“African American Participation in the 1910 Appalachian Exposition”

“It was, indeed, marvelous, magnificent, and a mammoth presentation, of which the most important events were the showing of the wonderful development of the resources of the South, and a conspicuous part which has been played by our race.”¹

This letter to the editor of the *Iowa State Bystander*, by T.E. Barton, a barber living in Washington, D.C., highlights the feelings that African Americans had about their participation in the 1910 Appalachian Exposition.² The purpose of the 1910 Appalachian Exposition, the first to be held in southern Appalachia, was to show the nation the progress made by southern industry and commerce and to highlight the natural resources of the Appalachian region.³ The first of three such expositions held in Knoxville, culminating in the 1913 National Conservation Exposition, the 1910 Exposition is often overshadowed in the literature by the 1913 National Conservation Exposition. As such, the African American participation in this exposition is often treated as a footnote, an afterthought to the discussion of the broader impact of the Exposition. However, by looking at newspaper article, in both the black and white press, one can see tensions in the African American participation in the event. Although a sense of pride comes through the articles, there is also the sense of the class and racial tensions felt by the African American participants in the events. While the

² 1910 Washington City Directory, 255.
Exposition was touted as being an integrated space for all visitors to enjoy, the reality of segregation never entirely receded from the Exposition grounds.

Efforts to promote the 1910 Appalachian began as early as 1899 when the Commercial Club of Knoxville selected Chilhowee Park as the site of an exposition; in 1900, they drew a map of the grounds and designated the location of the Main Building and other buildings. Despite their boosterism, efforts at launching the Exposition failed in 1899, 1900, and 1903. In 1909, the Commercial Club began an advertising campaign for the exposition, using the plans originally set forth in 1899 and spending more than $17,000 on newspaper advertising and books. W.J. Oliver, a businessman, recent arrival to Knoxville, and enthusiastic advocate of the New South ethos of the time, was elected President of the 1910 Exposition. The New South creed, first proposed in 1886 by Henry Grady, editor of the Atlanta Constitution, envisioned a “New South” rising from the ashes of the ruin of the Civil War to experience industrial and agricultural prosperity. In the late nineteenth century, the New South vision came to Appalachia, and observers of the region discussed the economic potential of the region and its inhabitants. Knoxville seemed an ideal place to push a New South vision, and to see its ideals come to fruition. Knoxville boasted an extensive railway system, flourishing wholesale businesses, ample natural resources, and a large labor supply;

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with such advantages, Knoxville was likely to become the premier city of the region.\textsuperscript{8} Knoxville, however, did have an “image problem,” one that the Exposition hoped to correct. While Knoxville was seen as a progressive city, the backcountry surrounding it was seen as a “strange land of peculiar people,” and this population of “peculiar people” were described as being almost white.\textsuperscript{9}

Appalachia was “discovered” as a distinct region by the rest of the nation in the late nineteenth century. Writers of the local color movement, such as George Washington Harris and Mary Noailles Murfree (writing under the pseudonym Charles Egbert Craddock), introduced the inhabitants of southern Appalachia to a wider audience, depicting them as quaint and odd people.\textsuperscript{10} Appalachia was depicted as overwhelmingly white, a place of racial wholesomeness. Samuel Tyndale Wilson, in \textit{The Southern Mountaineers}, described an almost entirely “white” region, stating, “While it is undeniable that the mountain people of the South are a composite race, the fact remains that they are probably of about as pure a stock as we can boast in America.”\textsuperscript{11} He goes on to state that Tennessee had five counties with only eleven to seventy nine African Americans in the entire county, further stating, “The only part of the South that is not directly concerned in the race problem is the purely mountain region.”\textsuperscript{12} Horace Kephart continued to perpetuate this notion in his work, \textit{Our Southern Highlanders}, first published in 1913. In this work, Kephart states, “The mountains are free not only from foreigners but from negroes as well. There are many blacks in the larger valleys and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{9} Lukens, “The New South on Display,” 5.
\item \textsuperscript{10} Silber, “What does America Need,” 248.
\item \textsuperscript{11} Samuel Tyndale Wilson, \textit{The Southern Mountaineers} (New York: Literature Department, Presbyterian Home Missions, 1906), 10.
\item \textsuperscript{12} Wilson, \textit{The Southern Mountaineers}, 42.
\end{itemize}
towns, but throughout most of Appalachia the population is almost exclusively white.”

