

SO. PARK HOUSING PROJECT PLANS GO FORWARD

The Chicago Defender (National edition) (1921-1967); Apr 8, 1939;
ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender

SO. PARK HOUSING PROJECT PLANS GO FORWARD

Work on the South Park Housing project is going full speed ahead. Four members of the Race have been employed in important positions. Walter T. Bailey, 4322 Prairie avenue, (pictured in top photo) has been employed as architectural draftsman. In center photo Miss Beverly Green, 61 East Forty-sixth street, also employed as architectural draftsman, is shown pointing out important features on a miniature model of the project to Mr. Bailey and Mrs. Leona M. Stafford, 321 East Forty-fourth street. Lemuel G. McDougal, 5811 Wabash avenue, (not pictured) has been appointed structural engineer for the project.—Photo by Charles Stewart, Jr.



Monday, Feb. 24, 1941

■ Funeral rites are being held in Chicago this afternoon for Walter Thomas Bailey, prominent Chicago architect and well-known native of Kewanee. Mr. Bailey was 57 years old and died Friday in a Chicago hospital.

Known as "Butter" Bailey, he was regarded as one of the greatest black athletes produced by Kewanee High School. He frequently visited a brother, Harry Bailey, who still lives in Kewanee.

100 Years Ago •

, 'dynamic' cheerleaders

■ Kewanee triplets Tommie, Donnie and Ronnie Billiet blew out the candles on their sixth birthday cake, Tuesday, at a party given in their home by their mother, Mrs. Henry Billiet.

■ A neighborhood circus held recently at 1028 Madison Ave., netted \$1.10 which the children donated to the bloodmobile drive in Kewanee. Those participating in the circus were Brenda Balutis, Petey Balutis, Shirley Kimberling, Bonnie Richards, Kay Richards, Danielle Lanson, and Danny Hansen.

▼ 100 years ago

Wednesday, July 26, 1905

(Kewanee Daily Star Courier)

■ Beginning with the coming term, the board of education has added two years to the course of study at the Wethersfield public schools. This will give students, after passing the tenth grade, two years more of study. The board has decided to

arrange a complete high school course in the future. Frank Craig was re-appointed superintendent by the board for the coming school year.

■ Walter T. Bailey, of Kewanee, has just received an appointment of which his friends will be pleased to hear. The position of head of the architectural department of Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute in Tuskegee, Ala., has been offered him by Booker T. Washington. Mr. Bailey has sent his acceptance and will begin work about Aug. 25. A graduate of the University of Illinois, Mr. Bailey is cur-

rently working for Spencer & Temple architects of Champaign. As is generally known, Tuskegee Institute is the greatest educational force among the colored people of America today.

■ Harvest work has been pushed rapidly by the farmers of Henry County during the favorable weather of the past week.

Threshing is in progress and rye, which is the first crop ready for the machines, is showing about average yield. There probably has not been a more ideal summer harvest time in this section of Illinois.

	<p>Bud Light</p> <p>\$12⁹⁹</p> <p>24 pk. cans</p>		<p>7-UP Pro'</p>
	<p>Pabst Blue Ribbon</p> <p>\$11</p> <p>30 pk. cans</p>		
			

Kewanee's Walter T. Bailey made African-American history

Feb 8, 2006
Star Courier

Kewanee's African-American community has a rich and largely untold history.

In honor of February, Black History Month, we wanted to find a little-known story about an African-American from Kewanee who made his or her mark in the world and found Walter T. Bailey.

Like most — if not all — of you, I had never heard of Mr. Bailey until scrolling through Star Courier microfilms last summer compiling our weekly listing of news from 10, 25, 50 and 100 years ago, and, after doing some research, found Bailey, the son of a former slave who came to Kewanee after the Civil War, has several "firsts" to his credit which include working with two major figures in African-American history — Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver.

In the Wednesday, July 26, 1905, Star Courier I found a front page story which reported that Walter T. Bailey of Kewanee had just been appointed head of the architectural department at Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute in Alabama.

According to the story, Bailey was personally offered the position by Booker T. Washington, who founded Tuskegee in 1881 as one of the first institutions of higher education for African-Americans. Also on the faculty was the famous naturalist and inventor George Washington Carver, who was head of the agriculture department at Tuskegee.

