civil service jobs, and pushed for President Roosevelt’s appointment of Dr. Crum to the post of U.S. Custom Collector in Charleston, South Carolina, despite stiff opposition from southern Democrats in the Congress. By speaking out against Crum’s appointment, S. P. Mitchell was certainly challenging the more mainstream Afro-American Council, setting a tone contrary to the Republican-leaning group, and perhaps courting potential allies within the ranks of the southern Democrats.

By the fall of 1903 Mitchell and other NIC leaders were likely anxious to establish some measure of legitimacy, since they had been publicly labeled as “fraudulent” by federal authorities. On 31 October 1903, it was reported that “a fraud order has been issued by the post office department against the National Industrial Council and its secretary and treasurer Isaac L. Walton, of Washington, and Little Rock, Ark., and Smith F. Rampton [sic], of Charleston, S.C.” Interestingly, Stanley Mitchell himself was not personally named in this fraud order. At the same time, however, the National Industrial Council began moving out of the shadows of ex-slave pension lobbying with vague statements and somewhat controversial political positions, in a calculated and very public attempt at political legitimacy.

THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF 1904

Perhaps the most remarkable story of all to come out of the ex-slave pension movement occurred in the presidential election year of 1904, when these nascent black political movements offered up not one, but two African American men as candidates for President of the United States. Very little is known of these efforts, but at least a bare outline of key events can be established. Walter Vaughan, the white politician who issued the call for ex-slave pensions in this country, had one final means to make his case and that of the movement relevant, by establishing a new political party called the “Lincoln Republican Party,” which formed out of the earlier “Vaughan’s Justice Party,” with I. L. Walton and S. P. Mitchell’s help in the spring of 1902. In February 1904, the Lincoln Republican Party announced: “A call has
been issued for a national nominating convention of the Lincoln Republican Party to be held in St. Louis on July 25. The call invited the attendance of all persons, white and colored.86 Among the planks in the Lincoln Party’s platform was “pensioning the ex-slaves; paying for property of southerners confiscated during the Civil War; a national ex-slave school fund; increased wages for mail carriers, and union labor.” The national candidates for the Lincoln Party were both African American, with E. P. Penn of West Virginia, running for president on the ticket; and John J. Jones of Illinois, serving as his vice presidential running mate.87

While S. P. Mitchell and other NIC leaders had announced the formation of a new political party, the National Liberty Party (formerly the Civil Liberty Party), in their national meetings in Washington, DC, in January 1903, little else was heard from the party’s organizers until the end of March 1904. William T. Scott, an African American lawyer from East St. Louis, revealed that preliminary plans were being undertaken in St. Louis for the “National Civil Liberty Party” to hold a national convention beginning 6 July 1904 to select an African American candidate for President; the city and date corresponded with the meetings of the Democratic National Convention. Scott estimated that some 2,000 delegates from all states would be in attendance. Although the party’s platform had not been voted on, Scott announced that it would include “government ownership of transportation facilities and pensions for ex-slaves.” Again, Stanley P. Mitchell was listed as party president, and Isaac Walton as party secretary.88 By May 1904, the executive committee of the “National Liberty Party” revealed arrangements in St. Louis for the party’s 6 July presidential convention.89

The convention was held and initially the Liberty Party delegates agreed not to field a candidate for President of the United States, but to instead endorse the Republican Party ticket of Theodore Roosevelt and Charles Fairbanks. They soon rescinded this statement, and decided instead to put forward presidential and vice presidential candidates; on 7 July 1904, the Liberty Party nominated East St. Louis attorney William T. Scott for president; and W. C. Payne of Warrenton, Virginia, for the office of vice president.90

The party’s presidential candidate, William Scott, who was instrumental in planning the convention, did not hold that honor for long. Charges were made that he had been convicted of “keeping a disorderly house” and had been sentenced to serve twenty days in jail for failure to pay a fine. The Liberty Party’s executive committee moved quickly and replaced Scott on the ticket with George Edwin Taylor of Ottumwa, Alabama; W. C. Payne would continue to serve as the Liberty Party’s vice-presidential candidate.91 On 15 September 1904 Taylor sent his letter of acceptance of the nomination, noting that he was motivated in doing so because, in his opinion, both the Republican and Democratic parties had betrayed the black electorate, and he saw this as a first step in solving the problem of “[N]egro disfranchise-
While in St. Louis attending the National Liberty Party’s convention, Taylor also served as delegate to the meetings of the Negro National Democratic League, one of the two groups of black Democratic politicians active in the early 1900s. The National Democratic League and the National Colored Democratic Association were made up of black politicians tied to Democratic political machines, largely in urban areas, and they received patronage positions and appointments for bringing out the black vote for Democratic candidates. George Edwin Taylor had been elected chairman of Negro Democratic League’s advisory council.

