

2020 AND THE FUTURE OF ALABAMA HISTORY

ABOUT

2020 and the Future of Alabama History: A Conversation with Richard Bailey was held on Tuesday, October 6. A native of Montgomery, Dr. Richard Bailey received his BS and MEd from Alabama State University in 1971 and 1972, an MA from Atlanta University in 1973, and a PhD from Kansas State University in 1984. Dr. Bailey's research focuses on Alabama Reconstruction and Alabama African American history. He is the author of *Neither Carpetbagger Nor Scalawags: Black Officeholders during the Reconstruction of Alabama, 1867-1878* and *They Too Call Alabama Home, African American Profiles 1800-1999*.

Sponsored by the [Alabama Historical Association](#) and the [Caroline Marshall Draughon Center for the Arts & Humanities in the College of Liberal Arts at Auburn University](#).

Visit aub.ie/2020alabamahistory to view a video recording of the program.

TRANSCRIPT

Mark Wilson:

Hello and welcome. I am Mark Wilson, Director of the Caroline Marshall Draughon Center for the Arts & Humanities and secretary of the Alabama Historical Association. Welcome to our series 2020 and the Future of Alabama History. Our organization's president Frazine Taylor has a word of welcome.

Frazine Taylor:

Good afternoon and I welcome you to our ongoing series 2020 and the Future of Alabama History and today's conversation with Dr. Richard Bailey.

Mark Wilson:

Thanks Frazine. Born in Montgomery, Alabama Dr. Richard Bailey holds a Bachelor of Science and Master of Education degrees from Alabama State University. He has a master's degree from Atlanta University and a Doctor of Philosophy degree in History from Kansas State University. Dr. Bailey's calendar stays full with events because he is an authority on the African-American experience in Alabama. He has worked on as a consultant for projects on topics such as the community and artist of Gee's Bend, on Heart is King the Antebellum Ridge Builder and Reconstruction Lawmaker. An award-winning program on remembering slavery, the story of the WPA slave narratives. His recent city of Montgomery sponsored documentary, "Downtown Montgomery Alabama Mark of Distinction" currently airs on Troy University television.

Mark Wilson:

His columns appear in newspapers across the state and he's the author of, "They Too Called Alabama Home, African-American Profiles 1800-1999." And his book, "Neither Carpetbaggers Nor Scalawags: Black Officeholders During Reconstruction of Alabama 1867-1878" is now in its fifth edition. When Dr. Bailey was interviewed upon retirement from a long and distinguished career as a research and writing specialist at Air

University Press of Maxwell Air Force Base, he said, "I didn't find history. History found me." 2020 has found many Americans taking seriously the harmful legacies of slavery, segregation and forms of racism that continue to exist. And there is a renewed commitment among organizations, institutions and citizens to understand the past in a comprehensive way, even the parts that are difficult, but necessary to discuss. Dr. Bailey you've been working on these issues throughout your life, so we are honored to hear your reflections. Thank you for joining us today.

Richard Bailey:

Thank you very much my good friend Mark Wilson for your generous introduction. I'd like to say good afternoon to everyone. I am delighted to appear here today as part of 2020 and the Future of Alabama History Series. Alabama history is at the crossroad. We are afforded the opportunity today to ask some difficult questions and to raise some powerful issues. I wish to inspire the next generation to lay the foundation so our young people no longer will anticipate the day when they can leave Alabama. I wish to create an environment in which we will not have to leave the state, our teachers for better paying jobs in Georgia. I want to say to everyone today, let's try to create an environment so that businesses, conventioners and retirees will hustle to come to Alabama.

Richard Bailey:

Since I view Alabama history as being at the crossroads in 2020, let us talk today about the three sections in which I have divided my presentation. Where we've been, what are some of the things we have neglected to research? We want to keep in mind that everybody's history is important. Where are we today? And I ask, where do we go from here? As I speak here today, I want to remind our listeners to be ever so vigilant about the impact of what we say and how future generations will look upon our words and deeds of today. For one example, let us go back to June 11th, 1963 where an Alabama governor stood at the schoolhouse door at Foster Auditorium to block the admission of James Hood and Vivian Malone. While the world has focused on that speech, let us look at some of the persons who were in that audience that day.