At the time he was offered the job at Tuskegee, Bailey was working for Spencer & Temple, Champaign architects "who have one of the largest offices outside of Chicago," the 1905 article stated.

There wasn't much else in the story about this promising young man from Kewanee who, a century ago, had been tabbed for a major position at what was already one of the leading colleges in the nation, except that he was a graduate of the University of Illinois where he "showed talent in his work."

In search of anything I could find about Walter T. Bailey, I went surfing the Internet and found him mentioned in an article on the U of I's commemoration of the 50th anniversary of Brown v. Board



by Dave Clarke

of Education, a 1954 Supreme Court decision which outlawed segregation in public schools. According to the article, Walter T. Bailey, a 1904 graduate, was the first African-American to graduate from the architecture program at the U of I — his first mark on history.

An entry in the 1913 U of I Alumni Record told most of the story. Walter Thomas Bailey was born in Kewanee on Jan. 11, 1882, the son of Emanuel and Lucy Bailey. He was "prepared" at Kewanee High School and graduated in 1904 from the U of I with a Bachelor of Science in Architecture. In high school he was a member of the Architecture Club and apparently worked as a draftsman for a Kewanee architect named Henry Ecklund, two places he may have developed his first interest in designing buildings. Ecklund designed the Victorian house on the

northwest corner of Elliott and West Prospect streets commonly referred to today as the "gingerbread" house.

After graduating from the U of I, Bailey was listed as working for Spencer & Temple in Champaign through September of 1905, when he assumed his new position as head of the architecture department at Tuskegee. According to his alumni entry, Bailey married Josephine McCurdy on Oct. 21, 1903, in Champaign, apparently while still a student. As of 1913, they had one child, Edyth Hazel, born March 8, 1905. In 1913 his address was still listed at Tuskegee.

Continuing to "Google," I then came across a site on Chicago landmarks which included the First Deliverance Church, built at 4315 S. Wabash Ave., in 1939. The architect — Walter T. Bailey. "Designed by the city's first African-American architect (another first) this unique Art Moderne-style structure reflects the innovative character of the congregation that built it," the site states. Bailey also may have been one of the first black architects in America. Rev. Clarence H. Cobbs, founder of the church, which was designated a Chicago Landmark in 1994,

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▼ **Around town**

was a pioneer in Christian radio broadcasting.

On another site, Bailey is mentioned as one of the architects involved in development of what became known as Chicago's "Black Metropolis," a "city-within-a-city" in the 1920s built by and for the African-American community centered in the vicinity of State and 35th streets. One of the black-owned and financed building projects listed in a thematic nomination of the area to the National Register of Historic Places was the seven-story Knights of Pythias building erected in 1926 "after plans by Chicago's first black architect, Walter T. Bailey."

Chicago's "Black Metropolis" is said to contain some of the "most significant landmarks of black urban history in the United States."

Finally, Bailey's name turned up twice on a site listing African-American historic sites in Evanston. He is listed as the architect of the Mount Moriah Masonic Temple, built in 1929, and a brick house built in 1926 for Dr. Rudolph Penn which became Evanston's first Community Hospital in 1930. A new building was constructed in 1952 and was in use until 1980.

As far as his Kewanee background, the records of Pleasant View Cemetery at the Kewanee Public Library revealed

that his father, Emanuel Bailey, died on May 23, 1888, six years after Walter was born. Going to the 1880 Kewanee census, we found that Emanuel Bailey, 38, was listed as a laborer, and his wife, Lucy, 28, listed as a housekeeper. Emanuel was born in Alabama and Lucy in Missouri and in 1880, they had six children ranging in age from 1 to 9, but no Walter (He wasn't born until 1882). With his father's death date, we went back to the May, 30, 1888, Kewanee Courier and found he died of consumption at age 44 and had been a resident of Kewanee for more than 20 years, meaning he came here around 1868, and "was a respected citizen." Born in Alabama, he would have been around 20 at the time of the Civil War and, most likely a slave. The account of his death states, "He leaves a wife and seven children" which by then would have included Walter. It means that Lucy was left to raise seven kids on a housekeeper's wages and, being the youngest, Walter probably was the one the rest of the family wanted to get an education. Lucy is not listed as buried in Pleasant View so it's likely that after the kids were grown, she went to live with one of them who may have moved away and is buried elsewhere.