The Liberty Party’s vice presidential candidate, W. C. Payne, according to one account, had been associated with the Naval Observatory in Washington, DC, for many years. In 1904 there were four major presidential candidates—Democrat Alton B. Parker, Socialist Eugene V. Debs, Prohibitionist Silas C. Swallow, and Teddy Roosevelt riding a wave of popularity as the “Trust Buster” trying to give both capitalists and workers a “Square Deal.” When interviewed, the Liberty Party’s candidate George Taylor admitted he had not a prayer of winning the presidency, but in July 1904 he told the Omaha World Herald, “I don’t suppose I’ll reign in the White House, but I reckon I’ll have about as much to say concerning the government of this country as several other candidates.”

Personal insight into the workings of the Liberty Party in 1904 was provided by the presidential candidate in an article published in The Independent, the progressive weekly magazine published in Boston. The editors had solicited statements and essays from the various minor political parties, including the National Liberty Party, and Taylor eloquently argued the necessity of the party given the participation of both the Democratic and Republican parties in the disenfranchisement of over two million citizens in the southern states, almost all African American. By 1902 the last African Americans to be elected to the U.S. Congress and other political offices were leaving and the effectiveness of white southerners’ disfranchisement practices had become clearly apparent. Taylor also sketched out the National Liberty Party’s history.

It is the direct outgrowth of the Civil and Personal Liberty Leagues, which for years have thrived among the [N]egroes of the South and portions of the East. Through efforts of Stanley P. Mitchell (the head of the Liberty Leagues), of Memphis, Tenn., and his associates, the first National Convention of the National Liberty Party was held in the Auditorium of the Douglas Hotel, in the City of St. Louis, on the 5th and 6th of July last, when a permanent and complete organization of the party was effected. Thirty-six states were represented in the convention.

Despite the lofty language, Taylor was clearly a realist and admitted that it was their intent to have their candidates placed on the ballot in “several states,” but only where there was a significant black population; and states where African Americans still had the ballot—Kansas, Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Tennessee, Iowa, and Texas. Taylor estimated that in these locations
the party’s candidates should enjoy at least 60 percent of the black vote, as well as an unknown percentage of white independents. Beyond the immediate presidential election, the party’s long-term goal was to run black Congressional candidates in areas with enough black voters for a potential success. Interestingly, although Taylor failed to mention the National Liberty Party’s origins in the ex-slave pension movement, he did state unequivocally that the Liberty Party supported pensions for formerly enslaved workers and the “Hanna bill.”

In the 3 November 1904 issue of *The Christian Advocate*, published in New York City by the Methodist Episcopal Church, the National Liberty Party was described, giving us some information about how this new black political party was viewed in the national religious press:

The latest party to enter the field is known as the National Liberty Party. It consists of persons of African descent who declare that both parties are endeavoring to rob the colored races of [their] rights. The candidate is George E. Taylor of Ottumwa, [AL]. While the party has views upon all questions, it charges the Republican Party and the Democratic Party with being substantially the same in aiding and abetting the disfranchising of Negro voters in six States.

Despite the hopes that the nascent National Liberty Party, or even Vaughan’s Lincoln Party, may have generated in that election year of 1904, the historical reality was that neither party made it onto the ballot in any state. In a 1 November 1904 article summing up the presidential election, the *Washington Post* reported that “the two [N]egro parties . . . apparently ended their work when the national conventions adjourned, as no electors have been selected, or at least none will appear on any official ballot.” In the presidential election of 1904, Theodore Roosevelt was elected receiving 57 percent of the vote, and 336 electoral votes, to Alton Parker’s 140. There were only 399 votes counted for various write-in candidates throughout the country.

On election eve, on 7 November 1904, George Taylor spent the evening in a small office above a saloon on 6th Avenue in New York City’s Tenderloin district. According to an account by a reporter from the New York *Sun*, after the election when asked several questions about the campaign, Taylor offered real insights into the future of black political power in the nation. He recognized that his presidential nomination was considered a farce by many whites.

