

The Heritage of the Polite Family

Generations in Lancaster committed to church, community & country



Mr. & Mrs. Polite at 540 North Street, late 1950s

Abraham Lawrence Polite (1874-1968)

M. Blanche Richardson Polite (1881-1965)

Among many areas of community involvement, Mr. & Mrs. Polite were founding members of the Board of Directors of the Crispus Attucks Community Center.

Mr. Polite was widely known and recognized as a social activist, musician, teacher, political and religious leader who helped to organize the Negro Civic League of Southeastern Pennsylvania and the Independent Benevolent & Protective Order of Elks.

Mrs. Polite was a longtime Stewardess Board member of Bethel AME Church.

The Polites raised their five children at their home at 540 North Street:
A.L. Polite, Jr., J. Stanley Polite, Ruth M. Duvall Polite, Nelson Polite, Sr.,
and E. Naomi Jones Polite.

Abraham Lawrence Polite (1874-1968)

Introduction

Abraham L. Polite, Sr. was born in Ridgeland, South Carolina on the 10th of April 1874, with the Civil War a close and abiding memory for nearly everyone in his world.

He in many ways was a child of Reconstruction, the sweeping Federal program in support of the formerly enslaved that was massively disrupted when he was a young boy of only 3 or 4 years. His parents, John and Charlotte Polite, experienced the ostensible end of chattel enslavement in this country, with the enactment of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the United States Constitution, opening the long and arduous path for formerly enslaved Africans to become recognized as full American citizens.

Polite is a family name in South Carolina and Georgia to this day, but information is incomplete on whether Abraham L. Polite's parents were enslaved or free at the time of the Civil War and the 13th Amendment.

Abraham L. Polite biographical sketch by Robert Herr of Lancaster, based on research and documentation materials supplied to this project by Nelson Polite, Jr., and Leroy T. Hopkins, Jr., PhD—February 6, 2021

As young Abraham grew, Reconstruction would end, the Jim Crow years would begin, and many dreams from the Civil War -- from President Lincoln's vision to the newly-minted Civil Rights Amendments -- all would be greatly diminished if not crushed for nearly 100 years. Abraham directly experienced these national developments and at age 29 decided to move north to work in the tobacco industry, first in Philadelphia and then Lancaster. In Lancaster, he first lived at 133 South Beaver Street.

By 1903, family history indicates he was employed in tobacco processing. Research continues to determine where he was employed in this industry and what was the name of the company.

Early in his career he was the head of the waiter's union. His occupations also included employment at Armstrong Industries as a Porter and the Lancaster City as a janitor.

At age 37 he married M. Blanche Richardson (1881-1965) and together they raised five children at their home at 540 North Street: A.L. Polite Jr., J. Stanley Polite, Ruth M. Polite (Duvall), Nelson Polite Sr., and E. Naomi Polite (Jones). Mr. Polite resided at the family home until his death on January 10, 1968.

Continued



Abraham L. Polite
(1874-1968)



M. Blanche Richardson Polite
(1881-1965)

Abraham L. Polite in the 1910 US Census, Lancaster, PA

STATE Pennsylvania COUNTY Lancaster DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND LABOR-BUREAU OF THE CENSUS
THIRTEENTH CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES: 1910-POPULATION

TOWNSHIP OR OTHER DIVISION OF COUNTY Lancaster City (part) NAME OF INCORPORATED PLACE Lancaster City (part) SUPERVISOR'S DISTRICT NO. 49 SHEET NO. 13 B
ENUMERATION DISTRICT NO. 13 WARD OF CITY John T. Martin Jr. ENUMERATOR 5638

NAME OF INSTITUTION None ENUMERATED BY ME ON THE 5-3 DAY OF April 1910.

AGE	SEX	NAME	RELATION	PERSONAL DESCRIPTION	ACTIVITY			EDUCATION	OCCUPATION	EDUCATION	ADDED IN 1909	REMARKS	
					Place of birth of this person, give the state or territory, if of foreign birth, give the country.	Place of birth of father of this person.	Place of birth of mother of this person.						
26	M	Abraham L. Polite	Boarder	36 Y. 32 M. 10 D. 0	Pennsylvania	Pennsylvania	Pennsylvania	English	None	Private	W	16	74
26	F	Mitahell Grace	Boarder	26 Y. 26 S.	Pennsylvania	Pennsylvania	Pennsylvania	English	Waiter	Hotel	W	12	74
26	M	Carl H. Frank	Boarder	26 Y. 26 S.	Pennsylvania	Pennsylvania	Pennsylvania	English	Porter	Restaurant	W	0	74

512	138	178	Mitahell Grace	Boarder	26 Y. 26 S.	Pennsylvania	Pennsylvania	Pennsylvania	English	Waiter	Private	W	16	74
512	138	178	Abraham L. Polite	Boarder	36 Y. 32 M. 10 D. 0	South Carolina	South Carolina	South Carolina	English	None	Hotel	W	12	74
650	268	274	Anna Dirlton	Wife	26 Y. 26 S.	Pennsylvania	Pennsylvania	Pennsylvania	English	Waiter	Hotel	W	0	74
650	268	274	Carl H. Frank	Boarder	26 Y. 26 S.	Pennsylvania	Pennsylvania	Pennsylvania	English	Porter	Restaurant	W	0	74
517	204	274	Frank Frank	Boarder	26 Y. 26 S.	Pennsylvania	Pennsylvania	Pennsylvania	English	Porter	Restaurant	W	0	74

Abraham Polite is enumerated in the 1910 Federal Census as a 36-year-old single Black male, who was born in South Carolina where his parents also were born. He is residing here as a boarder at 512 South Beaver Street in Lancaster and employed as a waiter in a hotel. He can read and write and was out of work for some 12 weeks during 1909.

1920 US Census, Lancaster, PA

STATE Pennsylvania COUNTY Lancaster TOWNSHIP OR OTHER DIVISION OF COUNTY Ward 7

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE—BUREAU OF THE CENSUS
FOURTEENTH CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES: 1920—POPULATION

NAME OF INCORPORATED PLACE Lancaster city WARD OF CITY 7

ENUMERATED BY ME ON THE 8th DAY OF January, 1920. Leon R. Frank ENUMERATOR 5057

Supervisor's District No. 4 Sheet No. 6 B

Enumeration District No. 70

Serial number of inhabitant in family	Place of birth of each person and parents of each person (If born in the United States, give the state or territory. If of foreign birth, give the place of birth.)	NAME	RELATION	SEX	AGE	MARRIAGE	CITIZENSHIP	EDUCATION	NATIVITY AND MOTHER TONGUE		OCCUPATION
									Place of birth	Mother tongue	
440/124/130	Horn Anthony	Son	M	13	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/131	Carl	Son	M	9	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/132	William	Son	M	5	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/133	Joseph	Son	M	3	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/134	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/135	Joseph	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/136	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/137	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/138	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/139	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/140	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/141	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/142	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/143	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/144	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/145	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/146	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/147	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/148	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/149	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/150	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/151	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/152	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/153	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/154	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/155	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/156	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/157	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/158	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/159	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/160	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/161	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/162	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/163	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/164	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/165	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/166	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/167	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/168	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/169	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/170	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/171	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/172	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/173	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/174	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/175	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/176	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/177	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/178	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/179	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/180	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/181	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/182	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/183	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/184	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/185	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/186	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/187	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/188	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/189	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/190	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/191	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/192	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/193	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/194	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/195	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/196	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/197	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/198	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/199	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None
440/124/200	Charles	Son	M	1	S				Germany	German	None

1920 United States Federal Census documents Abraham L. Polite by—“Name: Volity A L” This was apparently shown due to poor penmanship on the part of the census takers. Note also that this enumerator apparently made a mistake in showing the place of birth and language of Mr. Polite’s parents as “Germany” when research shows his place of birth as South Carolina, the same as his parents. His place of birth: Pennsylvania and his residence with his wife Blanche was then in Lancaster’s Ward 7, at 424 North Street, a rental property.

Abraham Lawrence Polite—World War I-era Draft Registration


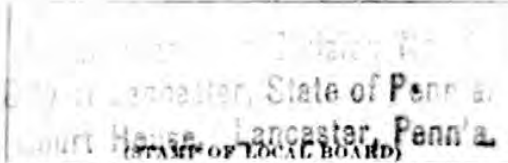
REGISTRATION CARD

SERIAL NUMBER	2897	ORDER NUMBER	A 20
1 NAME (Last, first, middle) <i>Abraham Lawrence Polite</i>			
2 PERMANENT HOME ADDRESS <i>424 1/2 North Lancaster Lane. Pa.</i>			
3 AGE IN YEARS <i>45</i> 4 DATE OF BIRTH <i>Apr. 10 1873</i>			
RACE			
White	Negro	Oriental	Indian
5	6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7	8
U. S. CITIZEN		ALIEN	
Native Born	Naturalized	Citizen by Father's Naturalization Before Registrant's Majority	Declarant
10 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	11	12	13
15 If not a citizen of the U. S., of what nation are you a citizen or subject?		14 Non-declarant	
16 PRESENT OCCUPATION <i>Porter</i>		17 EMPLOYER'S NAME <i>Armstrong Bros. Co.</i>	
18 PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS <i>Liberty St., Lancaster Lane. Pa.</i>			
19 NEAREST RELATIVE Name <i>Blanche Polite (wife)</i>			
Address <i>424 1/2 North Lancaster Lane. Pa.</i>			
I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE <i>Abraham L. Polite</i>			

P. M. G. O.
Form No. 1 (Red)

37-9-11. C

REGISTRAR'S REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF REGISTRANT							
HEIGHT			BUILD			COLOR OF EYES	COLOR OF HAIR
Tall	Medium	Short	Slender	Medium	Stout		
21	22	23 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	24	25 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	26	27 <i>Brown</i>	28 <i>Black</i>
29 Has person lost arm, leg, hand, eye, or is he obviously physically disqualified? (Specify.) <i>None</i>							
30 I certify that my answers are true; that the person registered has read or has had read to him his own answers; that I have witnessed his signature or mark, and that all of his answers of which I have knowledge are true, except as follows:							
 (Signature of Registrar)							
Date of Registration <i>Sept. 12, 1918</i>							
 (STAMP OF LOCAL BOARD)							
(The stamp of the Local Board having jurisdiction of the area in which the registrant has his permanent home shall be placed in this box.)							

93-6171 (OVER)

Abraham L. Polite was a pillar of the Lancaster community. During his life he experienced the difficult struggles many endured in our nation's goal to become a better place for all... a "more perfect union." He led and participated in many new initiatives and programs to further that cause. He started his life in the shadow of the Civil War, experienced the Jim Crow years of racial discrimination, waded through World War I and II, and completed his long life just as the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s was gaining ground. Many people today strongly believe Abraham L. Polite, Sr. was a blessing to all who live in Lancaster City and County.

While looking for information on Mr. Polite's involvement with the Colored Waiters Union, historian Leroy T. Hopkins, Jr. says:

"I came across a gem. The Union as well as W.W. Griest, the Republican U.S. Congressman, protested in 1916 against Birth of a Nation, the racist motion picture epic silent film and persuaded Mayor Trout to ban it. Also Abraham L. Polite was among those attending a meeting of Black Republicans in 1912 in which Albert E. Wilson was elected president of the group. Could the switch to the Democratic Party have anything to do with President Woodrow Wilson who seemed progressive during his campaign?"

Political and Civic Life

Abraham L. Polite was politically and civically active throughout his life and especially his time in Lancaster. Among some of his accomplishments are the following:

- Early on, after moving North to Philadelphia and then Lancaster, A.L. Polite was among those attending a meeting of Black Republicans in 1912 in which Albert E. Wilson was elected president of the group. In his later years he became a member of the Democratic Party.
- According to his obituary in the Lancaster New Era, January 15, 1968, "A.L. Polite Dies at 94; Church, Civic Worker," he was active since 1929 in the Democratic Party and was employed in the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue from 1936 to 1940 in Harrisburg.
- He was also a caterer in the City for many years and was employed at the Stevens House. Before his retirement, he worked as an insurance agent for the Industrial Life Insurance Co.
- He was a member of the Colored Waiters' Union, and from within that union affiliation participated in a 1916 protest against the silent film **Birth of a Nation** that presented people of African descent in a very negative light. This racist film gave support for the growing popularity among some people for the Ku Klux Klan. **Birth of a Nation** was the first film ever shown in the White House. Woodrow Wilson, born in 1856 in Staunton, VA, was then President. Our nation's first so-called Education President, Wilson was a Democrat and was responsible for segregating the operations of the Federal civilian work force in Washington D.C.

Negro Civic League of Southeastern Pennsylvania

Mission: to secure the American Dream for all



Gathering at Congressman Thaddeus Stevens' monument, Shreiner-Concord Cemetery, Lancaster, ca. 1918

Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, Lancaster

In 1908, Mr. Polite was a founding member of the Conestoga Lodge #140 of the Independent Benevolent & Protective Order of Elks, as well as Elks Lodges in York and Reading. In his later years, he was involved in establishing the Crispus Attucks Community Center and was a long-standing officer on that Board of Directors.

He was also one of the founders of the Lancaster Chapter of the NAACP. He was a member of the Committee on Organization of the Negro Civic League of Southeastern Pennsylvania, whose mission is listed as Securing the American Dream for All. He was a member and Treasurer of the Lancaster County Civic League.