He goes to perpetuate this myth of racial purity, stating,

Here, then, is Appalachia: one of the great land-locked areas of the globe, more English in speech than Britain itself, more American by blood than any other part of America, encompassed by a high-tensioned civilization, yet less affected to-day by modern ideals, less cognizant of modern progress, than any other part of the English-speaking world.

A newspaper in Berea, Kentucky, in specifically describing the 1910 Appalachian Exposition, calls the region, “. . . the region known to all the world as the most belated in the Union, the home of the purest Anglo-Saxon stock – Appalachian America.” This idea of “black invisibility” continued throughout the twentieth century. Edward J. Cabbell, Appalachian Studies scholar, summed up the problem, stating,

Black invisibility provides strong support to the myth that the number of black people in the mountains is inconsequential. In reality, one out of every fourteen Appalachians in black. . . . Black invisibility also supports the myth that Appalachia is a land of “poor white hillbillies,” beset sorely with “white problems” and not the “color problems” that plague the rest of America.

What Kephart and others overlooked was the long and rich African American history of Knoxville and East Tennessee. Slavery was present in every county of Appalachia prior to the Civil War. In Knoxville, 20.3 percent of the population in 1860 was African-American. During Union occupation, African Americans began to arrive in

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14 Kephart, Our Southern Highlanders, 380.
larger numbers in Knoxville, searching for jobs and new opportunities. Compared to other Southern cities, Knoxville did offer more opportunity to its African American citizens as African Americans could vote, hold public office, serve as policemen and sit on juries. Carter Woodson remarked on race relations in Appalachia in 1916, noting, “White and black men work side by side, visit each other in their homes, and often attend the same church to listen with delight to the Word spoken by either a colored or white preacher.” Dr. Henry M. Green, head of the African American Department of the 1910 Appalachian Exposition, served as a Fifth Ward Alderman from 1908 to 1912. Knoxville also boasted two African American fire companies – one on West Main Avenue and one on State Street. Knoxville hired its first African American policeman, Moses Smith, in 1882. The Crisis praised Knoxville in 1915, noting, “It affords a good example of Negro progress in a small, active city of the Southern border. It is in no way typical of the southern South and has always had strong union and anti-slavery leanings. On the other hand, it has needed the Negro as a laborer and servant and his group has grown and developed here.” The article in The Crisis alludes to one characteristic of Knoxville’s African American community – its lack of a large, assertive middle class. Some have blamed this lack of an assertive middle class on the way in

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23 “Of Colored Knoxville,” *The Crisis* 19, no. 4 (February 1915), 185.
which racial problems were worked out in Knoxville, often in a personalized way between the elite of the two races.\textsuperscript{24}

J.H. Daves, a branch librarian at the African American librarian in Knoxville, wrote a book on African Americans in Knoxville in 1926. In it, he commented on the living conditions of many African Americans in Knoxville, noting, “The general physical surroundings of the Negro family, as indicated by answers to these questions, for the most part are poor. The ordinary conveniences, considered necessities by the average white citizen, often are lacking.”\textsuperscript{25} Life was hard elsewhere in Tennessee for African Americans, as segregation began to tighten after 1900. In 1905, the Tennessee Legislature passed a law segregating passengers on streetcars throughout the state.\textsuperscript{26} In several cities, such as Nashville and Chattanooga, local African Americans organized boycotts of the streetcar lines. However, in Knoxville, the boycott was largely a symbolic gesture, and it was not supported by African American leaders such as Dr. Green.\textsuperscript{27} African American workers did not stage protests over their limited job opportunities in a city that allowed them to work in domestic servitude but kept many African Americans out of the skilled and professional job fields.\textsuperscript{28} And while their counterparts in other parts of the state were not allowed to use certain white accommodations (such as lunch counters and certain restaurants), African Americans in Knoxville were largely allowed to patronize most white establishments.\textsuperscript{29} It is in this

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{daves} J.H. Daves, \textit{A Social Study of the Colored Population of Knoxville} (Knoxville, Tennessee, 1926), 2.
\bibitem{stanfield1} Stanfield, “The Sociohistorical Roots of White/Black Inequality in Urban Appalachia,” 138.
\bibitem{stanfield2} Stanfield, “The Sociohistorical Roots of White/Black Inequality,” 139.
\end{thebibliography}
atmosphere of racial tensions and accommodations that the 1910 Appalachian Exposition unfolded.