For a young African-American living in Kewanee today, becoming an architect is an attainable dream, but to Walter T. Bailey in 1900, it must have seemed unthinkable.

Yet, Bailey took his start in Kewanee, worked hard and earned himself a place not only in our city's history, but also broke down racial barriers and achieved unheard of success for his time, earning him a place in African-American history, as well.

State
Lottery

▼ **Tuesday, February 7**

Pick Three-Midday: 7-5-1

Pick Three-Evening: 8-6-1

Walter T. Bailey: Dreamer before 'the dream'

Jan 20,
2016

Monday was the day we set aside to honor the life of civil rights activist Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., even though King was born on Jan. 15, 1929 in Atlanta, Ga.

Nevertheless, this year it was also the day I found the possible answer to a question I have had about a man who was one of the most famous African-Americans ever born in Kewanee — Walter Thomas Bailey.

I did a column about Bailey, the first African-American to graduate from the University of Illinois School of Architecture, 10 years ago in February for Black History Month.

I was reminded about Bailey last week when the Downtown Kewanee Facebook page posted a photo of the man on his birthday, Jan. 11, 1882, submitted by John Sarff, son of the late Jerry Sarff, Kewanee teacher and historian.

Exactly a week later, while scrolling through the Star Courier microfilms at the Kewanee Public Library for today's "yester-years" column (See Page A2), I found a short story on the front page of the Thursday, Jan. 20, 1916, Star Courier about a man I knew was connected to Bailey, Kewanee architect Henry Eckland.

In the early 1900s there was so much building going on in Kewanee that three or four architects lived and had offices here at any given time. In my research on Bailey, I found he had been employed as a



Around town

Dave Clarke

draftsmen for Eckland in his Kewanee office in 1905, a year after graduating from the U of I.

He also worked for an architect in Champaign before moving to Chicago, where he became quite



Walter T. Bailey

successful as that city's first African-American architect. He was also Illinois' first licensed African-American architect.

I wondered how he got from small towns like Kewanee and Champaign to a large city like Chicago. The 1916 story may have had the answer.

"Architect Henry Eckland, formerly of Kewanee, and well known

here, is the senior member of the new firm of Eckland, Furgard & Knapp," the story said.

It is quite possible that Eckland, Bailey's hometown mentor, had something to do with turning his attention toward Chicago. The 1916 story says Eckland "has had an architect's office in Moline since his departure from Kewanee a few years ago." It is likely that Bailey and Eckland stayed in touch explaining how he landed in Chicago.

One of Eckland's best-known projects was the residence of opera house owner Thomas McClure, which still stands on the northwest corner of West Prospect and Elliott streets. According to an advertisement in the 1898-99 Kelly's Directory of Henry County, Eckland (the name is spelled Eklund in the ad) had an office over 218 N. Tremont St., which would be across and a little north of Peoples National Bank. A Coast to Coast hardware store was on the first floor and is now part of the Good's Furniture complex.

"Will furnish handsome and carefully prepared designs of churches, school houses, business blocks, and residences," the ad reads.

Bailey's resume' includes a stint as head of the architecture department of Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute at Tuskegee, Ala., offered him by Booker T. Washington, one of the nation's leading African-American educators and orators.

In Chicago, Bailey made his mark designing buildings for what became known as the "Black Metropolis," a center of African-American culture, business and innovation in the 1920s. Today it is a National Historic

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▼ **Around town**

of Chicago.

In 1939 he designed the First Church of Deliverance at 4315 S. Wabash Ave., one of his best-known works, which was designated a city landmark in 2005.

According to his online biography, Walter T. Bailey died in Chicago on Feb. 21, 1941, at age 59, from pneumonia and complications caused by heart disease.

Obituaries stated

he was working on two projects at the time.

Born four days and nearly 50 years apart, Bailey was an example of what can come of a dream long before Dr. King expressed it from the steps of the Lincoln

Memorial in 1963. From a small town in Illinois at the beginning of the 20th century, he became a giant in a profession seldom associated with his race, at the time.

One more reason to be proud of Kewanee.

