

The Florida Trail in Black (not White), 1903-1912

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In an April 1904 publication appeared the following excerpt: “*Daytona Fla. — One hundred and ten miles from Jacksonville we find Daytona, situated upon the left bank of the Halifax River. Daytona is acknowledged to be without a rival for beauty among the villages of the South. Nature has crowned this village with lordly live and water oaks and hickories, many of them draped with graceful festoons of gray Spanish moss that over-arch the streets and walks.*”ⁱ A cursory glance at this entry suggests that it might be a snippet from the *Daytona Gazette-News* newspaper (1903-1909), or perhaps a city history excerpted from a tourist brochure. In fact, this entry appeared under the sub-heading “Notes of Travel” in a column titled “Business List” found in the *A.M.E. Church Review*, the quarterly publication of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. More surprisingly, the author was a woman, E. Marie Carter, and her “Notes of Travel” column appeared regularly in the *Review* between 1903 and 1912.

What did Florida look like in this decade, as seen from the eyes of a Black woman traveling the state in this era? This piece will take the reader on the road through a dozen towns and cities, specifically situated along the Florida Trail system, that Carter visited in her 10 years of travel for the *Review*. Railroad lines have disappeared from some of the smaller Florida towns she visited, replaced, in some places by hiking/biking trails, as part of the “rails to trails” movement.ⁱⁱ One town, Croom, has disappeared altogether: what is left of the once-thriving Black settlement can now be seen by bicyclists from the Withlacoochee State Trail running through the state forest and Croom Wildlife Management Area (WMA). Some of the church structures she visited and described are still standing today; in other cases, although the buildings have been replaced by newer structures, the African Methodist Episcopal congregations she described continue to thrive. Today’s reader finds conspicuously missing from her travel narrative: White faces and White spaces. Carter’s travel writing imagines capacious Florida landscapes populated by thriving Black citizens, largely devoid of intrusion from the

state's White citizenry. It is as if these White faces simply do not matter to the trajectory of Black progress Carter records – a narrative that focuses on successful Black home and land ownership, thriving businesses, efficient schools, beautiful churches and parsonages, and well-orchestrated meetings of denominational conferences held throughout the state.

Carter's ten years as *Review* representative included seven extensive trips through Florida, where she visited a total of 50 discrete towns and cities. Carter's columns, published between 1903 and 1912, circulated during the height of enforcement of Jim Crow travel laws, at the tail end of the period referred to by some historians as the "nadir" of American race relations, and at a time when most travel – at least throughout the South – occurred by train, steamboat, electric car, and horse-drawn conveyance.ⁱⁱⁱ As such, her surprisingly sunny descriptions of her Florida rail travels contrast sharply with those of her contemporaries, Anna Julia Cooper and Ida B. Wells both of whom railed against the indignities of train travel in the South for a Black female.^{iv} What might historians gain by viewing this era of Florida history through the eyes of one well-traveled Black woman? This article aims to begin to answer those questions by taking readers on a trip to some of the towns along the Florida rail system that Carter visited.

For all the travel Carter undertook – and she appears to have travelled nearly 12 months out of the year for this 10-year period, only pausing for a week or two of rest around the Christmas and Easter holidays – Carter wrote very little by way of complaint about the travel conditions. When discussing her rail travel, Carter focused rather on identifying which segment of rail line she rode, noting the various connections and stops at towns along the way, and in the case of rail travel in Florida, the terminus points of the various rail lines.^v If we consider Harriet Tubman as a key figure in the perpetuation of the "Underground Railroad" in antebellum America – with its nodes of refuge, hospitality, and information exchange – then certainly E. Marie Carter's columns construct an even more capacious, open, and transparently over-ground rail system serving as the nexus of African American community. Her travel column serves as a precursor to the later *Green Book* for Black travelers, by identifying not only routes and modes of travel (steamship, rail, horse-drawn conveyance), but also the names and addresses of Black families with whom she stayed while traveling, as well as black businesses.^{vi}

While titled “Notes of Travel,” the writing in this column spans a variety of genres. The column included descriptions of the natural surroundings – similar to the passage on Daytona that opened this article – history, demographic data, sociological observations, geographic descriptions of specific cities, rivers, ports, and sites of interest, descriptions of the architecture of A.M.E. churches that Carter visited, descriptions of the homes and personages Carter visited, reportage of conference proceedings, along with snippets of Carter’s spiritual autobiography, and homiletic-like exhortations to her readers. Her descriptions of Florida towns, cities, and A.M.E. churches in particular, paint a robust picture of Black prosperity.