In the months and weeks leading up the 1910 Exposition, the event was marketed to both whites and blacks across the region in a number of newspaper articles. In January 1910, the *New York Tribune* reported that President Taft promised the organizers of the Exposition that he would open the event by pressing a button in the White House, and would also visit the Exposition if possible. Many articles extolled on how the Exposition would benefit the region, as evidenced in the *Tazewell Republican*, which stated, “The possibilities for developing untold wealth are seemingly unlimited. It is with a view to attracting the attention of the people of these Appalachian states, as well as of the entire nation, to these opportunities and possibilities.” The *Pickens* (South Carolina) *Sentinel-Journal* reported, “Agents of the exposition are now getting in touch with all parts of the Appalachian country, with a view to bringing exhibits of the products, industries, civic and other resources of the various states.” In addition to inviting exhibits from across the region, organizers offered reduced rail fares to entice people to visit. As early as July, 1910, the *Shenandoah Herald* of Woodstock, Virginia was reporting, “Greatly reduced fares . . . on sale via SOUTHERN RAILWAY Sept. 10th to Oct 12, 1910 . . .” Articles in the white press rarely mentioned African American participation in the event, other than occasionally mentioning the presence of a “Negro Department” in one line. One exception was the *Big Stone Gap Post*, which described the African American Department as, “An exhibit of value, and one reflecting credit upon

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the race, will be that in the negro building. . . The negroes of the Appalachian States are making marked progress every year, and their display at this exposition will testify in a manner most convincing what they are accomplishing.”

Ads running in the *Nashville Globe*, an African American newspaper, beginning in July 1910, stressed the reduced railway rates being offered to visitors to the Exposition. The ads stated, “Rates of only one cent a mile to the exposition have been obtained throughout the country. Persons going to the National Baptist Convention at New Orleans or the B.M. C. at Baltimore will save money by going through Knoxville and have an opportunity to stop off and see the exposition at the same time.” The *Seattle Republican*, an African American newspaper as well, described the Exposition only in terms of African American participation, noting, “The colored building is nearing completion and will be one of the handsomest structures among the many beautiful edifices which adorn the exposition grounds.”

When the 1910 Appalachian Exposition opened on September 12, 1910, it opened with a separate African American department, headed by Dr. Henry M. Green. Dr. Green was a prominent member of Knoxville’s African American elite. He graduated from the Normal Department of Knoxville College, a Presbyterian college for African Americans, in 1895, and taught in one of the mission schools of Knoxville College. Green later began his medical studies at Knoxville College’s medical school; once it closed, he continued his studies at Northwestern University. He was the Chief of Staff

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36 *Seattle Republican*, August 26, 1910.
at the Knoxville College Hospital, which was in existence until 1910. Dr. Green was a surgeon, and was a recognized authority on nervous diseases; he also wrote a well-received book on pellagra. He acquired considerable property, and an African American school in Knoxville was named in his honor.

The department Dr. Green headed for the Exposition was impressive, even to white journalists. The Negro Building, as it was termed, stood fifty feet wide, sixty feet long, and thirty feet tall. It was a two-story stucco building located on a hill at the north end of Chilhowee Park's lower lake. Inside, the building boasted a "monumental" double stairway that led to a mezzanine overlooking an open court of exhibition space. The building was designed, built, and paid for entirely by African Americans. John Henry Michael, the head of the Mechanical Department at Knoxville College, designed the building. His business partner, William Stacy, supervised the Knoxville College carpentry students that built the building. The Knoxville Sentinel found it noteworthy that no whites were involved in the construction or financing of the building, stating:

A noteworthy feature of this building is that white men had nothing to do with it. It was proposed to the exposition directors by an auxiliary body of negro businesses and professional men. A negro devised the plans and a negro contractor with negro labor constructed it. This manner of its construction should and will no doubt afford an incentive to negroes of the south who visit the exposition.