In 1918, at a grave-side ceremony marking the 50-year commemoration of the death of US Congressman Thaddeus Stevens at Shreiner-Concord Cemetery in Lancaster, Mr. Polite is centrally featured in the photograph shown here, holding a wreath for the League's effort to honor the Abolitionist Republican Congressman.

This is an early example of public activism in Lancaster of A.L. Polite at age 42. The young man in the center, holding the wreath is thought to be A.L. Polite but there is no established list of all the people in this photograph. Can you identify anyone?

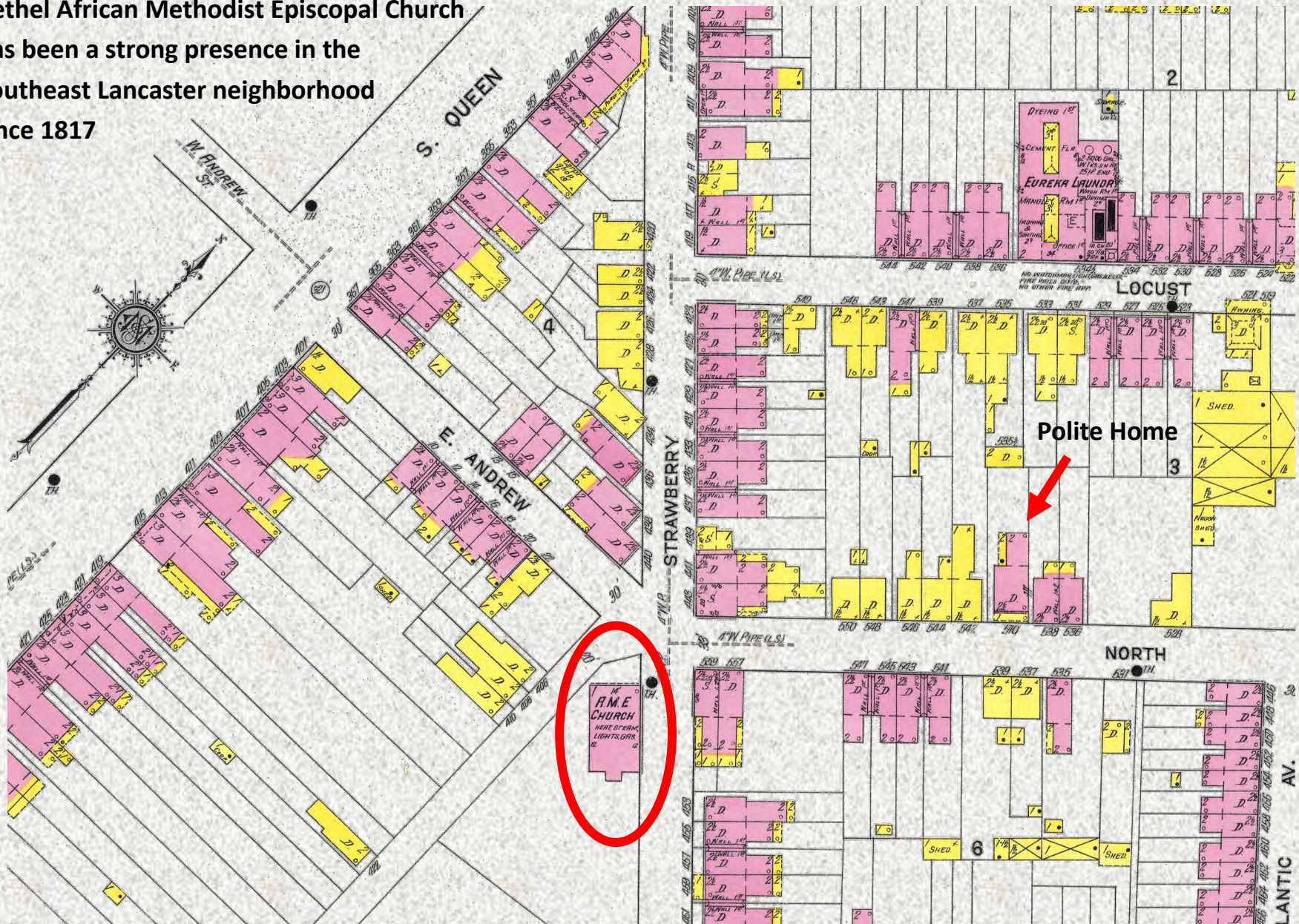
1930 U.S. Census—Part 1—Polite Family resides at 540 North Street

[illegible]

1930 U.S. Census—Part 2—Polite resides at 540 North Street

[illegible]

Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church
has been a strong presence in the
Southeast Lancaster neighborhood
since 1817



Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, City of Lancaster, PA—Detail of Sheet 45—1912

The Heritage of the Polite Family © SACA Development Corp.

Text by Leroy T. Hopkins, Jr. Ph.D. and Robert Herr, representatives of the African American Historical Society of South Central Pennsylvania. Lancaster, PA. Design by Randolph Harris, consulting historian, Lancaster, PA, May 2021



540 North Street-Southwest elevation



**North Street re-named
Nelson Polite, Sr. Way
By Lancaster City Council,
2015**



**Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, Strawberry & North Streets
View from North Street near Polite Family Home**



540 North Street

Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church Leadership

Abraham L. Polite was a long and influential member of the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in the City of Lancaster, where he was a member for 67 years. He was a member of the church board. At his death he is listed as “Trustee Emeritus”.

He directed the youth choir for over 50 years and served as Sunday School Superintendent and class leader for many of those years. He was a supportive worker for the church’s “Race Uplift” program.

By Leroy T. Hopkins, Jr., PhD from his essay, *A History of Bethel African Methodist Church, 2020*

History has always been central to Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church. From the pages of the Old Testament, its very name documents an awareness of its roots and the current emphasis the church places on resolving racial problems, continuing a tradition always implicit in the church’s history.

Under the leadership of Abraham L. Polite, who alerted local Black clergy and the population, a Lancaster Chapter of the NAACP was organized at Bethel in 1923. In that same year Bethel hosted the foundational meeting of the Hallie Q. Brown Women’s Legislative Club.

Named after of the leaders of the Colored Women’s Club movement, the Hallie Q. Brown Club organized recreational activities for Lancaster’s Black community.



**Abraham L. Polite
(1876-1968)**

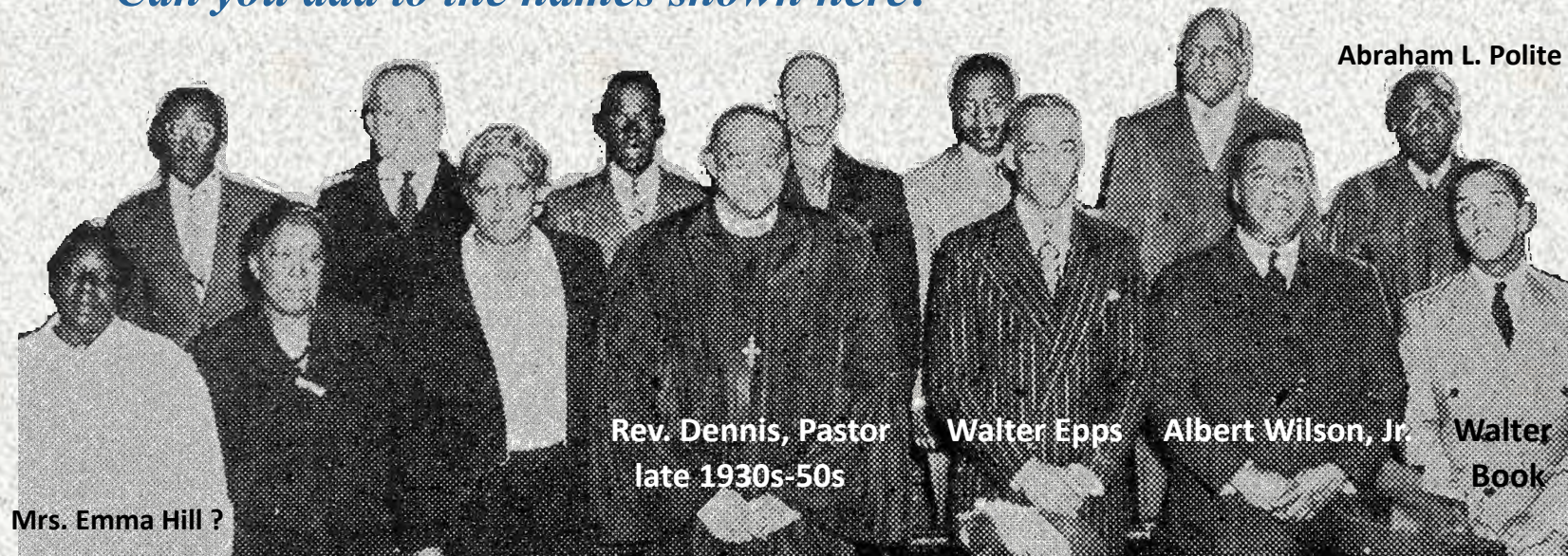
The demand was so great that the Club’s resources were soon overtaxed and it was decided to seek support from the Lancaster Recreation and Playground Association (today’s Lancaster Recreation Commission).

The Colored Recreation Center was begun in 1926/27 and in October 1929 it was renamed the Crispus Attucks Community Center and again members of Bethel were prominent in its governance and operation. The new Center’s first director was Ruby M. Bohee and her mother, Sophie Martin, was an active member of Bethel.

Bethel remained the focal point of the activities of the Lancaster Chapter of the NAACP until about 1949 when the group went into limbo. The last reported president of the chapter in the 1940’s was Abraham L. Polite.

Bethel A.M.E. leaders, circa 1950, from a commemorative booklet

Can you add to the names shown here?



When the group was revived in 1960, another member of Bethel, Ashley Dudley was elected its president.

The arrival in 1962 at Bethel of Rev. Alexander L. Stephans set off events which had a profound impact on race relations in Lancaster City. A new militancy evolved and protests marches were held in downtown Lancaster and at Rocky Springs Park to expose policies that excluded local Blacks from employment in the downtown and the swimming pool at Rocky Springs.

Local reactions to the protests were swift and perhaps predictable. Business and industry leaders contacted the National Urban League

and began the process which culminated in Spring 1965 with the creation of a local affiliate which, according to a story published on September 9, 1965 in the **Intelligencer Journal**, was an agency “designed to work professionally and effectively with community racial problems.” The implication was the efforts of the NAACP were too disruptive and in the eyes of the majority community, counter-productive. The organization’s board was interracial with key positions held by local business leaders. The dictum that working in the board room was more effective than demonstrating on street was clearly the mantra of the new organization.

The Heritage of the Polite Family © SACA Development Corp.

Text by Leroy T. Hopkins, Jr. Ph.D. and Robert Herr, representatives of the African American Historical Society of South Central Pennsylvania. Lancaster, PA. Design by Randolph Harris, consulting historian, Lancaster, PA, May 2021



DEDICATION
of
CONESTOGA LODGE No. 140
I. B. P. O. E. of W.



452 SOUTH DUKE STREET
LANCASTER, PA.

Sunday, July 28th, 1940

DEDICATION

of

Conestoga Lodge No 140 I. B. P. O. E. of W.
LANCASTER, PENNA.

Sunday, July 28, 1940

MEMBERS OF THE DEDICATION COMMITTEE

Bro. Herman Simms	Dt. Ethel Howell
Bro. Robert Burgess	Dt. Ida J. Smith
Bro. Earnest Christian	Dt. Calorine Watson
Bro. Earl D. Lavender	Dt. Reba Simms
Bro. Elwin H. Trotmen	Dt. Violo McFail
Bro. Charles Seals	Dt. Ruth Williams
Bro. Dr. John H. Travis	Dt. Ulrica Knight
Bro. Dr. John V. Sterrett	Dt. Estella Tombs
Bro. Charles A. Bailey	Dt. Elizabeth Adams
Bro. Samuel Milburn	Dt. Ella M. Henry
Bro. William Taylor	Dt. Ida Williams
Bro. Amos Thomas	Dt. Anna M. Dorsey
Bro. Edward Brewer	Dt. Dora Clark
Bro. Clarence Humphries	Dt. Bertha Smith
Bro. Louis Floyd	Dt. Alvina Glenn
Bro. LeRoy Henderson	Dt. Josephine Mellen
Bro. Harrison Jackson	Dt. Annabell Williams
Bro. Benjamin Morris, Jr.	Dt. Francis Christian
Bro. Clarence Boots	Dt. Margaret Clark
Bro. John M. Boots	