Carter appears to have been fairly well-known in her day in Black religious and literary circles. She was born in New Orleans in 1877, and attended New Orleans University (*Review*, October 1910, 206). According to a newspaper published in Selma, Alabama, Carter launched her first lecture tour in 1896, speaking in the north and east on behalf of southern Black women.^{vii} The author of that brief biography, published in 1900, noted that she “has traveled very extensively.”^{viii} The article also included the only image of Carter I have been able to locate.

Thus, even before beginning her 10-year stint with the *Review*, she appears to have been a seasoned Black traveler. In a biographical sketch of Carter published in the 1905 book, *History of Education: from the Greeks to the Present Time*, author John A. Jackson provides additional details about Carter’s ancestry, claiming that while her grandmother was of Indian descent, her grandfather was a brother to General



Fig. 1- E. Marie Carter.
Courtesy of newspapers.com.

Philip Sheridan. Jackson also notes that Carter has traveled extensively and as a speaker, has stood before audiences of over 6000.^{ix} A Cannonsburg, Pennsylvania newspaper wrote in 1911 that she “is regarded as one of the ablest women in the denomination to which she belongs.”^x Whether Carter’s mixed racial heritage permitted her to pass as “white” proves inconclusive, although in the one passage where she complains of her treatment – interestingly, a passage on her visit to Croom, Florida – she specifically mentions the condition of the “colored” waiting room at the Croom rail station (April 1909, 358).^{xi}

Carter was not the first African American to contribute what can be identified as “travel writing” to a Black periodical, but she appears to have authored the longest-running travel column I have discovered thus far – and certainly the most substantial travel writing I’ve discovered authored by a Black woman specifically for a periodical.^{xii} As Penelope Bullock noted in her early scholarship on the Afro-Protestant press, Molliston M. Clark, had published in the *African Methodist Episcopal Church Magazine* “a series of essays on life among black people, based on information gleaned during his travel for the book concern.”^{xiii} Much like E. Marie Carter, Clark had been hired initially in 1844 as a travelling agent for the church, soliciting subscriptions to A.M.E. publications and selling pamphlets and book. Two decades later, as Eric Gardner has demonstrated, Lizzie Hart published a series of letters in the *Recorder* in 1864 and 1865 that included tourist-like descriptions of the places she visited.^{xiv} As Mia Bay has shown, Ida B. Wells also published in *The Living Way* – a Baptist periodical – brief accounts of her 1886 train trip to California (passing through Kansas, and Colorado).^{xv} And in the pages of the *Review*, second editor Levi Coppin published an occasional column between 1891 and 1895 titled “From the Field,” commenting on his travel on behalf of the *Review*; Carter may have modeled her initial columns on Coppin’s earlier pieces. However, none of these earlier fragmented travel writings match the length and detail of Carter’s columns.

Whether or not Carter had read any of this earlier work remains a matter for speculation. What is clear is that her output – 20 plus columns totaling over 160 pages of writing published between April 1903 and April 1912, and detailing her travel to over 350 discrete American towns and cities – rivals in quantity that of most of the male contributors to the quarterly during this

decade. Her “Notes of Travel” column appears to have been a very popular regular series for the quarterly, and collated together, could easily constitute a single-authored volume. In fact, so popular were the columns that for the “Twenty-fifth Anniversary Issue” of the quarterly, Editor H.T. Kealing included on the page introducing the quarterly installment of the “Notes of Travel” column a handwritten appeal for each reader to secure two new subscribers. Carter’s seven Florida visits focused primarily on the Panhandle, east coast, and the interior, largely because those cities could be reached by either steam ship or rail in that era. A map from this era shows the steamship route from Charleston, South Carolina south along the Atlantic Coast, and veering inland at Jacksonville, Florida.

