

## The Smith Family History Part 5 – Weeden’s History

The last child of James A. Smith and Mary Ann Underwood is Annie. She married Henry Clay Weeden. An entry about Annie’s husband, Henry Clay Weeden, from the *Encyclopedia of Louisville*, reveals that “In 1901 he married Anna Marshall Smith, a black Canadian whose grandparents had been active in the UNDERGROUND RAILROAD in Ontario. Following her death, she was recognized as a prominent black poet. They had three children and lived at 816 Hancock St. Weeden is buried in the Louisville Cemetery.” As mentioned, they had three children and I was able to identify two, Mary and Philo. Mary Gertrude Weeden was born on January 8, 1912 in Jefferson, Kentucky. Her death record reveals her married name Slater, but she was divorced at that time. Her death record also shares that she passed on August 25, 1996 in Cleveland, Ohio and that she passed at the age of 84.

Mary Gertrude’s brother Philo, as mentioned, passed away at a young age. His death record states that he passed on June 3, 1923 in Louisville, Kentucky at the age of 17. I could not identify the last child of Annie and Henry that passed away, but one record states that this child passed at the age of 12.

Annie’s husband Henry Clay Weeden was described in a March 15, 1929 article from *The Amherstburg Echo* which wrote “H.C. Weeden, prominent attorney and counsellor-at-law, of Louisville, Kentucky, was a week end guest with Mr. and Mrs. W.H. Bush, Sandwich street. Mr. Weeden is also identified with the ministry and though not pastoring now he is general secretary-auditor of the A.M.E. Zion connection, which represents half a million communicants. Mrs. Weeden, a sister of Mrs. Bush was Miss Annie Smith, and prior to her marriage taught school in this district and in the southland.”

Henry Clay Weeden was quite well known in Louisville, Kentucky. According to the *Notable Kentucky African Americans Database*, Henry was born enslaved in LaGrange, Kentucky and has several impressive accomplishments. He wrote *Weeden's History of the Colored People in Louisville* which was published in 1897 and can be read here <https://archive.org/details/weedenshistoryof00weed/page/n3/mode/2up?view=theater> . On page 5 is a section called 'Our Compiler' which includes a biography of Weeden and was written by Joseph S. Cotter. It says "Mr. Henry Clay Weeden was born in Oldham county, Kentucky. Dr. Givens and wife taught him to read and write before entering the LaGrange public schools, presided over by the Rev. E.P. Marrs. He came to Louisville at an early age and entered the old school at Fourteenth and Broadway, afterwards attending the city schools, passing through them he entered the services of Dr. Stuart Robinson and Col. Bennett H. Young. He continued his studies under these distinguished gentlemen, especially those in languages, and Latin under Col. Bennett H. Young of whom he is a protégé. He then became sub-publisher of the *Christian Index*, under the late Bishop Miles, keeping the books and looking after nearly 1800 subscribers. After this he became editor of *Zion's Banner*, having the distinction of being the youngest editor in the world. His editorials were copied and commented upon by so able a paper as the *New York Independent*. This was, indeed, an honor. Since then he has been connected with several papers as correspondent and on the editorial staff. He has represented local dailies, being the only colored man in the city holding a certificate from same. During the G.A.R. Encampment, 1895, he was special reporter, and was allowed to go through all lines and enter all places in search of news. In 1881, as associate special reporter to Mr. Joseph Ekin (now of the *New York World*) to reported the proceedings of the great educational convention which met at Lexington."

“As a church worker Mr. Weeden has rendered great services. He was superintendent of Sabbath Schools twelve years, and for twelve consecutive years was made delegate to Annual Conferences of Zion Church. Twice has he been a member of General Conferences, and appointed to represent his Church at the Ecumenical Conference at Baltimore, and assigned to read a paper on ‘Missions.’”

“As a politician Mr. Weeden stands high. He is a good speaker and an able organizer. He was a member of the National Republican League of the United States, which met in Buffalo, New York, September, 1892, elected from State at large. By support of the New Jersey delegation he was elected secretary of one of the leading committees. He held a high position in the postal service. During General Harrison’s term of office, he held the highest office of any colored man in this district, and as a guager he distinguished himself. Mr. Riley, chief deputy under Colonel Scott, said of him: ‘Mr. Weeden is the only colored guager in the United States.’ So able was he along this line the special agents recommended him to the Department at Washington in glowing terms. He has been a delegate to Republican conventions for ten years, and a member of the City and County Committee for eight years. In 1892 he was elected secretary of the Fifth District Republican Convention, being the first colored man so honored. He has been identified with every movement for the advancement of his people.”

The biography continues by saying “He is a Knight Templar and Thirty-second degree Mason. Recently, the Zion Church honored him by making him trustee of Atkinson College, Madisonville, Ky. He is still actively engaged in newspaper work, being on the staff of the *Star of Zion*, the connectional paper which speaks to 450,000 people. Besides this he does special work for the dailies. For nearly two years he has been connected with J.P. Simmons as local and traveling salesman. No young man among us is better known for uprightness of living and

devotion to duty than he. His qualities are such that many older men would do well to copy them. I have known him for years, and the better I know him the better I like him. So far, he has made an heroic effort to be of service to his fellow-men, and by so doing has won a host of friends. So well has he improved the past that if the future has not in store for him many good things it will do him a great wrong.”