A. L. POLITE, Chairman

CARL WILLIAMS, Secretary

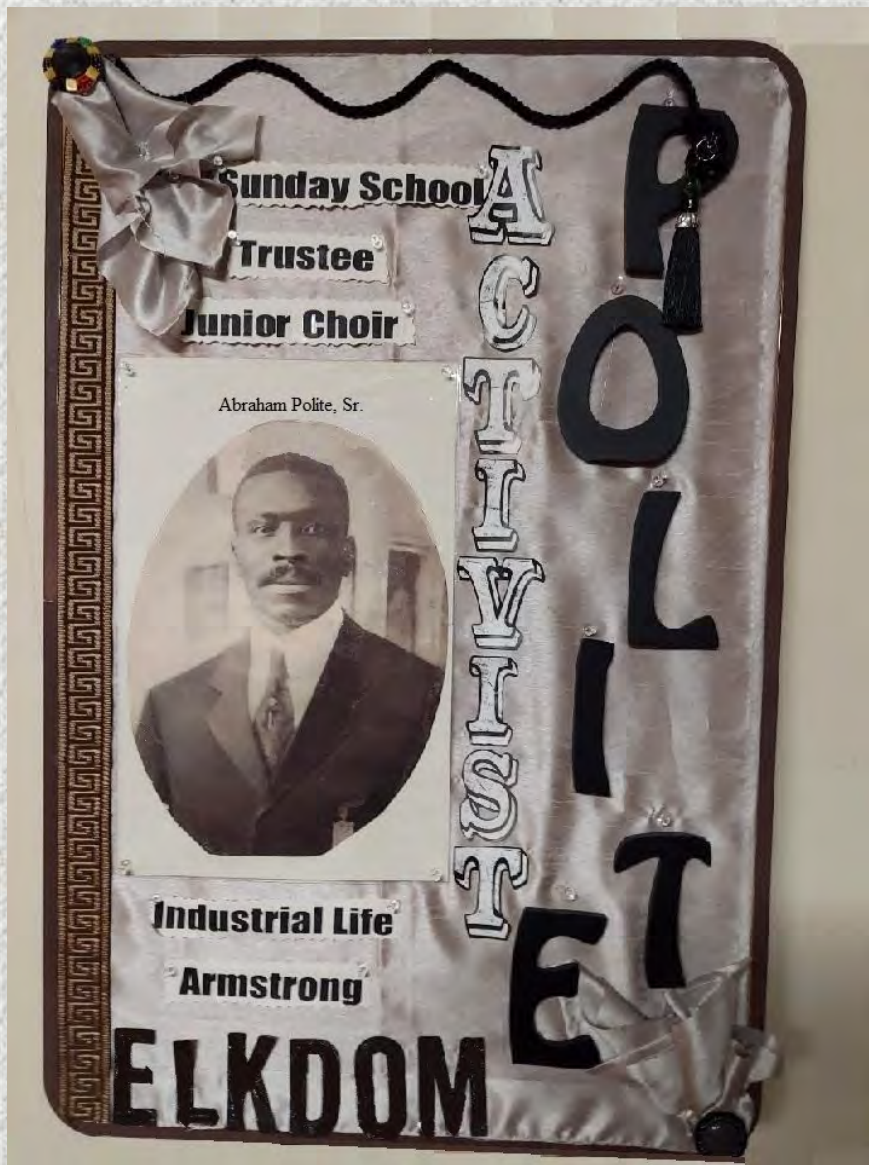
C. H. DORSEY, Asst. Secretary

Chairmen of the Sub Committees of the Dedication Committee

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| 1. Order of the Day | Bro. Earl D. Lavender |
| 2. Marshalls & Sergeant-at-Arms | Bro. Amos Thomas and Dt. Josephine Mellen |
| 3. Arrangements | Bro. Charles A. Bailey and Dt. Ulrica Knight |
| 4. Decorations | Bro. Albert Curtis and Ella M. Henry |
| 5. Program | Bro. A. L. Polite and Dtrs. Violo McFail and Ethel Howell |
| 6. History | Bro. LeRoy Henderson and Dt. Ida J. Smith |
| 7. Flowers | Dt. Anna M. Dorsey and Estella Tombs |
| 8. Information | Dt. Burtha Smith and Calorine Watson |
| 9. Music | Bro. A. L. Polite and Dt. Ida Williams |
| 10. Reception Committee | |
| Bro. Dr. J. V. Sterrett | Dt. Francis Christian |
| Bro. Dr. J. H. Travis | Dt. Mildred Michels |
| Bro. Earnest Christian | Dt. Dora Clark |



A. L. POLITE, General Chairman of the Dedication Committee, is one of the Founders and Organizers of Conestoga Lodge, First Past Esteem Lecturing Knight, a Past Exalted Ruler, Past Special District Deputy of Pa., and the Legal Advisor of Conestoga Lodge No. 140.



Family artwork commemorating Mr. Polite's
work life & commitment to community



A. L. POLITE

Past Exalted Ruler of Conestoga Lodge, No. 140, F. G. P. O. E. of M., and is now Special District Deputy of Pennsylvania, member of the Committee on Organization of the South Easton Negro Civic League and was elected Treasurer of said League; a member and Treasurer of the Lancaster County Negro Civic League, a member and officer of Bethel A. M. E. Sunday School and an enthusiastic worker for the race uplift.

THURSDAY, APRIL 5, 1934 —
**2ND NEGRO HEALTH
PROGRAM TONIGHT**

Musical and Literary Meeting in
Bethel A. M. E. Church.

Dr. J. V. Stearett will speak tonight at a second program in Bethel A. M. E. church at eight o'clock in commemoration of National Negro Health week. A program was given last night in the community center.

Music will be furnished by the members of the Crispus Attucks Recreation and Community Center and Miss Ruth Gantt, local high school student, will read a paper on "Health."

Those who will take part in the musical program are: Phyllis Brodis, Helen Parker and Charles Lair, violins; Thomas Stewart, trombone; Nelson Polite, trumpet; Marcia Bohee, accompanist, and Violet Burnside, director and saxophonist. Reuben Carr will give a tenor solo; Georgie Burnside, a piano solo; Viola Carter, a vocal selection; Benjamin Morris, Philadelphia, a clarinet solo, and A. L. Polite, superintendent of the Sunday school, a bass solo. The famous Dukes quartet will sing.

A. L Polite & Family in the news

PRESENTS FLAGS TO CITY
New flags waving from the Soldiers' and Sailors' monument in Penn Square are the gifts of A. L. Polite, city hall janitor, as his Christmas present to the city.

A.L. Polite Flags for City, 27 Dec. 1926

Negro Health Week New Era 5 Apr 1934

STEVENS TRIBUTE

82d Anniversary of Christiana Riot
Marked Here

Tribute was paid this week to the memory of Thaddeus Stevens for the part he played in securing the acquittal of 20 negroes accused of treason following the Christiana riot of 1851.

On the 82d anniversary of the riot, Miss E. C. Thompson, granddaughter of Ezekiel Thompson, one of the 20 negroes tried, went to Shreiner's Cemetery at Chestnut and Mulberry streets and laid a wreath upon the Great Commoner's grave. She was accompanied by Abraham Lincoln Polite, leader of the DePriest Citizenship Club here.

Following the Christiana riot, an event that received national attention, 20 free negroes were tried for treason in the U. S. Circuit Court, with Stevens as their attorney. The men were all acquitted.

A. L. Polite & Miss E. C. Thompson
at Stevens tribute - Sep. 15, 1933

ARRANGE PROGRAM FOR PILGRIMAGE

Route of Parade To Tomb of
Thaddeus Stevens Sat-
urday Announced

Everything was in readiness Thursday for the 1935 pilgrimage to the tomb of Thaddeus Stevens. Opening with a street parade Saturday at 2 p. m. the ceremonies will be climaxed with a program in Shreiner's cemetery in which several hundred Pennsylvania Negroes will participate.

The Citizens Committee of Lancaster completed plans Thursday to receive the visiting delegations. The local group includes George L. Anderson, chairman; Dr. J. V. Sterrett, vice chairman; A. L. Polite, program chairman; Benjamin Morris, chief marshal, and the Rev. H. A. Ivey, secretary and publicity chairman.

The parade, with three bands and several hundred marchers, will form at Duke and Locust sts. at 2 p. m. The route follows: North on Duke st. to Farnum, west on Farnum to Strawberry, north on Strawberry to Mulberry, north on Mulberry to Shreiner's cemetery. The O. V. Catto band, Philadelphia, the local Thaddeus Stevens post band and another organization from Pittsburgh are expected.

Principal speakers at the cemetery, where the ceremonies will begin at 3 p. m., include Philip Randolph, of New York City; Robert S. Vann, special assistant U. S. attorney general, of Pittsburgh, and Judge Edward W. Henry, of Philadelphia.

In the event of rain, the program will be held in the auditorium of the Boys High school.

Pilgrimage to Stevens Grave -
Intelligencer-Journal - 9 Aug 1935

PARADE TO OPEN STEVENS RALLY

Ceremonies to Be Held at
Shreiner Cemetery
After March.

Several hundred Negroes from Eastern Pennsylvania will pay tribute to the memory of Thaddeus Stevens tomorrow afternoon at the Shreiner cemetery. The pilgrims will open their ceremonies with a street parade at 2 P. M., and they will march to the tune of the local Thaddeus Stevens band, ending the procession at the burial place of the militant abolitionist and the "father of the Pennsylvania public school system."

The Citizens Committee of Lancaster completed plans yesterday to receive the visiting delegations. The local group includes George L. Anderson, chairman; Dr. J. V. Sterrett, vice chairman; A. L. Polite, program chairman; Benjamin Morris, chief marshal, and the Rev. H. A. Ivey, secretary and publicity chairman.

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In the event of rain, the program will be held in the auditorium of the Boys High school.

Lancaster New Era-9 Aug 1935

CHURCH TO CONDUCT INFORMATION HOUR

An Information Hour will be conducted Thursday (this) evening in the Bethel A. M. E. church, under the auspices of the Sunday school of which A. L. Polite is the superintendent. Dr. H. C. Bemby will preside. The program also will include music, and Miss Dorothy Scott will be the guest soprano soloist.

Questions concerning men and facts not generally known will be discussed by members of the audience. Among them will be: Who was Hannibal? Who was Matt Hensen? What business do the Overtons conduct? Who was James Europe? Who was the first discoverer of iron? Who was Frederick Douglass, and what two things made him famous? What woman pioneered in the hair business? Who was the first man to sew up a human heart after a stab wound? Who was Crispus Attucks? and who was Simon of Cyrene?

Intelligencer-Journal · 12 Apr 1934

STEVENS CITIZENS CLUB PLANS FESTIVAL

Plans have been begun by the Thaddeus Stevens Citizens Club for a festival to be held July 10 and 11, next to the IBPOEOW Hall, 452 S. Duke St. Initial arrangements were made last night at a meeting of the club's executive committee in its headquarters, 109 E. Vine St.

The festival is being held to raise funds for support of the club.

Committee chairmen are: hamburgers and hot dogs, Augustus Jackson; soft drinks, Oscar Johnson; watermelons, Ernest Christian; cakes and pies, Mrs. E. Chrisian and Mrs. A. Jackson; and novelties, A. L. Polite. Music will be furnished by Nelson Polite.

The club's executive committee will meet next Thursday, July 2, at 8 p. m., to complete final arrangements for the affair.

Intelligencer-Journal - 26 Jun 1953

NEW PASTOR FOR BETHEL A.M.E.

The Rev. Philip Accoe, pastor of the Downtown African Methodist Episcopal Church for the past year, has been named pastor of Bethel A.M.E. Church, North and Strawberry Streets, and will assume his duties at the 11 a. m. service Sunday.

The Rev. Mr. Accoe succeeds the Rev. George W. Crayton, D.D., who suffered a heart attack about two months ago and has been a patient in the Philadelphia Veterans Administration Hospital. The Rev. Dr. Crayton came to Lancaster in May 1954.

TO ARRIVE SATURDAY

The new pastor will arrive in Lancaster Saturday and expects to move with his wife into the parsonage next week. He formerly served the Union A.M.E. Church in Philadelphia and the Bethany A.M.E. Church in Harrisburg.

The Rev. Kelvey G. Keeys, presiding elder of the West Philadelphia District, has served as supply pastor during the past two months.

A. L. Polite, who has been secretary of the trustee board for a number of years, will be honored for 52 years of service to the church at a reception at 8 p. m. tomorrow.

Intelligencer-Journal 2 Feb 1955

The Polite Family in the Green Book

A.L. Polite continued to be a visible participant in many of the political and race-relations developments in Lancaster City and County during his life. During the early to mid-20th century, alongside his national political interests and commitments, he was an influential force. To date a short list might include the following:

This African American travel book was used by many during the mid-20th century, especially prior to the development of the inter-state highway system during the last 1950s and 1960s when road travelers needed to rely car travel through small towns and cities. In Lancaster, three homes are listed in the 1940 version of this Green-Book, and one is the home of A.L. Polite at 540 North Street. This is the only “Tourist Home” that still stands today.

Lancaster in THE GREEN-BOOK (1940)



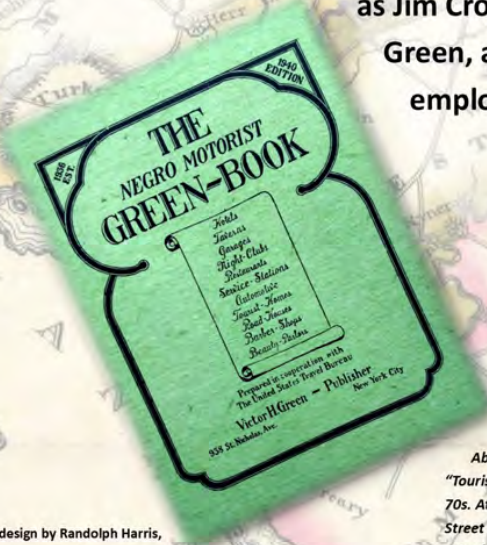
Abraham L. Polite
(1876-1968)

Social activist involved in many civic and religious organizations in Lancaster from 1908-1960; his late son, Nelson M. Polite was president of Lancaster City Council and Grandson Nelson Polite, Jr. is Vice President of the African American Historical Society of South Central Pennsylvania.