Built by Bailey

Black architect's work still utilized; local mural fundraising sees success

By Dave Clarke
For the Star Courier

KEWANEE — As fundraising for the Walter T. Bailey mural shifts into high gear, local historians and genealogists are learning more about a man who they have found is widely known by academic, architectural and African-American organizations but, until recent years, unknown in his own hometown.

Kewanee native Joy Hernandez-Butler is heading up a team of artists and researchers hoping to paint a Walldogs mural on the south wall of the B & B Printing building during the Prairie Chicken Chalk Art Festival in mid-July. The mural would be done by Walldogs artists and honor Bailey, a 1900 graduate of Kewanee High School and the first black student to graduate from the University of Illinois School of Architecture. He was also Illinois' and Chicago's first black architect, timing the mural project with the state's 200th anniversary celebration.

The group is trying to raise \$10,000 and has set up a GoFundMe page at <https://www.gofundme.com/walter-t-baileys-mural>. Donations may also be made to the Kewanee Arts Council by contacting Dianne Packee at Reiman's Harley-Davidson, 623 N. Main St. So far, just over half of the money has been raised, including donations from the Prairie Chicken Chalk Art Festival, Boss Mfg. Co., the Illinois Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, and a number of individuals



Photos by Allix Rogers

The Church of Deliverance (above), on Chicago's South Side, with its Art Moderne style, was considered revolutionary for church architecture when it was designed in 1939 by Walter T. Bailey. The twin towers were added in 1946, after Bailey's death. The sanctuary (top), also groundbreaking in design, features a multi-colored cross suspended from the ceiling of the auditorium.



Walter T. Bailey

Plans are being made for a bake sale on Saturday, June 16, at Peoples National Bank to raise funds for the mural.

Walter's parents were former slaves who could neither read nor write and were married in Kewanee in 1869. He was born in 1882 and his father, a laborer, died in 1888, leaving his mother to raise 10 children by taking in washing.

But, judging by the number of times his name appears in newspaper stories from the time, Bailey was an accepted and

active high school student. He was on the speech team, football team, in the glee club and played the guitar. He was listed in the social news items among those attending parties given by his white classmates.

After graduation, Bailey was one of 24 students from Kewanee to go to college, with seven enrolling at the University of Illinois, where he majored in architecture. His inspiration may have been a Kewanee architect named Henry Ecklund who had immigrated from Sweden when he was 18, went to the University of Illinois in 1894, obtained a degree in architecture, then set up an office in Kewanee.

When Bailey graduated from the U. of I. in 1904, he came back to Kewanee and worked as a draftsman in Ecklund's office. He also came home with a wife, marrying Josephine ("Josie") McCurdy, of Villa Ridge, Ill., in 1903 in

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▼ **Bailey**

Champaign. The only work researchers have been able to put Bailey's name to in Kewanee in the brief time he was here is the remodeling of second floor apartments in a building on the west side the 200 block of North Main Street, now Good's Park, reported in the *Star Courier* on Sept. 14, 1904.

Josie gave birth to the first of their two daughters, Edyth, in Champaign in March of 1905 -- so by that time Walter possibly saw little future in Kewanee and had moved back to his college town. There were already three full-time architects here and even though Kewanee was booming, in his opinion, there may not have been enough opportunity here.

In 1905 he is listed as "assisting in the planning" of the Colonel Wolf Elementary School being built for the Champaign School District by architects Spencer & Temple. The building is now owned by the University of Illinois and houses part of the College of Education.

In July of 1905, news of his appointment as head of the



Tuskegee University /Steven L. Markos

Tompkins Dining Hall and Student Center at Tuskegee University, as it looks today, was designed by Kewanee native and architect Walter T. Bailey. It was completed in 1910 and bears features similar to Kewanee's First Baptist Church which was designed by Kewanee architect and Bailey's mentor, Henry Ecklund.

Architectural Department at Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute, in Alabama, by its founder, Booker T. Washington, appeared in the *Star Courier*. Tuskegee was one of the leading black colleges at the time and was growing.

Bailey had applied at Tuskegee after graduating from the U. of I. in June of 1904, but was not hired until September of 1905, working in Kewanee and Champaign in the meantime. He joined an all-black faculty that included George Washington Carver, well-known for his agricultural research.