Richard Bailey:

When that governor said, "Segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever," how did that impact some of the persons in that audience? For example, four students in particular were in that audience. 20 year old Robert Bentley and 19 year old Bob Riley. They would later become Alabama governors. Then there was student government association president Donald Stewart who would later become a United States Congressman. And then in addition to that, that was William Stewart who would become a distinguished professor of political science at the University of Alabama. But the story becomes a big more intriguing. A photographer had traveled from Birmingham to snap photos that day. His name was Chris McNair. Three months later his daughter Denise McNair, would be one of four girls who would lose their lives in a bombing at the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham.

Richard Bailey:

A little more interesting is this point. In 1973, almost 10 years to the date, Chris McNair would serve as a member of the Alabama Legislature and that same governor who had stood in that schoolhouse door in 1963 would be governor of the state of Alabama at that time. Just imagine how those words from 1963 impacted those five individuals and other persons who were there also. So, let us try to do a better job of monitoring what we say and considering what impact that might have on future generations. Let us also do a better job of connecting the past to the present. For example, in the area of civil rights, how many of us when we discuss a civil rights event of the 20th century or the 21st century would dare to invoke memories of civil rights in the 19th century.

Richard Bailey:

I think if we were to do that we might get a clearer picture of the progress or lack thereof, that we have achieved over time. But we want to show the implications always, of past events on the present. And then we want to look at some of the history for basically anonymous persons of the 19th century just to let people know everybody who has achieved something in Alabama did not do so in the 20th or 21st century. One good example, Patti Julia Malone. Athens, Alabama. Born a slave and in many people's mind died a princess. What did she do? She became one of the members of the original Fisk Jubilee singers and she sang soprano for 20 years with that group. But, when you begin to scan the pages of Alabama history do we find this lady's name? I dare say, we do not.

Richard Bailey:

And then there is Joe Bell. I told this story before and hopefully I'll tell it again. In February, 1905 Joe Bell died. He was a mere janitor at Alabama Polytechnic Institute, known today as Auburn University. But because Joe Bell was held in such high esteem by the faculty and administration at Alabama Polytechnic Institute, the school shut down, closed and everyone there attended services for Joe Bell. Fast-forward, January 4, 1964 a Saturday. State troopers escorted one Harold Alonzo Franklin to the campus of Auburn University. They were so nice to Harold Franklin, they gave him the whole wing of the four story Magnolia Student Dormitory. I ask the question, what might have happened at Auburn University if someone had invoked the memories and relationship that school had with Joe Bell some 59 years earlier?

Richard Bailey:

For many years at our predominantly white universities, I think we could definitely say that one could walk across those campuses or walk into the halls of instruction and would not find a single black faculty members. But let's go back to 1947. Isaac Scott Hathaway who taught ceramics at Tuskegee Institute was invited to come to an all-white institution, the Alabama School of Technology. He worked in that all-white setting for one month and they were delighted to have him there. Think what might have happened if Isaac Scott Hathaway, 1947, had agreed to remain there and integrate that faculty. Not long after that he was invited, along with his wife, to a tea at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, 1947 thereabouts. Was treated royally. But here's what Isaac Scott Hathaway said, he did not want or seek employment at a predominantly white university because he wanted to remain at a predominantly black university to serve in effect as a role model to the black students.

Richard Bailey:

The point we want to emphasize here today is simply this, what might have happened to school integration if Isaac Scott Hathaway had accepted employment at the Alabama School of Technology or at the University of Alabama in the 1940s? Consider how our history in this state would have changed had he done so. And then in 1957, September 17th, Fred Lee Shuttlesworth along with his wife Ruby and two daughters sought to integrate Phillips High School in Birmingham, Alabama. That day is one day I believe that most people in Birmingham still remember and those who were not alive refuse to let it go to the recesses of their minds.

Richard Bailey:

On that day Fred Shuttlesworth was attacked viscusly and so was his wife and his two daughters were injured for just trying to integrate Phillips High School. Here's the point we want to drive home, Phillips High School was named for John Herbert Phillips, superintendent of public schools in Birmingham. He died in 1921. But the story gets a little bit better because of Phillips' relationship with Arthur Harold Parker, the first principal of Parker High School from 1890 until his death in 1939. Whatever Parker wanted for his school Phillips presented his pleas to the school board and Mr. Parker smiled. When he visited that school A.H. Parker was not beyond having his choir, singing some of Mr. Phillips' favorite songs and one of them included, "I am a Christian." And when that group of teachers met at that school, 200 of them, they passed a resolution in recognition of what John Herbert Phillips had done for black education in Jefferson County.