Upon entering the building, an African American visitor would have noticed the office of the chairman of the department to the left of the entry. A bureau of information

41 Welch, “Appalachian Exposition Negro Building,” 16.
42 “Architectural Achievements of Appalachian Exposition,” Knoxville Sentinel, September 6, 1910.
and registry office was located here, intended to help orient African American visitors to the site and to the Exposition. A parlor was located to the left of the entry, for the comfort of the attendees. The rest of the first floor was filled with booths for exhibit spaces. A double stairwell led from the first floor up to the second floor, which looked down over the exhibit court for a balcony effect. There was also space for exhibit booths on the second floor. A striking addition to the building, and a reflection of the segregation that ruled Knoxville, were two rooms set aside for “hospital purposes.” As any African American needing medical aid would not be able to receive treatment from local white hospitals, it was thought necessary to provide this service. 43 In describing the hospital rooms, Dr. Green noted, “Knoxville College Hospital, a colored hospital of this city, will furnish the rooms complete and have in attendance at all hours during the exposition, a trained nurse and physician, to look after any colored persons who may become sick or injured on the grounds.” 44

In addition to the impressive building, the exhibits housed inside made a positive impression on their viewers. The exhibits made in this building are described as covering,

nearly all the industries in which the members of the race are engaged, embracing domestic science, shop work, agriculture, horticulture, gardening, blacksmithing, moulding, basket making, drawing, painting, photography, etc. The displays are well arranged, attractive, and instructive, comparing favorably with those of other buildings. Exhibits from schools and colleges are also shown. 45

43 H.M. Green, “Colored Department, Exponent of Progress of Negroes,” Knoxville Sentinel, September 6, 1910.
44 Green, “Colored Department.”
The *Atlanta Constitution* remarked that the building and exhibits were “rather eloquent expression of what the well-to-do negro in the south is going to establish the standards of the race . . .” In the Appalachian Exposition Special Edition of the *Knoxville Sentinel*, Dr. H.M. Green wrote an article about the African American department. In describing the intended exhibits Dr. Green stated,

> There will be an exhibit from the largest colored publishing house in the world, showing every class of literature published. The educational display will be very large and varied. It will come from and represent nearly every negro college in the United States, most of which are located in the Appalachian region. . . Eight negro orators will electrify the masses with their eloquence.

Speakers schedule to address African American audiences at the Exposition included W.T. Vernon, register of the Treasury Department; Mary Church Terrell; Robert E. Clay; Byrd Prillerman; Chaplain L.A. Carter of the 10th Calvary, U.S. Army, and Rev. A.C. Gardner. At the end of the Exposition, the *Nashville Globe* reported on the African American department, stating,

> The exhibits in the Negro Building in Knoxville is in a sense a departure from exhibits shown in other expositions. It was more on the order of what the young Negro intends to do than what he has done, and a ray of hope can easily be gathered by anyone who chanced to witness the exhibition just closed in the Appalachian region.

Looking at media coverage of the event, both before and during the Exposition, one can argue that the Exposition was not meant for all African Americans; rather, only those of a certain class would be welcome. This theme of class, of a certain type of African American being showcased in a positive highlight, emerges repeatedly in

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46 “What the Negro is Doing is Shown at Exposition,” *Atlanta Constitution*, October 9, 1910.
47 Green, “Colored Department”.
48 Green, “Colored Department,” *Knoxville Sentinel*, September 6, 1910.
49 “Exposition held in Knoxville Great Success,” *Nashville Globe*, October 14, 1910.
newspaper articles during the period, and will be examined in further detail later in this paper. This theme is echoed in the African American press as well, as articles from the *Nashville Globe*, an African American paper, highlight as well.

