

# A SCHOOL FOR FREEDOM:

## MORRISTOWN COLLEGE AND FIVE GENERATIONS OF EDUCATION FOR BLACKS, 1868-1985

Edited by  
JoVita Wells



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(Cover Photograph) Morristown College Students c. 1900.

To the alumni and  
friends of Morristown College

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FIVE GENERATIONS  
OF EDUCATION FOR BLACKS, 1868-1985



COMMUNITY HISTORY SERIES  
EAST TENNESSEE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## Contents

Series Editors' Preface .....	ix
Introduction .....	xii
Chapter I    A School for Freedmen, 1868-1880 .....	1
Chapter II    The Judson S. Hill Years and After, 1881-1943 .....	6
Chapter III    The Miller W. Boyd Years, 1944-1952 .....	34
Chapter IV    The Challenges of Modern Education, 1952-1985 ..	44
Appendix I    Chronology of Events .....	55
Appendix II    Distinguished Alumni .....	57

## Series Editors' Preface

Founded in 1881 by Judson S. Hill, a Methodist minister from New Jersey, Morristown College (formerly Morristown Normal and Industrial College) has been a center of education for over 15,000 students in East Tennessee. Now one of only two historically black two-year institutions of higher education in Appalachia, the school stands today as a monument to a proud alumni, staff, and faculty, and the United Methodist Church, who for over a century worked to ensure the institution's survival in the face of adverse circumstance and recurrent hard times.

Despite its contributions to black education and its century-old history, Morristown College has received little scholarly attention. The standard histories of Tennessee and southern black education fail to mention the institution. Tucked away in an area where blacks comprise only three percent of the population, and possibly overshadowed by larger and better-known counterparts like Knoxville College and Fisk University in Nashville, Morristown College, nevertheless, has been an important institution in shaping the lives of five generations of black Americans. Morristown College still works hard to continue its unique tradition, and its neat, clean campus, which was recently placed on the National Register of Historic Sites, its optimistic staff, faculty, and student body, as well as its proud alumni and distinguished heritage, bode well for the school's future.

This book tells the story of Morristown College during Reconstruction, war, peace, the rise of Jim Crow, the Great Depression, and the Civil Rights movement. Although the written records of Morristown College are incomplete, the photographic record—stretching from the Judson Hill days until the present—is unusually rich. The accompanying images are only a small portion of the large body of photographs depicting life at

Morristown College, now housed in the school's archives. Ultimately, however, the college's story is told best by its former students and teachers, a story that chronicles the life of an institution and the experiences of its people as both attempted to adjust to the monumental changes of the past century. Thus *A School for Freedom: Morristown College and Five Generations of Education for Blacks, 1868-1985* is the result of a unique community history project sponsored by the East Tennessee Historical Society with funds provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

During the fall of 1983, ETHS received a major grant from the Endowment to implement an innovative local history project in ten East Tennessee counties stretching from the Georgia border to the Virginia line. Members of the ETHS staff trained approximately twenty-five volunteers in each county, stressing the proper methods of "doing history." Volunteers in each county subsequently went "into the field" for a year-long research endeavor examining topics that dealt with a specific period of their community's local history, including the Civil War, the Twenties, and the homefront during World War II. The Morristown College study group decided to examine the institution's entire history rather than a particular period because no comprehensive study of the school had been published. Working in teams, these amateur historians spent months of research looking through newspaper files, official college records, manuscripts, conducting oral interviews, and collecting and selecting photographs. This volume, written and edited by selected volunteers, is the result of their efforts.

Several individuals and institutions deserve a special word of appreciation. From our own staff at ETHS, Jim Moffitt once again served as a skillful editor; and Mattie Dunlap made herself an indispensable part of the community history program, contributing her excellent administrative and secretarial skills. The National Endowment for the Humanities provided the funding for this project, and without its support this volume would not have been written. Program officers James Early and Malcolm Richardson were particularly helpful and offered invaluable advice. The staff of the McClung Historical Collection once again made available information that helped researchers tell the Morristown College story. Moreover, the administration of Morristown College was fully supportive of the project and members of the institution's staff devoted their time and energy to the endeavor. The key to the success of a project of this nature is local leadership, and JoVita Wells, despite holding down a full-time job as Director of Development at Morristown College, worked

tirelessly as the local group director. Her hard work and determination made this book possible.

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## Introduction

As members of the Morristown College family, a rich and enduring heritage lives within us all. Whether we realize it or not, the desire to reach and surpass the achievements of each preceding generation of faculty, staff, and students (now numbering over 15,000) has given us incentive to work hard, overcome obstacles, and reach our goals. This volume is dedicated to the members of the Morristown College family, past, present, and future, who have sought and continue to seek to better themselves and those around them.

The history of Morristown College is a story of five generations of challenge. Almira Stearns and Judson S. Hill were confronted by the difficulties of educating newly freed slaves in a one-room school, surrounded initially by an unsupportive and often hostile community. Taunts and threats were a part of their daily lives and those of the hundreds of freedmen who found their way to the school. Yet these early pioneers of black education in Appalachia struggled and eventually succeeded. Sacrifice and commitment were reflected in Andrew Fulton's life's work, a former slave who became a teacher and devoted almost a half-century to the school and its pupils. Through two World Wars, the Great Depression, and the years of the Civil Rights movement—ironically characterized by the same bitterness and suspicion that troubled Stearns and Hill during Reconstruction—the college's faculty, staff, and students have met these challenges. *A School For Freedom: Morristown College and Five Generations of Education for Blacks, 1868-1985* is a chronicle of their efforts and achievements and a salute to their faith, which endured despite economic hard times and human frailty.

This project was sponsored by the East Tennessee Historical Society and funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities,

for which we are grateful. Local volunteers spent over a year examining local records, conducting oral interviews, and writing their chapters; all of them have been touched by the college and have worked out of a sense of love and dedication. Their efforts are deeply appreciated.

Special acknowledgment to Dr. Charles F. Bryan, Jr. and Dr. Mark V. Wetherington for selecting Morristown College for inclusion in this innovative study of East Tennessee history and for their invaluable assistance, guidance, and friendship. Samuel Richardson, librarian at Morristown college, who maintains the historical record of the college, was most helpful and without his help this project could not have been completed. Joan Lee Treece provided invaluable assistance in typing and word processing the drafts.

I also would like to acknowledge the valuable assistance of the following Hamblen Countians, who shared their time, memories, and photographs, and who conducted research and writing as well: Pauline Cardwell, Annie Chestnut, Fannie Donaldson, Betty Jean Gray, Willie V. Irvin, Barbara Mason, Henry Mason, James Nichols, Clara Osborne, Sandra Richardson, Bea Summers, and Bernice Taylor.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge Christopher Wells Bradshaw, my son and inspiration, and all other children whom I hope will receive this historical account with pride and use it as a source of knowledge about an institution that has affected all our lives.

JoVita Wells  
County Project Director

# ◆ 1 ◆

## A School For Freedmen, 1868-1880

Although officially founded in 1881, the seed for Morristown College was planted during the bitter and chaotic years of Reconstruction, when Tennesseans began to breathe new life into educational institutions that had been disrupted during the Civil War. The freedmen of the Morristown district of Jefferson County—from which Hamblen was partially created in 1870—were no exception. By the fall of 1868, they had established at Morristown a small grammar school which attracted students from their community and from other parts of the state and the South.

We know little about the early years of this freedmen's school. One of its first teachers was a black instructor who, during September, 1868, helped thirty-three pupils learn to spell and read. A Sunday School boasting fifty members also was established and operated in conjunction with classes, since early leaders had determined that the institution's "first object" was "the recognition of God in the elevation of mankind." The small school, housed in a building that had served as a slave mart, church, and hospital for both Union and Confederate armies, was popular and enrollment increased. In January, 1868, the number of students had grown to sixty-two, led by a Mrs. Hanford from Ithaca, New York. The pupils were black, including three who were free persons of color before the war, and the curriculum had been broadened to include arithmetic. In 1869 Mrs. Hanford was replaced by Mrs. Almira H. Stearns, a native of Plainfield, Vermont, who had lost both her husband and a son during the war.

White reaction to the establishment of the school was mixed and occasionally violent. Teachers and students were threatened with indignities. During Mrs. Hanford's brief tenure the school building was set afire but extinguished by a white neighbor. As taunts and threats mounted,





Bible she returned to her homemaking. Dick Bewly, fondly called "Uncle Dick," was a devout Christian who attended the school at age 100.

Although early teachers faced verbal abuse and ostracism—Stearns' own daughter was once the target of pieces of bread and cheese thrown at her while she walked down a street—there were rewards. One new teacher, upon approaching the schoolhouse, heard a song ringing from the windows and doors:

Good news, good news, that the Pil-i-grim brought,  
That the Father and the Lover are a-comin',  
That the lovin' Father is a-comin' in the mornin'  
To take-a them chilren all home.