Yes, I know most white folks take me as a joke. Frequently when I was introduced as one of the Presidential candidates, I saw people pass the wink around. They didn’t think I saw it, but I want to tell you the colored man is beginning to see a lot of things that the white folks do not give him credit for seeing. He’s beginning to see that he has got to take care of his own interests, and what’s more, that he has the power to do it.
Looking to the future with cautious optimism, Taylor noted that “we may not have done much this election, but the party is only in its infancy. At the election next year we expect to run a number of candidates for local offices throughout the country.”102 Two weeks after the election, the *Washington Times* reported on Taylor’s historic distinction of being the first African American nominated for the presidency by a national party and asked about the group’s future plans. The Liberty Party needed more funding if it was to be effective, but Taylor indicated he was already planning another run in 1908, and would raise funds “through clubs which [were] already being organized.”103

Although the Liberty Party failed to survive the 1904 presidential election, perhaps due to its roots in the dubious National Industrial Council, George Taylor continued to work within the social and political movements available to him, including Booker T. Washington’s National Negro Business League founded in 1901. He considered Washington’s overall plan of economic advancement only a partial solution to the plight of African Americans and believed that political engagement was also needed. Taylor was a high-ranking member of the league, and at the national gathering in November 1905 in Richmond, Virginia, he was appointed the convention’s official reporter.104

George Taylor remained active in politics throughout the remainder of his life, but a viable black national political party was not to be. The story of the National Liberty Party, or even Vaughan’s Lincoln Party, was little remembered by the 1930s when a detailed history of African Americans in politics was published; that work failed to mention these two parties and the larger political movement to obtain federal legislation to grant pensions to formerly enslaved men and women.105

References to George Taylor of the Liberty Party, or E. P. Penn of Vaughan’s Lincoln Party as the first African American candidates for President of the United States are rare in the literature on U.S. presidential campaigns.106 Bruce L. Mouser’s biographical portrait of George Taylor in the *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History* provides the most detailed information.107 While there have been references to the Liberty Party, Vaughan’s Lincoln Party and its black candidates, E. P. Penn and John J. Jones, have been left out of the historical accounts.108

In 1905 there were still some ex-slave pension groups in operation, holding meetings, recruiting members, and lobbying Congress. In the newspapers consulted for this study, however, the National Industrial Council is absent, except for the organizational meeting held in Dallas in 1905. Their rival—the Mutual Relief, Bounty and Pension Association—did meet in Washington, DC, in June 1905. Simultaneously, federal authorities pursued fraud charges against its leaders such as Butler Harris.109

It seems that by this time the National Industrial Council was decentralizing or even fragmenting, perhaps as a calculated last-ditch survival strategy. In the
aftermath of the 1904 election, the group’s only appearance in the Dallas press in 1905 was a notice of an attempt to organize there. “The organization heretofore has been altogether national in character, and it is the purpose of the present meeting to effect the organization of a state lodge” in Texas.\(^{110}\)

Events in 1906 also help to explain the National Industrial Council’s abrupt demise. Isaac Walton, longtime officer of the group, had by this time relocated to Savannah, Georgia. After being investigated yet again by postal authorities, Walton was once again denied use of the federal mail. Described as having the aliases “Rev. Isaac Walton, alias Rev. X. I. L. Walton, alias I. L. Walton,” and two addresses in the city of Savannah, “68 Bolton Street east and No. 507 Montgomery Street,” Walton was accused of calling conventions at which he never appeared, and of raising funds for the organization but using them for personal benefit.\(^{111}\)

The organization was described as having used various names, the latest being the “Independent Order of the National Industrial Council of America, Fraternal.” Moreover, at this time Walton was listed as the head of the organization; the absence of S. P. Mitchell’s name is unexplained based on these sources. But we also gain some insight into ongoing investigations of Walton’s actions from his having been warned by the U.S. Postal Department in December 1905 to cease further affiliation with the NIC, or any other ex-slave pension group, which he agreed to do, but later broke his word.\(^{112}\)

There may have been echoes of the group in a meeting of the “Grand Council of the National Industrial Association of America,” which held a meeting in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, on 19 January 1907, but no direct link has been established.\(^{113}\) Rather, among the sources consulted, the March 1906 account in the Washington Post offers the last clear reference to the National Industrial Council with the names of the officers.\(^{114}\) Unlike the Mutual Relief, Bounty and Pension Association, which continued in some capacity into the 1920s, there are few traces of the National Industrial Council in black or white newspapers after 1906.\(^{115}\) Tellingly, by the spring of 1907 in the popular press, the NIC was already being referred to in the past tense.\(^{116}\)