Like the rest of America at the turn of the century, Tuskegee was putting up brick buildings to replace the original ones made of lumber in new forms of cre-

ative expression. Only at Tuskegee, the faculty designed the buildings and the students built them learning masonry, carpentry, tin-smithing and other trades.

Eventually, Bailey's ability to produce excellent students and his drawing skills caught the attention of his superiors, including Tuskegee's Director of Industries, architect Robert Robinson Taylor, the first African American to graduate from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Bailey designed two of Tuskegee's largest buildings, Tompkins Dining Hall and White Hall, the main girls dormitory. Both are still in use today with Tompkins, which now includes the student center, undergo-

ing extensive interior remodeling in 2013.

While at Tuskegee, Bailey also designed the Negro Building at the Alabama Agricultural State Fair, and two black churches, all in nearby Montgomery, the state capital. Washington was the speaker at the opening of Bailey's agricultural building in 1906. One of the churches became a landmark in the Civil Rights movement.

Bailey also drew plans for the Ripley Street Baptist Church which, in 1961, was a refuge for the passengers on a Freedom Ride which met with violence from an angry mob at the Greyhound Bus Station in downtown Montgomery. From the church under siege, Dr. Martin Luther King called U.S. Attorney General

Robert Kennedy who federalized the Alabama National Guard to escort the group to safety.

In 1910, Bailey returned to Champaign to receive his Masters in Architecture from the University of Illinois.

In 1916, he left Tuskegee, possibly due to the death of Booker T. Washington on Nov. 14, 1915, and moved to Memphis, Tenn. There, he had a second-floor office on Beale Street, now referred to as the "Home of the Blues." Bailey was commissioned to design various buildings for a national black fraternal organization, the Knights of Pythias. Among the buildings he designed were the Fraternal Trust & Savings Bank in Memphis, the Knights of Pythias Bath House (for blacks only) in Hot Springs, Ark., and the Knights of Pythias Building in Nashville. That work led him in 1924 to move to Chicago where he was commissioned to build the eight-story, National Knights of Pythias Temple, at the time, one of the city's tallest buildings, in the South Side's Bronzeville neighborhood. The area was known as "The Black Metropolis" because it attracted African-American population and businesses moving away from the Jim Crow laws of the

South. Bailey's lasting achievement was the Church of Deliverance, built in 1939, which became nationally known through its weekly radio broadcasts of gospel music. Such artists as Nat King Cole, Louis Armstrong, Dinah Washington and others performed there. The church, designed in Art Moderne style with sleek exterior lines and a large, multi-colored cross suspended from the ceiling of the auditorium, was considered groundbreaking for church architecture. Church of Deliverance is still in use and has been designated a Chicago Landmark.

At the time of his death at age 57 in 1941 from pneumonia and complications from heart disease, Bailey was one working on the Ida B. Wells Housing Project for the Chicago Housing Authority.

Walter T. Bailey's achievements in his short life were amazing and trailblazing for a young black man who grew up in Kewanee in the late 1800s with very little going for him but an apparent desire to draw buildings on paper, with several becoming lasting historic landmarks of our day in Tuskegee, Alabama, Chicago, and elsewhere.

A man of firsts

Kewanee's Bailey to get downtown mural

By Dave Clarke
For the Star Courier

KEWANEE — Show of hands. How many people reading this story have ever heard of Walter T. Bailey? Thought so. That may change if the latest project of Joy Hernandez-Butler succeeds.

Hernandez-Butler, a Kewanee native now living in Indianapolis, is raising funds for an independent mural which hopefully will be drawn this summer on the south wall of the B&B Printing building in the 400 block of South Main Street, honoring an important figure in African-American history who was born here in 1882.

Bailey is the first African American to graduate from the University of Illinois School of Architecture, the first African American to be registered as a licensed architect in Illinois, an associate of Booker T. Washington at Alabama's Tuskegee Institute, and the man who designed the church in Montgomery,



Around town

Dave Clarke

like Kewanee do all of that, while most African-Americans were considered second-class citizens?

I first heard of Walter Bailey when I came across a story in a 1905 Star Courier announcing that Booker T. Washington had appointed him head of the architectural department at what was then called the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute, the leading black college in the U.S. of the day.