One man, who came from South Carolina to work in a Morristown hotel, attended the school and rapidly worked his way through the first three readers. One day he explained to his teacher how he first came to realize that he could read on his own:

I burn my lamp all the nights, studied as long as I could see with these two eyes, then went to sleep a few minutes at a time, and then studied more. Last night I picked up a paper and could read it. Well, sir, I yelled and hollered and screamed 'till the folks came running to see me, and I yelled some more yet. Then they said: "What's the matter here?" "Gentlemen," I said, "I can read! I can read! I can read!" Then they got mad and threw me out the window.

Northern born, white teachers like Stearns took the travails of Reconstruction in stride. Considering themselves missionaries in a strange land, they relied upon their faith to see them through. Almira Stearns liked to quote the Psalmist: "In my distress I cried unto the Lord and he heard me."

In 1880, the Holston Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church voted to separate black and white preachers in the conference and form a separate conference for Negroes. This decision had a far-reaching impact upon the education of black East Tennesseans. When it soon was discovered that there were not enough black preachers to complete the required quota for the formation of a separate, black conference, five white men volunteered to join the conference, thereby solving the dilemma. Among the volunteers was Rev. W. C. Graves, presiding elder of the Morristown District. Graves believed that there was a critical need for a school providing education for blacks, and especially would-be teachers, beyond the primary grades, and he eventually found a suitable location—the Morristown freedmens' school. He negotiated for its purchase, and Henry W. Warren, elected Bishop by the M.E. Church in 1880, also



*In this dim photograph, Judson Hill and his faculty in the 1880's pose in front of the structure that has served as a church, slave mart, Civil War hospital, and Morristown College's first building.*

backed the movement and provided \$500 toward the establishment of Morristown Seminary.

The early center of the campus was, of course, the old slave mart, often referred to as Reagan High School for Boys, in honor of John Reagan, a prominent Morristown attorney. The structure, ironically the last meeting place for secession discussions at Morristown, soon proved inadequate to house the growing number of students. In October, 1881, Dr. Judson S. Hill was asked by the bishop of the Holston Conference of the United Methodist Church to turn the school began by Stearns and others into a full-fledged seminary and normal school designed to supply teachers and ministers to black communities in East Tennessee.

In less than two months there were more than 100 students on the campus, arriving not only from Morristown, but from counties scattered up and down the Great Valley. Many walked for miles to school bringing lunches of fat pork and cornbread and stayed for the entire school day, from eight o'clock in the morning until five o'clock in the afternoon. In calling for the establishment of a teachers' college and in making its selection for the school's first president, Judson Hill, the church made an astute move that would affect black higher education in East Tennessee for generations to come.

## 2

### The Judson S. Hill Years and After, 1881-1943

Judson S. Hill, a twenty-seven-year-old native of Trenton, New Jersey, had followed an urge to do missionary work in the South after his college training at Madison University (now Colgate) and Crozier Theological Seminary. Appointed pastor of the First Methodist Church of Chattanooga in the late 1870's, Hill not only ministered to his own congregation, but also to several black pastors of various denominations, most of whom were illiterate. He began a school for them in the basement of an old church, teaching reading, writing, and homiletics.

Hill and his new wife, the former Laura E. Yard, moved to Morristown fully aware of the difficult task ahead. At first not certain how long he would stay at the newly-christened Morristown Seminary, Judson Hill would dedicate the next fifty years of his life to molding and shaping the institution, fighting for its survival, and overseeing its growth.

Beginning work in Mrs. Stearns' old schoolhouse, Hill appointed the dedicated teacher as principal of the primary department, while he and Nannie McGinley made up the faculty of the normal department. In the early years, he served not only as president and teacher, but also preacher, carpenter, painter, and financier in an environment of open racial hostility and derision by the local community. Indeed, one of his most difficult tasks was attempting to establish good relations with the local white population. At first perceived as a northern interloper, the young minister was taunted and threatened with tarring and feathering, not to mention his life. He and his family were initially socially ostracized by the white people of the city, finding loyal friends among local blacks only.

Among the local blacks who assisted Hill, Stearns, and other white faculty members during the postwar years was Andrew F. Fulton, a man intimately aware of the problems that confronted former slaves during the



*Student bodies during the 1880's and 1890's ranged widely in ages. For a brief period, it was possible for students to progress from kindergarten through college. Until 1898, the college campus consisted of frame additions to the original schoolhouse building (right).*

Reconstruction era. In 1860, Fulton and his mother were sold for \$1,400 at the auctioneer's block located in the building which became the nucleus of Morristown Seminary. Following the Civil War, Fulton attended the freedmen's school, graduated, and joined the faculty of the college, where he devoted fifty years of his life to educating the young blacks who enrolled at the institution. For more than a half century Andrew F. Fulton was a living example of what hard work and determination could achieve, even within an often hostile environment.

Despite the early adversities, Hill demonstrated a remarkable ability to overcome hardship and to strengthen and expand the little school. Within a year of the seminary's opening, he added a dormitory onto the old schoolhouse to accommodate out-of-town students. He kept costs at a minimum and established work programs for students who could not pay for their education.

During the early years, student ages ranged from preschool to adult; and from the beginning, Hill maintained strict rules and regulations, regardless of age. Rigid hours for classes, study, eating, and sleeping were



established and students were required to attend daily chapel and Sunday services. Tobacco and spirituous liquors were absolutely forbidden. Dress codes were strict: students were instructed to “dress plainly” and at commencement “the young ladies will be required to wear dresses of cheap material, made up as far as possible by their own hands, in the sewing classes.”

And to ensure that older students kept their minds on their work, the president established separate men’s and women’s departments. Fraternizing with the opposite sex was closely regulated. In an obvious attempt to maintain the virtue of the young female students, Hill stipulated that “no gentlemen, *whether connected with the Institution or not*, shall visit the Ladies Department without the permission of the President. Communications in writing between the ladies and gentlemen are forbidden; and the two sexes shall not associate on any occasion without the consent of the president.”

Nena Smith, who entered the elementary department in 1917, recalled that there were two drinking fountains on either side of the main administration building, one for boys, the other for girls. “You had better not be caught drinking at the wrong fountain,” she claimed. There were also two stairways, girl’s and boy’s, into the chapel, where seating was also segregated by sex. Dr. Hill “was nice, not a harsh person, but when he spoke, you moved,” remembered Mrs. Smith.

Despite the strict rules, young people enrolled in the institution in increasing numbers year after year. By the turn of the century over 300 students attended classes, now led by an integrated faculty that had grown to nearly twenty members. As a result, additional classroom and living space became a pressing need for Morristown Normal College (as it was named in 1897), and Judson Hill demonstrated a remarkable ability to raise funds for the physical expansion of the institution. As one observer noted in 1899: “The school for the enterprise by [Dr.] Hill has actually been heroic.” Traveling at least once a year to the North, the president proudly promoted his school and tapped philanthropic and benevolent organizations for over a million and a half dollars in the course of his fifty year term. Andrew Carnegie, the McCormicks and Swifts of Chicago, and Kelloggs of Battle Creek, Michigan, donated large sums of money to the school, especially for the construction of buildings.

Always on the lookout for innovative fund-raising plans, Hill developed the idea of constructing a “bishops table” to benefit the college. In 1911, the school sent nearly 3,000 letters and telegrams to individuals and every Methodist conference and mission field in the world requesting



*Faculty, 1898-99. Miss Almira Stearns sits second from left on back row. Andrew Fulton (right front row) became the first black faculty member when appointed in 1888. Sold as a slave during the Civil War in the old school house that would become his college alma mater, Fulton taught in elementary department until his death in 1932.*

*Morristown Seminary and Normal Institute.***RULES OF THE SEMINARY.**

1. Students immediately upon their arrival must report themselves to the President and adjust their bills at the office; and in no case must a student leave the Seminary without permission from the President.

2. Study hours, embracing the recitation hours, will be published at the commencement of each term.

3. Students' rooms shall always be accessible to members of the faculty. The occupants of the rooms are responsible for improper conduct occurring or tolerated in their rooms, and for all injury done to them or to the furniture while in their possession. Nothing must be thrown from the windows.

4. We strongly discountenance the use of *tobacco*, and any-one using it will be cut off from the half term honor roll. We forbid the use of it in the building or on the premises in any form.

Frequenting places of amusement, drinking spirituous liquors, or entering places where they are sold, playing at games of chance, using profane, rude, or indecent language, immodest conversation or behavior, and all other practices opposed to morality and order, are totally forbidden. Fire-arms, gunpowder, or fireworks of any kind, must not be brought upon the premises.

No student will be allowed to leave the premises after seven o'clock p. m. without permission.

Students who desire to leave town, or absent themselves from their rooms at night, must first obtain permission from the President.

Cleanliness and tidiness, both in personal habits of the students and in the condition of their rooms, will be rigidly exacted.

Students must sweep their rooms, depositing the sweepings in the box placed in each hall for that purpose, make their beds, and have the rooms present a neat and tidy appearance by seven o'clock a. m.

No gentleman, whether connected with the Institute or not, shall visit any person in the ladies' department without the permission of the President.

Students can not exchange rooms without the consent of the Matron. Students can not visit the kitchen, Matron's room, or dining-hall, or take a meal after the regular hour, without permission.

Students will be required to attend regularly such churches as may be designated by their parents, and also the Sunday-school connected therewith.