**CONCLUSION**

As noted at the plenary session held at the 2005 Association for the Study of African American Culture and History convention and the essays published subsequently in *The Journal of African American History* (Summer 2006), the virtual absence of the ex-slave pension movements from scholarly works or popular memory was almost total until the 2005 publication of Mary Frances Berry’s *My Face Is Black Is True: Callie House and the Struggle for Ex-Slave Reparations*. In addition, the National Industrial Council, the National Liberty Party, and these early campaigns by black men who ran for President of the United States in 1904 have also
been overlooked. The legacy of the political power engendered by the ex-slave pension movements is difficult to assess, since so much they sought to obtain met with roadblocks and failure. The formation of an independent black political party, however briefly, likely caused concern among the ranks of white Republicans, since many of the Liberty Party’s leaders were former Democrats. S. P. Mitchell, I. L. Walton, George Taylor, and the supporters of the National Industrial Council came agonizingly close to the creation of a viable power base among black voters, at a time when Republican Senator John Coit Spooner and others were actively courting the black vote in an attempt to forestall mass defections.

This historical account began by accident, with the widening of a Texas highway forcing a cemetery excavation in downtown Dallas. The man exhumed from Burial 303, wearing that pot metal badge, experienced slavery and emancipation and the first hopes and promises of Reconstruction, before enduring the harsher realities of Jim Crow segregation and racial violence. He was a witness to history, but also an active participant in a national black political movement aimed at providing for those who were paid nothing for their labor and sought reparations in the form of pensions from the federal government in their old age.

NOTES


The Journal of African American History


7Condon et al., Freedman’s Cemetery: Site 41DL316, Dallas, Texas, Assessments of Sex, Age at Death, Stature and Date of Interment, Davidson, Freedman’s Cemetery (1869–1907): A Chronological Reconstruction of an Excavated African-American Burial Ground, Dallas, Texas.

8Irons and Russell, Illustrated Catalogue of Solid Gold and Rolled Gold Plate Society Emblems, Pins, Buttons and Charms (Providence, RI, 1906), 17, 19; Victoria Owens, “Personal, Clothing, and Miscellaneous Items Associated with Excavated Burials,” in Freedman’s Cemetery: A Legacy of a Pioneer Black Community in Dallas, Texas, ed. Duane E. Peter, Marsha Prior, Melissa M. Green, and Victoria G. Clow (Austin, TX, 2000), 409–47.


11This claim of a 75,000 membership, along with later and greater membership claims, must be viewed cautiously, as they are always self-reported by council leaders who would benefit by an inflated membership roll and are not confirmed by other independent sources.


13What spurred their efforts was Ohio Senator Mark Hanna’s bill which argued for a federal pension as compensation for those formerly enslaved; “Ex-Slaves are Being Organized in Dallas,” Dallas Times Herald, 9 October 1903.


19Relying primarily on historic newspapers to outline its history and to better understand its context within the greater web of organizations and trends of the early 20th century, three digital archives were consulted. First, the Library of Congress has 140 digitized newspapers from all across the country spanning 1880 to 1922; second, the ProQuest Historic Newspapers database (containing seven historic newspapers); finally, the historic newspaper database on the website www.genealogy.com, which contains some 2,851 newspapers, most (though not all) of which were published during the period pertinent to this study (i.e., 1890–1920).

Within these sources, key newspapers included the Washington, DC-based African American newspapers the
Colored American and the Washington Bee. Other key sources included the Atlanta Constitution, the New York Times, the Washington Post, and the Chicago Daily Tribune. All of these sources were searched using a series of key words within an electronic database.


23Berry, My Face Is Black Is True, 37.

24Pensioning the Ex-Slaves,” Chicago Tribune, 12 August 1891.


26Berry, My Face Is Black Is True, 46.

27Ibid., 44–45, 51, 59.


30Berry, My Face Is Black Is True, 94.


32Will Go to Washington” (Lexington, KY) Morning Herald, 26 December 1900.

33Negro Industrial Convention” Washington Post, 13 July 1901; “Current Comment in Mississippi” (New Orleans) Times Picayune, 13 July 1901.

34Ex-Slaves Hold Meeting Here,” Dallas Times Herald, 16 December 1905.


36After the Swindlers,” Atlanta Constitution, 12 August 1899.

37Ex-Slave Pension Fraud,” Washington Post, 12 August 1899.

38Frauds Are Refused the Mails,” Atlanta Constitution, 19 October 1901.


42Mr. Shaw at Cabinet Meeting,” Washington Post, 5 February 1902.


