

Family of Distinction: Alfred and Isiah Moore

By Sanita Holmes Frazier Cousar

Among the many talented and deserving natives of Fairfield County are siblings, Alfred Phillip Moore (1838-1913) and Isiah Moore (1842-1917). These two men were born into slavery. Historical records indicate that the Moore family may have originated in Chester, SC as a part of the estate of James Wade in Chester County, SC, to Rebecca Wade, who married Michael Moore of Fairfield County, and eventually to Rebecca's son-in-law, Thomas Walter Brice, where the family is documented in the Slave Narratives and records of Concord Presbyterian Church in the Woodard section of Fairfield County. Following a circuitous path into wills and probate records from 1817 to 1870 through Chester, Fairfield, and Richland Counties led to finding the two siblings and a sister Charity, in Township 2 in Fairfield County for the 1870 Federal census.

Post slavery, each distinguished themselves in their own way and entered the annals of history. This historical information might not have been discovered had it not been for the tenacity of Mrs. Georgeanna Moore Reed of Chester (deceased), who reveled in the stories that her father, Dawson Moore, shared about the prominence of her great-grandfather Alfred Phillip as legislator, minister, and land owner. Her pursuit of the truth led her in 1999 to a reporter named Jeri Young from The Chronicle newspaper in Winston Salem, NC, who took great interest and found military and census records which answered puzzling questions about her ancestor, Alfred Phillip Moore. Some of his legend was not quite accurate, such as he was elected as Senator, was the only African American legislator from Fairfield County until the 1960s, and had served four or six years. However, he indeed had been elected from Fairfield County to the legislature but as a member of the House of Representatives and for one term (1870-1872). He was not the lone African American, in that he was elected along with another African American, William John McDowell who also served two years (1870-1872). His legendary reputation as a prominent Baptist preacher, veteran, model citizen, and landowner were all true.

In the federal 1870 census, Alfred Phillip was 30 years old living in Township 2 of Fairfield County with wife Mary and five children: Eli, Belton, Michael, Robert and Jeannett. Alfred Phillip Moore, more often referred to as Phillip, was a noted Baptist preacher of the County. Alfred Phillip was listed in the 1910 Federal Census as a survivor of the Civil War having served in the Confederate Army.

Alfred Phillip, a Mulatto with light skin, red hair, and blue eyes, was an imposing but quiet man according to descendants, who heard of his progressive accomplishments in the midst of deep racial divides following the Emancipation Proclamation. Alfred Phillip was elected to the House of Representatives and took his historical place with the Legislative class of 1870-71. Speaking of the legislative class of 1870-71, Ehren Foley, editor of the South Carolina Press wrote in a Washington Post article on August 13, 2021:

"It [the 1870-71 legislative body] was also the first state legislature in the history of the nation, then or since, that was majority African American in its composition. During the short window of reconstruction, from roughly 1869 to 1876, South Carolina's state legislators, the majority of them Black and put in office by Black voters, accomplished a great deal. They established the state's first public education system, expanded voting rights and experimented with meaningful land reform. In those years, the number of schools in the state grew from less than 400 to more than 2,600 and the number of enrolled students grew by a factor of 10. New colleges were formed to educate freedpeople and the state's flagship institution, the [University of South Carolina](#), became the only state-supported university in the former Confederacy to open its doors to students of all races."

On Tuesday, November 22, 1870 at noon, Alfred Phillip, presented his credentials and was sworn in by the Chair of the South Carolina House of Representatives.

In November of that year, he was appointed to the Internal Improvements Committee, which dealt with bridges and infra-structure. During the first year in office, Representative Moore introduced legislation to “erect a suitable building for a school house at, or near, Gladden’s Grove.” Alfred Phillip also introduced a bill “to provide for the free transportation of State students in State Institutions over all railroads in the State, to and from their homes.” The Bill was approved in the House and sent to the Senate for approval having been presented in the House by a joint resolution from the Fairfield County delegation. The bill did not pass the Senate. Representative Moore supported many bills that did pass during that year, including the bill to incorporate Claflin and the South Carolina Agricultural College, which later became Clemson University. His actions demonstrated his legislative priorities and speaks to his belief in education and his support of constituent’s needs.