Research, photography & design by Randolph Harris,
Consulting Historian, Lancaster, PA. — February 1, 2019

One-time 'Tourist Home' still stands at 540 North Street— Residence of Abraham L. Polite

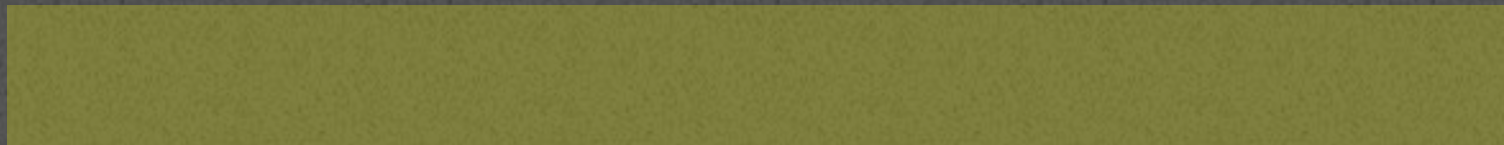
According to the website, Blackpast.org, *The Negro Motorist Green Book* was commonly known as The Green Book. This privately-published guide helped African American motorists and vacationers “avoid social obstacles” and find suitable lodging and other services that generally were not available to people of color during the nation’s social imposition of racial segregation commonly known as Jim Crow. The book was the vision of Victor Green, an African American US postal employee from Harlem, New York.



Above—The Green Book, 1940, cover and page 40. Two other Lancaster “Tourist Homes” demolished during the City’s Urban Renewal Era—1960s and 70s. At right, Polite home at 540 North Street, near corner of Strawberry Street and Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, established, 1817. From a Sanborn Fire Insurance Co. map, 1912.



1940 U.S. Census—Polite Family continues at 540 North Street



The Heritage of the Polite Family © SACA Development Corp.

Text by Leroy T. Hopkins, Jr. Ph.D. and Robert Herr, representatives of the African American Historical Society of South Central Pennsylvania. Lancaster, PA. Design by Randolph Harris, consulting historian, Lancaster, PA, May 2021

Intelligencer Journal

LANCASTER, PA., DAILY INTELLIGENCER JOURNAL, FRIDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 25, 1953.

Pequea Pete Hears Of Crispus Attucks Work



Three-year-old Nelson M. Polite Jr. fingers the fringe on Pequea Pete's Indian garb as the youngster calls on the Polite family at their home, 540 North St. Representing three generations of Polites who are interested in the Crispus Attucks Center, a Red Feather agency, they are Nelson M. Polite, left; his mother, Mrs. A. L. Polite and his father, A. L. Polite, holding Nelson Jr. Pequea Pete represents the Lancaster County Community Chest in the 1953 fund-raising campaign. (Intell. Photo)

The Heritage of the Polite Family © SACA Development Corp.

Text by Leroy T. Hopkins, Jr. Ph.D. and Robert Herr, representatives of the African American Historical Society of South Central Pennsylvania. Lancaster, PA. Design by Randolph Harris, consulting historian, Lancaster, PA, May 2021

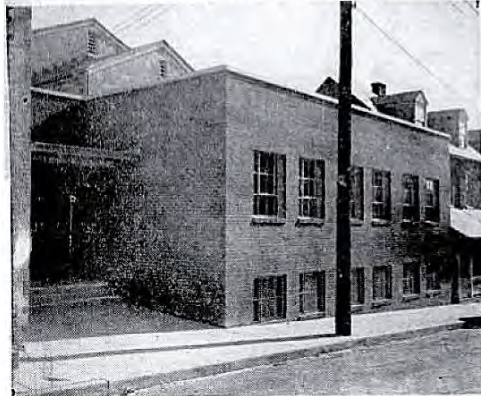
**For Sunday Thought
And Monday Action**
And some fell among thorns; and
the thorns sprang up with it, and
choke it.—Luke 8:7.

SUNDAY NEWS

To Place Want Ads Call 5252

LANCASTER, PA., SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11, 1942

Crispus Attacks Center Opens New Recreation Building Today



It's 15 years since Crispus Attacks started as a day nursery in three rooms of a seven-room house on S. Duke St., but today the Negro population of Lancaster celebrates the climax of a long effort. When the new Crispus Attacks center is dedicated this afternoon, they won't need to worry about boisterous folks who live in the rest of the house, as they did in the first community building.

Started in Small Way
In its early years the center was used to sharing its space with roomers. Two rooms and a kitchen were still all that they had to work with two years after the center got its start in 1927 as an idea of the recreation director to provide something similar to the YWCA community parties. In 1933 it became a Welfare Federation member, with a \$200 grant. At first the Halle Q. Brown Club supervised the whole work, but in 1935 it became obvious that these roomers were too big a job on their hands. That was when the present board of directors representing all religious, fraternal and civic organizations of the colored population took over.



MRS. RUBY PAYNE
Director of Center

That was the beginning of the real activities of the center, giving it a formal organization, on a framework proved satisfactory elsewhere by the National Recreation Association. To aid in shaping it up, the services of Ernest T. Atwell, director of the Bureau of Colored Work, were made available. Soon it became obvious that a trained director would be needed to formulate and supervise the program to meet needs of all age groups in the Negro population here.

Character-Building
Club and character-building activities were started in the house at 419 S. Duke St. As more clubs were formed, and as the musical, dramatic and health activities expanded, the center outgrew its space and moved across to its present location at 416 S. Duke St. There again roomers shared the building for some years, until the constantly expanding program demanded all the space available and tried out for more. Attendance ran well over 1,000 for any month. Conspicuous from leaders to addressers threaded the building every evening to sing, play, work at crafts, hold club meetings, or just to look on when all space and equipment were consumed.

New Structure Ready
Now, however, there shouldn't be much trouble in taking care of all comers. The new center, fronting on Howard Ave., just off S. Duke St., is a roomy brick structure featuring a big room which can serve as gym and auditorium, having a stage at one end. The store itself can double as a dining room, since a kitchen has been provided in one of the "wings." And the

First Community Building Of Group Provides Auditorium, Recreation And Meeting Rooms—Serves 1300 Monthly

The center was made possible by the inclusion, in the Welfare drives of 1934-35, of a campaign for Crispus Attacks. In line with the promise of "only one drive a year," it was included in the regular Welfare campaign, with the contribution given the privilege of making an additional contribution for the center if he wished.

Despite the fact that their earning capacity is below that of other citizens because of limited fields of employment, the Negroes gave liberally. They're still giving.

Several ramshackle old frame houses stood on the lots occupied by the first new Crispus Attacks Center (at left) fronting on Howard Ave. Just off S. Duke St.

Both white and colored children will be served in the spacious school lunch room in the new center. Some 150 children from four school buildings in the neighborhood can be accommodated. The old center accommodated about 100 children of both races (below).



kitchen will become a dressing room when entertainments are in order.

That's a sample of the careful planning which has gone into the new Crispus Attacks recreation center. The room beneath the gym, just as long as wide but not so high, will serve as school lunch room and should be able to accommodate all the children that several nearby schools can send—both white and colored, as has been the case in the old center.

Already some 600 quarts of food have been "put up" by the women of the auxiliary to be used in the hot lunches.

The successor to these early crowded nurseries is a room furnished by the Service Committee of the Unitarian Church, its color scheme worked out by a local interior decorator, and it's a happy, Showers And Meeting Rooms
These are classrooms and shower rooms, meeting rooms where every body from the board of directors to the "waxer" air raid warden can meet, and offices. But the job isn't finished. Any gifts of furnishings will be received very gratefully, especially pieces that can be used in the club and game rooms, and folding chairs for the auditorium. Considerable work has been done on the building by members of the Negro community.

the recreation training course of the National Recreation Association of New York City. Benben V. Hardcastle, a graduate of Princess Ann College, Princess Ann, Md., is supervisor of men and boys' activities and music.

Mrs. Marguerite Saunders, graduate of the Philadelphia School of Industrial Arts, is instructor in arts and crafts.

Mrs. Rose Parker, graduate of Pratt Institute, N. Y., is instructor of classes in household arts.

Through the Crispus Attacks Auxiliary of some 200 adults a substantial yearly sum will be raised to go toward the maintenance and equipment of the new building.

Serves 1300 People
The center serves monthly through its health promoting, cultural and recreational clubs over 1,300 children and adults. Through bands, sponsoring committee, and group leaders, approximately 300 persons give volunteer service to promote the program.

Through the Center six other health and character building agencies in the community being direct service to the Negro population. The Seventh Ward Health Center, and the hot lunch project, sponsored by the Women's Missionary Federation of Lancaster, include white children in their enrollment. During the Summer months the program is transferred to a city playground where race groups make up the attendance.

The program of the Crispus Attacks Center is promoted by the director and a staff of five other supervisors, assisted by a large number of volunteer leaders.

Mrs. Ruby M. Payne has been the director since 1929 and is a native of Ohio, a graduate of Wilberforce University in Ohio and

Miss Florence Thomas, Supervisor of girls and women's activities of the Lancaster Recreation Association Staff, is teacher of folk and intergerie dancing.

Brewster Lee is instructor in shop work for boys.

Inter-Racial Improvement
Equally as important as promoting a wholesome program of recreation has been the constant effort on the part of the Center to create, develop, and promote better inter-racial attitudes in the community. Through many and frequent talks before various church and civic groups, the director and officers have sought to build contacts that would interest the true place of the Negro in this community.

Franklin W. Hart is president of the board of directors. Uriah Morris is vice president. Mrs. Carrie Foster secretary, and Mrs. George Parker treasurer. Members include Mrs. Hezekiah Snow, Dr. J. V. Sterrett, Mrs. Tolbert Michaels, Mrs. Henry Henderson, Miss Ella Henry, Mr. and Mrs. A. L. Polite, the Revs. M. F. Matthews and E. S. Dennis, Dr. John H. Travis, Roy Carter, Albert Wilson, Mrs. Payne, and Benjamin W. Morris, who is in the service.

The Polites are among the original members of the Board of Directors, Crispus Attacks Community Center of Lancaster, 1942.

“Franklin W. Hart is president of the board of directors. Uriah Morris is vice president. Mrs. Carrie Foster secretary, and Mrs. George Parker treasurer. Members include Mrs. Hezekiah Snow, Dr. J. V. Sterrett, Mrs. Tolbert Michaels, Mrs. Henry Henderson, Miss Ella Henry, Mr. and Mrs. A. L. Polite, the Revs. M. F. Matthews and E. S. Dennis, Dr. John H. Travis, Roy Carter, Albert Wilson, Mrs. Payne, and Benjamin W. Morris, who is in the service.”

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HOME UNITY

Savings and Loan Association

BALDWIN 3-3200

2513 GERMANTOWN AVENUE
PHILADELPHIA 33, PA.

November 30, 1960

Mr. & Mrs. Abrahame Polite
540 North Street
Lancaster, Pa.

Pt-7990 (310) Flat HOLC

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Bolite, Re: 540 North St.
We acknowledge receipt of the final payment on
the above captioned mortgage loan and as instructed we en-
close herewith the following:

Satisfied Mortgage: Abraham L. Polite and Blanche
Polite, h/w to Home Owners Loan Corporation dated 11/10/34
Recorded in mtg book No. 380 Pg. 83 11/14/34

Bond and Warrant: /Same to same.

~~THIS POLITE~~

Copy of ledger sheet: x
Fire Policy: The Home Ins. Co. No. 499 52 17
Exp. 10/26/61 \$2500.

Tax and Water and Sewer Rent Receipts: County Tax 1940 to 1960
City Tax 1940 to 1959. and unpaid 1960 City Tax ~~xxxxxxx~~ bill,
School Tax 1940 to 1959.

Kindly sign the copy of this letter and return to
us in the envelope provided.

