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Methods of Historical Research
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Progressive Era Black Midwives and Healthcare in San Antonio, 1892-1920

An African American midwife was a revered woman who was seen as a wise and knowledgeable person in her respective community, an essential healthcare worker long before the term was ever conceived.¹ She had the long history of supporting women and “catching” their babies during childbirth.² For black women “out of slavery,” through Reconstruction, the Jim Crow Era, and into the Progressive Era, a midwife was even more necessary for those marginalized women.³ For many, a midwife was the only healthcare option for maternity care and would remain so into the mid-20th century, decades after the growing professionalization of the medical field discredited their work. These developments were especially pronounced in progressive-era San Antonio, Texas, where African Americans did not have the option to use a professional healthcare facility. Black women, then, most of whom suffered from poverty and discrimination, were especially dependent on the work of midwives, whose specialized and personalized attention in the maternity sphere of healthcare could not be underestimated in its worth. In San Antonio from 1892-1920, maternity care for black women was supported by skillful and long-serving black midwives, who practiced their trade despite the obstacles created in a segregated society and a newly professionalized healthcare field.

¹ Jenny M. Luke, *Delivered by Midwives African American Midwifery in the Twentieth-Century South* (Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2018), 27.

² Eloise Greenfield, *The Women Who Caught the Babies* (North Carolina: Alazar Press, 2019), 1.

³ Luke, *Delivered by Midwives*, 17.

During the Progressive Era in San Antonio, pregnant black women did not have very many options for professional healthcare, nor did any other black people in need of a doctor. Like the rest of the South, segregation was practiced in San Antonio. While the city consistently had four to six hospitals, as well as other healthcare facilities, there was evidence that certain medical centers, such as the San Antonio City Hospital, were denying blacks admittance to their establishments. Walter R. Patterson, an African American and advocate for black people in San Antonio, wrote a letter to the editor of the *San Antonio Daily Light* newspaper in March 1888.⁴ In the letter he told of the experience that he encountered while trying to admit his brother into the city hospital the previous fall. He recounted that he visited the city doctor, Dr. Braunagel, in October 1887 to gain admittance for his brother, who was unable to care for himself. Braunagel then told Patterson that because his brother had been a resident of San Antonio longer than six months, he would have to seek aid from the county. When Patterson told Braunagel that he would pay for his brother's hospital stay out of his own pocket, Braunagel still refused Patterson and his brother.⁵

Patterson had decided to write his letter to the editor because he had seen a report in the *San Antonio Daily Light* regarding notes from the city council meeting. There, Patterson read that “colored people were refused admission to the city hospital.”⁶ Patterson also pointed out in his letter that he witnessed patients who were currently admitted to the city hospital and were longtime residents of the city, yet they were given medical care free of charge. They were white patients. Therefore, Patterson respectfully argued that the hospital was denying lawful, tax-paying, black citizens their legal right to health care in the city hospital. Additionally, a black

⁴ Walter R. Patterson, “Walter Patterson Replies to the Mayor’s Message about Negroes in the Hospital,” *San Antonio Daily Light*, March 21, 1888. <https://www.tamusa.edu/> (accessed February 24, 2021).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

acquaintance of Patterson, Albert Richardson, had accompanied Patterson to the hospital to help him admit his brother. Richardson, who worked as a “janitor to the city council,” was subsequently fired by the mayor, Brian Callaghan. Callaghan told Richardson that “he did not want the city administration run in favor of the negroes.”⁷ Patterson’s letter to the editor confirmed the hardships that blacks endured while trying to access healthcare in San Antonio.

Therefore, knowing that segregation extended into the realm of healthcare for blacks, this made the role of midwives even more significant. During the Progressive Era, most working-class women of all ethnicities used a midwife or a family member to assist them in childbirth.⁸ However, they also called a doctor when complications arose during labor.⁹ For high-risk pregnancies, postpartum care, and newborn pediatric care, black women did not have other options besides their midwife.