A series of articles and ads for the Exposition appeared in the *Nashville Globe*, Nashville’s African American newspaper, beginning in May 1910. R.H. Boyd and a group of other African American businessmen organized the paper in late 1905. The first issues, appearing January 14, 1906, promoted the boycott of the Jim Crow streetcar law passed in 1905. The *Globe* favored businessmen, the Republican Party, preached an ethos of self-help and betterment, and supported the philosophies and teachings of Booker T. Washington.50 The paper had close ties with the National Baptist Publishing Board, and all four original officers of the corporation – Henry A. Boyd, Dock A. Hart, J.O. Battle, and Charles Burrill – all worked for the National Baptist Publishing Board.51 One wonders why the *Nashville Globe* was chosen, as Nashville is not located in Appalachia. However, it does show that the African American department worked to highlight the accomplishments of the entire race, not just African Americans in Appalachia.

The first article supporting the Appalachian Exposition appeared in the May 27, 1910 edition of the paper. The paper praised the Exposition and the African American involvement in it, stating, “The Negroes of Tennessee and the South will play a

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conspicuous part in making the Appalachian Exposition a success." The article also discussed the general goals and purposes of the Exposition, telling its readers in the Nashville area that,

The key-note of the Appalachian Exposition, which differentiates it from all other displays of this character, is its demonstrative nature. It proposes, from the use of actual object lessons, to show the importance of conserving the natural resources, and of developing them where now the force of exploitation has been but feebly exerted.

In addition to the article, an ad ran in the paper during the month of July, stating, "The Appalachian Exposition to be held in Knoxville, September 12th, to October 12th, inclusive will embrace eight states and will be the greatest show ever held. The colored building of this exposition will be one of the best ever seen and the exhibits will be second to none." In all, the "Spirit of Appalachia" ad ran nine times in the eleven editions of the Nashville Globe published between July 8, 1910 and September 16, 1910.

As the summer progressed and the Exposition loomed closer, the articles in the Nashville Globe continued. The front page of the July 29, 1910 edition of the paper announced that Dr. H.M. Green, described as “an entertaining speaker,” was coming to Nashville on August 3rd to speak. A half-page ad later in this edition of the paper provided more details of the event. This ad, featuring a photograph of Dr. Green, noted that the subject of his lecture would be, “The Appalachian Exposition – The Opportunities It Offers the Negro of the South.” It was noted that, “In order that the entire community may grasp this opportunity of hearing of the development of the Negro

53 “The Negro Will Play An Important Part.”
54 “Spirit of Appalachia” advertisement, Nashville Globe, July 8, 1910.
of the South, the admission will be free for the evening.”56 In remarking on the reduced fare offered to Exposition goers, the ad noted, “The rates are so low that every man, woman, and child should endeavor to visit the exposition once, where more can be seen that can be learned by traveling for years.”57

Looking more closely at the articles and advertisements in the Nashville Globe, one senses class and racial tensions that surrounded the 1910 Appalachian Exposition. Speaking first to class, several of the ads and articles in the Nashville Globe are addressed to a “certain class” of people. The August 3, 1910 lecture by Dr. H.M. Green was described as, “A musical program and a high class lecture, beneficial to the citizens of Nashville [emphasis added].”58 After the lecture, the Globe noted that Green had come to the city at the request of Nashville residents, “. . .for the sole purpose of having a heart to heart talk with the business men, school people, manufacturers and the industrious class of Negro citizens, who would likely take advantage of the opportunity that this exposition is offering . . . [emphasis added]”59 Historians have noted the class tensions present in African American society; Leon Litwack notes, “Two ways of life coexisted, sometimes uneasily, in every substantial black community: “colored society” and the black working class, themselves differentiated into subgroups.”60 Green, is appears, was reaching out to the “colored society” and middle class, hoping to use their successes to showcase the achievements of his race.

