

Dr. Gwen Patton, Archivist
Trenholm Tech Archives
Division of Library-Archives
1225 Air Base Boulevard
Montgomery, Alabama 36108



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Abstract

Arthur Madison: The Forerunner of the Voting Rights Movement by Dr. Gwen Patton

Arthur Madison (1888-1957) was born on the land purchased by his father, Eli Madison, in 1880---the Mays Plantation of 2,000 acres in Montgomery County, Alabama. The plantation was renamed "The Madison Park Community."

The Patriarch Eli Madison instilled in his children the importance of education, coupled with skills in trade and industry. Undergirding his instruction, the patriarch imparted a profound sense of race pride and consciousness.

Arthur Madison earned his Jurisprudence Degree from Columbia University in 1923. After graduation, he settled in Harlem, New York, established his law practice, served as legal counselor for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and as financial counselor for Father Divine, an influential Black minister with a huge church following and an array of successful business enterprises under the auspices of his church.

Though living in Harlem, Arthur Madison maintained dual residency, spending at least four months out of a year in his beloved "Madison Park Community." He, also, passed the Alabama Bar, which made him eligible to practice law in Alabama.

In 1943, Arthur Madison filed a class action suit against the Montgomery Board of Registrars, citing racial discrimination that prohibited Black Montgomerians to become voters. He was disbarred in Alabama in 1945 for his efforts, twenty years before the 1965 Voting Rights Movement.

My presentation will discuss the family life of Arthur Madison, the development of "The Madison Park Community" with his financial support, his movement and ordeal to obtain voting rights for Black Alabamians and the aftermath of his life as a result of this traumatic experience.