

**George and Lucy Vance Biography**

George Vance was born about 1843 in Tennessee probably in Montgomery County. He was born into slavery but no information has been found on either his parents or the family that enslaved him. The first record found was his listing in the 1870 Montgomery County census. This listing shows him living in District 12 which includes downtown Clarksville. All other records show that he was living on 9th Street so it is highly likely that this was his address in 1870. Also listed with him was wife Lucy and two children: Ella, age 3 and William, age 5 months. Tragically, these two children were not found in any other records so they probably were the victims of the high child and infant mortality characteristic of this time frame. George was working as a laborer. No record has been found of a marriage between George and Lucy so it is probable that they were married while they were enslaved and did not feel the need to formally marry. In 1866, Tennessee passed a law stating that former enslaved couples that were living together as man and wife were now considered legally married.

The 1880 Montgomery County census again listed the family as living in District 12 with a forty-two-year old George working as a laborer. Thirty-year old Lucy was keeping house and caring for Thomas, aged 10, Katie, age 6, and Lula, age 3.

In 1890, George was involved in a very nasty internal dispute in Fifth Ward Baptist Church. According to a Bill of Complaint filed in Clarksville’s Chancellery Court on February 16, 1891, Deacons George Vance, Charles Kessee, William Barksdale, and Henry Roberts were dissatisfied with an unspecified financial action of the church and resigned in protest on September 3, 1890. The church committee chose replacements for the four resignees and called a general church meeting to affirm the replacements and to formally designate Reverend Stokes as pastor of the church. Stokes had been preaching at the church for the last six years. At the general meeting, friends of the former deacons made a motion to reconsider the acceptance of the resignations and to reconsider Stokes as the pastor. The meeting got so contentious that it was adjourned until the next day. The full meeting of the congregation on the following day affirmed the replacement deacons and affirmed Stokes as the pastor. Vance, Kessee, Barksdale, Roberts and their adherents refused to attend church until December 27, 1890. Meanwhile in December of 1890, they filed a Bill in the Chancellery Court claiming to be trustees and deacons of the church and also claiming that the church was a corporation. They claimed Pastor Stokes had been fired and was illegally acting as pastor of the church. They had locked the church to prevent him from preaching, and the illegal deacons and the church janitor had removed the locks. They were seeking an injunction against Stokes preaching in the church or interfering with them. The injunction was granted. On February 16, 1891, the church filed a Bill of Complaint seeking to have the injunction lifted. They claimed that if the injunction stood, the church would be hopelessly divided and bankrupt. Vance and his adherents had installed another pastor, William Fluit, over the objections of the majority of the congregation. Vance and friends claimed the injunction gave them total control of the church until the lawsuit was settled. The members of the church sought to lift the injunction and have a congregational meeting vote settle the issue. They sought an injunction to prevent either side from preventing or interfering with the vote. At the time of this filing, Rev. Stokes had resigned and moved so an area of contention had been removed. This plan went forward, and while he was no longer a deacon of the church, George and his family continued to be members of Fifth Ward Baptist Church.

George became sexton of Mt. Olive Cemetery in approximately 1885, and in January 1892, the local paper wrote an article on him stating that he had found most families buried there could not pay him for digging their graves and that he could not make a living at it so he resigned. Unfortunately, according to the article, he found he could not deny the service to these families so would perform the service without pay when asked. This became a painful task when his wife Lucy died on May 26,1886, and he buried her in Mt. Olive.

In July 1894, George watched joyously as his daughter Katie was married in Fifth Ward Baptist Church to Joe Thompkins. In August 1894, George gave a deposition in Support of Delilah Burr’s application for a widow’s pension. Newly-wed Katie signed as a witness to his deposition. In October of 1894, George married his second wife, Mary Outlaw.

Although his primary residence was in Clarksville proper, George actually owned a plot of land in New Providence. It is unknown when he acquired it, but he owned it in 1877 when a map of Montgomery County complete with the names of the landowners was published. In 1896, he lost ownership of the property due to nonpayment of taxes. The newspaper announcement of the sale describes the property as bounded on the east by Leonard, on the south by a street, on the west by Gilmore and on the North by Pike.

The 1900 Montgomery County census shows him living at 228 Nineth Street working as a laborer. He owned the house but had a mortgage. He is listed with his wife, Mary and a boarder, Mollie Small. Ironically, in July of 1900 Fifth Ward Baptist Church’s lot and church building on Main Street was sold in a Mortgage Sale. George was one of the signers of the original mortgage that was foreclosed.

In 1905, George gave a deposition in support of Shelby Clark’s minor children affirming that he buried their mother in Mt. Olive Cemetery. In July of 1906, George’s son Thomas and Sam Garnett had charges dismissed in connection with the Fifth Ward Church fight of 1891. Tragedy struck the family on March 8, 1910 when Robbie May Outlaw, George’s granddaughter died. She is buried in Mt. Olive Cemetery and has a beautiful headstone. The 1910 Montgomery County census taken the next month listed George and Mary in the 9th Street house with George’s son Thomas, his wife, Anna, and their six children living with them. George’s occupation is listed as laborer in steel work.

George Vance died on April 24, 1918 of Mitral Deficiency. He died at home at 1:30 pm. His funeral was conducted at Fifth Ward Baptist Church the next day. He was buried in Mt. Olive Cemetery and no headstone for him has been found. He was survived by his son Thomas and daughter Katie. No mention is made of his wife Mary in his obituary, and no records of her death have currently been found.

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