On November 28, 1871, Alfred Phillip was sworn in for his second year of his two-year term as State Representative. During his second term of office, Representative Moore introduced a Bill to re-charter Barkley Ferry, over the Catawba River as a public ferry in Fairfield County, which passed and was approved and signed by Governor Robert K. Scott on March 12, 1872. Other examples of Bills introduced and passed during this session were bills to incorporate the Wateree Presbyterian Church of Fairfield County and to incorporate Zion Methodist Church, which were approved by Governor Robert K. Scott on March 13, 1872. A bill to compel the School Commissioner of Fairfield County to establish certain schools were approved by the House and advanced to the Senate, where it ultimately was not approved. On March 7, 1872, Alfred Phillip was one of nine representatives, standing on their principles, felt so strongly about their position relating to Bonds and Stocks of South Carolina that they presented a paper of six reasons for their affirmative vote which was entered into the Legislative record:

“We voted yes on the passage of the Bill relating to the bonds of the State for the following reasons:

Fifth. The ancient Israelites borrowed the gold and silver plate of their former masters and never returned it. In this they” spoiled the Egyptians,” who had sorely oppressed them. But we are not Israelites, nor are the bondholders Egyptians. Not to provide for the payment of our bonded debt, is to rob the men who are our creditors only because they had faith in our sense of public honor, and were willing to trust the free government of South Carolina when it was poor and weak and its continued existence uncertain.

Sixth. Our final and best reason is found in the sixth commandment, which declares, “ Thou shalt not steal.”

Family history documents (2001) assert that Alfred Phillip and his wife, Mary Moore, were the parents of seven sons and three daughters. Family history documents also assert that Mary was of Native American descent and that together they had seven children. Historical records show that Alfred Phillip was actually married twice: Mary Brown Moore (1840-1898) and then to Anna Moore in 1899 after Mary’s death the prior year. A review of census records between 1870 and 1900 list thirteen children, plus a step- daughter who was listed as such in the 1900 census, associated with Alfred Phillip Moore. . Family records list the following children, Adline/Adleine, Elem/Elam Belton/Belt Jinsey, Anna, Michael, Fannie, Forest Lee, Dawson, and Plez Pluth. Additional names in census records include Sam, Robert, Leroy, and Peter, and step-daughter Nancy McCoy.

Family anecdotes reflect that following his tenure in the Legislature, Alfred Phillip did not talk much about his experiences. He resumed his life as a minister and lived a quiet life until his death in 1913. He is buried with his first wife Mary (1840-1899) at Mt. Pilgrim Baptist on

Ashford Ferry Road in Fairfield County. His epitaph says "God's Ways are Just." His second wife, Annie Moore (1869-1939), is buried at Antioch Baptist Church in Chester, SC.

Isiah Moore, well-known in his own right in the history of Fairfield County, was the younger brother of Alfred Phillip Moore. He was born about 1842 and was living in Township 2 of Fairfield County in 1870. Isiah Moore, age 26, was living with his wife, Nancy, age 24, in Township 2 of Fairfield County. Children listed include Mahala, Chaney, Amy, Prince, David and Cecily. While the census does not list the relationships, the order and ages of two of the listed children suggest that David, age 12, and Cecily, age 5, may be relatives and/or not their children. In 1880 Isiah Moore, age 38 and his wife, Nancy, now listed as age 38, were still living in Township Two of Fairfield County and had seven children listed: Mahala, Charity, Amy, Prince, Jemima, Frances, and Hattie. David and Cecily of the prior 1870 census are not listed here, again furthering the thought that they may not be children of Isiah and Nancy. Moore family historical documents of 2001 list 8 children of Isiah and Charlotte (his second wife): Mahala, Charity, Amy, Prince, Jemima, Frances, Hattie and Charles/Charlie. However, documents between 1870 and 1910 associate 17 children with Isiah, Hattie and Charlotte: the prior named 8 plus children, Dave, Solomon, Fortune, Brice, Fannie, Sarah, Mary, Margaret, and Teeta.