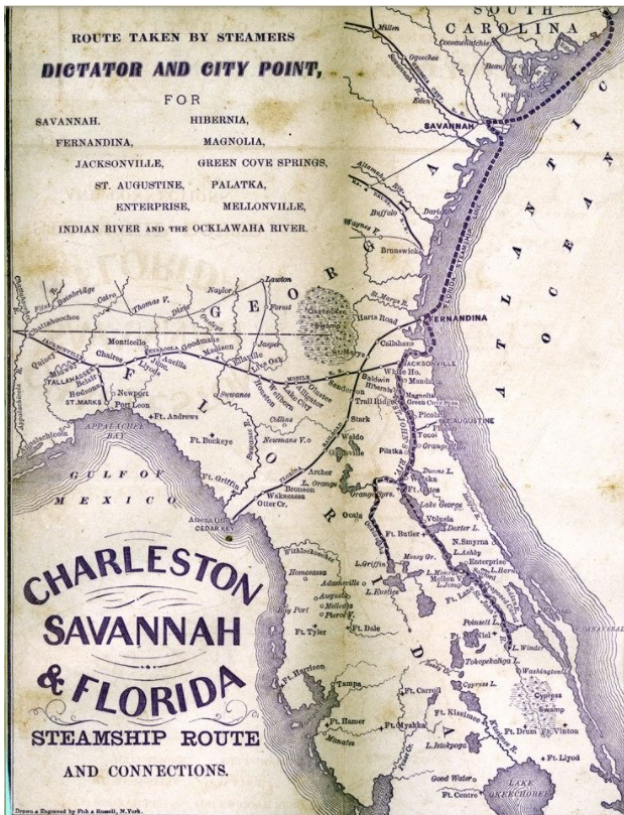


Fig. 2- Florida Steamship Routes.

Available at <https://ufdc-uf1-edu.ezproxy.lib.usf.edu/UF00103081/00001>

Her visits to churches in the south occurred during the winter months, largely, it seems, because the A.M.E. denomination scheduled annual, biannual, and quadrennial conferences in the south when temperatures proved the mildest, thereby avoiding the hot and humid summer months. In the northern part of the state, she visited Pensacola (Seashore Section of the Florida Trail); and Live Oak, Lake City, and High Springs (Suwannee Section). Further south, she sojourned along the east side of the Orlando loop (Orlando and Kissimmee trail sections) to Palatka, Orlando, Sanford, and Winter Park. On the west side of the mid-Florida loop of the Trail, she travelled to Ocala, Dunnellon, Hernando, Floral City, Webster, Brooksville, Croom, Trilby, and Dade City. The Withlacoochee State Trail – a rails to trail project – runs south from Citrus County (Dunnellon, Hernando, and Floral City); into Hernando County (Croom); terminating in Pasco County (just below Trilby). So it is perhaps unsurprising that most of her travel occurred along railroad routes now featured in the Florida Trail system.

Following the Withlacoochee Trail

In describing her travel on rail lines serviced by the Atlantic Coast Lines, she provides her readers – and subsequently, historians – with a rationale for the relative absence of White folks in her narrative. Traveling by rail along what is now the Withlacoochee State Trail, Carter encountered the towns of Dunnellon, Hernando, and Floral City. During a March 1908 visit she notes, “these three towns are phosphate mining towns, where hundreds of Negro men are employed” (January 1911, 314). In fact, for over twenty years, from roughly 1889 to 1909, Dunnellon served as the center of the Florida phosphate industry.^{xvi} Named for its founder, John F. Dunn – Dunnellon and the other mining towns paid workers wages not attainable elsewhere; as a result, by some estimates at the time, the population of Dunnellon ran as high as 90% Black, 10% White.^{xvii} Likely this may have been the case in other phosphate mining towns as well.

Throughout Carter’s travel columns, a clear marker of Black prosperity involved not only the construction of stone and brick churches, but also the construction of parsonages to house A.M.E. ministers and their families, and schools to educate Black children. In view of the higher wages in the phosphate industry, it is perhaps unsurprising then that Carter could boast, in

writing of her February 1908 trip to Mt. Olive A.M.C. church in Dunnellon, of “the very neat and comfortable parsonage which will grace any large town,” (April 1909, 458). Church and parsonage served more than just the religious needs of the local population. From 1896, when townsfolk organized the first Black school, until 1914, when a building formerly serving white students was moved into the neighborhood, Mt. Olive A.M.E. church hosted classes for the town’s Black children.^{xviii}

However, Carter’s record of her February-March 1910 visits to Dunnellon and nearby towns also evinces the “boom and bust” nature of Florida’s economy, and the vagaries of the itinerancy preaching model adopted by the A.M.E. denomination in this era. She records visits to a “Mars Hill” A.M.E. church in Hernando on March 2, 1908, and another to “Mt. Carmel” A.M.E. church in Floral City – neither of which exists today (January 1911, 313).^{xix} Because the A.M.E. denomination moved preachers frequently during this era, Carter rarely reported seeing the same minister on repeat visits. For example, she reports being greeted in March 1908 by the Rev. James Archie at Mars Hill, Hernando and by the Rev. P.R. Roberts at Mt. Carmel, Floral City – a church built originally by the Rev. G.W. (George) Archie, James’s brother. Moreover, the Rev. George Archie also founded and built in 1896 the original Mt. Moriah A.M.E. Church in Tarpon Springs: a likeness of Archie remains in the keeping of Annie Doris Dabbs, Mt. Moriah historian.^{xx}

During a visit to Hernando, Carter reports staying with a Mr. and Mrs. Loomis Williams. In the 1910 census, Williams listed himself as “Employer” in the “laryng and lurry” business, which



Fig. 3- The Reverend George Archie, Courtesy Mt. Moriah A.M.E. Church, Tarpon Springs, Florida.

according to archaic definitions, translates roughly “storytelling and praying” – perhaps Williams’s playful indication of either his church involvement or his favored non-work pastime.^{xxi} That Williams was willing to make light of his business pursuits in reporting them to a likely White census collector would seem to indicate a level of comfort in his position within the town.

