Conflicts over Temperance and Class: The Dissolution of the Working People's Labor and Art Association

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NASHVILLE DIRECTORY.

Morton John W Jr, wks 321½ Public Square, bds Franklin pike 2 m.
  " John W Sr, editor & manager Tenn Farmer, h Franklin pike 2 miles.
  " L Rush, barber, h 108 S First.
  " Mamie, wks Clinton cor Clay.
  " Marmaduke B, city editor The American, bds 315 N Summer
  " Mary A Miss, wks Tenn Mfg Co.
  " Minnie Miss, wks 221 N Cherry, bds Kayne av nr Bilbo av.
  " Moses (c), h 818 Gleaves.
  " Ophelia Miss, wks 431 N Vine, bds N Spruce nr Gay.
  " Perry (c) (Morton & Hockett), h 614 Line.
  " Peter G (c), huckster, h W Walnut nr Herman.
  " Pleasant (c), laborer, h Batavia nr Tweed.
  " Pollock (c), N Mfg Co.
Strictly First-class Fitting Garments Made by H. N. Welton, 404 Union.

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Baine B Frank, carpenter Fillmore nr Decatur.
  " May Miss, saleslady 201 Public Square.
  " Michael T (Mooney & Baine), h 322 N Spruce.
  " Thomas, plumber, wks 319 N Cherry, bds 232 McLemore.
  " Thornton (c), laborer, h Hyde’s Ferry pike nr Alberta av.
Baines Bettie, widow Martin, h Áment nr Bilbo.
  " Henry (c), stone-mason, h Watkins nr Pearl.
  " Robert (c), shoe-maker 917 Church; h Hynes nr Hardee.
Baird Albert E, editor Southern Lumberman, h 325 Woodland.
  " Annie S Miss, stenographer 213 Church, bds 628 Boscobel.
  " Daniel W managing editor Southern Lumberman, h 628
View of Murfreesboro, Tennessee
Image courtesy Historic Murfreesboro Postcard Collection, Center for Historic Preservation
African American workers in Rutherford County, TN (undated)

Image from the Montgomery County Historical Society inventory of Albert Kern. Taken from the Stones River Battlefield Historic Landscape Collection, Walker Library, MTSU.
Group of Grand Lodge Masons, c. 1897
G.U.O.O.F. Hall, located on Lytle Street, Murfreesboro, TN

From the 1902 Sanborn Map of Murfreesboro, TN. The hall is outlined in black on the right.
“The aim of the Association is to elevate, unite, and give employment to the Negro youth, to establish and encourage charitable undertakings, to encourage and foster trades, trade schools and any enterprise that will guarantee the Negro a livelihood, make his labor in demand to all avenues of life, and to be of practical utility to the race and state.”

African American man in fraternal garb. This costume represents the type of formality and expensive regalia the WPLAA was against.
A group of people comprising the WPLAA in a town was known as a Lodge.

Each Lodge was then further divided into lodges for men, lodges for women, and lodges for juveniles (members under age 21).

Murfreesboro had at least 3 “lodges” of the lodge – Lodge Number 1, Number 4, and Number 6. It is believed that Lodge Number 1 was the juvenile lodge. Lodge Numbers 4 and 6 were for men and women, but it is unclear which one was which (if Lodge 4 was for men or women).

To further complicate matters, men could serve as leaders of the women’s lodge.
Jordan Hotel – Site of the first meetings of the WPLAA in Murfreesboro
Dr. Harden favored the name change and served as an officer of the state organization of the WPLAA. He was charged by the local group with drunkenness.
Working People’s Labor and Art Association (WPLAA) – initial group formed in Murfreesboro in 1896. The state-wide organization changed the name to The Sons and Daughters of Cyrene in 1914. This led to factions in Murfreesboro, and a new group formed.

The new group was called the Working People’s Labor Aid Association and was led by Harvey Childress. It was also known as the Childress faction in the depositions of the lawsuit. It began in October/November 1914.
Mr. Hawkins was a former Professor of Greek and Latin at Walden University in Nashville, Tennessee.
Class Tensions emerge

• “They didn’t want it to carry the name Sons and Daughters of Cyrene they wanted the name of the Working People.” John Watkins (opposed to name change)

---From the Deposition of John Watkins, November 17, 1915

• “I with others thought it would be a more suitable name . . . We have lost the worst element of members that we had in the order. We have lost but very few of the better sort.” James Bumpass (suggested the name change)

---From the Deposition of James Bumpass, December 9, 1915
Nannie Cator’s reaction to the change

- “Daughter President, their wives ain’t no better than I is. I have to work.”

- “Daughter President we are grand as we want to be. We don’t want to be no grander.”

*From the Deposition of Nannie Cator, November 22, 1915.*
Mt. Zion Church, where the Childress faction met and created the new group.
There is more truth than fiction in the statement that there have been troubles without and fear within since we assembled last.” Annual Address of the Supreme Grand President.

“The property at Murfreesboro is in a lawsuit, the other side suing for possession.” Committee on Public Safety

“We see that the membership of our Order has decreased since the last Convention . . .” Committee on Expansion