Occasional violations of these rules, through carelessness, will subject offenders to such penalties as the magnitude of the offense and the maintenance of discipline in the hall may require; but continued malicious infractions will render the perpetrators liable to expulsion from the institution.

Such other regulations as the President may make shall have all the force of these published rules.



*Elementary school students during the 1890's.*



*Old Cray Hall under construction. Dr. Hill and two of his children in foreground. Completed in 1898 after eight years of construction, the four story, brick and stone, one-hundred-room building housed students, a main dining facility, and classrooms. The first brick structure on campus, Cray fell victim to fire in 1921.*

a piece of wood of historical interest to be used in constructing the table. Remarkably every conference and mission field—161 in all—sent wood to the little college in Tennessee.

The legs and body were made of solid mahogany from Honduras. The top was handsomely inlaid in a mosaic design with specimens of wood gathered from every corner of the globe. The various divisions on the table's top, representing the grand divisions of the United States and the various mission fields, were separated by narrow strips of native maple and walnut from the timber tracts surrounding Morristown. A section of John Wesley's pulpit and a piece of the podium from one of the Lincoln-Douglas debates were included. Hill and his students built the table, then took it to the General Conference of the Methodist Church in 1912. Auctioned off for \$1,500, it was later willed to the college where it is on display today.

Beginning in the 1890's, Hill launched a major expansion and building program. Adding to existing structures, he also oversaw the construction of five handsome brick buildings, including dormitories, classrooms, administrative offices, and a dining facility. Student labor used in the making of brick and construction of buildings was crucial. In the early 1900's, the school acquired a separate 300-acre dairy farm, including a fully operational creamery.

Essential to the building efforts and to interracial harmony in Morristown, Hill, over a period of time, eventually won not only the respect of the white citizenry but also their financial support. Effectively emphasizing the financial benefits of the college to the community, the president successfully solicited contributions from local merchants during the college's annual fund-raising campaign. After the burning of Crary Hall in 1921, local merchants and citizens contributed nearly \$10,000 to its reconstruction.

In addition to monetary donations, Hill obtained gifts of clothing, paper, books, and numerous other articles from throughout the nation, as well as farm produce from the surrounding countryside. He shrewdly printed a list of gifts and the names of the donors in the college catalogue in an expression of appreciation. Another unique form of in-kind contribution was arranged with the city of Morristown in 1896. The school was allowed one thousand gallons of water a day from the town in return for the deeding of a spring located on school property.

Just as the school grew financially stronger, its influence and reputation spread also. In 1886, the Tennessee State Board of Education recognized Morristown Seminary as a normal school, allowing its graduates to teach



*Industrial shops housed vocational classes where students received instruction in stove manufacturing, brickmaking and masonry, automobile repair, and a wide variety of skilled trades.*



*Laura Yard Hill Administrative Hall, named for Judson Hill's wife and completed in 1911 after ten years construction, was built with bricks made on campus. From its opening until the present, the building has served as the central campus structure, housing classrooms, main library, bookstore, auditorium, and administrative offices.*



in any public school in the state without further examination. The name changed to Morristown Normal Academy and two years of high school were added to the curriculum, making it a full-fledged high school. Before long, graduates found little difficulty securing positions as teachers in black communities throughout the Upper South. In some cities, notably Chattanooga and Nashville, the graduates were employed as teachers on the strength of their diplomas. Graduates of Morristown were scattered all over the country, and could be found even in Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and other countries. Also, nearly one-half of the black ministers in the East Tennessee Methodist Conference were graduates or had been students of the school. For that matter, Morristown had furnished not only many able men to the Methodist ministry, but also some to the Baptist and African Methodist Zion churches.

While sending its graduates to places throughout the world, the college also became international in the make-up of its student body. In 1914, Morristown N & I started a new program recruiting young men from Africa "who evidenced a desire to prepare themselves for Christian work in their own land." Given a thorough education in the liberal arts department, the foreign students also were taught one of the trades offered from the industrial department. The Africans came to school under two major stipulations: the college would bear none of their expenses, and once finished with their education, they would return to their native land. Thus



A group of third year students at Morristown Normal and Industrial College, 1910. Classical course offerings included the history of American and English literature, Cicero, Latin, and modern languages.

GRADES							
FIRST	SECOND	THIRD	FOURTH	FIFTH	SIXTH	SEVENTH	EIGHTH
1st Semester	1st Semester	1st Semester	1st Semester	1st Semester	1st Semester	1st Semester	1st Semester
Reading Language Writing Numbers Stories Drawing Music	Reading Language Writing Numbers Stories Drawing Music	Reading Language Writing Numbers Stories Drawing Music	Reading Language Arithmetic Geography Sup. Reading Writing Manual or Domestic Arts Spelling Drawing Music	Reading Grammar Arithmetic Geography Sup. Reading Writing Manual or Domestic Arts Spelling Drawing Music	Reading Grammar Geography Sup. Reading History Writing Manual or Domestic Arts Spelling Drawing Music	Reading Grammar Arithmetic Geography Sup. Reading History Writing Manual or Domestic Arts Spelling Drawing Music	Reading Grammar Arithmetic Geography Sup. Reading History Writing Manual or Domestic Arts Spelling Drawing Music
2nd Semester	2nd Semester	2nd Semester	2nd Semester	2nd Semester	2nd Semester	2nd Semester	2nd Semester
Reading Language Writing Numbers Stories Drawing Music	Reading Language Writing Numbers Stories Drawing Music	Reading Language Writing Numbers Stories Drawing Music	Reading Language Arithmetic Geography Sup. Reading Writing Manual or Domestic Arts Spelling Drawing Music	Reading Grammar Arithmetic Geography Sup. Reading Writing Manual or Domestic Arts Spelling Drawing Music	Reading Grammar Arithmetic Geography Sup. Reading History Writing Manual or Domestic Arts Spelling Drawing Music	Reading Grammar Arithmetic Geography Sup. Reading History Writing Manual or Domestic Arts Spelling Drawing Music	Reading Grammar Arithmetic Geography Sup. Reading History Writing Manual or Domestic Arts Spelling Drawing Music

Course offerings in the Elementary Department in 1888 ranged from topics such as stories in the first grade to domestic arts in the eighth grade.



A faculty gathering in Dr. Hill's parlor, 1914.



*Y.M.C.A. Cabinet, Morristown Normal & Industrial College (1912-13). Both the Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. were popular extracurricular organizations on campus.*

over the next several years, hundreds of students from Africa came to Morristown, exposing themselves to new ideas and a new culture.

As might be expected, the Africans added to the cultural enrichment of other students attending the college. For several years, the school sponsored the "Friends of Africa Society," whose object was "to foster and stimulate missionary inquiry and love for the work of Africa." Once a month, students met to hear talks about conditions in Africa and to contribute money to needy causes there. Prizes were awarded to students for writing missionary hymns and essays on the African missionary field.

The tie to mission work reflected the close affinity that existed between the college and its parent Methodist Church. Well into the early Twentieth Century, the denomination provided a \$2,500 annual appropriation and donated large amounts of material items to Morristown College. In return, the school often served as the location for joint meetings of both the black and white East Tennessee Conference sessions with Dr. Hill serving as secretary of the conference for several years. The college also held ministerial and Christian education training workshops, Women's Society meetings, youth conferences, and a variety of other activities in behalf of the Methodist Church. The involvement of the church in the governance of the college has historically been strong with all bishops of

## SCHOOL CALENDAR.

1889.

SEPTEMBER.							OCTOBER.							NOVEMBER.							DECEMBER.													
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S							
..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28

1890.

JANUARY.							FEBRUARY.							MARCH.							APRIL.																						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S																
..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31

MAY.						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
..	..	..	..	..	..	..
..	..	..	..	..	..	..
..	..	..	..	..	..	..
..	..	..	..	..	..	..

- September 9, Monday, fall term begins.
- December 20, Christmas recess.
- December 30, Monday, winter term begins.

1890.

- March 7, Friday, winter term ends.
- March 12, Wednesday, spring term begins.
- May 18, Baccalaureate and annual sermons.
- May 19, 20 and 21, Public examinations.
- May 19, Monday night, annual address before the literary societies.
- May 20, Joint meeting of board of trustees and visitors at 10 a. m. Oratorical contest 7:30 p. m.
- May 21, Commencement.





*Students and the New Jersey Home around 1900. Built in 1892, the structure has been used as a private residence, dormitory, faculty apartments, classrooms, and student canteen.*

the supporting conferences holding seats on the board of trustees. In addition, members of the Methodist clergy have traditionally held faculty and administrative positions at Morristown.

One of the strongest and most enduring relationships that the college has had with an individual congregation has been with Bethel Church, the only black United Methodist Church in the Morristown area. Founded in 1907, under the direction of Reverend D. T. Turner, U. A. Weber, and Dr. Hill, Bethel has served as the "home church" for Morristown College. Several generations of Morristown College students have worshipped and participated in services at Bethel. In many ways, the church grew to become the Methodist religious center for the black community in Morristown and beyond.