During a “bust” entire towns might disappear, as seems to be the case with Croom, Florida, originally located to the east of Brooksville. Croom appears to have been another phosphate town situated alongside the tracks of what was then known as the Atlantic Coast Line, and what is now the Withlacoochee State Trail. Carter reports only one visit to Croom, but it proved a memorable one: the only time in 10 years of contributing her “Notes of Travel” column that she complained outright about the level of service provided by the railroad. She reports, “On Thursday, February 27th [1908] I arrived at Croom, Fla., where Rev. S. H. Bell met me and assured me that my visit would long be remembered as I was the first to visit Croom in the interest of the General Department [of the A.M.E. Book Concern].” While she reports being greeted by an “appreciative audience” and records a pleasant stay, her departure proved less than pleasant. Carter writes, “As usual little or no attention is given to the waiting room for colored people in these villages. Not a heater at Croom, not even a light. Mr. Williams and Rev. Berrian had to furnish a lamp, and on this cold morning, Friday, Feb. 28th, made a bon fire, and before the fire the representative of the *Review* waited for the train” (April 1909, 458).

After boarding the train in Croom that cold February morning in 1908, Carter reports her next stop: “A travel of ten miles brought me to Trilby, Fla. where I received a warm welcome from Mr. and Mrs. Burt Foster, in their comfortable home” (April 1909, 458). At the time, Trilby served as a major railroad center linking Florida east to west. Originally settled as “Macon,” Henry Plant renamed the town “Trilby” when he took over the Orange Belt Line from earlier developers.^{xxii} Evidently Plant’s choice of “Trilby” reflected the popularity of the 1894 novel of the same name by George Du Maurier.^{xxiii} By the time Carter visited Trilby, she likely rode in on the Atlantic Coast Line, which then continued on to St. Petersburg, Florida. A photograph from this era, shows the Trilby freight station on the left, and the passenger depot on the right.



Fig. 4- Trilby Depot, with freight station on left, passenger depot on right.
Courtesy of Jeff Miller.

That very evening, February 28th, Carter reports, “I addressed a most excellent audience in St. John A. M. E. Church, Rev. D. D. Dempsey is the pastor. Mr. and Mrs. Robert Witherspoon assisted in making my stay pleasant” (April 1909, 459). The 1910 U.S. Census lists an “E. D. Dempsey” as “Preacher” in the “Grocery” business, living in Plant City, Florida; Robert Witherspoon appears in the same 1910 census as a “Cook” in the “Railroad” business.^{xxiv} Ministry in the A.M.E. denomination rarely served as a full-time job in the South in this era, so it is unsurprising that the Census records other lines of work for these pastors. Dempsey likely traveled by train to serve the St. John’s A.M.E. congregation at Trilby and Witherspoon would have known many of the African Americans traveling in and out of Trilby by virtue of his work as a cook for the railroad. St. John’s A.M.E. Church no longer exists, and the small African American community that supports the current A.M.E. church, Mt. Olive, founded in 1971, can be reached via an unpaved road at the edge of what is left of the village of Trilby. As seen through Carter’s eyes, however, St. John’s A.M.E. church claimed center stage in 1909.

From Trilby, Carter continued her journey south to Dade City, where, she reports, “Mt. Zion A. M. E. Church . . . is the center of attraction. Rev. E. D. Dempsey, the faithful pastor has beautified the church and is now building a parsonage. May God ever bless his labor.” She adds, On Sunday, March 1 [1908], I had the pleasure of addressing the Sunday school, also speaking at the 11 a.m. service” (April 1909, 459). The current Mt. Zion A.M.E. church, erected in 1920, bears a plaque placed by the Pasco Board of County Commissioners, proclaiming the building the first church in Pasco County to be constructed of masonry. The church is situated along a tree-lined major thoroughfare in Dade City.^{xxv}

Carter traveled again to this area in February 1910, stopping this time in Center Hill, Webster, and Brooksville. Although she usually spoke at A.M.E. churches, at Center Lake Carter spoke before an audience at an A.M.E.