In February of 2006 I wrote a Black History Month column about my "find." Since then, I have written another column, the Kewanee Historical Society has developed a file on him, and now he is being researched by Hernandez-Butler, who has worked on Walldogs



Above: Walter Bailey, third from the left in the front row, was a fullback on the 1898 Kewanee High School football team. Also pictured are, standing from left to right, Dwight Blish, Pearl Bowen, Coach Naseef Melaik (Naseef may last name), A.W. Errett Jr. and Ellis Ingram. Center row, Fred Peterson, Thomas Blair. Paul Shilton and Fred Rowley. First row, Bert Norris, Rolland Anthony, Walter Bailey and John Kirley. (Photo courtesy Kewanee Historical Society)



Left: The First Baptist Church in Montgomery, Ala., an historic landmark in the Civil Rights move-

Spring 2018

▼ **Bailey**

where he was the first black student in the School of Architecture. I wondered how that could have happened in 1900 America. Two things, I believe, made it possible. The U of I had a new, forward-seeing president who was trying to broaden the university's mission, and a Kewanee architect named Henry Ecklund. A Swedish immigrant who came to Kewanee when he was 18, Ecklund also graduated from the U of I with a degree in architecture. After graduating with a bachelor's degree in 1904, Bailey worked briefly for an architectural firm in Champaign, where he married his wife, Josephine, and for Ecklund in Kewanee. It is conceivable that Ecklund discovered Bailey when he was in the KHS Architect's Club, or Bailey sought him out, but it's a safe bet

design buildings. and students construct them, making the bricks themselves. Bailey's most notable contribution was White Hall, a three-story woman's dormitory which still stands. While at Tuskegee. Bailey was commissioned to build The First Baptist Church in Montgomery, Ala.

From 1952 to 1961, the church was led by civil rights activist Ralph Abernathy, a good friend of Martin Luther King, Jr., who preached a few blocks away, at the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church. During the Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955-56), it was the location of mass meetings. On January 10, 1957, there was a bombing at the church and its parsonage (Abernathy's residence). On May 21, 1961, the church was a refuge for the passengers on the Freedom ride which met with violence at the Greyhound Bus Station in downtown Montgomery. The church was filled with some 1,500 wor-

General Robert Kennedy for help. In 1916, Bailey moved to Memphis where his office was located on now-famous Beale Street, and where he designed many government and fraternal buildings. In 1928, he moved to Chicago, where he became the city's first black architect and designed many buildings for the near-southside neighborhood known as the "Black Metropolis," or Bronzeville, a mecca for black businesses in the 1920s and 30s. His best known work was the eight-story Knight of Pythias building which, at the time, was one of the tallest buildings in Chicago. Again, Henry Ecklund may have been part of Bailey's reason for moving to Chicago, where building was booming. Ecklund moved from Kewanee to Moline and eventually became associated with a Chicago architectural firm, and may have convinced his former apprentice to move there. Bailey's lasting legacy, however, is the First Church of

needed renovation. According to a story last month on the Chicago Historic Preservation website, "A historic Art Moderne gem on Chicago's South Side will be getting some much needed repairs thanks to a measure recently approved by the Commission on Landmarks. The \$228,000 grant via the Adopt-a-Landmark program will fund exterior terra-cotta work on Bronzeville's First Church of Deliverance at 4315 S. Wabash Avenue as well as restore its interior murals and doors. The streamlined building typifies Art Moderne architecture thanks to its smooth surfaces and use of glass-block windows. It was officially designated a Chicago Landmark in 1994. The structure also served an important cultural and artistic role. In 1934, First Church launched a radio broadcast that gave Rev. Clarence H.

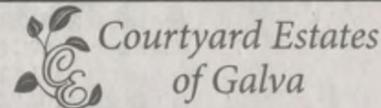
Cobbs and his 200-person choir national exposure. Music director Kenneth Morris brought in a Hammond electric organ in 1939 — a move that is credited for revolutionizing the sound of gospel music. Notable musicians such as Louis Armstrong, Nat King Cole, Dinah Washington, and "mother of gospel music" Sallie Martin have all been associated with the congregation and its broadcasts.

Bailey died Feb. 21, 1941, in Chicago, of pneumonia and heart disease.

