

PRIMARY SOURCES FOR EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS

Benjamin Tonsler, Black Educator and Community Leader, Obituary, 1917

A COLORED EDUCATOR DEAD

Benjamin E. Tonsler, for nearly 30 years the earnest and efficient principal of the Jefferson Graded School for colored children, died of pneumonia yesterday afternoon at his home, 327 Sixth Street, S. W., after an illness of less than one week.

The funeral will be held at 3:30 o'clock tomorrow afternoon from the First Colored Baptist Church, the service to be conducted by the pastor, Rev. C. M. Long. The interment will be in Oak Hill Cemetery.

Principal Tonsler was in the sixtieth year of his age and was born and reared near Earlysville, in this county. Educated at Hampton Institute he returned to his native county and in the early 80's was elected a teacher in the colored public school, not long since established. After six years of effective work he was promoted to the position of principal of the school and by his earnestness and devotion to the upbuilding of his race he has earned a high place in the estimation of the school authorities of the State. His steadiness of

purpose and appreciation of the changed conditions since the Civil War period will easily rank him among the highest of his people in this section and in the South. Quiet and unassuming, but with a clear perception of the vast field for good which lay before those of his race who are ambitious to rise, he impressed himself on the rising generations under him in a way which won the admiration and esteem of all his white neighbors. In his smaller field it may be justly said without exaggeration that he measured up to the high standard of usefulness to his people which was set by Booker Washington and men of his stamp.

Benjamin Tonsler was married to Fannie Gildersleeve, of this city. She survives, with six children—Emma Harris, of Alderson, W. Va.; Compton and Gildersleeve Tonder, of this city; Joliff Curtis, of Chicago; Mabel Sampson, of this city, and Basil Tunstall, of Richmond. He also leaves two brothers, Jerry and Horace Tonder, of this city, and one sister, Judith Stewart, of Washington, D. C.

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