Fig. 5- Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church, Dade City. Courtesy of the author.

Zion Church, another Black denomination evangelizing in the South in this era. She reports that “Rev. Blair, the Presiding Elder of Key West District delivered a very instructive address. Not only should such be heard in the rural districts, but is much-needed in the large cities.” Following Blair’s address, Carter spoke to the crowd gathered at Center Hill as well, noting “I hope some good was done” (January 1911, 312). She traveled from Webster on to Trilby, speaking at Mt. Pisgah A.M.E. Church at 7 p.m. that same evening. Similar to the Black community at Trilby, the Mt. Pisgah A.M.E. Church at Webster can be accessed via roads at the edge of town that fizzle out into dirt roads surrounding the church building. The Mt. Pisgah A.M.E. Church, situated across the road from a cemetery, looks in 2020-21 much as it must have looked in 1910.

From Webster, Carter traveled on to Brooksville, named, sadly for South Carolina legislator and slavery supporter, Preston Brooks, known for infamously caning nearly to death Senator Charles Sumner on the floor of the Senate.^{xxvi} Carter, however, makes no mention of the adoption of the



Fig. 6- Mt. Pisgah A.M.E. Church, Webster, Florida. Current church constructed in 1926. Courtesy of the author.

town's name by White citizens: instead, she focuses on the achievements of the town's Black citizens. For example, Carter reports, "I had the pleasure of addressing the dear people." on Tuesday evening, February 8 at Allen Chapel A.M.E. She adds that she was "well cared for in the beautiful home of Mrs. Frances Giles and her son, Mr. Henry Giles, who is the only shoemaker in this village" (January 1911, 312). The following day she reports visiting the Public School of Brooksville where, the Rev R. D. McLin, former pastor of Allen Chapel, serves as principal, assisted by his wife and two other lady teachers. Carter notes, "The average attendance was one hundred and sixty-five, very good for the orange gathering season" (January 1911, 312). With Brooksville located in the middle of the orange growing belt, children would have been pressed into the gathering process along with their parents and adult guardians. Today, Allen Temple is located in the middle of a residential neighborhood, likely originally surrounded by orange groves, and the houses surrounding it look much like they must have when they were built in the early 20th century.

Along the Eastern Loop of the Florida Trail

Carter also made several trips along the eastern portion of what is now the Florida Trail, stopping at towns and cities that could be accessed either by steamship on the St. John's River, or by rail, including (north to south): Palatka, Sanford, Apopka, Winter Park, and Orlando. During her first visit to Palatka, February 1903 to attend the South Florida Conference, she pronounced Palatka a "beautiful town" (April 1904, 380). Five years would pass before Carter made a return trip, and during her March 1908 trip, she dubbed it a "thrifty town . . . noted for its beautiful orange groves and fine gardens" (July 1908, 83). Likely she arrived in time for the dedication of the new building, as she notes that "a large audience greeted me in Bethel A.M.E." [See Figure 7]

A plaque dates the formation of the congregation to 1875, but the 1908 structure, still standing today, also boasts a commemorative plaque marking the rebuild, as well as beautiful stained glass windows welcoming all.

While previous trips likely occurred via steamship, when Carter returned for a third visit to Palatka a year late in February 1909, she traveled via rail, stopping over in Mobile, Alabama. Carter arrived in time for the opening of the 17th Session of the South Florida Conference, noting that the event was so well-attended that "Hundreds could not even get near the church" (January 1910, 311). It is likely that many of the "hundreds" gathered for this Conference worked on or owned the



Fig. 7- Dedication Plaque, Bethel A.M.E. Church. Courtesy of the author.



Fig. 8- Bethel A.M.E. Church, Palatka, Florida, Rebuilt 1908. Courtesy of the author.

farmlands surrounding Palatka, for Carter pronounces Palatka “the richest vegetable spot in the United States” (January 1910, 311). During this visit, she reports staying with Mr. and Mrs. James Robinson. According to the 1910 U.S. Census, James J. Robinson, a Black man aged 39 worked as a salesman in the retail business, while his son, James J. Robinson, Jr., 17, worked as a laborer in a shingle factory. It seems quite possible that James Jr.’s employer produced the shingles that graced the newly-constructed Bethel Chapel when dedicated in 1908. Regardless, the Robinsons prospered: the 1910 Census reports that James Sr. owned his home.^{xxvii}

During her March 1908 trip to Sanford, she reports traveling south to the “embryo town” of Winter Park, located “sixteen miles south of Sanford and sixty-five miles north of Lakeland” (July 1908, 83). According to the Winter Park Chamber of Commerce, “the city was developed as a winter resort for wealthy Northerners seeking refuge from the harsh winters and a tranquil place to live.”^{xxviii} Notably, the original city survey, dated August 29, 1881, specifically segregated the city, with an area for Black citizens specifically set apart.^{xxix} But Carter seems to have taken no notice of the White Northerners’ winter resort area. Rather, she notes that on March 15, 1908, an “appreciative audience” awaited her at Ward Chapel A.M.E. church. A plaque posted to the side of the present-day Ward Chapel dates the founding of the congregation to 1893, the current building dating to 1930.