The lack of healthcare for blacks was not a trivial matter either. Historian Jenny Luke explained that “almost total neglect of the health needs of the African American population in the Jim Crow South created an indescribable level of chronic ill health.” Luke continues, “Poor health, deficient housing and sanitation, exacerbated by an inadequate medical infrastructure and institutional discrimination had taken its toll.”¹⁰

Statistics for the years 1890, 1900, 1910, and 1920 elucidate the healthcare situation for black women and all black people in San Antonio. In 1890, blacks accounted for 11.2% of the population in Bexar County, according to the 1890 U.S. Federal Census.¹¹ However, only one

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Katy Dawley, “Campaign to Eliminate the Midwife,” *The American Journal of Nursing*, 100, no. 10 (October 2000): 50-56, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3522317>.

⁹ Ibid., 22.

¹⁰ Ibid., 26-27.

¹¹ 1910 Abstract Supplement for Texas Population: Agriculture Manufactures Mines and Quarries, p.604, <https://www2.census.gov/> (accessed March 1, 2021).

black physician could be found in the San Antonio City Directory Classifieds that same year.¹² This was possibly only one doctor for 5,504 people that made up the black population.

In 1900, blacks accounted for 12.5% of the population listed in the census for Bexar County.¹³ But in 1901 there was only one black doctor listed in the Classified Business Directory for all of San Antonio.¹⁴ That possibly meant that there was only one doctor available for 8,530 black people.

In the 1910 U.S. Federal Census, blacks accounted for 9.7% of the population in Bexar County.¹⁵ That same year, the San Antonio City Directory listed four black “physicians and surgeons” in the Classified Business Directory.¹⁶ That was possibly only four doctors available to the 11,642 people that made up the black population at the time.

As a comparison, in 1910, whites had the option of seeing a total number of 151 physicians, surgeons, and/or specialists according to the Classified Business Directory.¹⁷ With a white population of 107,932 in Bexar county, the doctor/patient ratio was 1:715.¹⁸ Whereas in 1910, the doctor/patient ratio for blacks was 1:2,910.

By 1920 the population of San Antonio had increased to 161,370 total within the city limits.¹⁹ The race and ethnicity demographics for 1920 were not readily accessible, however,

¹² Greene J. Starnes, San Antonio City Directory (San Antonio: Jules A. Appler Press, 1890-1891), 451.

¹³ 1910 Abstract Supplement for Texas Population: Agriculture Manufactures Mines and Quarries, p.604, <https://www2.census.gov/> (accessed March 1, 2021).

¹⁴ G. J. Starnes, San Antonio City Directory (San Antonio: Jules A. Appler Press, 1901-1902), 591.

¹⁵ Abstract of the Fourteenth Census of the United States: 1920-Population.p.604 <https://www2.census.gov/> (accessed March 1, 2021).

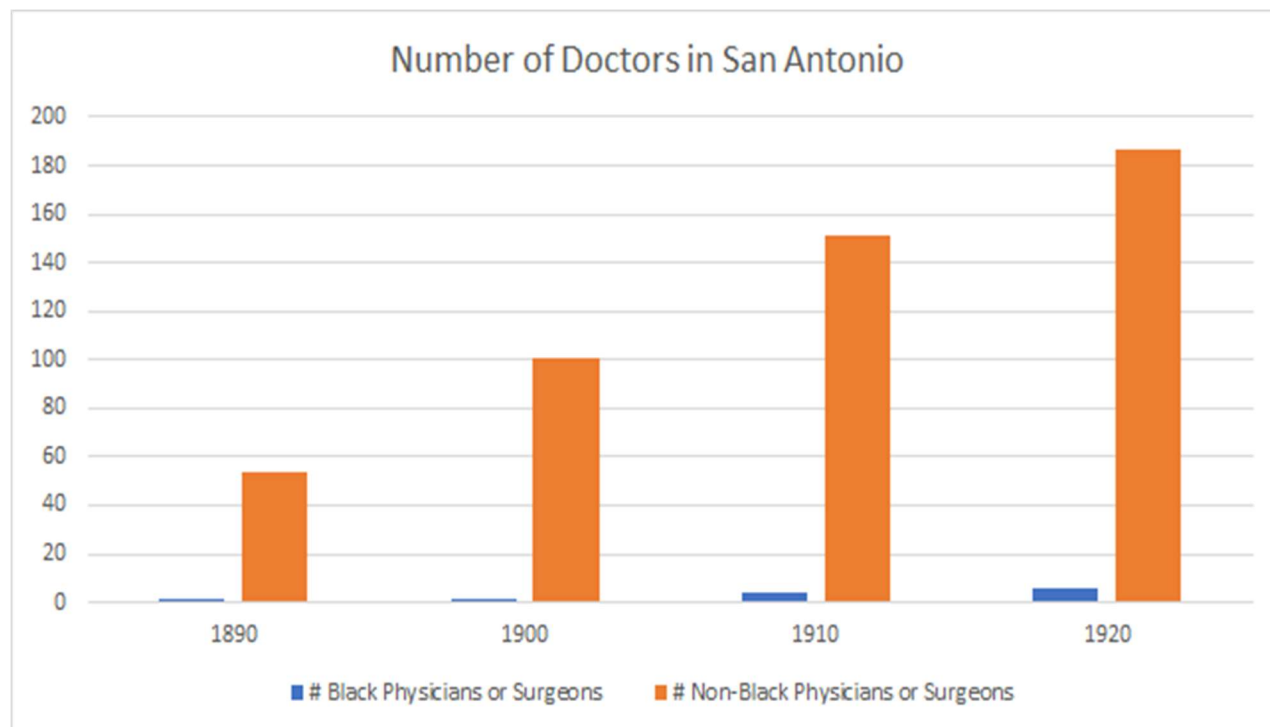
¹⁶ Louis Jackson, Henry Lewis, G.J. Starnes, James T. Walton, San Antonio City Directory (San Antonio: Jules A. Appler Press, 1910-1911), 1190.