Hernandez-Butler has a number of peo-

ple helping her here and elsewhere with research and design, but needs about \$10,000 to make the mural a reality. She has been in contact with Tuskegee University, the First Church of Deliverance, and others, telling them about the project to remember Walter T. Bailey.

She has set up a GoFundMe page at: <https://www.gofundme.com/walter-t-baileys-mural>. Joy says large donations will go through the Walldogs nonprofit set-up. The latest on the project can be found on her Downtown Kewanee Facebook page.



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of the Architect's Club at KHS, where he graduated in 1900. He was apparently accepted immediately at the University of Illinois,

came to Kewanee after the Civil War. He was the only black player on the Kewanee High School football team and — of significant interest — a member

Butler, a former slave who 1882, the son of Emmanuel Bailey was born Jan. 11, 1958. took refuge from a mob in Chicago including the Prairie projects in her hometown

Martin Luther King, Jr., and other Freedom Riders took refuge from a mob in 1958. How did Bailey, who came from a small town

ment in the 50s and 60s, was designed by Kewanee native Walter T. Bailey and built in 1915 while he was head of the architecture department at Tuskegee Institute.

Mural project reunites Bailey descendants

By Dave Clarke
For the Star Courier

KEWANEE — When Joy Hernandez-Butler "went deep down the Walter Bailey rabbit hole," in search of descendants of Illinois' Kewanee-born first black architect, she had no idea she would come out the other end helping two women in California discover their roots and each other.

Hernandez-Butler, a Kewanee native who now works for a TV station and owns an art gallery in Indianapolis, has launched a one-woman effort to paint a mural honoring Bailey this summer.

A 1900 graduate of Kewanee High School, Bailey was the son of freed slaves who came to Kewanee from Missouri a few years after the Civil War as did most of this city's earliest black settlers.



Walter Bailey



Genevieve Bailey

Mentored by Kewanee architect Henry Ecklund, Bailey was accepted at the University of Illinois where he was the first African-American to graduate from the School of Architecture in 1904.

After briefly working with Ecklund on the designs of buildings in Kewanee, he was discovered by Booker T. Washington and appointed head of the Mechanical Design Department at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, where he designed several buildings on campus.

While there he also designed a church in Montgomery, Ala., where years later Dr. Martin Luther King sought refuge from a mob in the early 60s.

Bailey went on to work in Memphis and Chicago and is now recognized as one of the latter city's landmark architects. His first major accomplishment was the eight-story Knights of Pythias Temple in the Bronzeville neighborhood once considered the tallest building designed by a black architect.

While trying to raise the \$10,000 needed to make the Bailey mural a reality, Hernandez-

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▼ **Bailey**

Butler has been working with artist friends she met when the Walldogs created 16 historic murals in Kewanee in 2013-14 to design a Walter T. Bailey mural tentatively planned for the south wall of B&B Printing on South Main Street.

She also set out to find any surviving family members who could be invited to the unveiling. Through social media, she connected with local genealogists Steve Morrison, Marla Millman Roth and Rose Melbourne. Along with several others who offered to help, Joy dubbed the group the "Scooby-Doo Squad," after a TV cartoon series which features four teenagers and a talking Great Dane dog who solve weekly mysteries.

Research found that Bailey's father, Emanuel, was listed in early census reports as a domestic servant and later a laborer. He died in 1888 when Walter was six years old and is buried in Potter's Field at Pleasant View Cemetery. His mother, Lucinda, was listed as a homemaker who took in washing. Neither could reportedly read or write. Their economic and educational status makes the fact that Walter even got in the door at the U of I all the more amazing. Emanuel and Lucinda apparently had 10 children with only three surviving to adulthood, including Walter.

As early as 1905 their address was 235 Elliott St. In the 1930s Lucinda went to live with Walter and his family in Chicago where she died in 1940 at age 97. Walter Bailey died in 1941 at age 57. Efforts to find any living descendants of his two daughters, Edyth and Alberta, were unsuccessful. One became a cabaret singer, the

other a secretary.

The last family connection in Kewanee appears to have been a nephew, James L. Bailey, who died in 1968 at age 53. He was the son of Walter's brother, Harry, a local barber, and wife Iola Estelle Bailey, who both died in the 1940s. According to his obituary, Jim had no children, was a World War II veteran and worked for Walworth. He was survived by a brother, Hayden, and sister Genevieve, both living, at the time, in Los Angeles.