With its reputation spreading far beyond the confines of Morristown, along with its close ties to the Methodist Church, the school gradually became more accepted in the local white community and an important part of the institution's increasing acceptance in a predominantly white environment was Judson Hill's ability to serve as a goodwill ambassador. But just as important was the changing role of the school by the turn of the century. The idea of a special kind of education for blacks, championed by a few educators at the Conference for Education in the South at Capon

**APPLICATION BLANK**  
 TO THE  
**MORRISTOWN NORMAL & INDUSTRIAL COLLEGE**  
*JUDSON S. HILL, D. D., President*  
**MORRISTOWN, TENN.**

Date of application .....191..

2 Name .....

3 Sex ..... Age .....

4 Post Office ..... State .....

Street and No .....

5 Parent or Guardian .....

6 His or her Post Office Address .....

.....

7 Name two prominent persons who will recommend you

Name .....

Name .....

8 Where did you last attend school? .....

9 Why did you leave? .....

10 In what grade were you? .....

11 Do you promise to obey promptly all rules of the school? .....

12 Is your health good? ..... Have you any bodily deformities? .....

13 Board is \$7.00 per month and must be paid in advance.

14 Students who are allowed to work out a part of their board are required to enter school promptly at the opening and remain until the closing.

*This simple application form was the first step on the road to higher education for many blacks.*



*Dr. Hill observes students pouring molten iron during an iron manufacturing class in 1902. The college made iron cookware, andirons, and fireplace tools.*



*Printing classes during the 1920's. In addition to training students, the shop published and printed materials for the college and for many businesses in Hamblen County.*



*Furniture making in the 1920's. Students manufactured baskets, desks, flower stands, tables, secretaries, stools, cedar chests, and even bird houses. Items were sold to businesses and institutions throughout the South.*



*Working on Model T's. Automobile mechanics class in the early 1920's. A 1917 publication boasted: "We are now able to do work on automobiles that have heretofore been sent to Knoxville."*



*While male students labored in the industrial shops, women specialized in the "domestic arts." The sewing department in the 1920's. A school publication noted in 1929: "The girls are taught sewing and its branches, always with a view toward simplicity, economy and quality. They make their own uniforms and each year every graduating student makes her own commencement gown. Last year one young woman made her graduating dress at a cost of 89 cents."*



*Women students learned the fineries of setting tables and serving guests. After completing their schooling, many young women took jobs in hotels and restaurants.*



*An important part of the Morristown College curriculum for women was cooking. Many young women worked in the homes of Morristown's white residents during the summer in order to earn enough money to pay their way through college.*

Springs, West Virginia, in 1898, spread to become the basic ideology of the black school system. Northern and southern leaders, realizing that most southern whites would not accept education aimed at developing blacks for full participation in southern society, settled on "industrial education" to increase the labor value of blacks. As one advocate noted, the education of blacks should "avoid social questions; leave politics alone; continue to be patient; live moral lives; live simply; learn to work and to work intelligently; . . . learn that it is a mistake to be educated out of your environment." Charles W. Dabney, president of the University of Tennessee, put it more bluntly, stating that "the place for the negro in the immediate future is upon the farms and in the simpler trades." These beliefs quickly became a part of the ideology of southern black education. Industrial departments, patterned after the Tuskegee model, sprang up wherever there were black schools large enough to have a plot of land for a farm or a small room for a shop and kitchen.

A name change to Morristown Normal and Industrial College in 1901 clearly demonstrated that Dr. Hill's school was following the predominant trend in southern black education. After careful study of industrial departments in other schools (Virginia's Hampton Institute in particular), Hill introduced industrial training to the school curriculum in 1900. He



supervised the construction of several shops and outbuildings, and provided courses in brick making and masonry, carpentry, iron molding, chair caning, shoe making, printing, broom manufacturing, and agricultural training for the male students. "Domestic Science" was broadened to include cooking and serving techniques for women. Automobile mechanics and cosmetology were added later.

For the remainder of Hill's presidency, industrial education would be the centerpiece of the Morristown curriculum, with teacher and clergy training receiving less attention. Not only did the industrial emphasis fit comfortably into contemporary views on the purpose of black education, it provided the school with two major sources of revenue—philanthropic contributions and retail sales. Dr. Hill's appeals to potential contributors after 1900 usually stressed the school's role in providing industrial education. More than once, he warned of the alternatives to black education and at the same time noted the economic advantages of providing training to the non-white population. In the 1923 fund-raising campaign, the president quoted an unnamed southern newspaper: "Fighting against grammar, academic, and industrial schools for Negroes is bad business judgement. Worse than that, it leaves the Negro ignorant; from which class the vicious criminals are recruited. Where there is education there is less criminality." Then putting in a plug for the type of education emphasized at Morristown, Hill asserted: "To the young negro man and woman no greater opportunity for progress and success is afforded than through the training of the hands as a means of putting to more productive use the knowledge and power of the mind. To the white friends who contribute in a larger number toward the betterment of the school, a particular need for the liberal support of the industrial department of this school is urged." William Rule, a Knoxville newspaperman and friend of Dr. Hill's, noted that the school's industrial department was "not only serving the [Negro] race but the nation also."

While industrial training became a key element in the pleas for financial support, the products manufactured in the busy, humming shops provided more direct monetary returns. Indeed, goods manufactured at the college were actively marketed and provided a steady source of revenue for the institution's coffers. The school's brooms were noted for their excellent quality and were sold throughout the United States and Europe. Morristown N. & I. College tables, chairs, cabinets, and chests became standard institutional furniture for area schools and government offices. The print shop handled huge amounts of commercial printing for local businesses.

Brick manufactured on campus not only went into the school's own building, but also into hundreds of other structures in the Morristown area. Instructors in brick-making and brick masonry, such as William C. Coleman, were engaged in masonry throughout the region and were responsible for the brick work at neighboring Carson-Newman and Maryville colleges. Examples of his work still stand throughout Morristown. Some of Coleman's students are among the most highly skilled masons in the region today. Others have passed the skills learned at the college on to their children, who have established businesses in Morristown and even today are engaged in their trade in many of the neighboring states. DeWitt Dykes studied masonry under Coleman and became a world famous designer of church architecture and the first licensed black architect in East Tennessee.

By 1913, much of the prejudice existing in the community against the school and the ostracism of the workers had gradually diminished. Relations between the citizens of Morristown and the college had greatly improved since Dr. Hill arrived in 1881. The president of the Morristown Chamber of Commerce, who took part in the baccalaureate services for the Class of 1913, spoke highly of the great merit and worth of Morristown Normal and Industrial College. He stated that the college was the city's chief asset. As evidence of his popularity, Dr. Hill was solicited to form a class in cooking for the leading women of Morristown; he was recognized as a businessman and was a member of the Board of Trade. When a new charter was sought for the city of Morristown, Dr. Hill was made chairman of the committee to draft the charter, and later Chairman of the committee to present it for the approval of the state legislature.

A more positive "town and gown" relationship developed between the citizens of Morristown and the school for blacks within their midst, even though strict Jim Crow segregation prevailed in the area. The splendid physical plant made the college the focal point of community social and recreational activities for both blacks and many whites, including church events, social and recreational activities, and special community programs. Community leaders were often invited to the president's or dean's homes for social activities, fostering a spirit of cooperation and respect among city fathers and blacks that may not have occurred otherwise. Frequent visits to the college by noted speakers enhanced the city's cultural environment and were often given prominent coverage in the local press. Visiting speakers, many of whom were church leaders, spoke to area civic clubs, further promoting a positive image of the school among the predominant white citizenry. Frequent appearances in the area

### In Memoriam

Mrs. Cyrus H. McCormick

Died July 5th, 1923

Among the multitude of beneficiaries of the friendship, generosity and helpfulness of this beautiful character, none feel a more personal loss than the President and the entire school body of Morristown Normal and Industrial College.

Numbered among the institutions to which Mrs. McCormick extended substantial support and personal interest, we owe to her a debt of gratitude which neither death nor time can efface; a debt which engraves her memory in our hearts.

The beautiful simplicity of her character, her natural piety and sincerity, radiated an unselfish beneficence that was remarkable. Altho a member of the Presbyterian church, she made no distinction with regard to denomination in the distribution of her support toward the furtherance of Christianity and education.

We counted her a friend--as such, we mourn her death with deep regret--yet, we can but feel reconciled in the glories of all Paradise; where no mortal discomfort can affect; where she is freed from physical suffering; whence comes the merited rewards of a life consecrated to the work of the Master.

"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and THEIR WORKS DO FOLLOW THEM."-Revelation xiv, 13.



*The Morristown campus in the 1920's, as seen looking east. This photograph shows the backside of New Crary Hall, Kenwood Refectory, and Wallace Hall. The tower of Laura Yard Hill Hall looms in the background.*

by the popular Morristown College Octette did much to showcase the musical talents of students.

By the 1920's, Morristown Normal and Industrial College was at its height. Enrollment approached 400 students. The faculty had grown from two to twenty-four and its composition had changed from all-white to only one-third white. The school boasted a physical plant of fifteen buildings valued at almost one million dollars. Morristown fielded athletic teams in football, baseball, and basketball, competing against black colleges throughout the South. And Morristown-trained teachers, preachers, and tradesmen were scattered throughout the upper South.