Very truly yours,

Paul D. Nuber

Paul D. Nuber
Ass't. Secretary

Received above papers





Abraham L. Polite Certificate of Death

HVS-20143 REV. 11/59		COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH VITAL STATISTICS		006216-68	
LOCAL REG. NO. <u>53</u>		PRIMARY DIST. NO. <u>36001-340</u>		CERTIFICATE OF DEATH	
1. DEATH OCCURRED IN:		a. County <u>LANCASTER</u>		b. City or borough <u>CITY</u>	
c. If death did not occur in City or borough, give name of township (Do not use R. D. or Box Number) <u>LANCASTER</u>		2. DECEASED'S MAILING ADDRESS		a. Street address, R. D., or Box Number <u>540 NORTH ST.</u>	
d. Full Name of Hospital or institution (if not in hospital, give street address) <u>540 NORTH ST.</u>		b. Post Office, Zone, and State <u>LANCASTER, PA. 17602</u>		3. VETERAN Yes <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
4. NAME OF DECEASED (Type or print) <u>ABRAHAM L. POLITE SR.</u>		a. (First) <u>ABRAHAM</u>		b. (Middle) <u>L.</u>	
c. (Last) <u>POLITE SR.</u>		5. DATE OF DEATH <u>JAN 14 1968</u>		a. Which War _____ b. Serial No. _____	
6. WHERE DID DECEASED ACTUALLY LIVE?		a. State <u>PA.</u>		c. Did deceased live in a township? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, deceased lived in _____ township.	
b. County <u>LANCASTER</u>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No, deceased lived within actual limits of <u>LANC</u> city or borough.			
7. SEX <u>M</u>	8. COLOR OR RACE <u>NEGRO</u>	9. MARRIED <input type="checkbox"/> NEVER MARRIED <input type="checkbox"/> WIDOWED <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DIVORCED <input type="checkbox"/>	10. DATE OF BIRTH <u>APRIL 10, 1913</u>	11. AGE (in years last birthday) <u>54</u>	If under 1 year Months Days If under 24 hours Hours Min.
12. USUAL OCCUPATION (even if retired) <u>INSURANCE AGENT</u>		13. SOCIAL SECURITY NO. <u>184-01-4887</u>	14. BIRTHPLACE (State or foreign country) <u>RIDGELAND S.C.</u>	15. CITIZEN OF WHAT COUNTRY? <u>U.S.A.</u>	
16. FULL NAME OF SPOUSE <u>M. BLANCHE POLITE</u>		17. MOTHER'S MAIDEN NAME <u>CHARLOTTE PROCTOR</u>		19. INFORMANT'S NAME AND ADDRESS <u>John Polite 540 North St. Lancaster, Pa.</u>	
18. FATHER'S NAME <u>JOHN POLITE</u>					
MEDICAL CERTIFICATE (Items 20 through 23 must be completed by physician only)					
20. CAUSE OF DEATH: Enter only one cause per line for (a), (b) & (c).				INTERVAL BETWEEN ONSET AND DEATH	
PART I. Death was caused by:					
IMMEDIATE CAUSE (a) <u>Natural Causes</u>				Died in sleep	
Conditions, if any, which gave rise to above cause (a) stating the underlying cause last. DUE TO (b) <u>Arteriosclerosis</u>				25 yrs	
DUE TO (c) _____					
PART II. OTHER SIGNIFICANT CONDITIONS: contributing to death but not related to the immediate cause given in Part I (a)				21. WAS AUTOPSY PERFORMED? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
22. a. ACCIDENT Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		22. b. DESCRIBE HOW ACCIDENT OCCURRED		22. c. TIME OF ACCIDENT Hour _____ m _____ E.S.T.	
22. d. ACCIDENT OCCURRED While at work <input type="checkbox"/> Not while at work <input type="checkbox"/>		22. e. PLACE OF ACCIDENT (e.g., home, farm, street, etc.)		22. f. CITY, BOROUGH, TOWNSHIP COUNTY STATE	
23. I hereby certify that I attended the above named deceased and that death occurred from the causes and on the date stated above at <u>7:30</u> m., E.S.T.					
a. Signature <u>[Signature]</u>		b. Address <u>400 S. Duke</u>		c. Date signed <u>1/10/68</u>	
24. a. BURIAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CREMATION <input type="checkbox"/> REMOVAL <input type="checkbox"/>		24. b. DATE <u>JAN 19, 1968</u>		24. c. NAME OF CEMETERY OR CREMATORY <u>St. Luke's Cemetery</u>	
24. d. LOCATION (City, Boro., Twp., & County) (State) <u>Lancaster, Pa.</u>		25. DATE REC'D BY REG. <u>1-16-68</u>			
26. REGISTRAR'S SIGNATURE <u>[Signature]</u>		27. SIGNATURE AND ADDRESS OF FUNERAL DIRECTOR <u>[Signature] 502 S. Church St. 17602</u>			

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Mrs. A. Polite Succumbs at 83

Mrs. M. Blanche Polite, eighty-three, wife of Abraham Polite, 540 North St., died at 7:20 p.m. Tuesday at St. Joseph Hospital, where she had been a patient for the past three weeks.

Born in Newville, Pa., a daughter of the late James N. and Isabella Brown Richardson, she lived in Lancaster most of her life.

She was long prominent in the affairs of Bethel AME Church, where she was a member for 63 years.

PAST PRESIDENT

She was a past president of Stewardess Board 1 and a member of Annie E. Smith Missionary Society of the church.

She was a charter member and past Most Noble Governess, Chamber 132 of the Household of Ruth, of Lancaster; a charter member of the Crispus Attucks board of directors and a Past Daughter Ruler of Queen of Sheba Temple 137, Lancaster.

Surviving besides her husband are these sons and daughters: A. Lawrence Jr., J. Stanley and Mrs. Ruth M. Duvall, all of Philadelphia; Nelson M. Sr., and E. Naomi, wife of James Jones, both of Lancaster. Nine grandchildren and four great-grandchildren also survive.

Lancaster New Era—1-14-1968

OBITUARIES

Time and place of Service will be found under Funeral Invitations

A. L. Polite Dies at 94; Church, Civic Worker

Abraham L. Polite Sr., a charter member of the Crispus Attucks Center and a member of numerous church, civic and social organizations, died at the age of 94, at his home, 540 North St., Sunday after an illness of about 10 months.

Born in Ridgeland, S. C., a son of the late John and Charlotte Proctor Polite, he was the husband of the late M. Blanche Polite.

A member of the Bethel AME Church for 67 years, he was steward emeritus of the church and trustee emeritus of the church board. He was director of the junior choir for over 50 years, class leader for a number of years, and was superintendent of the Sunday School. He was also a member of the Lancaster County Federation of Men's Bible Classes.

He was the last surviving charter member of the Conestoga Elks Lodge No. 140, and past exalted ruler of the lodge. He was the former district deputy and organizer of the Elks for this area. He was responsible for organizing of Brotherly Love Elks Lodge No. 228 of York.

HONORED BY ELKS

He was named honored Elk of the Quarter in 1965, and was treasurer of the Elks for many years. He was also a former chaplain of the Lancaster County Federation of Clubs.

Since 1929, he was active in the Democratic Party, and was



ABRAHAM L. POLITE

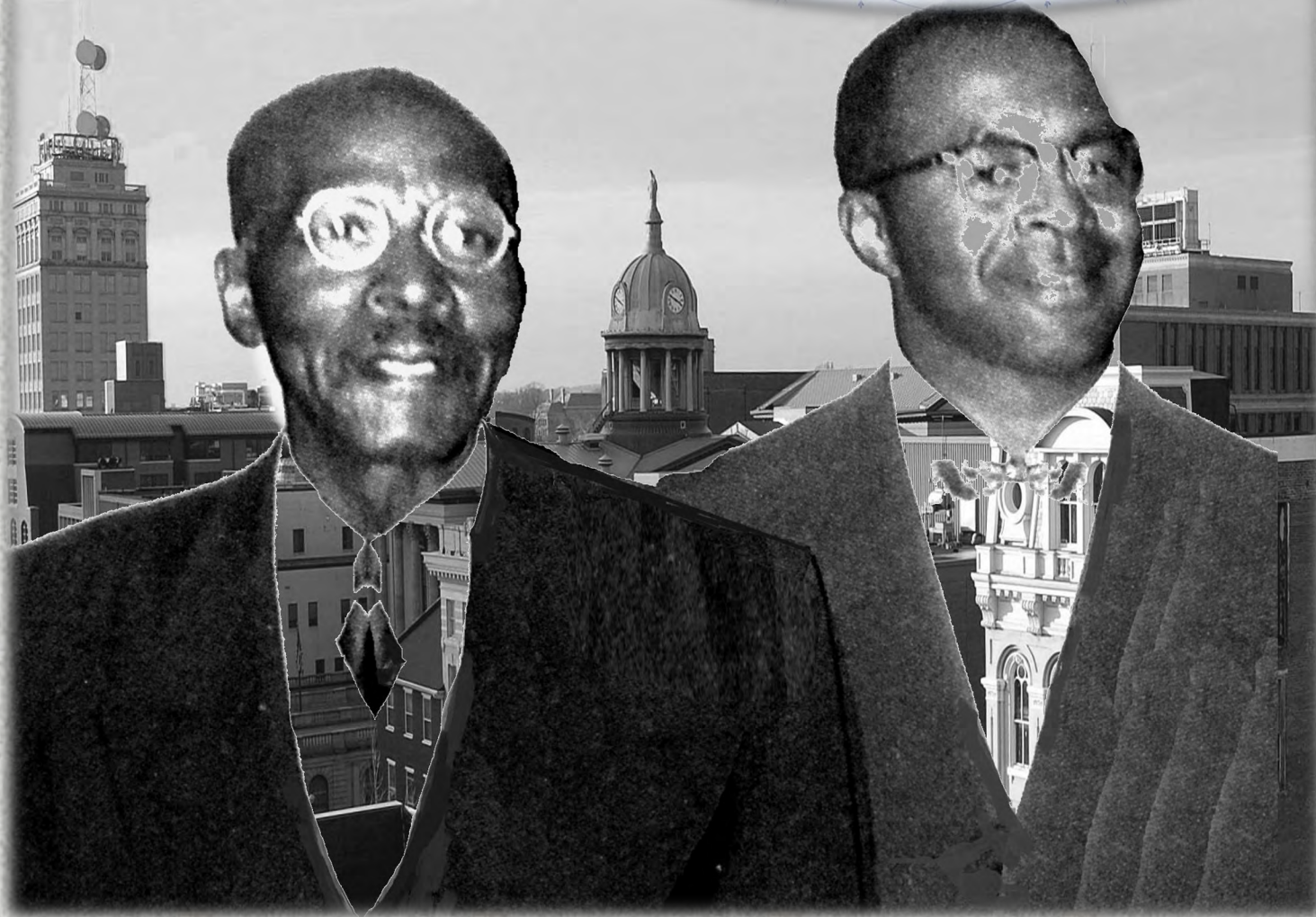
employed in the State Department of Revenue from 1936 to 1940 in Harrisburg.

He was also a caterer in the city for many years and was employed at the Stevens House. Before his retirement, he worked as an insurance agent for the Industrial Life Insurance Co.

He is survived by three sons, A. Lawrence Polite Jr., and J. Stanley Polite, both of Philadelphia, and Nelson M. Polite, Sr., at home; two daughters, Mrs. Ruth M. Duvall, and E. Naomi, wife of James H. Jones, both at home; one sister, Mrs. Alice Hall, Ridgeland, S. C.; nine grandchildren; and six great-grandchildren.

Passing the torch...

LANCASTER



A.L. Polite Sr. ~ Nelson M. Polite, Sr.

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Commonwealth of Pennsylvania



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION CERTIFICATE OF PERFECT ATTENDANCE

This is to certify that Nelson Polite, a pupil in the public schools of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, in accordance with a statement filed by the teacher with the Department of Public Instruction, has been neither absent nor tardy during the school year certified below by the seal of the Department of Public Instruction.



11191

H. E. Guss

Superintendent

James H. Pule

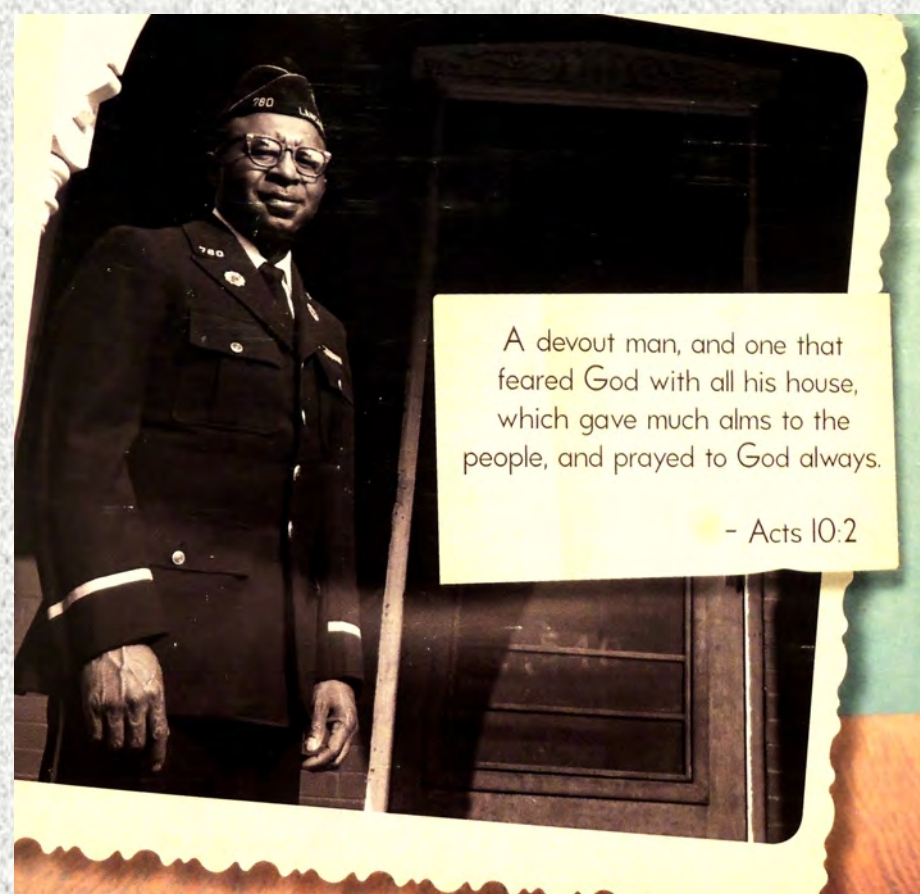
Superintendent of Public Instruction



**Engagement of Nelson Polite, Sr. and
Jean Ann Wilson, 1946.
Shortly after World War II, at the African
American Ball. Nelson wears the uniform of
American Legion, Post 780, Lancaster**



**Served three years in the U.S. Army
during World War II.
Stationed at Fort Lee, Virginia**



Jean and Nelson Polite, Sr. Portraits from the cover of a family calendar, published in 2018

Church & community events through the lens of Nelson Polite, Sr.