Richard Bailey:

And the point I want to drive home and I really mean that here today, I firmly believe if members of the Klan or the Mob or whoever those persons were in September of 1957, if they had just known the history of the relationship between Parker and Phillips, they would have escorted Shuttlesworth, his wife and daughter and any other African-Americans in Birmingham Jefferson County into that school and welcomed them into that environment if they had just known and appreciated the relationship between A.H. Parker and John Herbert Phillips.

Richard Bailey:

We have many stories of that caliber that we can tell about events in Birmingham, Alabama. Today we are concerned with a virus. Starting in January, the Center for Disease Control was beginning to spread the word that this virus was permeating the atmosphere and that it was dangerous. And today we still are concerned about that virus. In May of this year the nation and the world was brought to its feet with stories about the death of George Perry Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota. I think that when many people say 8:46, they can remember that law enforcement officer policeman in Minneapolis was supposed to have kept his foot, his knee on the neck of George Floyd as he pleaded for mercy and invoked his mother's name as he began to breath his final words.

Richard Bailey:

Also in 2020, we can applaud the number of black individuals who were new to the political arena in 2019 in Montgomery. We installed our first African-American mayor and people all over this country have applauded Montgomery for electing an African-American mayor. What some of those applause were all about were to say can we be sure that Montgomery has begun to distance itself from its horrific past? I think when you move around Montgomery today there is a resounding yes that Montgomery is moving forward rapidly. In 2020 also the state of Alabama can look in the state house and see a female as governor. Kay Ivey is not only a female, but she is the state's first female Republican governor and we want to applaud that. But there's something else we want to bring to people's attention and that is she is from Camden, Wilcox County. And for the historians we want someone at some point to remind our reading audience that Governor Kay Ivey is the second Alabama governor that we've had from that county. Benjamin Meek Miller who was governor from 1931 to 1935 was the state's first governor from Wilcox County.

Richard Bailey:

What we have to do in Alabama in 2020 is to begin to look our history and legacy squarely in the face. And I say that to say that maybe there has been a reluctance to mention Mr. Miller's name because of what happened in March 1931 in Jackson County, Alabama with those nine boys who were escorted from that train and later became known as the Scottsboro Boys. That part of our history should not be minimized nor completely overlooked. If we want to say something about the Miller administration we can definitely add that he was no friend of the Klan in the state of Alabama. In fact, his election marked a sad day for the Klan. So, we want to ensure that when we talk Alabama history, we do not fail to include any antecedence that helps to eliminate the picture and that we bring to the table the good and the bad.

Richard Bailey:

Just a couple months ago I was fortunate to visit the Capitol and view the body of civil rights icon and Georgia Congressman John R. Lewis. I talked to some people about this. As those people move around that coffin, in the background was a photo of Horace King, a black man. I have not heard anybody from the journalism community, from the community at large, ask the question, who is that black man, that African-American whose portrait is hanging there right behind the body of John Lewis? That would have been a good opportunity for a journalist to write a story detailing how Horace King and John Lewis were bridge builders. Horace King built physical bridges, the first one 1832, to connect Girard, later called Phoenix City and Columbus, Georgia. But he also built bridges to connect the races. John Lewis did much of the same. But, on

that day I did not hear a single question and maybe there were some. But I did not hear a single question from anybody asking who is that man whose portrait is hanging there right behind the body of John Lewis?

Richard Bailey:

So what we want to do, we want to ensure that we are using history, not even just Alabama history, but history to not only inform people but to inspire people also. Let me give you a good example. Many students of history have been inspired by the stories of George Washington crossing the Delaware, December 1776 to surprise the British and his success in crossing that river was the turning point in the American Revolution. While he was crossing that river there was a light on the other side, by which he used as a guide and for generations we have applauded the exploits of George Washington as commander during the Revolutionary War and for what he did as the first President of this country.

