

Dr. J. H. Lowery

John Harvey Lowery was born in Plaquemine, Iberville Parish, Louisiana, on October 18, 1860. He was the son of John Harvey Lowery Sr. (1834-1907), a mulatto bricklayer from Virginia and Elizabeth (Carson) Lowery (1835-1919), a mid-wife of Madagascan heritage from Tennessee. He was one of 19 children.



Education

Little is currently known about John H. Lowery's early and secondary education. However, he did complete a full course of studies at Straight University in New Orleans, a historically black college founded by the American Missionary Association. He then studied medicine at the Flint Goodrich Hospital in New Orleans and graduated with a Doctor of Medicine Degree from New Orleans University in 1894.

Marriage and family

In 1883 Dr. Lowery married Elizabeth Conway (1867-1924) who preceded him in death. He remained a widower for several years before remarrying in 1927 to Mary L. Brown (1907-1993). His union with Elizabeth Conway produced three children. He fathered an additional child during his second marriage to Mary L. Brown. His Daughter Mary Lowery Munson Runge, a pharmacist, became the President of the American Pharmacists Association.

Life as a young physician

In 1895, then a young physician, Dr. Lowery decided to establish his practice in the town of Donaldsonville along the Mississippi River. One of his very first investments in real-estate still stands on 412 Charles Street. This magnificent structure would later become the home of Dr. J. Sidney Brazier. As a physician of color practicing medicine during the Jim Crow era (1876-1965), Lowery would have faced certain pressures in establishing himself as an educated person of color. His skill as a physician and sheer scope of his activities, garnered considerable respect from patients across racial lines.

Business

Dr. Lowery became one of the most successful businessmen in Donaldsonville through not only substantial investments in real-estate, numbering some 50 pieces of property in the Donaldsonville historic district, but through his considerable success as a planter. More than 200 men and women were permanently employed year around on his sugar cane and rice plantations in Modeste, La. He also owned and operated a mercantile department store for a number of years and ran one of the first pharmacies in Donaldsonville. He was also active in the insurance business serving on the Board of Directors of the People's Industrial Life Insurance Co. in New Orleans. There is also evidence indicating that he and his business partners were at one point in the process of establishing a bank in Baton Rouge, La.

Political career

Dr. Lowery was very active in the politics of Louisiana. He was a Republican all of his life and served as a member of the State Central Committee. He had the honor of being a delegate to every national Republican convention in the United States since 1884. He was also the first African American Chairman of the Louisiana State Republican Party.

Human rights

Dr. Lowery was a proponent of equal rights, and actively fought against discrimination. Through the actions of his committee, the State Railroad Commission (the forerunner of the Louisiana Public Service Commission), he forced the hand of Jim Crow to order equal accommodations for the races on the railroads of this state.

Brotherhood and community

Until his death, Dr. Lowery was active in fraternal orders. He served as the Secretary of the Endowment Department of the District Grand Lodge of Odd Fellows for the state of Louisiana for a number of years. He was also a prominent member of the Grand General Independent Order of Brothers and Sisters of Charity North America, South America, Liberia and Adjacent Islands (G. G. I. O. of B. & S. of L. & C.).

Education

Dr. Lowery had a very early interest in the education of colored youth which led him to sponsor a movement to build a new modern school for them in Ascension Parish, Louisiana. His generous contributions led to the school being named the Lowery Training School in his honor. The elementary and intermediate schools in Donaldsonville still bear his name. Lowery also donated land for a school in Modeste, a rural community between Donaldsonville and White Castle.

Little known fact

When he was not on his 600-acre rice plantation or on one of his equally as large sugar cane plantations, he was fishing. On his fishing trips he brought along the whole family and his household employees. His local nickname was "King Fisherman".

Death

Dr. John Harvey Lowery died at the Flint-Goodridge Hospital in New Orleans, La., on September 25, 1941. Although he was a Methodist, he is interred in the Ascension Catholic Cemetery in Donaldsonville, Louisiana.

- From: J.H. Lowery Foundation, jhlwery.org