In the summer of 1922, when construction on new dorms and the Kenwood Refectory was going full-speed, the college kiln turned out over a half million bricks. The dairy farm provided a full range of products for students and faculty, and also furnished healthy financial support for the school through outside sales.

Amid growth and expansion, Hill and his staff, along with the support of the Methodist Episcopal Church (North) made plans for the transition of Morristown Normal and Industrial College to Morristown Junior College, in hopes of achieving greater academic credibility. By 1923, the plans were implemented with the establishment of two new departments



*Morrystown N & I Red Knights football team, 1921. The college, which competed with other two-year black colleges throughout the Southeast, fielded football teams from the early 1900's until 1961.*



*Like most American colleges, Morrystown instituted an intercollegiate athletic program in the early twentieth century, starting first with baseball, pictured here (1915). With major league baseball closed to blacks, several Morrystown graduates went on to play professional ball in the old Negro Leagues.*



*The large dairy barn of Wallace Farm. Secured in 1918, the 300 acre farm provided dairy products for the college and local community. The school was forced to sell the farm in 1938, however, in the depths of the Depression.*

(pre-law and pre-medical), the admission of additional students, and the hiring of more faculty. The school was the first junior college in Tennessee, black or white.

With entrance requirements increased to sixteen units from an accredited high school, junior college students had to comply with other school requirements, including maintaining good moral character and frequent attendance at chapel and church services. In 1925, five proud graduates received their junior college diplomas, the first such degrees in Tennessee. With the junior college program almost an immediate success, the college's leadership moved to further expand the school's mission and advance it to higher academic levels by adding a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1929. Requirements were raised significantly. No student under the age of sixteen was admitted to the program. Requirements for graduation were increased to 192 quarter hours of work, with thirty-six in a particular field. For students planning on teaching careers, an additional twenty-seven quarter hours in education were required.

The Bachelor of Arts program, however, was short-lived, producing only two graduates—Gilbert Johnson and Fred Smith of Morrystown. The small size of the college, the relative close proximity of well-established four year black colleges in Knoxville and Nashville, and the onset of





*Dr. Hill insisted that classes be segregated by sex, and in the beginning maintained separate men's and women's departments. In time, Hill relaxed many of the rigid constrictions but most classes remained segregated until after his death.*

economic hard times forced the school to drop the four year program in 1931.

Indeed, the decade of the 1930's would prove to be the school's most difficult, raising serious doubts about its survival. Like every other educational institution in the country, Morristown N. & I. quickly felt the impact of the Great Depression. Many of the students who had long depended on outside jobs to support their education now found the doors to part-time work closed. The 1930 *Morristown College News* noted that the past summer had been a hard one. "Many who had dreamed their dreams, relative to large savings during the summer months, found conditions such as not only to prohibit savings, but almost to prohibit their making a living. . . . Conditions are acute all over the county and whatever the cause, it has worked a hardship upon many worthy and deserving students."

The school suffered its most serious blow in 1931, however, with the loss of its greatest resource—Dr. Hill. Preparations had been made by the faculty and administration to celebrate the school's fiftieth anniversary. Hill, approaching eighty years of age, had continued to proselytize for the institution with the determination of a man many years his junior. But he





*Dr. Hill addressing his faculty in 1928 in the old library at Laura Yard Hill Hall. An elderly Andrew Fulton sits at far right.*

began to show his age and increasingly succumbed to illness. Yet when he entered a hospital while on a \$500,000 endowment fund-raising trip to Michigan in September, 1931, no one expected the shocking news of his death a few days later. His body was returned to the little town that he had entered fifty years before. Mourners, black and white, crowded the student chapel to pay their respects to a remarkable man.

With his death, Morristown College had lost not only a leader, but a symbol of interracial harmony, a good-will ambassador who had kept the school financially solvent. Speaking at a memorial to Hill, one Rev. Hamilton reflected: "He was not an individual in the sense that we usually speak. He was an institution; he was a versatile man; an artist."

The memorials and platitudes lavished upon Hill at his death were a complete reversal of the attitude Hill encountered some fifty years earlier when he was despised and even threatened because he wished to educate black people. When he died all city businesses and schools, both white and black, were closed by proclamation of the mayor. This was the first time in the history of the city that a citizen had been so honored, a lasting tribute by the city to Dr. Hill.

After two years of searching, the board of schools of the Methodist Church selected E.C. Paustin as the new president. In his three year

tenure, Paustin sought to greatly change the direction of the school from industrial training to a more traditional liberal arts institution, pushing particularly for a strong music program. His policies may well have been influenced by the Depression. With the shops too expensive to maintain and little market for the school's products, Paustin eliminated almost all of the industrial classes by 1935. Teacher salaries were cut nearly in half as an economy measure; but with enrollment dropping to only 134 students, the school sank deeper into debt. Unable to turn the school around, Paustin resigned in 1937, to be succeeded by Morristown's first black president, J. W. Haywood. He worked tirelessly for the survival of the school, and ignoring staff protests, even sold the dairy farm to pay long-standing debts. During his seven-year tenure, Haywood managed to keep the school going, even upping enrollment slightly. But it was his successor who would return Morristown to its healthiest state since Judson Hill's days.



# 3

## The Miller W. Boyd Years, 1944-1952

Miller W. Boyd, the first Morristown College alumnus to rise to the presidency, assumed the office in 1944 and immediately his charismatic personality, exceptional public speaking talents, and sound business mind gave the school the leadership necessary for renewed growth. Boyd, strongly influenced by Judson Hill, embodied the spirit and life of the college. He probably made a greater sacrifice and did more to keep the school alive than any other person since Dr. Hill.

Boyd was born in Abingdon, Virginia, July 21, 1897, to Washington and Della Boyd. As was the custom during his youth, because of the lack of public high schools for blacks, Boyd came to Morristown to attend the high school at Morristown Normal and Industrial College from 1913 to 1917, and later graduated from the college. Upon graduation he entered Lincoln University, Chester County, Pennsylvania, graduating as valedictorian of his class in 1921, receiving prizes in English and mathematics, and voted best representative of the ideas of the University. He was elected as an instructor at Lincoln University for one year after his graduation but declined the offer to accept a position at Morristown Normal and Industrial College. He later attended Columbia University in New York for graduate study.

Professor Boyd taught at Morristown Normal and Industrial College from 1921-41, in addition to serving as principal of the High School Department and registrar for a period of ten years. It was during his administration that the high school won accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and the College Department gained full recognition by the State of Tennessee.

After a leave of absence begun in 1940 to work as the Educational Recreational Supervisor of Negro Training at Fontana, North Carolina,



*During Miller C. Boyd's (far left, second row) administration (1945-52), school finances were sound and enrollment steadily climbed for the first time since the 1920's. By 1949, the student body had risen to 435, the largest in the school's history.*

Boyd returned to the college as president in 1944.

Remembering the example of the school's first president who brought him back to Morristown to teach mathematics, Boyd won several friends from the business community of Morristown. He reinstated the Founder's Day Program to develop alumni pride and at the same time to solicit their financial contributions. And he pursued an active recruiting program, both for students and money. Boyd stressed the proud traditions of the school, reinstated a few of the trade courses that had been eliminated by Paustin, and, for the benefit of Northern philanthropists and church groups, he noted the school was "a venture in interracial goodwill."

Boyd's ability to instill pride and loyalty and hard work were legendary. George Easterly, a former teacher, recalled that during Boyd's administration there was an "unwritten contract" between the school and its employees that extended up to the president—that no one had just one job, "everyone was a twenty-four hour employee, seven days per week." Once regular teaching or administrative duties were taken care of there was always something to do; chaperoning, vespers on Sunday, chapel during the week, Sunday school or Wednesday night worship service. Mr. Easterly, for example, often drove the school boys to athletic events after a day of teaching because everyone knew that this was what had to be done in order for the school to survive. He also noted that race relations in the Holston Conference were often considered excellent because of Boyd who, he said, had "all the people of Morristown behind him; he had established great rapport with the community."

No two presidents have shared any greater success at Morristown than Hill and Boyd, and no two people perhaps had more in common—it may have been that Boyd learned lessons of administration well but a common thread of "greatness" ran through each and each of them possessed the qualities that carried the institution on an upward path during his time at the helm: untiring loyalty, devotion to students and Christian ethics; and an unselfish giving of oneself.

Again, George Easterly speaks of the Boyd years noting that during that time, student interest in the institution and loyalty were at an all time high. "Each student sold the college." The degree of student loyalty could be directly attributed to the type of relationship Dr. Boyd cultivated among the students and their parents; he knew each student's name; he knew the parents; he knew their home towns much in the same manner that Dr. Hill did during his tenure. The statement of Dr. R. D. Minard, a long term faculty member and dean of the college, is perhaps reflective of the faith which faculty had in Dr. Boyd when he wrote about the status of the



*The dress code required formal attire at dinner during the 1950's.*

college. "Today Morristown College, under vigorous leadership of its recently elected President, Dr. M. W. Boyd, has experienced renewal of faith in its mission. Its new goals are to be projected in the light of recent trends due to developments in this regional area and in world relationships."

