

Paul Laurence Dunbar

Poet Extraordinaire

By now you have probably seen or heard about the #Dunbar150 celebration. There have been and will be many celebrations throughout Dayton commemorating and celebrating the 150th anniversary of the birth of Paul Laurence Dunbar.

Woodland is proud to have this native son of Dayton resting peacefully in our beautiful cemetery and arboretum.

Please join our friends at the Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park and the Paul Laurence Dunbar House in celebrating the first internationally recognized African American poet.

Below is an exact transcription of an article that appeared in the Sunday, Journal Herald newspaper on February 11, 1940.



The Sunday Journal-Herald Spotlight

Memory of Paul Laurence Dunbar Still Lives 34 Years After His Death

By Irving A. Williamson

On Friday, February 9, thirty-four years ago the nation mourned the passing of a native Daytonian who had fashioned these words:

“Because I had loved so deeply,
Because I had loved so long,
God in His great Compassion,
Gave me the gift of song.”

The man and poet was Paul Laurence Dunbar, and friends recalled with vividness his qualities of genius and their experiences with him during the last week.

Though many friends of the generation in which Dunbar lived have passed on, there still are many who knew him before and after he became famous.

One of Dunbar's friends, Paul Schivell of 131 Hudson avenue, who first met him at the Chicago World's Fair in 1892, recalls that the poet made friends easily.

Although Dunbar was seeking a job and audiences for reading his poetry, he was cheerful and full of wit Schivell comments.

A friend of Dunbar who began sharing experiences with the poet early and is full of stories of their joys and sorrows is Randolph Tams, retired fireman.

Was a Friend

Of him, Tams has said:

"He was my friend for I was closely associated with him in his young manhood. I knew much of his earlier ambitions, his deep privations, his ever determined efforts to succeed over seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Yet withal he was cheerful in a remarkable degree. How I enjoyed his hearty ringing laughter. And even after he had gone away and come back famous, I was glad to be known as one of his old friends.

Charles A. Funkhouser was a friend of Dunbar at Central high school. His father, the late G. A. Funkhouser, who delivered an eloquent oration at Dunbar's funeral, said the poet was a most democratic person, and could be at home with ease in any group.

Mr. Funkhouser remembered Dunbar frequently jotting down bits of verse and reciting them at Friday evening meetings of the Philomathean Literary society of which Dunbar was president one year.

Charles D. Higgins of 620 South Perry street enjoyed a friendship with Dunbar that began at a picnic when they were youths. Dunbar insisted on taking Higgins home to meet his mother and play. In later years Dunbar said to Higgins of Miss Jewella Galloway, "Charley you ought to meet her." At the time Dunbar didn't mean for Mr. Higgins to marry her - but he did.

Mr. and Mrs. Higgins both are splendid readers of the poet's work. Mr. Higgins was in charge of the Dunbar estate for 27 years.

Mrs. Mabel Deaton of Mead street recalls Dunbar as "a well-beloved person who always had something pleasant and witty to say, and on the other hand knew how to get things done."

A face that lights up with joy and interest when the name of Dunbar is mentioned, is that of Mrs. Donald A. Gillim, of 43 Leroy street. She probably has the best collection of pictures of Dunbar available anywhere. Failure of persons to return these choice pictures have cut down the number, however. Dunbar was her uncle and consequently she knows much of him and of his mother.

She thinks her uncle's most beautiful lines are:

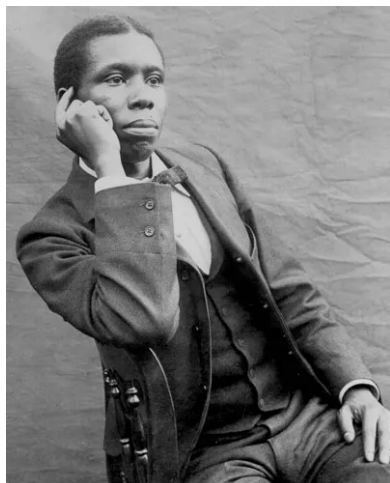
"An angel, robed in spotless white,
Bent down and kissed the sleeping night.
Night woke to blush; the sprite was gone,
Men saw the blush and called it dawn."

Mrs. Grace Stivers-Purvis emphasized that "Paul" was a gentleman of the nth degree, and declared that her family always delighted in the visits he made to their home.

Frederick Rike of the Rike-Kumler company knew Dunbar as a struggling young man and believes that the poet's reputation tells amply of his worth.

A number of Dunbar's poems were written in Mrs. Dora Rice's home before she became the bride of the late L. J. Rice. She is a first cousin of the poet. When Dunbar was at her home ill, Mrs. Rice, then Miss Dora Burton, would come to the door of his room and be greeted with "Howdy, honey, howdy, won't you step right in" which became a line of a poem he wrote at the Burton home.

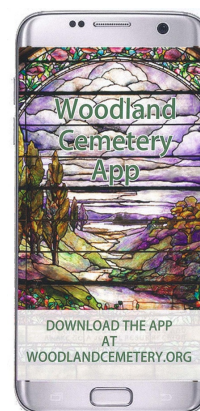
Ezra Kuhns, of the NCR speaks of his friendship with Dunbar as being an "interesting association." He and the poet were students at the intermediate school on Brown street, where the principal, Samuel Brown, recognized and encouraged the poetic young Dunbar. The fellowship with Dunbar continued through high school and until his death. Mr. Kuhns knows in detail many experiences of the poet and the quality of his poetry which he and his wife can recite.



Guided walking tours are now available and registration is open for all tours and events. Woodland does have many hills and valleys so if walking is not your thing, you can take a virtual tour from the comfort of your couch by visiting our website at: woodlandcemetery.org/tours.

From your phone you will be prompted to download our app. Take one of 12 walking tours we have available for your enjoyment at the cemetery. If you are on your desktop, laptop or tablet, you can take the tour right from the tour page. We will be adding more tours so come back often to learn about the men and women who made it Great in Dayton.

[Download the mobile app for your phone by clicking here.](#)



Memories of a loved one should last for generations.

Using our app, you can:

- Navigate to your relative or friend's grave using our GPS-based system
- Share stories about your family
- Upload photos and video
- Share memories with your family on Facebook

Your loved one's memorial page is automatically created when you make cemetery arrangements with our office. You may also share and upload information by using our burial database via our website (woodlandcemetery.org). (please contact our office if you need assistance)

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THANK YOU for supporting us through our 180th Anniversary!



We hope you will continue to support the Woodland Arboretum Foundation as we move through 2022. Support of the Chapel restoration and preservation project is our most critical need as you will soon see the outside of the Chapel and Administration Building receiving new sandstone pieces and eroding and disintegrating elements replaced. Once the stonework is complete, the beloved Tiffany windows will return and be put back in place. The Tiffany mosaic floor will be restored and the beautiful interior woodwork will also receive a facelift. We are hopeful to open the doors to the public once again in late 2022.

Please consider making a first time donation or an annual donation to the Chapel Fund. Donate on our secure website by clicking below or click on the check to receive a donation form to mail in.

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Total Donation to Woodland Cemetery and Arboretum

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