Richard Bailey:

But that man standing there holding that lantern for years was basically anonymous. And I can remember growing up in Montgomery and I would pass the yards of some prominent white families and there was a man, a statue in fact, on those persons lawns. I can imagine how many African-Americans dropped their heads when they saw that man on those person's lawn. And I can imagine how many people white, felt good about having that man on their lawn. But when we begin to tell the rest of the story, regarding Washington crossing that river, we must invoke that man who was holding that lantern was a black man and by the time that Washington had crossed that river, that black man had frozen. That makes him a giant in American history. When we begin to tell the story, we have to ensure that he does not remain anonymous.

Richard Bailey:

Let me tell you two more stories. There was a student in the schools of Baltimore, Frederick Douglas High School to be exact. This was a troublesome guy. He always was causing something to go on that the administration didn't particularly care for. So one day someone gave him a copy of the United States Constitution to read. And as I love to tell the story, when Thurgood Marshall graduated from Frederick Douglas High School he knew the U.S. Constitution backward and forward. This is a clear indication of what we can do with our history. And let me invoke a personal example. More than a decade ago I was called by a dean of one of our colleges to go to state prison and teach history to those inmates. And you can just imagine how those persons might have felt to have someone come to them and teach them. Then the dean asked me to go Tutwiler, that's a women's prison. I went there and taught those ladies history.

Richard Bailey:

Apparently somebody must have been impressed because the dean later called me and he said, "You don't have to take this assignment if you do not want to." I said, "Okay, I'll take it. I'm a young guy." He said, "I want you to go on death row and teach this student." I went on death row and I guess if I were to tell someone I've been on death row they would assume I've been an inmate. I went there as a teacher and I went there and I taught history and I should never forget the glow on that lady's face as I taught history and the sense of anticipation after I had walked through all of those bars to get to her cell. And what I'm saying is there is power, immense power in what we can do as historians.

Richard Bailey:

So the question becomes where do we go from here? Here's what I suggest. Number one, that we start on the family level. That our families appoint two individuals, if possible approximately 30 years apart and that's to ensure continuity. Those person would research family history, would ensure that old photographs are not discarded. Old letters are not discarded. Obituaries are not discarded. And if anyone wants an example of what we can do with obituaries, all that person has to do is go to the public library in Valley, Alabama. And I believe those person would graciously show any patron what can be done with old obituaries. But the point is don't discard old obituaries. And then our communities, our churches, our businesses, our federated club. I

would love to see each one of those entities appoint here again two individuals, 30 years apart in age as historians. And that way I believe that all of a sudden we would get a renewed sense of pride if we were to do that.

Richard Bailey:

And then on the municipal level, I would invite every mayor in the state of Alabama to bring onto his or her staff a person you would identify as a historian. Two persons in particular, 30 years apart in age in the name of continuity. So as anything that pops in the newspaper or comes across the national news, that person's job would be to bring it to that mayor's attention, how that news story impacts that municipality. Let me give you an example of what we're saying. I firmly believe and I have mentioned in many of my speeches, what might have happened if we had such an individual when the movie, "The Alamo" with John Wayne, Richard Widmark came out several years ago and they would have noticed in that movie there were two persons with ties to Alabama and we're not talking about those persons.

Richard Bailey:

The movie, "Glory" the people of Mobile, if anyone could have brought to their attention what implications the movie, "Glory" had for Mobile when it came out. I firmly believe tourism would be at a high point in Mobile today if someone had done that. And then take the movie, "Harriet." I talked to many people who said, "My organization is going to the movie to see Harriet." But what might have happened in Montgomery, Alabama if someone working in the mayor's office or someone in the newspaper had contacted a historian and said, "Are there any implications, any connections between the movie Harriet and Montgomery, Alabama?" That would have been one of the most powerful stories just to know that Harriet Tubman had a tie to Montgomery, Alabama. But that did not happen because no one even dare to ask an historian about any of those stories. It just so happened I approached the Montgomery advertiser about the 54th Massachusetts in the movie "Glory" made a front page story.

Richard Bailey:

But we want to continue these stories so that history is not just an opportunity to make a grade or to earn a living, but a way of actually transforming the lives of individuals. I submit today that if we had history taught on the local level administered by the local school board, that would immediately be a 10% drop in the crime rate because persons would begin to see what the significance of that building on the corner. What the significance of that church three blocks down and my point is simply this, I don't know of any municipality where local history is taught in the schools. Somebody might ask, "Well where would we get the money to support such an effort?" We can write grants. We can approach the Chambers of Commerce. We can approach businesses. They would be more than happy to support such an effort, especially when we tell them the connection between our citizens knowing local history and crime for example. And then when we begin to talk Alabama history, all the way from Northeast Alabama to Northwest Alabama. From Southeast Alabama to Southwest Alabama all of a sudden everybody would make a beaten path to our doors because they will see exactly what we have here in this state.