Boyd's daughter, Marjorie Debnam, who now is a member of the Board of Trustees, remembers the "stress" brought on by the presidency and her father's constant travel on behalf of the school. She recalls that their door was always open; their dinner table always had room for one more, despite the financial difficulties of raising two children on a very meager salary; assisting brothers and sisters financially and trying to help not only those at the college but in the community as well. Often her father would personally obligate himself on notes for the college or friends but remained "happy" in his work and his constant effort to move the college forward.

During Boyd's eight years as president the junior college of Morristown Normal and Industrial College was accredited by the departments of education of Tennessee, Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, and West Virginia; the college's teacher training was also recognized by these states with Georgia being added in 1948. The Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools (Southern Association) was considering giving

the college its approval and the high school had been fully accredited by the Southern Association. In 1947 the Southern Association announced that the college was fully accredited and given a class "A" designation.

It was also during the decade of the Forties that the high school became accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and the college became accredited by the Departments of Education in Tennessee, Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky and West Virginia, a growing recognition and acceptance of its program.

The emphasis on the ability to write and speak English was increased in 1945 and students, though they had maintained the required grade point average of C, were not allowed to graduate unless they were able to demonstrate satisfactory skill and facility in their usage of the English language. The first full-fledged terminal degree program was instituted and those students who desired to go directly into secretarial work could enroll in the Commercial Department. Veterans could qualify for graduation from high school on an acceptable rating of general competence through general equivalency diploma tests and during the period following World War II, the student population was much older. Many returning veterans took advantage of the opportunity to acquire their high school diplomas and college degrees and were a vital part of campus life during this period.

Nearly five years after his presidency began and some of his greatest accomplishments completed, Dr. Boyd learned that at the beginning of his presidency it was generally thought that he had been employed to preside over an institution "whose demise could be expected at any time."

Unaware of this expectancy and of attempts by the Board of Higher Education and Ministry to give the college property away to other church agencies on two occasions and of their refusal to accept the property, President Boyd stated:

One can understand the reasons for pessimism on the part of the Methodist Board of Education and the refusal of the other agencies to accept the offer, when one learns that the enrollment of the high school and college combined had dropped to 112 students during the War years of 1941-44, that the college's budget of less than thirty-five thousand dollars was going unbalanced; that several of the 15 buildings and dwellings on the campus were falling apart and were being abandoned for the lack of funds to repair them; that the college and high school lacked regional accreditation; that many local firms were dubious about granting credit of any amount; and that the college farm had been sold at a give away price and a portion of the funds used to apply on outstanding debts.



*The 1946 Southern Athletic Intercollegiate Conference Women's championship basketball team, coached by Bruce Mackey, posed before Kellogg Gymnasium (now Valentine-Branch Gym), built in 1927.*



*The Morristown College Red Knight football team in 1945, coached by Thomas M. Crowder. The college, which competed with other two year black colleges throughout the Southeast, fielded football teams from the early 1900's until 1961.*





*Red Knights basketball team, 1944-45.*

Once Dr. Boyd became aware of all the facts involved in the college's precarious financial situation, he took immediate action, enlisted assistance of ex-president Haywood and began visiting key leaders of the Holston Conference, soliciting opinions on the possibility of having the Holston Conference designate its Race Relations Offerings to Morristown College. Their responses were positive and encouraging but any official action had to be channeled through the Holston Conference at its annual session. With the aid of these leaders, a resolution was passed and, in 1949, Morristown College became one of Holston Conference's official missionary projects. The college was generally accepted by the presiding bishop and the entire conference. With this designation, the college was, officially, on equal footing with the other schools of the Conference and was given a place on the Annual Conference program.

The immediate affect was beneficial to the college in several respects. The college was included in the Conference's Public Relations Program, including the radio and in other matters, without restriction. Immediately, the college and President Boyd gained greater exposure throughout the Holston Conference and as a result increased financial support. Perhaps equally as important, a new era in race relations began that came to the



*Students leaving classes in Laura Yard Hill Hall in the late 1940's. Bobby-socks, saddle shoes, and short skirts provided a marked contrast from earlier student days. Taboos on male-female socializing obviously had fallen by the wayside.*

region earlier than most areas of Tennessee in part because of Dr. Boyd and the College.

President Boyd was invited to become a staff member of the Youth Camps, to be a member of the faculty at Conference Youth Institutes, and he played a key role in the work of the Conferences, elected three times as representative to the Methodist General Conference, serving as a member

of the Methodist Jurisdictional Board of Education; and the Foreign Mission Board.

Regularly, youth organizations from the conference met on the campus, raising money to support deserving Morristown College students. Lasting friendships between the youth of the conference and the students of the college developed, positively affecting race relations throughout the Conferences.

The creation of better race relations during the Boyd years went beyond the effort made by Dr. Hill, and the impact his administration made may have had greater racial and sociological significance than Hill's venture.

The acceptance of the college by the conference led to an exchange of concerts by college choirs; dinners and fellowship hours; regular appearances by speakers from the conference on the campus; service by conference representatives at summer institutes as instructors, recreation leaders, and counselors with women's societies in the conference providing financial support for African students.

The spirit of cooperation and good will created extended beyond Morristown church and conference members to others in the vicinity of Morristown, others throughout East Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia attempted to promote racial harmony through what was referred to as the "Holston Conference way."

Dr. Boyd was happy doing what he wanted despite the stress of the presidency; but he was working in an uncertain situation; trying to raise two children and trying to help other members of his family, and being financially responsible on many of the obligations of the college.

The stress of returning Morristown College to a sound footing would take its toll on Boyd and eventually ended in tragedy. Bothered for years by ulcers, Boyd became sick while on a fund raising trip around Thanksgiving, 1952. A black physician in neighboring Newport, Tennessee, treated the college president and ordered him to work at home for a week, away from the hectic atmosphere of the office. On December 3, however, after discussing Christmas plans with his daughter, Boyd collapsed and was rushed to the white hospital in Morristown. (There was no such facility for blacks in the town.) After some confusion as to whether he could be given a room because of his race, Dr. Boyd was finally admitted, but died soon afterward, having suffered a massive heart attack. Although people like Judson Hill and Miller Boyd had done much to bridge the gap of interracial goodwill, the shadow of Jim Crow still prevailed in the early 1950's.

Reminiscent of events some twenty years earlier after the death of Dr. Hill, there was a great outpouring of sorrow and goodwill from the black and white communities alike. The mayor and other town dignitaries, along with a host of Boyd's former students, attended the funeral service held at Laura Yard Hill Hall. He was then buried at Abingdon, Virginia.

Boyd's wife, Mary Whitten, served as interim president for the remainder of the academic year and even though she did not solicit gifts, ironically donations to the college increased from all sources. Most of the contributions were given in memory of her husband.

The loss of Boyd was in many ways similar to that of Judson Hill. His dynamic, innovative leadership could not be easily matched. He had started a "League of a Thousand Friends," a program giving everyone in Morristown an opportunity to contribute. Businessmen particularly had been supportive of this program, largely because of Boyd's ability to communicate effectively with them. And Boyd commanded a devout loyalty among his former students, having gone out of his way to make certain that many of them were accepted at four year institutions, especially Methodist schools. Despite his years of service and hard work, Boyd died a relatively poor and pension-less man; but as his daughter, Marjorie Boyd Debnam, recalled, "He died doing what he wanted to do. His philosophy continues to live through his students."

## ◆ 4 ◆

## The Challenges of Modern Education, 1952-1985

The years following Dr. Boyd's untimely death in 1952 were characterized by changes in curriculum and, eventually, a return to the original mission of the school. During the Fifties some of the industrial departments previously discontinued were reinstated, including cosmetology, which now required that students fulfill all the requirements promulgated under state law for the practice of "beauty culture." In addition to regular courses in the care and treatment of hair, classes in science, anatomy, salesmanship, and shop management also were added.

Under the leadership of Dr. Leonard Haynes, Jr., the college became a member of the American Association of Junior Colleges in 1957, and undertook a complete revision of its curriculum. The transfer curriculum now included a basic two-year program for liberal arts and general education, which included teacher training, pre-professional nursing, and Christian education. Under the terminal curriculum brick masonry and carpentry, two industrial courses formerly abolished, were added to existing courses in secretarial science and cosmetology. A program of adult education and self-improvement was offered as well.

After Haynes' resignation in 1959, the school, under the direction of an administrative committee, ended high school level instruction. A new black high school, approved by the citizens of Morristown through a December, 1958 referendum, was constructed and named West High School. The mission announced at the founding of Morristown Academy became a part of the new public high school's goal: "All youth need to become self-helpful, self-respectful, and sensitive to the need of constant self-improvement."

In the spring of 1961, the Board of Trustees voted to amend the school's charter, creating a two-year college called Morristown College. Under the



*Morristown College offered a degree in cosmetology and trained many beauticians. Cosmetology class in the late 1950's.*



*Students leaving Laura Yard Hill Hall. During the 1960's dress codes were relaxed considerably, following a nationwide trend.*





*The student canteen during the late 1960's. Shirley Hemphill, star of the television show "What's Happening" (third from left) observes a card game played by two cigarette-smoking students, a scene which would have been unlikely during the early 20th century.*

leadership of Dr. Elmer P. Gibson (1957-1969), a retired army colonel, the college was admitted to full membership in the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, the highest accrediting agency in the region. With accreditation came recognition not heretofore received by other predominantly black, two-year institutions in the United States.