1960s, 70s & 80s



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Nelson Polite, Sr. joins protest of segregated swimming facilities at Rocky Springs Park, 1960

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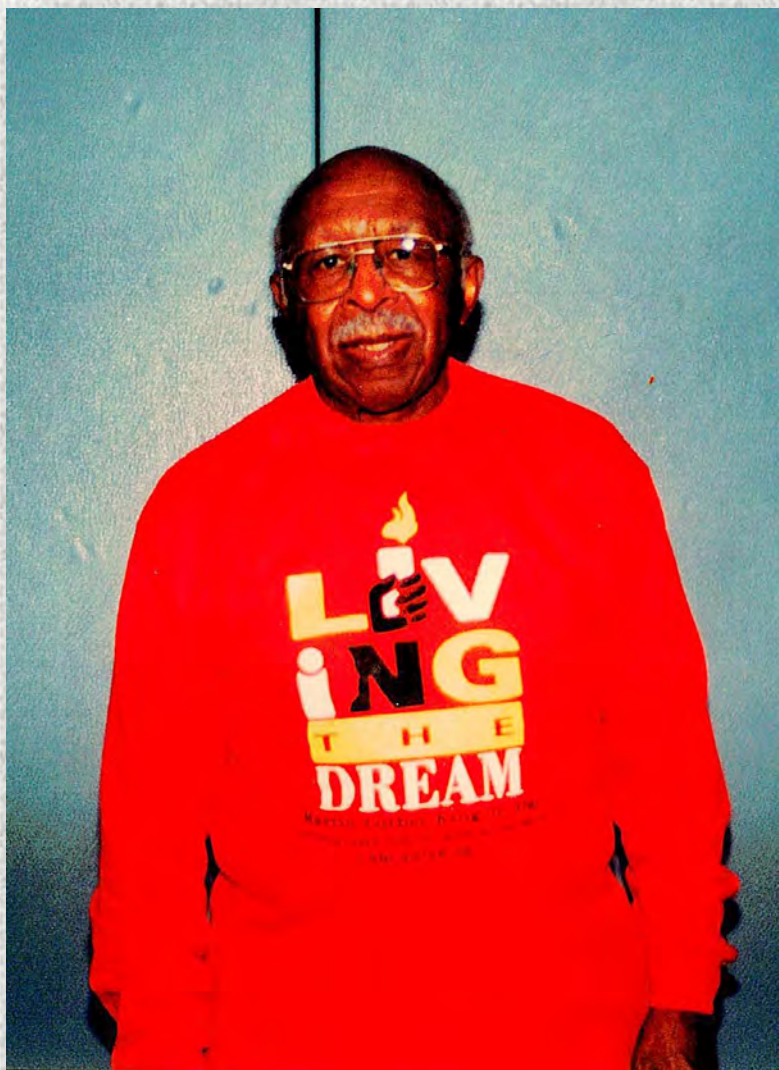
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New Era photo by Chris Knight

To the applause of the crowd, newly elected Lancaster City Council President Nelson Polite Sr., left, is about to shake hands with outgoing

president C. Ted Darcus at Monday's swearing-in ceremony in Southern Market Center. New council member Julianne Dickson is at center.

LANCASTER, PA., NEW ERA

Nelson Polite Sr. to get Urban League's top honor

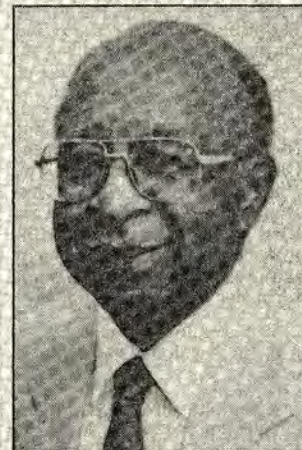
Nelson M. Polite Sr. of 540 North St. will receive this year's Elaine J. Washington Memorial Award, the highest honor bestowed by the Urban League of Lancaster.

The award is given annually to an individual who has demonstrated an outstanding contribution to the cause of equal opportunity. Polite will receive the award Tuesday at the 28th annual Equal Opportunity Day Dinner at the Olde Hickory Inn and Resort.

A native of Lancaster, Polite retired as division supervisor in the Chief Property Marketing Division at the defense depot in Mechanicsburg. He served with the U.S. Government for more than 30 years.

He is active in numerous organizations and agencies, including the NAACP, Boy Scouts of America, Manor House and the United Way of Lancaster County.

He is secretary of the executive committee for the Urban League of Lancaster County board of directors, and was chairman of the Citizens Assembly of the Lancaster Model Cities Program.



Nelson Polite Sr.

He is a member of the Blue Lodge, Mount Horeb No. 14, Free and Accepted Masons of Lancaster, where he is a 33rd degree mason and served as worshipful master. He is past potentate of Himyar Temple No. 17, Ancient Egyptian Arabic Order, Nobles of Mystic Shrine, Harrisburg.

He is a lifetime member of Bethel African Methodist Church of Lancaster and served with the church trustees for more than 30 years.

He has been married to his wife, Jean, for 43 years. They have three children, Nelson Jr., Deborah and Patrice.

Polite to head Adams-Musser citizen's group

Nelson Polite Sr., 540 North St., was elected president Thursday night of the recently-formed Adams-Musser Towns Citizens' first official meeting.

Other officers elected are Mrs. Clara Jackson, vice president; Mrs. Patricia Williams, secretary; and Mrs. James Epp, treasurer.

A set of by-laws were also adopted during the meeting, and these chairmen of the following committees were named:

Mrs. Miriam Wallace, human relations; Laurence Tsudy, housing; Fred Eissler, relocation; the Rev. George Evans, community facilities; and Daniel Shertzer, finance.

Although no official action was taken by the organization, a spokesman said it plans to work closely with the Lancaster Redevelopment Authority. It was decided that the group will meet the last Thursday of each month.



FRIDAY, JANUARY 14, 1994



Nelson Polite Sr.

Civic leader to talk about racial issues

Nelson Polite Sr. will speak about racial prejudice during a 9:30 a.m. Sunday adult forum at St. Peter's United Church of Christ.

Polite is a trustee of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church and secretary of the Lancaster Chapter of the Urban League. He is also a member of the Lancaster City Planning Commission and the strategic planning committee of United Way of Lancaster County.

During the 11 a.m. service, the Rev. Robert W. Muise will preach the sermon "Come and See!" Worshipers will make contributions to the Lancaster County Council of Churches Food Bank.

St. Peter's Church is at Buchanan and College avenues.



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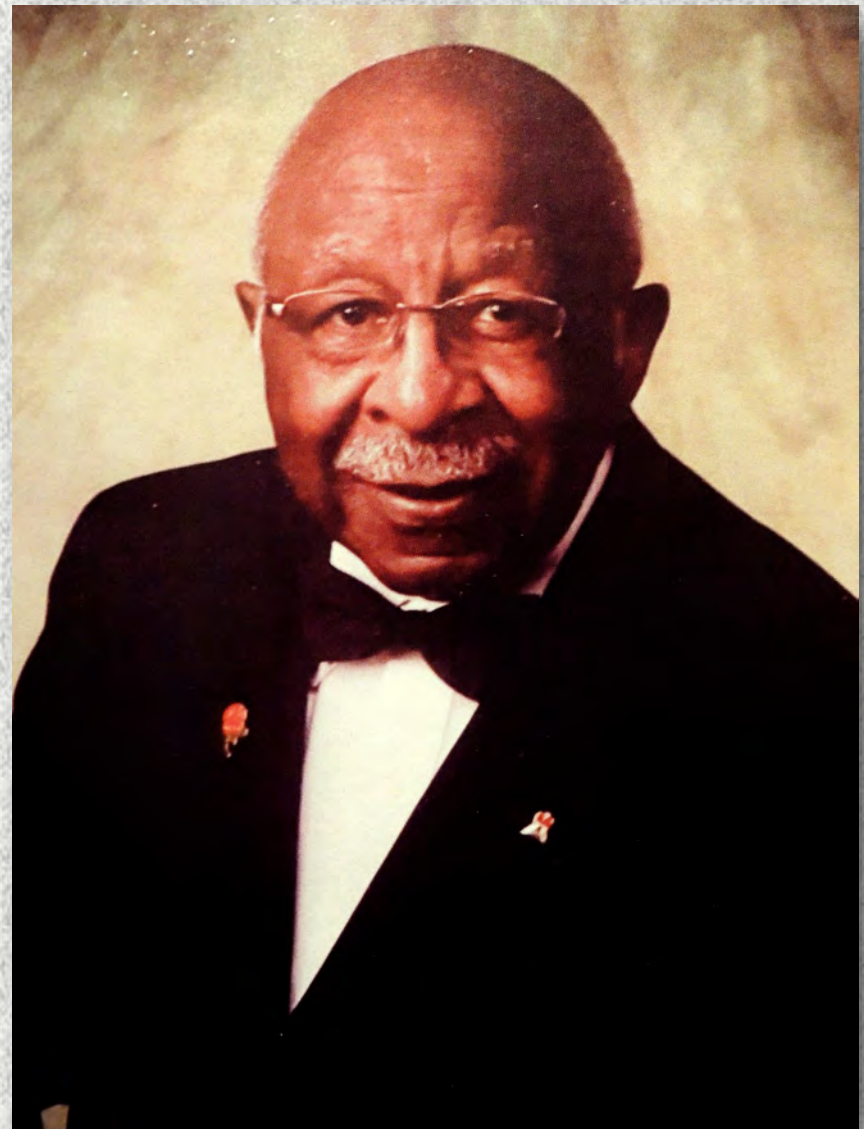
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BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA



THE SILVER BEAVER AWARD

FOR DISTINGUISHED SERVICE TO YOUTH

Presented to

Nelson M. Polite, Sr.

Upon nomination by the

Pennsylvania Dutch Council

and with the approval of the National Court of Honor

*The officers of the National Council of the Boy Scouts of America hereby
affix their signatures and the corporate seal.*

June 11, 2003

Loy S. Roberts
PRESIDENT

[Signature]
NATIONAL COMMISSIONER

Michael D. Harris
CHAIRMAN, NATIONAL COURT OF HONOR

Ray L. Williams
CHIEF SCOUT EXECUTIVE



No. 92-210

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Jean and Nelson Sr. on the front porch of their home at 540 North Street, 2000

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Polite Family Calendar photography & design by Nelson Polite, Jr. 2020

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Jean Ann Polite, 75, RCA retiree

Jean Ann "Nanny" Wilson Polite, 75, of 540 North St., died of natural causes Monday at home.

She worked 38 years in the quality control department of the former RCA Corp., Lancaster, retiring in 1988.

She attended Lancaster area schools and Apex Beauty School, Philadelphia.

A longtime member of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, she was president of the Missionary Society, a senior choir member, Sunday school teacher and Church Women United member.

In 1988, she also founded the Jean A. Polite Food Bank, which became the Bethel Church Food & Clothing Bank. She was honored for her work with the food bank in 1998 by the Pennsylvania agriculture secretary.



Jean Polite

A board member of Lancaster Area Habitat for Humanity, she received numerous awards, including the Women Who Care award from the Fulton Opera House and Urban League Family of the Year award. She enjoyed crossword puzzles.

Born in Lancaster, she was the daughter of the late Albert H. Sr. and Myra Jay Wilson.

She was married 54 years to Nelson M. Polite Sr.

Surviving besides her husband are two daughters, Deborah Polite-Miller, married to David N. Miller of Staten Island, N.Y., and Patrice, married to Terry S. Dixon of Lancaster; a son, Nelson M. Jr., married to Karen Polite of Lancaster; 12 grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren; two brothers, Leonard and Richard A. Wilson, both of Philadelphia; and a sister, Dorothy Wilson Ellis of Columbia.

She was preceded in death by two brothers, Albert and John Wilson; and a sister, Thelma Wilson.

Come inside

Take a tour of the finest new homes
• Parade of Homes



PLUS: Up to \$100 in coupons inside

ENVIRONMENT

Colorful 'prairie' a home to trails

\$1.2M restoration open to the public

AD CRABLE
ACRABLE@LNPNEWS.COM

A prairie in Lancaster County? A \$1.2 million makeover of a River Hills farm has given Lancaster County its newest and one of its most unique natural areas.

The 170-acre Chestnut Grove Natural Area near the county landfill in the River Hills area of Manor Township opened to the public Saturday after an intense three-year ecological restoration effort.

The Lancaster County Solid Waste Management Authority owns the property south of Washington Boro and converted it to a passive recreation area as part of its mission of "community sustainability."

The entrance with a 20-space parking area is located off Chestnut Grove Road, near its intersection with River Road in the Highville area. The natural area is open seven days a week, dawn to dusk.

Though it offers many diverse natural features, and 4.5 miles of easy-walking trails, the undulating property's main feel is some 85 acres of open grassland

NATURAL AREA, page A10



Wetlands-loving red-winged blackbirds are already numerous in the Chestnut Grove Natural Area.

