



DR. TIM WESTLEY

“Patriot - For The People!”

By Tim Westley, PhD.

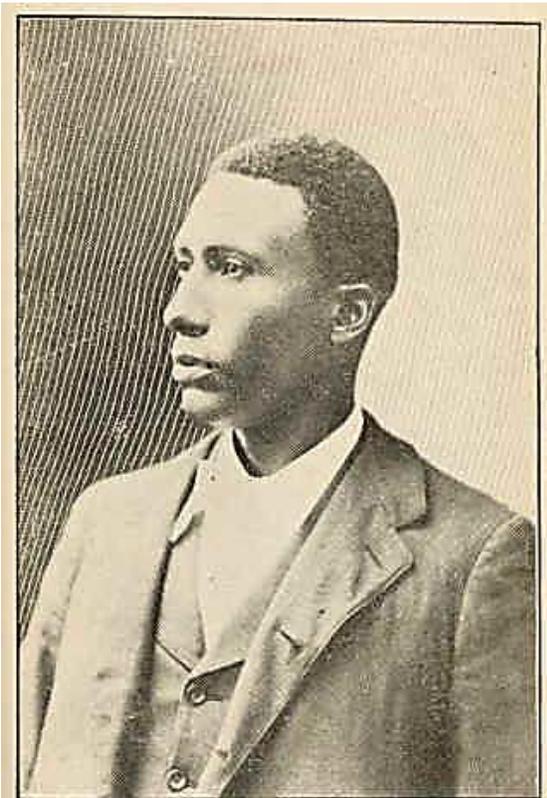
June 6, 2022

Kaufman & Tarrant Counties Legend

“A Man of Ingenuity, Influence, & Impact”

WILLIAM MADISON McDONALD

William Madison McDonald was born June 22, 1866, in Kaufman County, Texas his



William Madison McDonald

father was a former slave, and his mother was a free woman.ⁱ He died July 5, 1950 (aged 84) in Fort Worth, Texas, but the life he lived was both fascinating and highly impactful.ⁱⁱ Ironically, his father was once owned by Nathan Bedford Forrest, Confederate General and eventual Grand Wizard of the KKK and was eventually owned by George Martin.ⁱⁱⁱ

William Madison (Gooseneck Bill) McDonald was a politician, fraternal leader, educator, civic leader, entrepreneur, and businessman. McDonald overcame the remnants of slavery, Jim crow, and more!

Fittingly, he was born on June 22, 1866, at College Mound, Texas to former slaves, just one year after the first Juneteenth celebration in June

1865. McDonald was an exceptional student and soon began working for rancher and lawyer, Z.T. Adams, from whom he learned business and insights about law.^{iv} Combining this foundation with

the college education he received from Roger Williams University in Nashville, TX, McDonald would move forward to thrive in business and other areas.^v He would go on to become a teacher and principal of a segregated Black high school.^{vi}

His life displayed excellence, as evidenced by the many feats he accomplished as an educator, rising to the role of the school principal. Likewise, as a politician, he became a leader in the Republican Party of Texas during the late 1800s, even leading it at a certain point. Additionally, his achievements in business were unmatched by any Black person at the



Bank Owner, William M. McDonald

time and arguably any person in general. He is believed to be the first Black millionaire in Texas. He earned the name “Gooseneck” in 1896 when a *Dallas Morning News* reporter mocked him, calling him “A goose-necked Negro with an Irish name.” The name would stick, and Mr. McDonald accepted it, remained focused on his business adventures, and continued to thrive.^{vii}

Business

Around 1906, he left Kaufman county and headed west to Tarrant County and the city of Ft. Worth. He would quickly build a three-story mansion, employing a Black contractor. His only



The Home of the Fraternal Bank & Trust, Ft. Worth, TX

child, a son, who was attending Howard University, died of pneumonia. Although a tough loss, McDonald regrouped and continued to move forward. While in Fort Worth, he founded the Fraternal Bank and Trust Company (believed to be the first Black-owned bank in Texas), which quickly became the chief depository of funds for the state's Black Masonic lodges.^{viii} His bank would loan Black

entrepreneurs' money when the white banks would not and was one of the rare banks that survived the Great Depression. Further, his bank loaned money to some of the white institutions so that they could survive during this time as well.

McDonald facilitated the project to build the building which housed the bank.^{ix} Additionally, seeing the needs of the people, he wisely served them by doing the following within the building:

- Established the Temple Drug Store.
- Made offices available for three Black physicians.
- Ensured a barber shop was in the building as well.

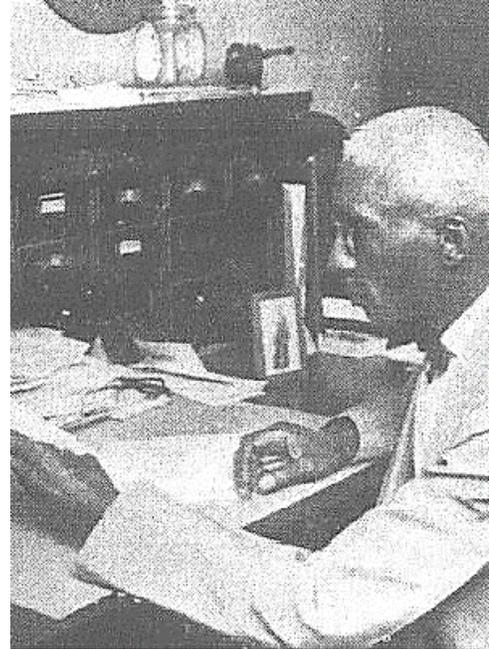


YMCA in Fort Worth, Texas bearing the name of William M. McDonald

Unwilling to stop there, McDonald saw there was no YMCA serving the needs of minority youth at that time, so in the late 1930s he bought an old hotel and donated it to the YMCA branch which served many Black people. Today, it is the only physical structure reminding people of his legacy. Ultimately, he built the *Black Business District* in Ft. Worth in the mid-1900s. He would quietly attend foreclosure auctions at the Tarrant County Courthouse, purchasing real estate, and eventually building a huge real estate portfolio. He also built a fifty-room hotel known as ‘The Jim Hotel’ in the late -1920s which was the first Black-owned hotel in Ft. Worth, TX, and was located downtown.^x