Many forces influenced the composition and number of students enrolling at Morristown College during the Sixties and Seventies. Although the college gained full academic accreditation, revised its curriculum, renovated its physical plant, and generally progressed to a level never before achieved, there was a general decline in enrollment, both among prospective students in the Morristown area and in the surrounding counties. Of the 154 students attending Morristown College in 1960, only 36 came from within a fifty-mile radius of the school. The external forces creating the enrollment crisis are easily identifiable. The completion of West High School drew many potential students from the college's campus and the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 opened the doors of traditionally white colleges and universities to blacks for the first time.

After the resignation of President Gibson in 1969, the school year again began under the direction of an administrative committee. Sweeping



*The covered walk linking Kenwood Refectory, the college's central dining facility, to Wallace Hall and New-Crary Hall has been a popular gathering place for students since the complex was completed during the 1920's.*

curricula revisions were made. The major in Christian education was eliminated and the College Education Achievement Program, designed to assist low academic performers, was established to provide special instructional aid. Thus almost concurrently with the assumption of the presidency by Raymond E. White (1972-81), the ninth president, came a new educational focus which provided a program for poorly prepared students. As a result, the college began to enroll many pupils who had not finished high school and attempted to prepare them for the graduate equivalency exam. Having successfully passed the exam, qualified students were allowed to take college courses. The success of this program and its impact upon the school are still being debated.

One immediate result of the new focus upon remedial programs was the curtailment of literature and music courses and the complete elimination of art instruction. Social science and humanities courses were also cut back, the faculty and administration finding it necessary to concentrate its efforts on the basics—mathematics and English. For whatever the reason, it appeared that instruction at the institution had come full circle some 100 years after its founding, since both Mrs. Stearns and Dr. Hill were required to concentrate on teaching the fundamentals during the school's early years.



*A late 1960's classroom scene. Separation of sexes in the classroom, characteristic of the Judson Hill Era, had fallen by the wayside.*



*By the 1960's the television had become a centerpiece of entertainment in the student lounge.*



*By the mid-20th century many Morristown College women were being trained to enter the work force as secretaries.*



*During the early Sixties, Rock and Roll groups became the most popular form of musical entertainment on campus, supplementing the choirs and brass bands of the college's early years.*



Financing remedial education was expensive and was made possible largely by federal grants created during the John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson administrations. By the end of the 1979-80 academic year, however, the GED program was discontinued, having become too costly to operate once the federal government eliminated many of the subsidized programs created for educationally and socially disadvantaged students. Once again, Morristown College may have been a forerunner in a trend toward providing developmental programs which later began at other institutions. But ironically, this trend, from all indications, may have won students to other area schools offering remedial programs that would have normally enrolled at Morristown College.

After Dr. White's resignation on June 30, 1981, leadership fell upon the shoulders of Dr. Charles Wade, who assumed the presidency in August, 1981. With Wade's administration came a reshaping of the institution's mission by the Board of Trustees. Truly, with this board action, the college had come full circle, for the institution redirected its fundamental mission to fit the original goals espoused by Dr. Hill. The revised mission implemented during the school year 1975-76 had, in the opinion of the board, proved "too restrictive and too specialized for institutional growth."

With other colleges and universities admitting marginal students and instituting individualized instruction, Morristown College was no longer unique. There was no longer the same need for concentration on enrolling "those who would not be admitted to traditionally oriented institutions of higher education." The college once again shifted its emphasis to providing better academic opportunities for all students. The 1981 mission was a return to the institution's original purpose espoused in 1881 by Dr. Hill, who declared that the school's aim was "to train young people to be self-respecting and self-helpful."

The "New-Old" mission was adopted in September, 1981. Greater emphasis was placed upon religious training, academic work, and social etiquette. The Board of Trustees, administration, and faculty of the college reaffirmed their commitment to the school's original purpose. The change in emphasis was reflected directly in a broadening of the curriculum, and in a return to more traditional orientation.

An educational program offered in cooperation with Walters State Community College, also in Morristown, provides Morristown College students an opportunity to take fifty percent of their course work at their own institution and approximately fifty percent in a specialized technical program at Walters State. The redirection of the college's academic



*A residence hall scene during the 1960's. Martin Luther King's influence was felt on most college campuses, including Morristown's.*



*President Fred Hill (center) presides over the Oxford Club, a group of Methodist students in 1958. Religious activities continued to play a role in the lives of students.*



*Fire struck the Morristown College campus once more in February, 1983, when Wallace Hall was set ablaze due to faulty wiring. The building has since been restored.*

program was accompanied by a re-emphasis on the school's Christian foundation by Dr. Wade. Weekly Vesper service attendance is now required, along with courses in the study of the Old and New Testaments and mandatory attendance at Sunday services at Old Bethel Church.

The immediate effect of this redirection was reflected in enrollment, which climbed from 112 in 1981-82 to 200 in 1982-83. The academic program is now divided into four divisions: humanities, behavioral science, science and mathematics, and applied science, offering four associate degrees to students who complete a minimum of sixty hours of credit with a 2.0 minimum grade point average. The faculty is small, racially and culturally diverse, numbering 14, with approximately forty percent holding doctoral degrees.

The challenge of educating blacks during the post-Civil War years and the rise of Jim Crow, the Great Depression, and the post-Civil Rights era has been a monumental one, yet a small school tucked away in East Tennessee succeeded in ways inordinately proportional to its size. Morristown College fulfilled the mission of its founders and perhaps went beyond their greatest anticipations; its over fifteen thousand graduates have made an impact throughout America in small ways and in larger ones. The school has reached into the streets of Harlem, the black belt of Alabama, the plains of Africa, and the hills of Tennessee, touching those who—despite their geographical diversity—had common needs, hopes, and desires. To those who struggled in spite of adversity and personal sacrifice, Morristown College stands as a monument to freedom, to family, and to love.

## Notes On Sources

The following is a limited discussion of the most pertinent primary and secondary sources used by the participants in the research and writing of this book. Although footnotes are not included in the text, frequent references are made throughout the narrative to the various sources of information described below.

Two comprehensive studies of Morristown College were extremely useful: Brenda Hines Hammond's doctoral thesis, "An Historical Analysis of Selected Forces and Events Which Influenced the Founding, Growth, and Development of Morristown College, An Historically Black Two-Year College from 1881 to 1981," (Ed. D. dissertation, George Washington University, 1982); Edith Steward Whitten's "The History of Morristown Normal and Industrial College," (senior thesis, Tennessee A&I University, 1943); and an article by Charles F. Bryan, Jr. and JoVita Wells, "Morristown College: Education for Blacks in the Southern Highlands," in East Tennessee Historical Society's *Publications* 52-53 (1980-81), 81-77. "A Highway in the Wilderness," by Almira H. Stearnes (typescript, 1898), "The Old Slave Mart," an undated typescript by Ralph Day Minard, and "Running a Church-Related College in Days Like These" by Miller W. Boyd, are all in Morristown College archives.

Useful secondary sources included James S. Thomas, "Methodism's Splendid Mission: The Black Colleges," *Methodist History*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (1984), 23-31; Willie P. Osborne, "Follow-up Study of Graduates of West High School, 1949-59," (M.A. thesis, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 1961); Lester C. Lamon, *Black Tennesseans, 1900-1930* (Knoxville, 1976); and Henry Allen Bullock, *A History of Negro Education in the South* (Cambridge, Mass., 1962).

One of the most important sources of research material was the Miriam

Parlin Library's collection on Morristown College, which includes a wide variety of Morristown College catalogues and the Morristown College *News* from 1881-1966, pamphlets, articles, and photographs. The journals and programs of the Holston Annual Conference and East Tennessee Annual meetings and programs proved helpful, as did newspapers. These used most often were the Morristown *Gazette and Mail* and the Morristown *Citizen-Tribune*.

In addition to the primary and secondary sources available, much valuable information was obtained from several Hamblen Countians, alumni, and friends of the College. The following people were interviewed during 1984-85: Richard Bowyer, Mary Coleman, Willie Mae Crawford, Marjorie Boyd Debnam, George Easterly, Reverend William James, Blance Irvin Jarnigan, George Johnson, Nena Smith, Berniece Taylor, and Samuel Yette.