Isiah is renowned for his devotion to Major Thomas William Brice. A newspaper article in the State dated May 10, 1959 prominently featured the recollections of Isiah and the bond of devoted friendship and kinship between Isiah and Major Brice. The article provided the information that follows. Isiah served in the Confederacy alongside of Major Brice, who was First Lieutenant in Company D, Sixth SC Volunteers. Isiah followed Thomas William into service, where Thomas William lost an eye in the Battle of Campbell's Station in Knoxville, Tennessee in 1863. Thomas William, who wore a patch over that eye, returned to Fairfield County where he became a successful merchant and farmer. Isiah was devoted to Major Brice until Brice's death in 1908. Isiah lived until 1913 and asked that he be buried as close as possible to Major Brice. The family and members of Concord Presbyterian Church were so touched by Isiah's devotion that they granted his request, allowing him to be buried in the White cemetery, outside of the fence but as near as possible to Major Brice. In a news article featuring the history of the Concord Presbyterian Church at Woodward, Isiah was called "a great student of the Bible. Isiah could recite the Shorter Catechism from front to back and back to front." Isiah was said to have received a Bible for reward for his knowledge and recitation of the Catechism. The article also recalled his remembrance as a superstitious man, who would make and put a horseshoe over his door to "keep away the witches." Isiah also was known as a fiddler. Since Isiah was buried, the Church expanded the fence that divided Major Brice and Isiah, making him the lone African American buried within the boundaries of Concord Presbyterian Church in Woodard.

More information on Isiah is found in the Slave Narratives of 1937-1938, as told by his daughter Charity Moore, who was 75 at the time of the interview. Charity lived in a two-room frame house on the property of Thomas William Brice. Charity shares the names of her parents and siblings, which she states numbered 13, or a baker's dozen. (As indicated prior, there were more names associated than 13; however, those could have been relatives, step-children, deceased, relocated, or disassociated with the family.) Charity proudly shares her father's ability to entertain children with his stories of "de fox and de rabbit, de squirrel, brer terrapin and sich" long before Aesop's fables were published in America. She even recites one of her father's stories in this narrative. Charity confirms much of what was written in the 1959 article

about Concord church, providing a first-hand recollection of her father's thorough knowledge and recitation of the Catechism. She produced her father's Catechism for viewing during the interview. She, like her father was also evidently superstitious. She insisted that the interviewer had to exit from the same door which he entered or it would be bad luck. Most importantly, Charity shared how the epitaph on her father's grave came to be, which is "As good as ever fluttered."

' I want something else on it Uncle Isaiah,' said Marse Tommie. Wid a tear and a smile, pa raised his white head and said: 'You can put down, below de name and age, just dis: 'As good as ever fluttered.' And dat stone at Concord Cemetery 'tract more 'tention than any stone and epitaph in dat churchyard. Why, de white folks puts flowers on it sometimes.

" I's livin' wid my young marster, Thomas, now. He took good care of my pa, when he got so old and feeble he couldn't work no more. God'll bless Marse Tommie for all his goodness. When Pa Isaiah come to die, Marse Tommie come every day. One day in leavin', he said in his gruff, kind way: 'Is dere anything I can do for you Uncle Isaiah?' Pa say: 'Take care of Charity.' 'I will,' say Marse Tommie. Then he 'low: 'Ain't dere something else?' 'Yes,' pa 'low, 'I want a white stone over de head of my grave.' 'What must I put on de stone,' asked Marse Tommie? 'Just y name and age,' said pa. 'Oh yes, dere ought to be something else, ' says Marse Tommie. Pa shock his head.

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The legacy of the Moore family lives on. There is a strong united family which covers the breadth of this nation and of careers, with lots of existing family members in Fairfield and Chester counties. Prior to COVID there were annual reunions, which celebrate the legacy. The matriarch of the family, Mrs. Georgianna Moore Reed passed in 2015, but her passion, her research and her writings live on. How fitting that the two brothers, both strong, talented,

intelligent, visionary men of great moral character have left us simple but profound messages:
“God’s ways are just” and “As good as ever fluttered.”