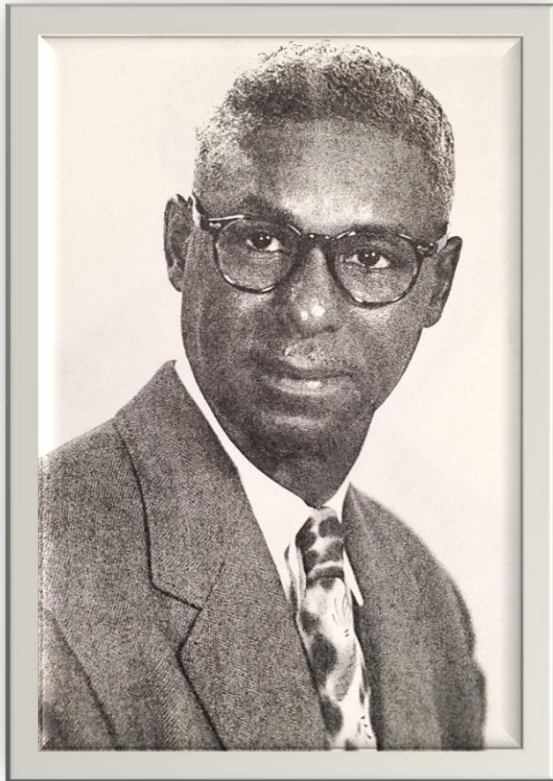


Lake County Profiles: Painesville's Dr. William & Mrs. Mildred Rucker

Dr. William J. Rucker was born in Nashville, Tennessee, on December 15, 1898. He was the eldest of Joseph and Fannie Patterson Rucker's five children. William was educated at Fisk University, whose distinguished alumni include W.E.B. DuBois and Ida B. Wells.

He went on to earn his medical degree from Meharry Medical College. Located in Nashville, Tennessee, Meharry is one of the nation's oldest and largest historically black academic health



science centers dedicated to educating physicians, dentists, researchers, and health policy experts.

Dr. Rucker arrived in Cleveland around 1929. It was nine years later that he and his



wife **Mildred Battle Rucker** (1903-1992), also a Nashville native, moved to Painesville, Ohio. For the next 42 years, their positive impact was felt in the community.

Dr. Rucker joined the staff at **Lake County Memorial Hospital** in 1938. He was the first African American



physician to serve the county. In 1944, Dr. Rucker entered private practice which he conducted from his Painesville residence on West Jackson Street assisted by his wife Mildred.

The civic-minded Dr. Rucker helped to build the **St. John Baptist Church** in Painesville as well as serving as Chairman of the Deacon Committee. He was also a member in good



standing of the Ross Bethel Lodge #105, Starlight Lodge #443, the NAACP, and President of the Lake County Garden Club. Dr. Rucker faithfully served his adopted community until his passing on June 25, 1980.

Though the Ruckers did not have children of their own, Mildred left an even longer legacy. The couple became true cornerstones of not only the African American community living in Lake County, but in the fabric of Lake County's history. Here is a brief tribute to her written after her death on August 16, 1992.