57 “A Free Entertainment.”
58 “A Free Entertainment.”
A similar class-based appeal to women also appeared in the *Nashville Globe*. A notice in the July 1, 1910 edition of the paper was addressed, “To the Ladies of Nashville,” and requested women to “exhibit, fancy work of various kinds, viz: needle work, hand painting, millinery, dressmaking, domestic science and anything that will show progress made by Negro women of to-day.” Historians have noted that African American women, following the Civil War, often associated themselves with virtues once believed to be the sole province of white women; that is, by endowing themselves feminine traits such as piety, moral virtue, and the pursuit of “genteel” pastimes such as embroidery and fancywork, African American women rejected the racist ideology that consigned them to the bottom rungs of society. African American women had to combat vicious racial and gender stereotypes at the time, such as the following from an article in the *Independent* in 1904, which stated, “. . . [N]egro women evidence more nearly the popular idea of total depravity than the men do. They are so nearly lacking in all virtue that the color of a negro woman’s skin is generally taken (and quite correctly) as a guarantee of her immorality.” The author goes on to state, “I sometimes read of virtuous negro women, hear of them, but the idea is absolutely inconceivable to me. I do not deny they exist, but after living in section all my life that teems with negroes I cannot imagine such a creation as a virtuous black woman”

Racial tensions also abounded at the 1910 Appalachian Exposition although these problems were not openly discussed in either the white press or the African

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61 “To the Ladies of Nashville,” *Nashville Globe*, July 1, 1910.
63 “Experiences of the Race Problem, By a Southern White Woman,” *Independent* LVI (March 17, 1904), 590.
American press. While the white press never mentions equality on the Exposition grounds when discussing the Exposition, the theme of equal access is seen in the African American press. T.E. Barton, a barber from Washington, D.C., wrote a letter about the Exposition to the *Iowa State Bystander*, an African American newspaper. In discussing the Exposition, he mentions that William J. Oliver, “... declared that in this exposition should be represented all the people, and said that all people should be privileged to all departments on the ground, and to all buildings on the ground. This idea was carried out. There was no “Jim crowing” on the Appalachian ground.”

The *Nashville Globe* extolled the opportunities the Exposition offered to African Americans, stating,

> The Exposition as it is being pushed by energetic citizens is far different from others in that it has provided for not only a department in name but a department in reality, where the Negroes in Tennessee, Georgia, Virginia, Alabama, Kentucky, North and South Carolina, West Virginia and the District of Columbia will be able to show the world what they have been able to do... 

The “Spirit of Appalachia” ad that ran nine times in the *Nashville Globe* stated, “The colored people will enjoy equal rights with all other people at the exposition.”

In the October 14, 1910 edition of the *Nashville Globe*, an article was devoted to the Exposition that served as a wrap-up to the event. In this article, it was claimed that,

> The Negroes of Knox County come in for a large share of credit for the success of the exposition, and it is the first time in the history of the country that black and white have united so fully to develop a project of this kind. A fair example of the good will that existed between the races in this

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enterprise is attested to by the hearty co-operation that was manifested.67

Amidst the congratulations in the white and African American press of the cooperation between the races that prevailed during the Exposition, there was a limit to how far the cooperation went. Despite the avowed egalitarianism of the Exposition, Jim Crow segregation was firmly in place in Knoxville, and made its presence felt on the Exposition.

Certain “days” were set aside for different groups, including African Americans. September 22, 1910 was “Georgia Colored People’s Day,” September 30, 1910 was “Knoxville Colored People’s Day,” and October 6, 1910 was “Colored Educational Day.”68 September 27, 1910 was termed “Negro Day”, the day dedicated to African Americans. The Knoxville Sentinel reported on the event, describing how Rev. C. T. Walker of Augusta, Georgia, termed the “Black Spurgeon of America,” addressed the crowd. In addition to the address by Rev. Walker, a musical concert and parade was held during the day. The parade was described as “. . . biggest exclusive Negro parade ever witnessed in the South,” and it was led by the four African American policemen in Knoxville.69 The event was a success, as the paper reported, “The trains arriving from Appalachian points within the past twenty-four hours have brought at least 10,000 negroes, according to the estimate of Dr. H.M. Green, chairman of the executive committee of the negro department.”70 The arrival of so many African-American visitors to the city posed a housing problem, as the hotels that existed were firmly segregated. There was the African American Y.M.C.A., located at 514 E. Vine Street, but there were