McDonald did not only thrive in education, business, and entrepreneurship, but also in politics. Like many Black people during his time, he was a Republican. Getting heavily involved in Texas Republican politics, McDonald accomplished the following:

- 1887: By 21, he was active with the Republican Party of Texas.
- 1891: Served as Secretary of the RPT^{xi}
- 1892: Elected to the Texas State Republican Executive Committee (SREC)^{xii}
- Helped organize the Kaufman County Republican Party
- 1896: Befriended Edward Robinson Green (Col. Ned Green), a wealthy banking magnate & Railroad Manager.
- Participated in the Black and Tan Faction of the RPT (opposed RPT's faction of the Lily-White Movement).



Businessman, William M. McDonald

The partnership forged with Green birthed power for McDonald in addition to name recognition and wealth.^{xiii} After the death of [Norris Wright Cuney](#) in 1897, McDonald and Green formed a political alliance to capture control of the Republican Party of Texas for a few years.^{xiv} While active with the Black and Tan Faction, he and others worked to encourage black people within the party to go out and vote.^{xv}

For more than thirty years he remained a notable figure of the party and attended many Republican national conventions. His life and contributions to society impacted countless people and left a legacy that still amazes people today. In 2002, the Texas Historical Commission & city of Forney erected a historical marker in his honor.^{xvi} McDonald was laid to rest in a grave in the Old Trinity Cemetery in Fort Worth.

As always, there is so much more that can be learned from the rich history of Texas Republican politics. It is great we have such stalwarts like William Madison McDonald who has left us a rich legacy of history to pass on to the next generation. Remember, *History Matters!*

Endnotes

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- ⁱ Glasrud, B. (2007). William Madison McDonald. BlackPast. Retrieved from <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/mcdonald-william-madison-1866-1950/>
- ⁱⁱ Casdorph, P.D. (2020). William Madison McDonald. Texas State Historical Association – Handbook of Texas.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Moments in Tarrant County Black History (2020). The Story of William Madison “Gooseneck” McDonald. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GHqr4SBQ5Vw>.
- ^{iv} Wallis, J. (2021). Regarded as the first Black millionaire in Texas, William McDonald’s Legacy has lived on in Fort Worth. WFAA. Retrieved from <https://www.wfaa.com/article/news/local/regarded-first-black-millionaire-texas-william-mcdonald-fort-worth-businessman-educator-political-activist/287-410732de-449d-4932-98b1-d39de3813bd5>
- ^v Moments in Tarrant County Black History (2020). The Story of William Madison “Gooseneck” McDonald. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GHqr4SBQ5Vw>.
- ^{vi} Tarrant County Black Historical & Genealogical Society. Moments in Tarrant County Black History. The Story of William Madison “Gooseneck” McDonald. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GHqr4SBQ5Vw>
- ^{vii} Moments in Tarrant County Black History (2020). The Story of William Madison “Gooseneck” McDonald. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GHqr4SBQ5Vw>.
- ^{viii} Casdorph, P.D. (2020). William Madison McDonald. Texas State Historical Association – Handbook of Texas.
- ^{ix} Wallis, J. (2021). Regarded as the first Black millionaire in Texas, William McDonald’s Legacy has lived on in Fort Worth. WFAA. Retrieved from <https://www.wfaa.com/article/news/local/regarded-first-black-millionaire-texas-william-mcdonald-fort-worth-businessman-educator-political-activist/287-410732de-449d-4932-98b1-d39de3813bd5>
- ^x Moments in Tarrant County Black History (2020). The Story of William Madison “Gooseneck” McDonald. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GHqr4SBQ5Vw>.
- ^{xi} Ibid.
- ^{xii} Casdorph, P.D. (2020). William Madison McDonald. Texas State Historical Association – Handbook of Texas.
- ^{xiii} Moments in Tarrant County Black History (2020). The Story of William Madison “Gooseneck” McDonald. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GHqr4SBQ5Vw>.
- ^{xiv} Casdorph, P.D. (2020). William Madison McDonald. Texas State Historical Association – Handbook of Texas.
- ^{xv} Wallis, J. (2021). Regarded as the first Black millionaire in Texas, William McDonald’s Legacy has lived on in Fort Worth. WFAA. Retrieved from <https://www.wfaa.com/article/news/local/regarded-first-black-millionaire-texas-william-mcdonald-fort-worth-businessman-educator-political-activist/287-410732de-449d-4932-98b1-d39de3813bd5>
- ^{xvi} Wallis, J. (2021). Regarded as the first Black millionaire in Texas, William McDonald’s Legacy has lived on in Fort Worth. WFAA. Retrieved from <https://www.wfaa.com/article/news/local/regarded-first-black-millionaire-texas-william-mcdonald-fort-worth-businessman-educator-political-activist/287-410732de-449d-4932-98b1-d39de3813bd5>