Henry Clay Weeden is also mentioned many times in the press, including an article about his political career from the *Hopkinsville Kentuckian* from November 15, 1895 titled ‘They Want to ‘Domernate.’ It says “It is said that H.C. Weeden, the colored man from this city who is seeking the chief deputyship in the land office, will receive the solid support of every colored voter in Louisville, and that his claims will be urged with a persistence that will not bear refusal. The colored Republicans will hold a mass meeting at Thirteenth and Walnut streets Thursday night at which it is expected that Weeden’s candidacy will be indorsed. The meeting is said to have been called for the purpose of discussing how much and what particular slices of ‘pie’ should come to the colored Republicans of Louisville, and it is probable that candidates will be put in the field for a number of places.”

It does not appear that Weeden gained enough votes for the deputyship because a few months later (February 7, 1896) *The Courier Journal* printed that he was applying for a clerkship in the City Hall. The article ‘Weeden Thinks a Clerkship On One of the Executive Boards Would Suit Him. H.C. Weeden, colored, who organized the colored Republican forces during the last campaign, is an applicant for a clerkship in the City Hall under the new Administration. He has the indorsement of a large number of white Republicans, as well as the solid support of the colored contingent, and declares that if he does not get a place and a good one, something will drop in November. Weeden was a gauger under Collector Scott. He thinks a clerkship in either

one of the executive boards would be about his size, and intends to have it or know the reason why.”

H.C. Weeden was very active politically as was recorded in *The Courier Journal* on February 29, 1896 which says “A movement is on foot among the colored Republicans of this city which if carried out successfully may throw cold water on the Bradley presidential boom. They are quietly organizing by wards and precincts, with the intention of capturing the primary conventions at which delegates to the district and State conventions are to be selected, and declare that they will allow no Bradley men to be chosen. The movement is led by H.C. Weeden and others. Weeden organized the negroes for Bradley last year, but is opposed to Gov. Bradley for any place that he may seek in future. The colored troops are mad because they fought nobly and got nothing – not even a crumb from the pie counter. They find that they are even unable to get any preferment from the Louisville Republicans, and it is finally dawning upon them that they are wanted only for their votes. H.C. Weeden, who is a candidate for delegate to the National Convention from the State-at large, said yesterday that not only he, but nine-tenths of the colored Republicans of the city are aggrieved because the Republicans have failed to redeem their ante-election promises. “If they do not do something for the negroes and the negro race their goose is cooked,” said Weeden. ‘The negroes supported them this year under pressure, and they promised us not only place and power, but a repeal of the Separate Coach Bill. We get nothing, not even consideration. We all understand Gov. Bradley’s bluff about the appointment of Postell at Hopkinsville. He knew that Postell’s appointment would not be confirmed when it was made, but he thought it would satisfy the negroes. If he was in earnest about giving the place to a colored man, why didn’t he nominate another, and another, if necessary? Why didn’t he act like Cleveland did about Hornblower? Just because he wasn’t in earnest; he didn’t intend that a

colored man should have the place. There are 9,000 colored men in this city who voted the Republican ticket last fall. In some wards we will elect our own delegates. In those wards where the white Republicans predominate, we shall demand of them representation in proportion to the number of votes we cast. This will give us ninety votes in Louisville, and you may rest assured that Gov. Bradley will not get them.”

A few years later, Weeden appears in a writeup in the *St. Louis Palladium* on May 14, 1904 which says “Rev. H.C. Weeden, A.M., at one time the most prominent layman in the west. Edited and published Zion’s Banner, the first church paper of the A.M.E. Zion denomination. Gave the church great prominence through the local dailies. He is now stationed at Springfield, where Zion in this part of Kentucky has been given an impetus along all lines under his administration. Rev. Weeden is prominent in politics, being held in high esteem by the leaders of the republican party. Through his efforts Dr. E.E. Underwood was made delegate-at-large to represent Kentucky in the national republican convention. Rev. Weeden is a very fluent speaker.”

*The Courier Journal* also mentions on September 12, 1927 that Weeden was the treasurer for the Lincoln Bar Association which gathered and “Advice to members of the race, furtherance of justice and upholding of legal ethics were named as the objects of the association.”

Henry Clay Weeden passed away on October 8, 1937. His death record lists him as widowed and a preacher. Surprisingly, for someone who was mentioned often in the press, I could not find an obituary for him. I was able to find an obituary for his wife Annie which appeared in *The Amherstburg Echo* on December 21, 1934. It says “Following a long illness, Mrs. H.C. Weeden died in Louisville, Ky., Thursday night, December 14<sup>th</sup>. Born in Amherstburg in 1870, Mrs. Weeden was Annie, the youngest of the 12 children of the late Capt. James A. and

Mary Underwood Smith. She was educated in Amherstburg, spent her girlhood here, and taught a school term in S.S. No. 1, Anderdon. Forty years ago she accepted a school in Shelbyville, Ky., and a few years later she married H.C. Weeden, attorney-at-law, of Louisville, Ky., who survives her with one daughter, Mary Gertrude. One son died in early manhood, and another at the age of 12. She also leaves behind one sister, Mrs. W.H. Bush, of Amherstburg, who is now the sole survivor of this well known family. Funeral services were held in Louisville Sunday afternoon.”

**What we publish is not a complete history of any family and is based on the documents that are available. We welcome photos and information to fill in the gaps. See you next week where we will celebrate another amazing family.**