¹⁷ San Antonio Business Directory, San Antonio City Directory (San Antonio: Jules A. Appler Press, 1910-1911), 1189-1191.

¹⁸ 1910 Abstract Supplement for Texas Population: Agriculture Manufactures Mines and Quarries, p.604, <https://www2.census.gov/> (accessed March 1, 2021).

¹⁹ Abstract of the Fourteenth Census of the United States: 1920-Population. <https://www2.census.gov/> (accessed March 1, 2021).

there were six black doctors in San Antonio.²⁰ Additionally, the numerous hospitals and healthcare facilities in the city provided eligible patrons with additional access to physicians and other healthcare professionals.



*Compiled by the author from the San Antonio City Directories, Classified Business section.

An advertisement for the Santa Rosa Infirmary from 1909 touted “the infirmary is attended by the most prominent physicians in the city. Patients select their own doctor.”²¹ It was highly unlikely that blacks would have had access to any of the medical centers in San Antonio at the time, as was the case for Patterson and his brother in 1887. However, we do not know for certain if any of the physicians accepted black patients in their private practices. Additionally, Luke wrote, “Many white doctors felt no obligation to see black patients. Some feared that by

²⁰ J.S. Cameron, W.M. Drake, W.R. Maynard, J.G. Selby, G.J. Starnes, J.T. Walton, San Antonio City Directory (San Antonio: Jules A. Appler Press, 1919-1920), 777-778.

²¹ Santa Rosa Infirmary advertisement, San Antonio City Directory (San Antonio: Jules A. Appler Press, 1909), image 3. ancestry.com (accessed February 20, 2021).

caring for black patients they would lose their white clientele.”²² They also considered it a financial liability.²³ Either way, blacks were being denied care at the city hospital, and as Patterson’s experience demonstrated, it was not possible to receive help or be admitted. The statistics shown above confirm that black midwives held a vital role in the maternity care of other black women in San Antonio, as pregnancy, delivery, and newborn care was carried out by their essential work.

Though the historical record does not document the first two black midwives in San Antonio until 1892, African American midwifery and its practices had a long history in the South, even before emancipation.²⁴ Enslaved midwives learned their craft through older women and other midwives.²⁵ There is evidence that some enslaved midwives interned for a number of years with doctors.²⁶ Luke argues, “The folk remedies initially brought from Africa, synthesized with Native American and some Western practices, persisted, and...that knowledge was consistently transmitted from one generation to the next.”²⁷ The San Antonio midwives of the 1890s were not far removed from the days of slavery, and were likely to have had that wealth of knowledge that had been passed down from experienced midwives. For instance, Luke wrote about black southern midwives being knowledgeable in techniques that were used to stop hemorrhaging such as using “cobwebs, soot, and cherry bark.”²⁸ The use of cobwebs to treat a bleeding wound was also an old wives’ remedy from south Texas as well, although not exclusively.