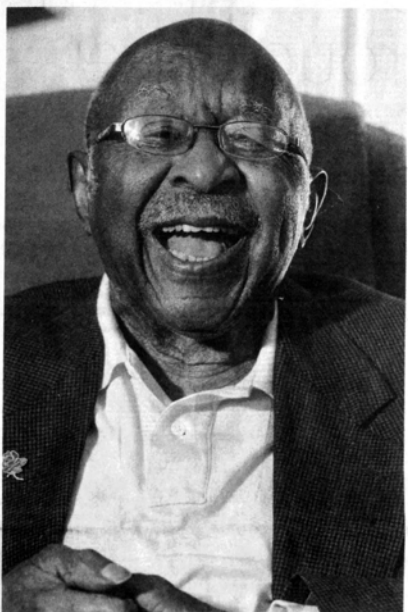
WATCH THE VIDEO

See an overview of the newly opened Chestnut Hill Natural Area in Manor Township at lanasteronline.com

WORLD WAR II VETERAN, NAACP LEADER AND CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST. FORMER LANCASTER CITY COUNCIL MEMBER.

One day to

CELEBRATE A LIFETIME



Nelson Polite served in the U.S. Army during World War II and returned to a civilian life in which African-Americans still were treated as second-class citizens.

CINDY STAUFFER
CSTAUFFER@LNPNEWS.COM

A few things about Nelson Polite: This 91-year-old community, city and civil rights icon has lived in the same house on North Street his entire life.

His family nickname is "Babe." He loves to line dance and is particularly fond of the "Cupid Shuffle," with its hip-swaying sidestep. He knows everything that is going on in Lancaster, of

POLITE, page A7

ECONOMY

Alliance aims for \$1B here

Strategy hinges on private investments

DAN NEPHIN
DNEPHIN@LNPNEWS.COM

The Lancaster City Alliance wants to see \$1 billion in private investment in the city over the next 15 years.

It's one of the many goals — both specific and broad — of the economic development strategic plan the alliance put together to foster the city's growth over the next 10-15 years.

The plan will be released to the public Thursday evening at the Ware Center.

Bob Shoemaker, Alliance president, and Marshall Suwey, its executive vice president, talked with LNP's editorial board about the year-long planning process last Thursday.

Some context for that \$1 billion: Over the past seven years, Lancaster realized \$1.5 billion in investment, but much of it was public money.

"We're not going to see another convention center. We're not going to see another ballpark," Shoemaker said. Most of the envisaged \$1 billion investment will have to come from the private sector.

Housing, hotels, poverty

Other goals include:

- Create jobs that provide a livable wage.
- Have 300 new hotel rooms — beyond the planned 60-room Surveyor Hotel and 96-room Marriott expansion.
- See 2,500 additional residential units, both new and renovated

ALLIANCE, page A6

LANCASTER CITY ALLIANCE FORUM

• The plan will be shared during a presentation from 6:30-7:30 p.m. Thursday at Millersville University's Ware Center, 42 N. Prince St.
• Persons interested in attending should respond to cwagner@teamlancc.org by Monday.

LNP | LANCASTER, PA

FROM PAGE A1

SUNDAY, JUNE 7, 2015 A7

Polite: Today is designated as Nelson Polite Sr. Day

Continued from A1

ten before everybody else. (Nobody really knows how he does this.) He always gets the last word at funerals at Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church. "Get right with God. Do it now," he says.

If he likes you, you know it. If he doesn't, you know it, too. That's OK, because you'll want to straighten up.

He has that effect on people.

Arthur "A. Lee" Brinson laughs when he talks about this. Brinson, 44, of Lancaster, met Polite through Mount Hersh Lodge No. 14, Free & Accepted Masons, where they are both members.

"When I was young, I guess I could be kind of abrasive," he says. "He would just look at me and shake his head. 'Boy oh boy.'"

Brinson says he eventually mellowed and matured. Polite nurtured and noticed. As a longtime leader in the Masons, Brinson says Polite embodied the organization's ideal of taking a good man and making him into a better man.

Today, the entire Lancaster community is invited to celebrate Polite's life on Nelson Polite Day, being held from 2 to 5 p.m. at McCaskey High School.

The day will celebrate a man who protested segregation during the civil rights movement here and who walked the streets to keep the calm after Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated. He was a man who spent decades serving groups such as the NAACP and Crispus Attucks Community Center; was a member and president of City Council; and was chairman of the city Planning Commission.

To understand how such a gentle and soft-spoken man became such a mover and a shaker, it helps to know his origins.

His roots

Polite is the youngest of four children, the "caboosie baby" who came as a surprise 10 years after his parents' last child, earning him his family nickname.

His dad, Abraham, and mom, Mildred Blanche, both attended Bethel AME Church, a place that has played a pivotal role in Polite's life.

When Polite was younger, he and his dad would walk to the nearby church on Saturday nights during cold-weather months and build a coal fire, so the church would be warm for parishioners on Sunday mornings.

Polite's dad was a staunch Democrat and a hard worker, as a custodian at City Hall. His mom was a homemaker, who took in laundry, a clerical duties at a base in western Pennsylvania.

Polite graduated in 1941 from McCaskey High School. In 1943, he was drafted into the U.S. Army and assigned to clerical duties at a base in western Pennsylvania.

When he left the Army, Polite returned home to North Street, where he began noticing a pretty young woman walking down nearby Strawberry Street, on her way to visit her grandmother.

It was Jean Wilson. The two lived in 1950. Her father's political background was a bit different. Her father, Albert, was a staunch Republican.

But the Wilsons also attended Bethel AME, where the common good, not politics, was the focal point.

"They worked together for the benefit of the community," Polite says of his father and father-in-law, a lesson in unity he kept in his heart.

Polite got an office job at the U.S. Navy Depot in Mechanicsburg. His wife worked second shift at RCA.

Polite and his wife, who died in 2004, had three children. They are Deborah Miller of Staten Island, New York, and Nelson M. Jr. and Patricia Dixon, both of Lancaster.

The couple and their children lived with Polite's parents, at the elder Polite's request.

Polite's parents were there to help supervise their three grandchildren as they grew, and Polite's family was there to help care for his parents as they aged. Everyone benefited.

"My parents taught me how to raise my kids, not to be in the streets, to listen to neighbors," he says. "All the neighbors took care of your kids back in those days."

'Da Mayor' of his neighborhood

Derrick Burch grew up a block away from the Polites, on Chester Street. His late father, John, and Polite were friends.

Everybody in the neighborhood knew Polite, Burch says.

"In our neighborhood, he was always known as 'Da Mayor,' the person to go to," Burch says.

Mark Simms, Polite's grandnephew, says, "Everything happened on North Street," which is being renamed in Polite's honor.

The Polites would host summertime strawberry



NELSON POLITE SR. DAY

In honoring this local legend, Lancaster City as Nelson Polite Sr. Day and renamed North Street as Nelson Polite Sr. Way.

The public is invited to celebrate.

• WHO: Nelson Polite Sr., former council president, community leader and agent for change

• WHAT: Community tribute

• WHEN: 2 to 5 p.m. today, with members of Polite's family scheduled to speak at 3:30 p.m.

• WHERE: Gymnasium at McCaskey High School, 445 N. Reservoir St.

socials, as a benefit for the church. Ladies would dress up and wear hats, and everyone would enjoy shortcake.

Polite always made sure kids had something to do at his house.

"Uncle Babe would hang a pinata from the trees," Simms remembers, "not because it was someone's birthday. He wanted the kids to have fun."

Neighborhood kids knew it was time to go home when they heard Polite go out on his porch and do his trademark loud whistle. Burch says.

Focus on people

All along the way Polite was working for equality and fairness. It seems that if there was a community cause, Polite was involved.

But even when serving on boards and organiza-

tions, people were always his focus. As neighborhood boys grew into men, Polite was there to offer advice.

Simms, now the principal of Hand Middle School in Lancaster, says, "He would ask you, 'Have you set goals for yourself?' It was frank and firm but gentle and guiding."

As president of City Council, he had his own style. "You would never see him at a meeting pounding his gavel," Simms says. "He has an aura about him. When he enters a room, you know he's there. There's a quiet presence about him that commands attention and respect."

It was Polite who encouraged Burch, co-owner of Soul Restaurant in Lancaster, to become a Democratic committeeman.

"He was always a man of his word," Burch says. "When you're a person of respect and dignity and you live your life like that, other people want to emulate it."

Simms says he was always amazed at his great-uncle's reach.

"He would know about hot-button topics at the schools," he says, "and I'd say, 'Uncle Babe, how did you hear about that?' He would just chuckle and say, 'I know.'"

Polite always made sure kids had something to do at his house.

"Uncle Babe would hang a pinata from the trees," Simms remembers, "not because it was someone's birthday. He wanted the kids to have fun."

Neighborhood kids knew it was time to go home when they heard Polite go out on his porch and do his trademark loud whistle. Burch says.

Focus on people

All along the way Polite was working for equality and fairness. It seems that if there was a community cause, Polite was involved.

But even when serving on boards and organiza-

5 THINGS YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW ABOUT NELSON POLITE

• His birthday is on Halloween.

• He grew a beard only once in his life, to appear as an extra in the Oprah Winfrey movie "Beloved," part of which was filmed in Lancaster County. He never saw the movie.

• He could type 50 words per minute when he was in the military.

• He ran the 100-yard dash in 10 seconds "flat" when he was on the track team at McCaskey High School.

• His favorite dish made by his late wife, Jean, baked beans.

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Obituary—Nelson M. Polite, Sr., March 3, 2016

Published by LancasterNewspapers—

https://lancasteronline.com/obituaries/nelson-m-polite-sr/article_297650fc-a0f4-577f-badd-03d6e7c41428.html

Nelson is a lifelong resident of Lancaster, Pa., born on Halloween in 1923, who departed from this life on February 22, 2016. He is a widower who was married to Jean A. Wilson Polite for over 54 years. To that union there are three siblings namely Deborah Miller, Nelson Jr. and Patrice Dixon, all University Graduates.

He graduated from the public schools of Lancaster and received several awards for achievements in sports and he played trumpet in the band. Most recently Nelson was recognized as a distinguished high school alumnus from the J. P. McCaskey High School Alumni and currently he is an active member of the alumni board. He graduated from the Lancaster Business College and took specialized courses at Franklin & Marshall College; Stevens Tech School; and Michigan State University along with many years of training in sales and marketing.

Nelson served his country on active military duty for three years in the United States Army during World War II and was honorably discharged in 1946. After his discharge from the service, he organized and directed a 75 piece award winning Junior Herd Drum and Bugle Corps consisting of many neighborhood juveniles who were members of the Conestoga Lodge of Elks Junior Herd. He attained the rank of Boy Scout Life Award and was an active Boy Scoutmaster. He retired as a U.S Federal Civil Service Marketing and Sales Manager, after 42 years, and he received numerous awards and recognitions for distinguished service during his career.

Nelson has committed his life to serving his Church, community and eliminating racism. He continues to be a voice for change in the dialogue concerning ways of fairly upgrading the lives of many residents making sure they are recognized, not forgotten and are getting equal access in job opportunities, housing, quality of life improvements, educational benefits and fair treatment.

Nelson is possibly the longest serving elected Lancaster City Councilman whose tenure lasted for 12 years. During his tenure he served as President and Vice President of the Council. He decided not to seek another term and retired from Council December 31, 2011.

Other religious and community activities include being active in the Bethel AME Church Lancaster all of his life. Nelson continues to serve in many capacities; currently he is a Trustee Emeritus and Chair of the Elders Board. Other board memberships include: United Way; Boy Scouts of America Commissioner; Executive Board Lancaster Branch NAACP; Martin Luther King Scholarship Committee; City Democratic Committee Member; State Weed and Seed; Tall Team boards; City Recreation Commission; former president and now board member, Crispus Attucks Recreation

Continued

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from Previous page

Center; Positive Image Action Group; LHOP Inner City; Elm Street--designed to improve the neglected city neighborhoods. Nelson was also the former Chairman of the Lancaster City Planning Commission; Vice President Community Action Program Board; The Lancaster Urban League Board; the Lancaster County Historical Society Board; Former president of the Arbor Place & Model Cities Board; Treasurer of a neighborhood drug fighting group named DADDs; Neighborhood Block Captain; and retired board member of the Southeast Lancaster Health Center.

Brother Polite joined Mt. Horeb Masonic Blue Lodge 69 years ago & served as Worshipful Master in 1952 and is currently its longtime Secretary. He has served the MW Prince Hall Grand Lodge of PA in the following capacities: Grand Lecturer; District Lecturer; Grand Trustee; and currently Brother Polite is the Director/Liaison to the Elizabethtown Masonic Village Admissions. He holds membership in Harrisburg Himyar Shrine Temple #17 and served as its Potentate; Recorder, Deputy of the Oasis and Patrol Captain; served as High Priest of Harris Holy Royal Arch Chapter #26, Harrisburg; member of the State Grand Royal Arch Credentials and Registration Committee; and Past Commander-In-Chief of Nimrod Consistory #9, Harrisburg. Brother Polite was elevated to the 33rd and last degree in Masonry as a part of the United Supreme Council Ancient & Accepted Scottish Rite in 1975 and most recently was elected as the Pennsylvania State President of The Commanders of the Rite, a group of 33rd and last degree Prince Hall Masons.

Brother Polite has received numerous awards, to name a few: Urban League Family of the Year; City Red Rose Award; Human Relations Commission Humanitarian Award; CAP Community Leaders Award; and Boy Scouts Silver Beaver Award; Bethel AME Church; and a 2006 WGAL TV Jefferson Award Nominee. Most recently his life's history was video recorded & posted on Facebook by the Lancaster County Foundation.

Funeral services will be held on Saturday, March 5, 2016 at 12:00 noon from Bright Side Baptist Church, 515 Hershey Avenue, Lancaster, PA.