68 “Special Day Scheduled for Exposition Period,” Knoxville Sentinel, September 6, 1910.
69 “10,000 Negroes See Exposition Upon Negro Day,” Knoxville Sentinel, September 27, 1910.
70 “10,000 Negroes See Exposition.”
few other public accommodations available for African American visitors. The 1910 City Directory lists no African American hotels, and only one boarding house for African Americans, run by Martha Watson and located at 524 N. Broadway.71 The Sentinel alluded to this difficulty, stating, “So large is the throng that in spite of the departure of a large number before night, every available space will be required to house the visitors for the night, said Dr. Green. This is one of the problems which he is meeting now and a large corps of assistants is at work locating sleeping quarters for the visiting colored people.”72 To help alleviate the problem, local African Americans opened their homes to the visitors. Dr. Green alluded also to this problem as early as September 6, 1910, stating, “The colored committee of public comfort has secured homes for several thousand visitors and will care for them at a very reasonable rate. Many of the best colored homes will be open to accommodate the visitors.”73 In the end, at least 5,000 African Americans were housed in private homes.74

In addition to hotel accommodations, restaurants and other amusements also remained segregated. Dr. Green mentioned in his Knoxville Sentinel article, “On the grounds near the colored building there will be innumerable amusements owned and operated by colored people. Moving picture shows, cafes, restaurants, etc.”75 Were these amusements there to extol the progress made by African Americans, or were they there as a concession to the strictures of segregation in Knoxville? Was this an acknowledgment that although both sides praised the “spirit of cooperation” that existed among the races during the Exposition, or was it an acknowledgement of the realities of

71 1910 Knoxville City Directory, 673.
72 “10,000 Negroes See Exposition.”
73 Green, “Colored Department.”
74 “10,000 Negroes See Exposition.”
75 Green, “Colored Department.”
segregation in Knoxville? While the answer may never be known, it is plausible that the cooperation that existed for the 1910 Appalachian Exposition existed, at least in part, because the African American participants did not try to push their inclusion in the Exposition to the point that made whites uncomfortable. The very structure of the African American department, separate but under the direction of the white executive department of the Exposition, showed that segregation was not seriously challenged by the participation of African Americans in the Exposition. The *Big Stone Gap Post* references this separation, stating, “The negroes have a separate board, and while working under the general direction of the executive department of the exposition, the details of their building and their exhibit, have been worked out among themselves.”

Despite dealing with the realities of segregation, African Americans and whites at the time viewed the participation of African Americans in the 1910 Appalachian Exposition positively. Robert D. Lukens has noted that the African American department was, to the local African American community, “a source of inspiration and pride.” The *Daily Public Ledger* of Maysville, Kentucky noted that, “The Negro Building is an embodiment of the progress the colored race is making.” In writing in the aftermath of the Exposition, the *Nashville Globe* noted, “All joined hands to bring success. A oneness of spirit and of purpose was the life of the institution.” The *Knoxville Sentinel* noted the African American participation, stating, “When the Appalachian Exposition was first assured, the progressive body of negroes in Knoxville

79 “Exposition Held in Knoxville Great Success.”
and throughout all the Appalachian region, desired representation in the great exposition. Consequently a colored board was named with Dr. H.M. Green, chairman . . .

Yet despite the achievements of the race that the African American participation in the Exposition was meant to highlight, the long-term consequences of the Exposition for the bettering of race relations in the region was insignificant. The white reaction to the exhibits of African Americans can be summed up in a quote from an article in the Atlanta Constitution from October 9, 1910. At the end of a fairly laudatory article about the achievements of African Americans at the Exposition, a white woman is quoted as saying, “This exhibit is all very well, but I can’t find a good cook when I want one, nor a good butler.” Another reaction quoted was, “Does the education evidenced in the building tend in the right direction?”

Despite the gains African Americans felt they made at the Exposition, and despite the description of the cooperation exhibited at the Exposition, most whites were unwilling to change their views of African Americans or to offer them more equal opportunities. In this light, the African American participation in the 1910 Appalachian Exposition can be seen as more of the same; an upholding of Jim Crow segregation and an event that did little to better the daily life of African Americans in the region. The event also did little to highlight the specific issues that African Americans in Appalachia faced, nor did it change the way Appalachia was depicted as primarily a white region. It would take several more decades and a different generation to achieve material gains in the improvement of race relations and to awaken the nation to the presence of African Americans in the region.

80 “Architectural Achievements of Appalachian Exposition.”
81 “What the Negro is Doing is Shown at Exposition.”