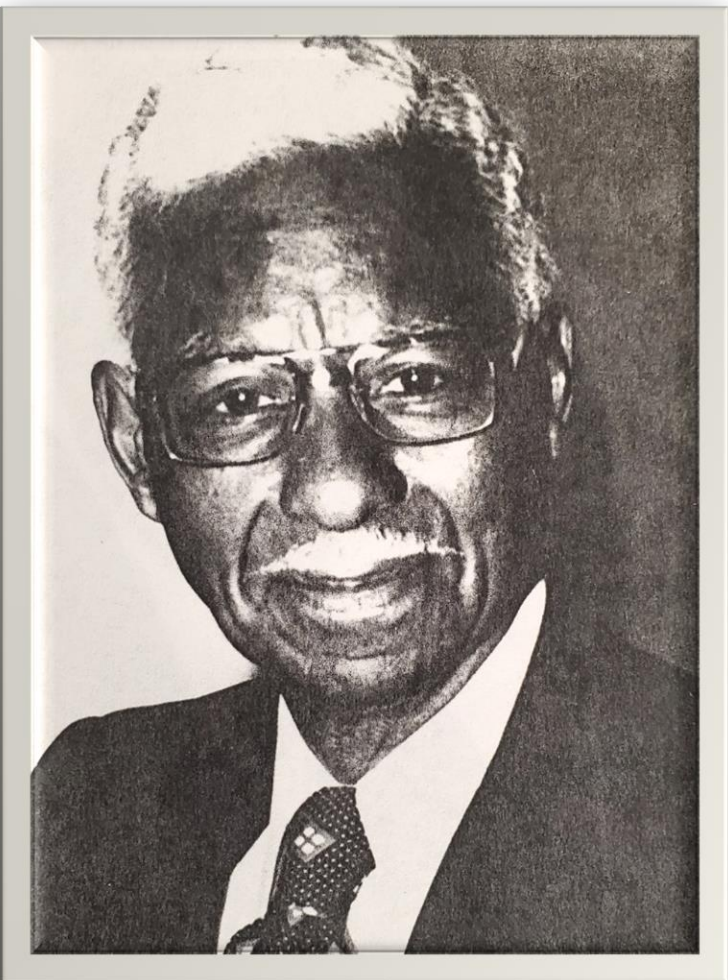
"It has been reported that Mildred Rucker literally touched the lives of every African-American born in Painesville between 1940-1987. Mildred Rucker served as nurse and personal secretary for her husband's private



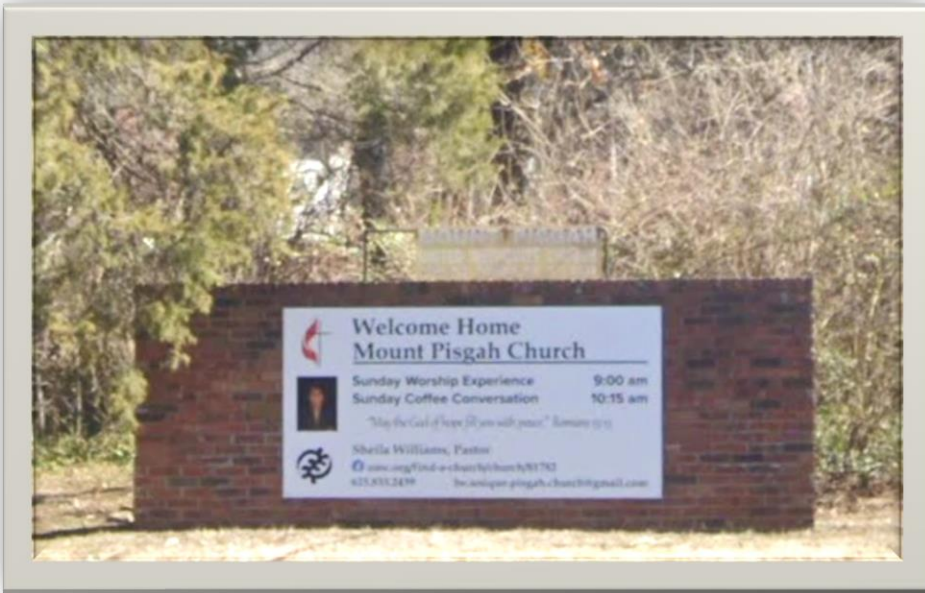
practice beginning in 1944. From their home on W. Jackson Street, she mentored hundreds of children in her lifetime. She took them on field trips and introduced them to life experiences beyond the rural Painesville of the day. Keeping the young busy and engaged in learning / community became a life-long passion. Her passing in 1992 was the end of an era."

Dr. and Mrs. Rucker returned to their Nashville, Tennessee, roots in selecting their burial spot. The small cemetery adjacent to **Mount Pisgah United Methodist Church** is their final resting place

where they are surrounded by the extended Rucker family. They lie side-by-side in death just as they worked tirelessly together in life.



Both Dr. and Mrs. Rucker served Painesville and Lake County much like an underground spring. They quietly made the ground above them all the richer and more abundant by their presence. Through their generosity and commitment, both made important contributions to Lake County's history and the quality of life in this community.



Submitted by Dan Maxson Local Lore by Max (2010-2016), News-Herald Community Media Lab - Trustee, Curator - FHHS / Fairport Harbor Lighthouse & Marine Museum - Curator / Docent - Old Stone School, Concord Township
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