## Appendix I Chronology of Events

- 1830 Original building erected (destroyed).
- 1868 Beginning of a small grammar school in Morristown, Tennessee (in an old building formerly used as a slave mart) by Mrs. Almira H. Stearns, a Christian missionary from Elizabeth, New Jersey.
- 1881 College founded as *Morristown Seminary* by the Reverend Judson S. Hill, a Methodist minister from the New Jersey Conference. With the establishment of Morristown Seminary, Mrs. Stearns became the principal in the primary department and with Dr. Hill and Nannie McGinley in the normal department constituted the first faculty.
- 1883 First dormitory built. 60' x 40'; 3 school rooms, 22 boarding rooms.
- 1890 Cornerstone laid for Crary Hall.
- 1892 New Jersey Home built.
- 1897 Name changed to *Morristown Normal College*.
- 1900 Crary Hall completed—industrial work introduced.
- 1901 Name changed to *Morristown Normal and Industrial College*. The original building and dormitory connected and both utilized for school purposes.
- 1903 The William Sarah Boyd Building erected for industrial work.
- 1909 Work on administration building begins—Laura Yard Hill Hall.
- 1911 Administration Building completed and occupied in September.
- 1921 Crary Hall destroyed by fire January 10th.
- 1922 Carriger property purchased, ground broken for new buildings. July 1 first brick laid for Kenwood Refectory, Crary Hall, and Wallace Hall.
- 1923 Cornerstone laid for new buildings with ceremonies April 13th. Wallace Hall completed and occupied August 30th. Kenwood Refectory completed and occupied October 2nd. Central heating plant completed and fired. *College incorporated*.
- 1924 Crary Hall completed and opened March 29th.

- 1926 Crary Hall partially destroyed by fire; rebuilt and opened September 1st. Athletic field enlarged. Ground broken for Kellogg Gymnasium.
- 1927 Kellogg Gymnasium completed May 25th.
- 1929 Athletic field enclosed—grandstand and bleachers erected.
- 1931 Dr. Judson S. Hill died September 14th. Administrative Committee in charge of College with Dr. O.B. Chassell, representative of the Board of Education acting as Chairman.
- 1939 Acreage sold.
- 1959 High School Department discontinued.
- 1960 Name changed to *Morristown College*.
- 1961 Full accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.
- 1963 Kellogg Gymnasium renovated and renamed Valentine-Branch Gymnasium.
- 1968 Sheeley-Drew Centennial Science Hall dedicated.
- 1970 Student Union Addition to Crary Hall—Wallace Hall renovations begun.
- 1973 Crary Hall—Wallace Hall renovations completed.
- 1974 Hill administration building renovated.
- 1975 Adoption of the New Mission of the College by the Board of Trustees.
- 1981 Reaffirmation of Original Mission.
- 1983 Placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

## Appendix II Distinguished Alumni

- Melvin Blevins, Class of 1969, Principal, Lincoln Heights Elementary School, Morristown, Tennessee.
- Charles L. Bowen, Class of 1954, Superintendent of Schools, Harvey Public Schools, Harvey, Illinois.
- Dr. Althia N. Canty, Class of 1970, Instructor of English and Director of Greeneville Campus, Walters State Community College, Morristown, Tennessee.
- Marlene Clark, Class of 1957, Actress, "Sanford and Son" and "The Young and the Restless" TV Series.
- Dr. Marjorie Boyd Debnam, Member, Board of Trustees, Morristown College, St. Augustine's College; Businesswoman and Civic Leader, Raleigh, North Carolina.
- Dr. DeWitt Dykes, Class of 1926, retired United Methodist Minister and now a Noted Architect, Dykes & Associates, Knoxville, Tennessee.
- Roland Dykes, Owner, Dykes Construction Company, Newport, Tennessee. Member, Board of Trustees, Morristown College.
- Anthony Eckel, Class of 1951, Assistant Principal, Kingsport, Tennessee and Former Coach, (Old) West High School, Morristown, Tennessee.
- John Evans, Class of 1954, Member of the Board of Trustees, Morristown College, first black elected to the Dekalb County Commission, Decatur, Georgia.
- Robert Fanney, Class of 1958, Owner, Bob's Concrete Pumping Service, Oakland, California.
- Eleanor Fulton, Class of 1959, Musician, New Haven, Connecticut.
- Shirley Hemphill, Class of 1967, Actress, "What's Happening" TV Series.
- Kenneth Jones, Class of 1943, Owner, Jones Construction Company, Morristown, Tennessee.
- Dr. Ralph Martin, Class of 1926, Retired Educator and Administrator at Knoxville College.



- James Mobley, Mayor, Lincoln Heights, Ohio.
- Lina McCord, Class of 1943, Director, Black College Fund, Board of Higher Education and Ministry—United Methodist Church, Nashville, Tennessee.
- James A. Nichols, Class of 1938, Principal, Judson S. Hill School, Retired, Morristown, Tennessee.
- DeElzier O'Connor, Class of 1961, Real Estate Broker, Chicago, Illinois.
- Dr. Henry Pearson, Class of 1948, Dentist, Charlotte, North Carolina.
- Toby Pearson, Class of 1948, Director of Douglas Cherokee Authority, Morristown, Tennessee.
- Dr. Larry Pettis, Class of 1968, Physician, Trenton, New Jersey.
- Sandra Richardson, Class of 1968, Field Supervisor, Hamblen County Department of Human Services, Department of Human Services, Morristown, Tennessee, Nominated in Episcopal Church for Study as Priestess.
- Edward Robinson, Class of 1961, women's basketball coach, Knoxville College. His 1983 team finished third in the nation among Division II Schools of NCAA.
- Father V. Campbell Smith, Class of 1949, Episcopal Priest, Knoxville Diocese, Knoxville, Tennessee.
- Rev. Velma G. Smith, Class of 1960, Pastor, Stanley Memorial United Methodist Church, Chattanooga, Tennessee.
- J. Saunders Thompson, Class of 1937, Builder, Los Angeles, California.
- Dr. Eugene Walker, Class of 1942, Physician and Chief of Staff, Los Angeles, California.
- Dr. Bernard Wiggins, Class of 1964, Physician, Nashville, Tennessee.
- Dr. Charles Wiggins, Class of 1964, Physician, Nashville, Tennessee.
- Samuel F. Yette, Former Reporter for *Afro-American* and *Dayton Journal Herald*; Associate Editor of *Ebony Magazine*; Information Director, Tuskegee Institute; Executive Secretary of Peace Corps; Washington Correspondent for *Newsweek*; and now Distinguished Professor of Journalism at Howard University. Member, Board of Trustees, Morristown College.

## Index

- Bethel Church of Morristown, 18
- Bewly, Dick ("Uncle Dick"), 4
- Bishop's table, 8-9
- Boyd, Miller W., appointed president, 34; continues Hill legacy, 36; death of, 42; early years, 34; gains more support through Methodist conference, 40; improves race relations, 42; wins accreditation for college, 37
- Boyd, Washington and Della, 34
- Brown, Joseph, 2
- Brownlow, Gov. William G., 2
- Carnegie, Andrew, 8
- Carson-Newman College, 25
- Civil Rights Act of 1964, 46
- Coleman, William C., 25
- College Education Achievement Program, 47
- Conference for Education in the South, 18
- Crary Hall, 12
- Crozier Theological Seminary, 6
- Dabney, Charles W., 23
- Debnam, Marjorie, 4, 37
- Dykes, DeWitt, 25
- East Tennessee Methodist Conference, 14
- Easterly, George, 36
- First Methodist Church of Chattanooga, 6
- Freedman's Aid Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 2
- Fulton, Andrew F., 6
- General Conference of the Methodist Church, 12
- Gibson, Dr. Elmer P., 46
- Graves, Rev. W. C., 4
- Hamilton, Rev., 32
- Hampton Institute, 23
- Hanford, Mrs., 1
- Haynes, Jr., Dr. Leonard, 44
- Haywood, J. W., 33
- Hill, Judson S., becomes president, 5; death of, 32; early fund raising, 8; early years, 6-7; educational philosophy of, 24; imposes dress and conduct codes, 8; introduces industrial training, 23; launches major expansion, 12; leadership in community, 25; secretary of Methodist conference, 16
- Holston Conference (Methodist Church), 36
- Holston Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 4
- Holston Conference of the United Methodist Church, 5
- Jim Crow (segregation), 42
- Jimison, Fannie, 2
- Johnson, Gilbert, 29
- Kelloggs of Battle Creek, donations from, 8
- Kenwood Refectory, 27
- League of a Thousand Friends, 43
- Madison University (Colgate), 6
- Maryville College, 25
- McCormicks of Chicago, donations from, 8

- McGinley, Nannie, 6  
Methodist Church, affinity with college, 16  
Methodist Episcopal Church (North), 27  
Minard, Dr. R. D., 36  
Morristown College Octette, 27  
Morristown Normal Academy, 14  
Morristown Normal College, 8  
Morristown Normal and Industrial College, 14  
Morristown Seminary, 6, 7, 12, 5  
Paustin, E. C., 32  
Reagan High School for Boys, 5  
Reagan, John, 5  
Rule, William, 24  
Smith, Fred, 29  
Smith, Nena, 8  
Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, 37-38, 46  
Sterns, Mrs. Almira H., 1, 2  
Swifts of Chicago, donations from, 8  
Tennessee State Board of Education, 12  
Trotter, Thomas, 2  
Turner, Rev. D. T., 18  
Tuskegee Institute education model, 23  
Wade, Dr. Charles, 50  
Walters State Community College, 50  
Warren, Bishop Henry W., 4  
Weber, U. A., 18  
West High School, 44  
White, Raymond E., 47  
Whitten, Mary, 43  
Wilson, Rev., 2  
Yard, Laura E., 6

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