During her visit, Carter records staying with a “Mr. F. R. Israel, a subscriber for *The Review* [who] owns a well-supplied grocery store” (July 1908, 83). According to the 1885 Florida State Census, F. R. Israel, a Black man aged 25, resided in Winter Park Florida with his wife, Amaretta; he would have been 48 at the time of Carter’s visit.^{xxx}

Fig. 9- Ward Chapel A.M.E. Church, Winter Park, Florida.
Courtesy of the author.]



Carter visited Apopka, just north west of Winter Park and Orlando, only once, in February 1910. She reports that February 17 found her “standing before a beautiful audience in St. Paul A.M.E. Church” (January 1911, 313). Carter likely arrived to Apopka by rail. While most wooden structures in Florida, including churches, were replaced by brick or masonry structures, curiously the depot in Apopka reversed this order. According to a digital exhibit on “Central Florida Railroad Depots” hosted on by the University of Central Florida, the original brick depot – which Carter would have visited in 1911 – was destroyed by a tornado in 1918, and replaced with the wooden depot still standing along the tracks in Apopka today, several blocks from St. Paul’s A.M.E. Church.^{xxxii}

The Orlando that Carter visited has been changed so much by the arrival of Disney that likely she would recognize very little today. Carter records three visits to Orlando: February 1903, February 1905, and February 1908. During her first trip she notes simply that Orlando is “a beautiful inland town . . . noted for the abundance of beautiful flowers,” adding, “We have



Fig. 10- Railroad Station, Apopka, Florida. Courtesy of the author.

a church in this town which will grace any large city” (April 1904, 380). The now-sprawling suburbia that is Orlando was once, as Carter reports, “a typical old town, such as one finds everywhere in the South . . . the terminus of the railway” (April 1906, 390). On February 13, 1908, she attends the 15th Session of the South Florida Conference, held in Mount Olive A.M.E. Church (July 1908, 80). While Mount Olive appears to be the only A.M.E. church in Orlando at the time of Carter’s visits, now the greater Orlando area boasts seven A.M.E. churches with an Orlando mailing address.^{xxxiii}

One final stop along the Florida Trail, worth mentioning in view of its historic importance and Carter's three trips to this location: Mount Zion A.M.E. Church, Ocala.

Carter initially visited this church, now listed on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places, in December 1903. She reports being "royally entertained" at the home of the presiding elder and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. J. (James) A. Quarterman (April 1904, 386). Since, as noted earlier, most A.M.E. ministers held other day jobs, it is notable that by the time of the 1910 Census, Quarterman is listed only as a minister in the A.M.E. Church, with no additional occupation noted.^{xxxiii} Carter's December 1903 visit



Fig. 11- Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church, Ocala, Florida.
Courtesy of the author.

marked the first time the Central Florida Conference had been held during Christmas week. Gatherings of this nature proved of great consequence to the larger African American community, and this event attracted the attention and attendance of the editor of the *Baltimore Afro-American*, John H. Murphy Sr.^{xxxiv} At Murphy's suggestion and by a unanimous vote of the

attending clergy, the Conference garnered the moniker, “the Christmas Conference” (April 1904, 386).

While Carter spoke before the Conference as the Representative of the A.M.E. Book Concern, including women on the platform party for such events proved rare in this era. As a denomination, the African Methodist Episcopal Church recognized the services of women in only two primary positions: “stewardess” (one who assisted in Holy Communion and preparing the sanctuary for services) and “deaconess” (those engaged in pastoral care of the sick and in out-reach to the community).^{xxxv} Although bishops had tried earlier in the nineteenth century to ordain an occasional woman to the preaching ministry, it was not until 1948 and the ordination of Rebecca M. Glover that such ordinations were not overturned by the church hierarchy.^{xxxvi} So while the interior sanctuary looks much the same to a present-day viewer as it would have to an attendee of the Christmas Conference in 1903, what Carter would not have seen is the presence of the Rev. Dr. Rhella P. Murdaugh, the current Pastor of Mt. Zion, in the pulpit, where she can be found today on any given Sunday.