There will be a viewing on Friday, March 4, 2016 from 1:00 PM until 9:00 PM from the Bethel AME Church, 450 East Strawberry Street, Lancaster. On Saturday, March 5, at Bright Side Baptist Church, there will also be a viewing from 8:00 AM - 9:00 AM, followed by the Masonic Service from 9:15 AM - 10:30 AM. Final viewing will be from 10:30 AM until the time of the service. Interment will be in the Riverview Cemetery, Lancaster.

In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts may be made to Lancaster County Community Foundation, In Honor of Mr. Nelson M. Polite, Sr., 24 West King St., Suite 201, Lancaster, PA 17603.

Ministry of Comfort entrusted to Emmett Golden Hunt Memorial Chapel, Inc., 427 East Lincoln Highway, Coatesville -- 610-380-8000. Visit us at www.huntmemorialchapel.com

Opinion

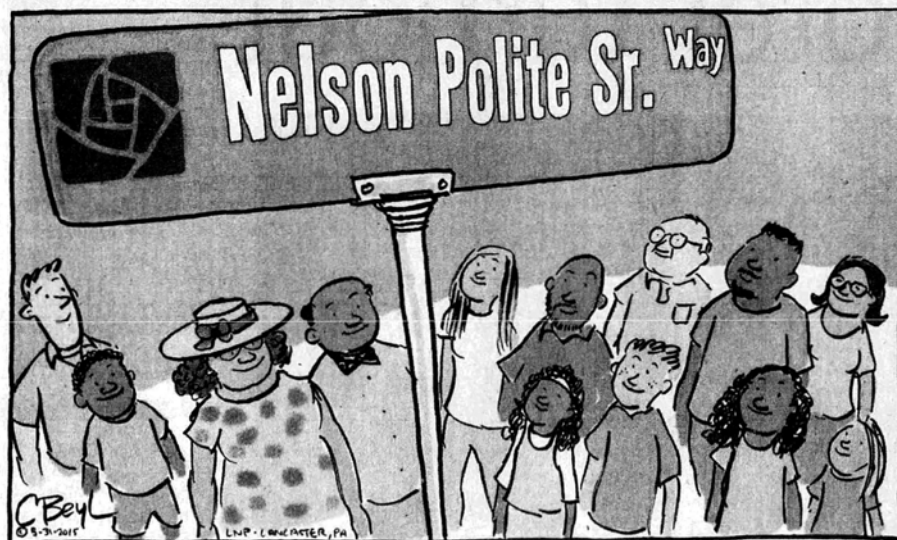
LNP



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In our words

The venerable Mr. Polite



MORE THAN JUST A STREET — A WAY TO LIVE

Next Sunday, June 7, will be Nelson M. Polite Sr. Day in Lancaster, as designated by a City Council resolution. The McCaskey Alumni Association and the City of Lancaster invite people to stop by the gymnasium at McCaskey High School, 445 N. Reservoir St., between 2 and 5 p.m. that day to honor Polite, a longtime civic and civil rights leader; members of the Polite family will speak at 3:30 p.m. North Street in the southeast section of Lancaster city has been renamed Nelson Polite Sr. Way; the new street signs will go up this week. Polite has called North Street home throughout his 91 years of life.

In 1963, Nelson Polite Sr. was among those who protested at segregated Rocky Springs pool, and outside stores downtown that offered few employment opportunities to African-Americans.

His daughter Patricia Dixon remembers accompanying her father to the protests. She didn't understand the demonstrations — she was too little — but she loved being with her father.

"Looking back on it, he's been an incredible father," says Dixon, now director of the Family Center at the Community Action Program of Lancaster County. "I didn't realize how much my dad did. He always had time for us."

As a father, as an elected official, as a civil rights leader, Polite has given his all.

It's now time for us to give something back to him.

He deserves his own street, his own day. He deserves all the accolades he and his family are sure to hear in the coming days. We hope the lines are long when people stop by McCaskey High to pay tribute to Polite.

He grew up on the street that's being named for him, in the very house in which he still resides — a house that was purchased in 1923 by his father, the late Abraham Polite Sr., a janitor at the old City Hall, who has his own city street named for him.

These days, Nelson Polite is lionized as Lancaster city's ambassador. But his stature was hard-won, his experiences emblematic of African-Americans of his generation.

He served in the U.S. Army during World War II and returned to a civilian life in which African-Americans still were treated as second-class citizens.

When the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in 1968, Polite took to the streets of Lancaster with other NAACP members to try to cool tempers and prevent the police from harming protesters brimming with rage and grief.

His experiences made him wary, but never bitter, Lancaster Mayor Rick Gray says.

A deeply spiritual man, unafraid to raise questions, respected by all, "he's invaluable," Gray says.

Polite supported the Lancaster County Convention Center and hotel project, but pushed for minority involvement.

As a City Council member and president, as a longtime chairman of the Lancaster City Planning Commission, he was a voice on behalf of people who otherwise might have been left behind as the city moved forward.

As Polite explains in a short film produced



by the Lancaster County Community Foundation. "When decisions are being made ... you gotta be in the room to have your input."

He's been in the room for decades; he's been in a lot of rooms, seeking to make a differ-

ence.

The NAACP, the Boy Scouts, the Crispus Attucks Community Center, the Lancaster Recreation Commission, the United Way, the Ancient & Accepted Scottish Rite Masons, his beloved Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church — all these and still other organizations have been graced with the gift of Polite's involvement.

As a leader, Polite has been tough, but also gentle, "a gentleman in every sense of the word," Gray says.

"He always got it done," Dixon says. "Even as a father, he wasn't a yeller, but you knew — he was a presence."

Politicians enamored of their own loud voices could learn something from Polite.

We all could.

Even when he faced controversy, people recognized his fundamental decency. In 2004, he set off a national brouhaha when he asked a Central Market standholder to take down photos of President George W. Bush; Polite didn't think political displays were appropriate in the city-owned facility.

Rush Limbaugh railed against him; so, too, did Brit Hume of Fox News. He received phone calls in the night from strangers screaming obscenities. It was, he said at the time, "the worst week of my life."

Religious leaders of varying faiths came forward to support him. A McCaskey student told City Council that Polite was revered by the city's young people. "We look up to Mr. Polite," the teenager said. "He does so much for this community."

Even as he recovers from brain cancer surgery, he remains a force in the city.

Polite "opened many doors of opportunity for people of color," Fran Rodriguez, program officer for the Lancaster County Community Foundation, says. "As a community, we should feel a sense of urgency about building Mr. Polite's legacy. ... His life story must be a constant reminder of how far we've come and the work he needs us to continue in our society."

We agree.

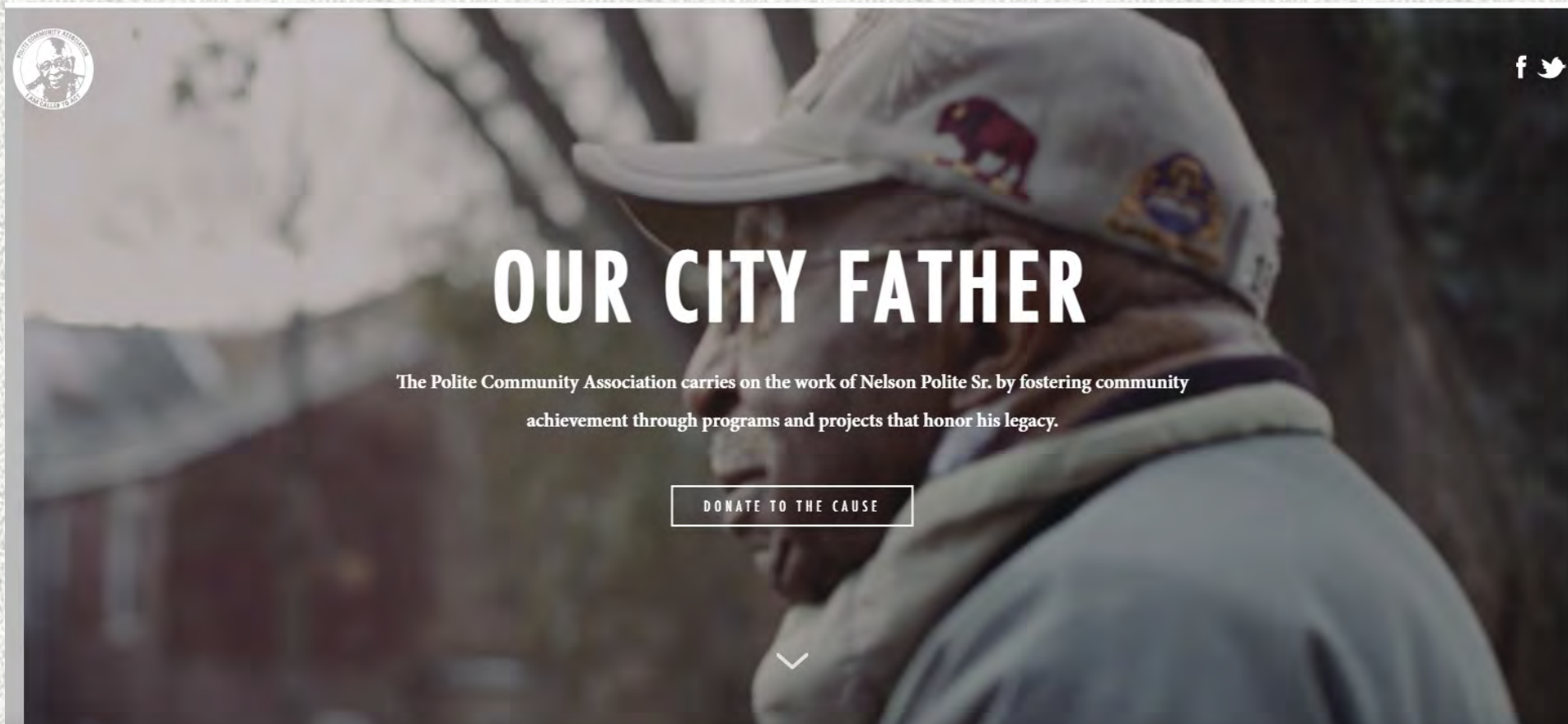
Let's thank Polite next Sunday for all he's done, and then show our gratitude in the way he'd most appreciate — by following his example, by working for a city and county in which opportunity is available to all.

READ MORE

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Text by Leroy T. Hopkins, Jr. Ph.D. and Robert Herr, representatives of the African American Historical Society of South Central Pennsylvania. Lancaster, PA. Design by Randolph Harris, consulting historian, Lancaster, PA, May 2021

<http://www.nelsonpolite.com/>



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Honoring the life of Lancaster icon Nelson Polite

By Pennsylvania House Rep. Mike Sturla *April 11, 2016*

HARRISBURG, April 11 – The state House of Representatives unanimously adopted H.R. 773 honoring the life of Lancaster civil rights leader Nelson M. Polite Sr., introduced by state Rep. Mike Sturla, D- Lancaster.

Polite, who died in February at 92, served as former president of Lancaster City Council and former chairman of the Lancaster City Planning Commission. In addition to his service to the city, he was a member of the NAACP, Crispus Attucks Community Center, Lancaster Recreation Commission, Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church and the United Way.

A member of the Boy Scouts, Polite formed Troop 15 in 1947. He was also a member of the Ancient & Accepted Scottish Rite Masons and was a 33rd Degree Mason, the highest honor in the Free Masons.

During the civil rights era, Polite protested segregation in Lancaster. He helped to lead protests at the segregated Rocky Springs pool and outside downtown stores that offered few jobs to African-Americans. After the 1968 assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., he walked the streets to urge calm. Polite was a civil rights icon who always worked for equality and fairness.

“I am privileged to commemorate Nelson Polite’s life and contributions to Lancaster. He truly embodied a good citizen and I am proud to have called him a friend. I will miss him and his profound advice and explanations, and I’m sure all who knew him will miss him as well,” Sturla said.



"I believe that people will continue to say that Nelson Polite influenced them." Karen Polite

When you mention the name "Mr. Polite" in Lancaster you receive a smile. "Our dad was here to serve and was a man of action," his daughter, Deborah, explains. After nearly a century in Lancaster, Mr. Polite's influence swept wide across the community from launching the first African American Boy Scout troop, to creating the city's vibrant Drum & Bugle Corps, to his service to Bethel AME Church, and a seat on Lancaster City Council. "His own experience as a Boy Scout was significant," Nelson Jr. reflects. "It built an integrity that he carried throughout his life." His daughter-in-law Karen continues, "He was the voice for African Americans [in Lancaster]," she says. "He was our elder statesman."

Together with his wife, Jean Polite, the couple set deep roots in their family home on North Street and kept an open door for conversation on the porch or shared moments around the kitchen table. "One of my mother's favorite sayings to us was "don't forget the bridge that carried you across."" Deborah says, believing that their job "is to reach back and help [those coming behind]." Today, the Polite family works through Forever Lancaster to keep Mr. Polite's vibrant impact alive. They focus on values that are a priority in their family: mentorship, integrity, civic duty, and family. "Dad taught us that community is your family," Deborah declares. "It is evolving and everlasting, and his legacy can live within it."

"I believe that he planted seeds [here]," Karen reflects. "I believe that people will continue to say that Nelson Polite influenced them."

From the website of the Lancaster County Community Foundation—*Forever Lancaster—Stories of Giving*

<https://www.lancfound.org/cbos/stories-of-giving/deborah-nelson-jr-karen-polite/>

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