49An essentially identical crescent moon and star badge to that found in Dallas was also recovered from an early 20th-century African American graveyard in Memphis, Tennessee. Subjected to archaeological investigation in 2003, the Providence Baptist Church Cemetery is located in Memphis. Burial 50 contained the remains of a woman approxi-
mately 40 to 50 years of age at the time of death, interred between 1899 and 1915. The woman in Burial 50 likely was born in the 1850s and almost certainly experienced slavery. The badge’s identical design to the one recovered in Dallas, and its inscription referencing the National Industrial Council, along with its dating, would place its acquisition within the time that the National Industrial Council was founded and viable. Memphis was for a time the home and seat of power of Stanley Mitchell, long-time president of the organization, and it is likely that many black citizens of Memphis claimed membership; see Warren J. Oster, Guy G. Weaver, Jamison P. Richardson, and Jason M. Wyatt, *Archaeological and Osteological Investigations of the Providence Baptist Church Cemetery (40SY619), Memphis-Shelby County Airport, Memphis, Shelby County, Tennessee,* (Memphis, TN, 2005), 133–35, 224–25.


55Ibid.


59On 7 February 1903, in Montgomery, Alabama, H. F. Crosby was arrested on the charges of obtaining funds under false pretenses by selling certificates for the Mutual Relief, Bounty and Pension Association, while a Mr. A. B. Webb was arrested in Richmond, Virginia, on similar charges: “Warned Ex-Slaves,” *Washington Post,* 12 June 1903; “Negro Agent Is Arrested,” *Washington Post,* 8 February 1903.

60“Negroes Favor Mr. Hanna,” *New York Times,* 7 February 1903.


70Ibid.


73Ibid.

74Ibid.
76"Pension Swindler Convicted,” Washington Post, 5 November 1903.
78"Negro Politicians,” Washington Post, 12 October 1903.
80"President and Ex-Slaves,” Washington Post, 15 January 1903.
86"Lincoln Party Call Issued,” Chicago Tribune, 12 February 1904.
91George Edwin Taylor was born in Little Rock, Arkansas, on 4 August 1857, to Bryant (Nathan) Taylor and Amanda Hines, and was one of the youngest of the couple’s twelve children. At the time of his birth, his father was a slave, but his mother was a free person of color. Due to the passage of Arkansas’s Free Negro Expulsion Act in 1859, in 1860 Amanda Hines was forced to leave the state for Alton, Illinois, taking her son George with her. By 1861 or 1862, Taylor’s mother had perished from tuberculosis and George was forced to live on the streets until 1865, when he was taken to La Crosse, Wisconsin. When George was 19 (in 1876) he attended Wayland Academy in Beaver Dam, Wisconsin, obtaining an advanced education including immersion in the classics, graduating in 1880. It was in this year that Taylor embarked on his primary occupation—that of a newspaperman—serving in various capacities over the years, including typesetter, reporter, editor, and owner, first with the Wisconsin Labor Advocate, and after his move in 1891 to Oskaloosa, Iowa, the Negro Solicitor. Bruce L. Mouser, “George Edwin Taylor (1857–1925),” The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture (website: http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entrydetail.aspx?entryID=5892&type=Type&item=Person&parent=&grandparent=#); Bruce L. Mouser, “Black La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1850–1906: Settlers, Entrepreneurs, and Exodusers,” La Crosse County Historical Society Occasional Paper, No. 1, 2002.
94"Items of Interest,” The Colored American, 3 September 1904.
95"George E. Taylor Is a Presidential Nominee,” Omaha World Herald, 30 July 1904.
97Ibid.
98"How the People Have Dealt with Present Candidates on Former Occasions,” Christian Advocate, 3 November 1904.
100http://uselectionatlas.org/RESULTS/.
101"Negroes Seek Recognition,” New York Sun, 20 November 1904.
102Ibid.

Hanes Walton’s 1972 study of American black political parties does acknowledge the existence of both Taylor and the National Liberty Party, which although brief, is voluminous compared to other references; neither Taylor nor the Liberty Party are to be found in various encyclopedias or chronologies of black history, including Peter Bergman’s (1969) *The Chronological History of the Negro in America*, and Alton Hornsby, Jr.’s *Chronology of African-American History* (Detroit, MI, 1991). Surprisingly, Taylor and the Liberty Party are even absent in the recent A. Appiah and H. L. Gates edited volume, *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience* (New York, 1999).


*Say He Defrauded Negro Ex-Slaves,* *Atlanta Constitution*, 13 March 1906.


*Berry, My Face Is Black Is True,* 212.

*Swindling by Mail,* *New York Tribune*, 16 May 1907.


*Spooner for President,* *New York Times*, 10 March 1903.