Richard Bailey:

I should never forget a couple of years ago I was on a television program and we were talking about one of my books and the moderator said, "Dr. Bailey if I listen to you, I might wind up thinking everybody has a tie to Alabama." I say, "That's true." And we went from there. But the point of the matter is, I have been surprised when I read about a person who lives in Illinois, who lives in Michigan, who lives in California and either that person or that person's parents have ties to the state of Alabama. Sometimes those people don't remember for whatever reason to let folks know that they are from Alabama. So that's our job, to do a better story, better job of telling these stories about people who have ties to Alabama. And I firmly believe that we have people out there who are willing to accept this challenge. Peggy Towns, Madison and Limestone County area. Lee Freeman, Lauderdale County, Florence area. Mary Fitz Jones, west Alabama. Linda Dairy, Dallas

County. Debra Grate, Macon County Tuskegee and I can just go all over the state and name some people. Time won't permit me to do that however, who are doing excellent jobs to ensure that our history is maintained.

Richard Bailey:

And as I leave today, I want to go back to February, 1901 when the Alabama Department of Archives and History was established and I invite everyone to make it his or her business to at some point during every year to visit the Alabama Department of Archives and History. And then in April, 1947 the Alabama Historical Association was established. What this organization does is absolutely stunning. When you combine the Alabama Historical Association with the Alabama Department of Archives and History, I think we can all smile and say we got a lot to be proud of with agencies such as these two and there are many others and I'm going to call their names in just a minute, who have done magnificent work in ensuring that our history is not lost.

Richard Bailey:

And as I close on the county level, I would like to invite every county historical society to recruit two black persons into your organization, 30 years apart and to find a black person in your community who has been deceased at least since 1920 and name a room in your building and that's the way of attracting black people to your setting. And I think when we begin to do some of these things, and there are many others, we will see a new day for Alabama. And that day will be one in which our high school kids won't be sitting around saying, "As soon as I march for graduation from the 12th grade, I'm going to leave Alabama." I think those people will want to stay here and help us to make this state an even better place to live. Thank you very much.

Mark Wilson:

Thank you Dr. Bailey. You gave us a lot to think about and a lot to consider. Some of the folks that you've named I'm sure are watching right now and so they are certainly sitting up straight after hearing their named called by Dr. Bailey. Folks from all over the state certainly are watching. I know we've got definitely Marengo County and Washington counties represented because I see them in the chat box and we would love to have other people give us questions in the chat box that we can ask Dr. Bailey. And while hopefully somebody puts us a question in there, I certainly have one or two already. When you worked on the book, "They Too Call Alabama Home," it's always true that there is a story behind a book's purpose and its life. What made you want to do the research for that book and remind me, how many persons are discussed in that book?

Richard Bailey:

Well first of all we have 383 persons in that book and equal number of photographs. And the reason I have so many photographs is simply this, many times when we call a person's name we don't have any idea what that person looks like. But I like to remind people that just about everybody in this country knows what George Washington looks like because of Parson Williams and that adventurous photograph that we have of George Washington. So I want people to know what James Thomas Rapier looked like, what Benjamin Turner looked like, what Jeremiah Haralson looked like. The impetus for my writing that book, I went to a meeting of the Alabama State Board of Education to have my Carpetbagger book adopted by the State Board of Education. They did adopt that book as the second time in all of Alabama history that a book by an African-American was adopted by the State Board of Education.

Richard Bailey:

You have about six minutes to answer questions. My session lasted for 15 minutes where they're asking me questions and before they let me leave that room, they were so impressed with my Carpetbagger book they said, "We want you to write a book covering the totality of Alabama history." I was working full time so I said, "This is what I can do." So that's why I put all of those photographs and those profiles in that book going back to 1800 and that's why I have in the book two appendices, one is a geographical appendix

showing where everybody in the book was born and an occupational appendix showing the occupation of all those people so that Chambers of Commerce can use those books. Colleges and universities can use that book to recruit. The implications are limitless almost. So that's how the, "They Too Call Alabama Home" book came about.