Carter’s final column for the *Review* appeared in April 1912. A changing of the editorship at the quarterly likely accounts for the termination of her long-running column. The editor who had championed her “Notes of Travel” column, Hightower T. Kealing, accepted the Presidency of Western University in Kansas City, Kansas, an historically Black college (April 1912, 832). Sadly, Carter seems to have disappeared from A.M.E. church history: while many other A.M.E. churchwomen appear in Richard Wright’s monumental Encyclopaedia [sic] of the A.M.E. church, Carter is



Fig. 12- Interior, Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church, Ocala, Florida. Courtesy of the author.



Fig. 13- The Reverend Dr. Rhella P. Murdaugh, Pastor, Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church, Ocala, Florida. Courtesy of the author.

notably absent.^{xxxvii} Had Carter's columns proved so popular that the all-male A.M.E. hierarchy felt threatened by Carter's notoriety? That seems worth speculating. Regardless, her accounts of her travels on Florida's rails paint an inspiring picture of a network of Black homes, churches, and businesses thriving in spite of – or perhaps because of – persistent segregation and White paternalism. Thanks to the concerted efforts of Florida's Black citizens, many of these institutions still thrive today, providing hikers and bikers along Florida's trail systems a chance to catch a glimpse of Florida's rich Black history. Seeing the Florida Trail through Carter's eyes ought to remind Florida historians to recenter the experiences of Black Floridians and to avoid the "whitewashing" of Florida history as it has too often been presented.

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NOTES

- i "Business List/Notes of Travel/1903," A.M.E. Church Review, April 1904, 380.
All subsequent references to issues of the A.M.E. Church Review will be made parenthetically within the text, citing month and year of publication and the page number where that information can be found. Only a couple dozen issues of the Review have been digitized: Wilberforce University, Xenia, Ohio, holds a full print run, while Drew University, Madison, New Jersey holds a microfilm copy. I conducted archival research at both Wilberforce and Drew.
- ii For an early history of the rails to trails movement, see Bonnie Nevel and Peter Narhnik, *Railroads Recycled: How Local Initiative and Feder Support Launched the Rails-to-Trails Movement 1965-1990* (Washington, D.C.: Rails-to-Trails Conservancy 1990).
- iii See Rayford Logan, *The Negro in American Life and Thought: the Nadir, 1887-1901* (New York: Dial Press, 1954). It is beyond the scope of this essay to adjudicate the validity of Logan's oft-reprinted observation.
- iv Charles Lemert and Esme Bhan, editors, *The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper, Including A Voice from the South and Other Important Essays, Papers, and Letters* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1998), 92-94. In her chapter "Woman versus the Indian" published in *Voices from the South* (1892) Cooper notes especially conductors who assist white women travelers while turning their backs on black women. She also complains about waiting rooms marked "For Ladies" and "For Colored People," wondering in which one she rightly belongs (94). That said, she notes that conductors do not make the laws, but merely enforce

them to keep their jobs (94). Ida B. Wells writing of her experiences in "The Jim Crow Car" (1891) and in Chapter III of her pamphlet *Southern Horrors* (1892) titled "The New City, complains that due to the passage of separate car laws in the South, black travelers, "regardless of advancement" must ride in "filthy, stifling partitions cut off from smoking cars." See Ida B. Wells, *The Light of Truth: Writings of an Anti-Lynching Crusader*, edited with an Introduction and Notes by Mia Bay (New York: Penguin Books, 2014), 31-32 and 69.

v In spite of the efforts of Henry Plant and others, as late as 1899, Florida contained a scant 1700 miles of rail line, and that consisted primarily of short routes connecting smaller, regional towns and cities. Most roads at this time consisted of little more than expansions of earlier Spanish and Native American trails. This remained true until 1917, when the state legislature passed more substantial road development and expansion measures. For more information on Florida railroad development see Charlton W. Tebeau and William Marina, *A History of Florida* (Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1999), 266.

vi I lay out more fully the comparisons between Carter's columns (1903-1912) and *The Green Book* (first publication 1936) in a forthcoming article for the *Journal of African American History*, titled "'Notes of Travel' in the A.M.E. Church Review 1903-1912: Precursor to *The Green Book*, Feminized Sociology."

vii "Miss E. Marie Carter," *Missionary Searchlight*, January 15, 1900, 1. This brief biography also included the only image of Carter that I have been able to locate.

viii Ibid.

ix John A. Jackson, "Biographical Sketch of Miss E. Marie Carter," *History of Education: from the Greeks to the Present Time*, Second Edition (Denver: Western Newspaper Union, 1905), 303-04. According to the book's title page, Jackson was the ex-president of the Kentucky Normal and Industrial Institute and the Lincoln Institute, Jefferson City, Missouri.

x *The Daily News*, 4.

xi Throughout this article, I use the term for African Americans found in the original source. Carter used the term prevalent at the time in popular

discourse: "colored." Census reports also used "black" or "mulatto" and I have preserved the language of the original.