They proved to be the clues to the discovery of living relatives and a family reunion, of sorts.

By mid-March, Genevieve Bailey Taylor had been found living in Los Angeles. After a "cold call," Joy said the unsuspecting 95-year-old is "still alive and fiesty."

"She is surprised we are doing this, but so appreciative," she said.

Genevieve still drives and manages the apartment complex where she lives. She married Thomas Taylor of Canton and moved to California, where she worked in real estate since "there were few jobs in Kewanee for black women" in the 1940s.

She was only one of two black students — both girls — in the 1942 graduating class at Kewanee High School. According to the 1942 Kewanite, senior classmates included a future mayor, Al Hill, and a future judge, Bill O'Connor. Under her yearbook photo were the words "Doggone Dependable."

Her husband died from a heart attack in the 1970s at age 51 and she has not been back to Kewanee since 1945.

Walter Bailey's 1941 obituary, however, said "The Chicago man had frequently visited in Kewanee," where his only close family, at the time, would have been his brother Harry, sister-in-law Iola, nephews Hayden and Jim and niece Genevieve, which means she may be the only living family member who remembers

Walter Bailey when he was alive.

In the 1939-42 Kewanee city directories, Harry, the barber, and Iola, a homemaker, are still alive and living at 235 Elliott St. Son Jim was a shoe shiner at Dave Vlahos' shop, Hayden was a car washer at the Parkside Garage and Genevieve was in high school.

The most exciting "find" on the Bailey family tree was yet to come.

Late last month, the Scooby-Doo Squad followed a trail through Illinois, Michigan and California that led them to Tara Bailey Medina, who lives with her son and husband, Miguel, in Pomona, Calif. "

We blew her mind," Joy said. She is a PhD. student at USC, works in Early Music as a researcher and his a musician herself, Joy learned when she called. Tara Bailey would be around 38 and still uses Bailey as her professional name.

"She loves research and is now researching everything about Kewanee (which she had never heard of), and great-great uncle Walter (whom she had also never heard of) she can get her hands on," Joy said. She is the daughter of Hayden Bailey's son, Hayden Marvin ("H.M." for short), and is Genevieve's niece, although they had lost track of each other over the years.

"We filled in all the blanks for her and she is going to contact Genevieve since they are practically neighbors," Joy said. Tara has volunteered to join the Scooby-Doos and help track down any other surviving family members.

Hernandez-Butler and her group turned up family history neither woman knew and now want to know more about, including their slave history and origin of the Bailey name.

"She (Tara) said (in one phone call) she went from being an oddball with no family tree to now

having several 'roots' of the tree and a famous great-great-uncle," Joy said.

Genevieve said it was not likely she could make it to Kewanee for a dedication of the mural, but wants to be kept up on everything. Tara said she loves the mural idea, plans to help with fundraising and would like to travel to Kewanee to see it when its done.

Hernandez-Butler now has her intrepid group of detectives searching for the blueprints of any building Walter T. Bailey designed or helped design in Champaign, Kewanee, Tuskegee, Memphis or Chicago that would have his name on them. She would like to include them in the mural. Anyone who can help with this, or any other part of the project, can e-mail Joy at nothingtofear@hotmail.com. Updates on the project are posted on the Downtown Kewanee Facebook page.

The biggest hurdle is still money. Some of the organizations she has contacted have told Joy they might be able to come up with some funds, but so far nothing definite. A GoFundMe page has been set up at <https://www.gofundme.com/walter-t-baileys-mural>, but so far only a little more than \$1,300 has been contributed and donations of all sizes are being accepted there.

Those who wish to make larger, tax deductible contributions can send them to: Walldogs Public Art, 317 N. 13th St., Centerville, Iowa, 52544. Designate the donation as being for the "Walter T. Bailey mural" to ensure it is credited to the Baily fund. Donations are being collected by Dianne Packee.

A design is being created by one of the Walldogs artists and Joy hopes they will be able to paint it on the wall at B&B during this summer's Prairie Chicken Chalk Art Festival, which will be held July 13-14.