Mark Wilson:

Excellent, thank you for that. It's nice to know the background behind some of these projects that are labors of love for sure. You mentioned and I mentioned in your introduction that history found you. But, talk about some of the teachers that you had. Was it early in your life that you had history teachers who helped make this come to life? People don't just get this automatically. Who were some of the influences?

Richard Bailey:

Very good question. I think if I had my way I would have been an MD today not a PhD because in elementary school science was my leaning. In the seventh grade I had a student teacher Mr. Jacobs in Doris Parker's class who asked me a question one day. We were studying Greek and Roman history and I did not know the answer and he said something to me I don't dare repeat and it brought my attention to history. In the 10th grade, Ms. Geraldine Preston asked me to teach the history for a day. We had a day at school when a student taught the whole day that particular subject and that was World History and I tell people I still don't know why she chose me. The next year in Josie Lawrence class, 11th grade, she asked me to teach United States history. Here again, I don't know why somebody chose me to do that, and I'm serious about that.

Richard Bailey:

So, I became engaged to history. By the time I got to college I did not know it, but my classmates knew it because of the way they began to refer to me something like Mr. History or something along that line. I knew there was an affinity for history that was real deep and that was the beginning of the history. I began to go onto graduate school, instead of slowing down, I accelerated my pace. I can honestly say I walk into the Alabama Department of Archives and History in August of 1979. I've been going to that place 41 years and that's my home. I have many people who when they try to contact me they call the Alabama Department of Archives and History.

Mark Wilson:

That's great. Well and we happen to have a question that I'll put on the screen from Steve Murray, the Alabama Department of Archives and History which is a good segue into question about public education. "The state's Social Studies Course of Study will be updated in 2021." And of course that is the future of Alabama history because it is the curriculum and the guidance that will be used for social studies. "What guidance would you give the committee," as they begin to work on updating the Social Studies Course of Study?

Richard Bailey:

Well, believe it or not I had on my list to say that Alabama history must be taught in more than just the fourth grade. I would ask that committee to ensure that Alabama history is taught in more than just the fourth grade and that it is more inclusive than the traditional history books and that we get people to teach Alabama history who have an affinity for people. I know that doesn't come out on a resume, it doesn't come out on your college courses. But when that teacher gave Thurgood Marshall that copy of the United States Constitution, what impact that had on him. He went toward law and those kids that I taught at the prison system, although they were incarcerated, they took a real love for history. So if we can try to include in our education courses something about not only loving your subject matter, but loving the people that you also teach.

Richard Bailey:

One person asked me two years ago, "How do you give a good speech?" And I said to that person without hesitation, any at all. "First of all fall in love with your audience and then make sure you're well prepared." No one wants a mechanical speaker standing before him or her. No one wants that. People want to hear someone who seems to relate to the audience and the more you relate your audience, the more successful you'll be. The more a teacher relates to students, the more successful that teacher will be. There's a story of a history professor at Auburn and one day a student from Mobile and I'm not going to call any names here, one day a student from Mobile approached that history professor who's from Birmingham and said, "I'm thinking about going back home." And that history teacher said to him to turn his mind and change him and today he is a highly successful person and I applaud that Birmingham native for taking the time out with that student to encourage him to remain at Auburn University and just look at how he turned out today and he's probably listening too.

Mark Wilson:

You're right, history teachers can be quite convincing, can't they? It's important and we appreciate all of what history teachers do and next year will be an important year and I think your advice is well taken for sure. You're very complimentary of the organizations that you're a part of. You've always been a supporter of Alabama history through and through. But there are some things that we need to do better and so I'm wondering when you come across, for example, a historical marker in a community, in a public building and you read the text of that historical marker knowing because you've written many of these texts. You've been a part of historical marker projects and you have a finite space. But, it's also true that sometimes even in that finite space we have opportunities to be more inclusive and we have not been. And so, some of these texts were written in past generations. As we look to the future, when you come across a historical marker that has more to say, what do you think?

Richard Bailey:

I think a person has done his or her research. I think the persons who were approving that historical marker has asked that group or that individual to go into greater detail on that particular point. See in other words it's a two-sided sword. The organization or persons who are submitting the historical marker and then the person on the approving end has to ensure that the marker is as inclusive as possible. So once we begin to get that, the point is we are really making a dent because the person from out of town, from out of state can read those markers on the weekend, on holidays et cetera, and one thing that I want to bring to everyone's attention is simply this, local people don't read historic markers as visitors do. So we want to encourage local people to start reading historic marker and that's why we want local history to be taught in our school system so that people will take greater pride in local history and I firmly believe if we begin to teach local history the crime rate would drop dramatically almost overnight.