- xii Mitch Kachun, Professor of History at Western Michigan University, has done some work on Associated Press journalist, Charles Stewart, who wrote about his travels in early twentieth century black newspapers under the name "Col J.O. Midnight." He presented a portion of this research at the 2018 African American Intellectual History Society (AAIHS) conference under the title "The Travels of Col. J. O. Midnight in the New Negro Era: Movement and Constructed Personae in the Activism of Journalist Charles Stewart," but to my knowledge, has not published any of this research in print.
- xiii Penelope L. Bullock, *The Afro-American Periodical Press, 1838-1909* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 46.
- xiv Eric Gardner, "'Yours for the Cause': the Christian Recorder Writings of Lizzie Hart," *Legacy* 27:2 (2010), 367-91.
- xv Mia Bay, *To Tell the Truth Freely: The Life of Ida B. Wells* (New York, Hill and Wang, 2009), 62.
- xvi J. Lester Dinkins, *Dunnellon: Boomtown of the 1890's* (St. Petersburg, FL: Great Outdoors Publishing Company, 1969), 41. xvii *Ibid*, 73, 113.
- xviii *Ibid*, 163.
- xix On the landing page of the national web site for the African Methodist Episcopal denomination a user can "Search" for an A.M.E. church. Recent searches reveal no "Mars Hill" A.M.E. church in Hernando, and none at all in Floral City. See <https://www.ame-church.com/directory/find-a-church/>. "Mars Hill" appear to be a reference to Acts 17:22, which reads "Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars hill and said, 'Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.'" Explanation provided by the "About" page of the web site of Mars Hill College, North Carolina, <https://www.mhu.edu/about/who-we-are/history-of-the-university/>.
- xx Rev. Kelvin Price and Annie Doris Dabbs, Personal Interview, Friday, July 10, 2020.
- xxi "Loomis Williams," 1910 United States Federal Census. Accessed via [ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com) 28 November, 2020. For definitions of "laryng" and "lurry",

see The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary, Volume I (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 1573, 1681.

xxii Scott Black, "The Railroad Boom Town of Trilby," History of Pasco County web site, <http://www.fivay.org/trilby9.html>, accessed December 3, 2020.

xxiii Ibid.

xxiv "E.D. Dempsey," 1910 U.S. Federal Census; "Robert Witherspoon," 1910 U.S. Federal Census. Accessed via ancestry.com 03 December 2020.

xxv The church sits at 14440 7th Street in downtown Dade City. xxvi "Brooksville, Florida," Florida Back Roads Travel, <https://www.florida-backroads-travel.com/brooksville-flor-ida.html>. Accessed December 3, 2020.

xxvii "James J. Robinson," and "James J. Robinson, Jr.," 1910 United States Federal Census. Accessed via ances-try.com 5 December 2020.

xxviii Winter Park Chamber of Commerce, "The History of Winter Park," <https://winterpark.org/history-of-winter-park> accessed 5 December 2020.

xxix Steve Ratjar and Gayle Prince Rajtar, *A Guide to Historic Winter Park Florida* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2008), 12.

xxx "F.R. Israel," Florida, U.S., State Census, 1867-1945, accessed via ancestry.com 5 December 2020.

xxxi "Apopka Seaboard Air Line Railway Depot," <https://richesmi.cah.ucf.edu/omeka/exhibits/show/railroadde-pots/apopka> accessed 5 December 2020.

xxxii "Find a Church," The Official Web Site, African Methodist Episcopal Church, <https://www.ame-church.com/di-rectory/find-a-church/> accessed 5 December 2020.

xxxiii "Rev. J.A. Quarterman," 1910 United States Federal Census, accessed via ancestry.com 6 December 2020.

xxxiv For more about the Afro-American, see Hayward Farrar, *The Baltimore Afro-American, 1892-1950* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1998).

xxxv For a lengthier description of these roles, see <http://www.tamec-lansing.org/stewardess-deaconess.html>.

xxxvi Stephen W. Angell, review of Jualynne E. Dodson, *Engendering Church: Women, Power, and the AME Church* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.: 2202), in *The North Star* 5:2 (Spring 2002), accessed online via EBSCOhost 6 December 2020.

xxxvii Richard R. Wright, *The Encyclopaedia of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, 2nd Edition (Philadelphia: The Book Concern of the A.M.E. Church, 1947).