Mark Wilson:

That's right and I think you've illustrated that we remember what we value.

Richard Bailey:

Yes.

Mark Wilson:

That we value what we remember and it works both ways. There's certainly more opportunities to be more inclusive as we move forward in the future. You are certainly an encyclopedia of Alabama history and the stories that you tell for every single community in the state of Alabama always challenge us to learn more. But what are a few, if you could write or if you could assign some of the folks listening biographies to write, who are some of the folks that you think still deserve a book length treatment of their lives?

Richard Bailey:

I would start with Patti Julia Malone in Athens, Alabama. I think she definitely deserves a full length biography as soprano with the original Fisk Jubilee singers. I would go into Ethel Glenn in Montgomery, a poet here born in the 1880s and one of her favorite poems is "Lincoln and his Pen." Telling the story of Lincoln signing the Emancipation Proclamation. I think we can go to Mobile and talk about Lucy Ariel Williams Holloway, a giant poet and I think most people even know her son, some other relatives who live in Mobile today. I can just go across the state and talk about people who deserve a full length biography. And one in particular that truly stands out is Lewis Adams, Tuskegee Macon County not only for what he did in convincing Samuel Chapman Armstrong at Hampton to dispatch Booker T. Washington to come to Tuskegee in 1880. But almost nobody focuses on the fact that Lewis Adams could speak at least three languages. When we talk about person in Antebellum, Alabama we overlook persons like Overdee Gregory in Mobile one of three African-Americans who served concurrent terms as a councilman in his state legislature. Cigar maker who could speak several different languages.

Richard Bailey:

And see this goes against his stereotype. But Lewis Adams definitely deserves a full length biography. Cornelia Bowen first graduate of Tuskegee, 1884 who started that school on the Carter Plantation in Waugh, Alabama deserves a full length biography and I can just go on and on and on with some of these people male and female who deserve full length biographies. The story is limitless and let me just mention something else to you also, when we start talking about some aspects of Alabama history that some people don't want to focus on. Let me just go back to 1865 for example. One day somebody is going to bring to our attention some things that we might not be too proud of and one of those things is while we applaud Pat Garrett from Chambers County for killing Billy the Kid, in that same area geographical area, Lewis Thornton Powell was born in Randolph County. And he's one of the four persons who were actually hanged for having been involved in the conspiracy to kill President Abraham Lincoln. That's something almost nobody in Alabama talks about. But that's part of our history just as much as anything else.

Richard Bailey:

And as we begin to investigate that I wouldn't want anybody to shy away from that point. It's just a matter of how you handle it. All of our history is not glorious and it shouldn't be because it tells the story of what people actually did. There are ways of handling those stories to let people know just what people that we've had in the state of Alabama.

Mark Wilson:

Well said and we appreciate that. Tunisia Thomas has a question. She would love to know the tie between Harriet Tubman and the city of Montgomery that you mentioned. You knew that was coming.

Richard Bailey:

That's no problem. Here's the story. Willis E. Stirs who's brother was one of the co-founders of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church December 1877, was the first African-American physician in Decatur, Alabama. He established a clinic there and upon his death in 1921 the body was brought back to the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church and Willis E. Stirs is buried today in Oakwood Cemetery. But in Decatur he had a nurse and that nurse was Francis Bell Richardson. So once he came to Montgomery for burial, Francis Bell Richardson came here and she became the superintendent of Hale Infirmary at 325 Lake Street in Montgomery. She was from, Tunisia, Auburn, New York. And one of her patients had been Harriet Tubman.

Mark Wilson:

Wow, just even down to the address you remember these things in great detail. We are so impressed. Thank you Dr. Bailey. We really appreciate you spending time with us today and I think the thoughts that you've

given us are inspiring. They're encouraging to everyone, but I think also challenging too that there is so much more that needs to be done and hopefully the future will include all of this research and all of this reflection and many more mentors of future historians. Thank you for what you've done for Alabama history.

Richard Bailey:

Thank you too for having me.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

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