²² Luke, *Delivered by Midwives*, 27.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Martha Gray, Marie Holland, *San Antonio City Directory* (San Antonio: Jules A. Appler Press, 1892-1893), 327 & 363.

²⁵ Luke, *Delivered by Midwives*, 27.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 23.

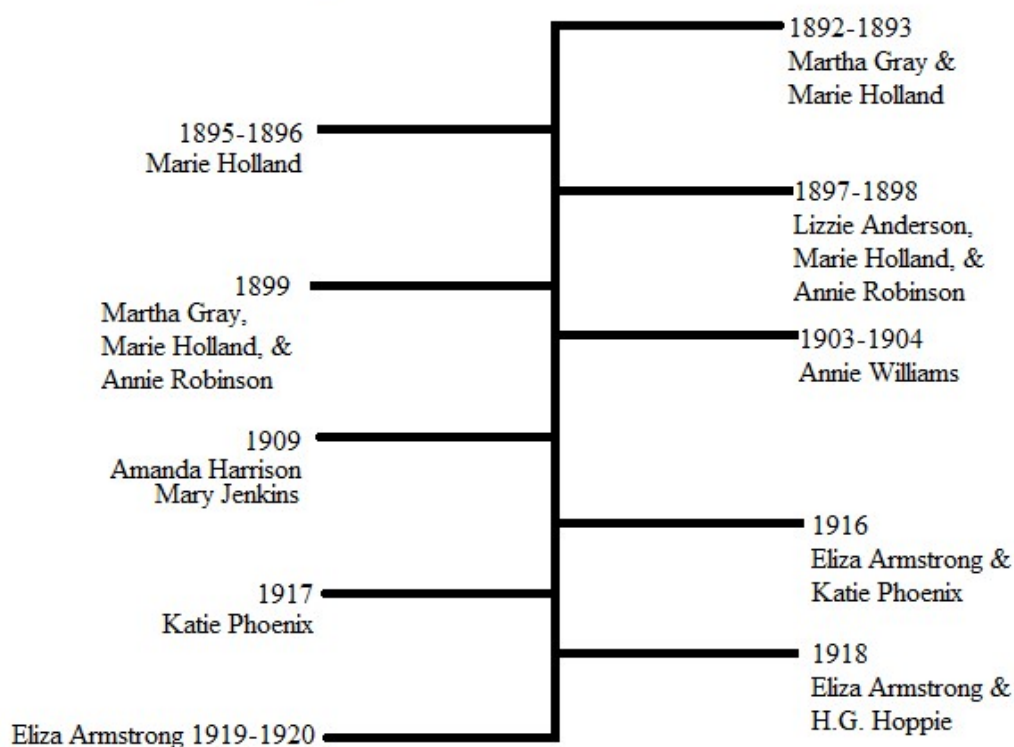
²⁷ *Ibid.*, 24.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 29.

In the San Antonio City Directories, from 1892-1920, a total of ten black midwives could be found, however, not consistently or simultaneously though. Those women were, in alphabetical order:

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Lizzie Anderson | 6. H. G. Hoppie |
| 2. Eliza Armstrong | 7. Mary Jenkins |
| 3. Martha Gray | 8. Katie Phoenix |
| 4. Amanda Harrison | 9. Annie Robinson |
| 5. Marie Holland | 10. Annie Williams |

Progressive Era Black Midwives of San Antonio



*Compiled by the author from the San Antonio City Directories 1892-1920.

It is important to note that although the midwives are not listed continuously from year to year, it does not mean that they were not practicing midwifery in those absent years. An example from the timeline above is Eliza Armstrong. She was missing from the 1917 directory,

yet she was listed previously in 1916 and afterwards in the 1918 and 1919-1920 directories.

While the historic San Antonio City Directories provided this information, it was not necessarily complete or error free. There were instances where the midwife was listed but there was no accompanying occupation. There were also times where a midwife's husband was listed in the residential section of the directory, but her name was missing. The timeline above represents the years that the midwives could be found with their occupation confirming they were midwives.

1892 was the first year that African American midwives could be found in the San Antonio City Directory. That year there were two midwives listed, Martha Gray and Marie Holland.²⁹ They were designated in the residential section with their occupation, "midwife" after their name. For instance, below is the 1892 entry for Marie Holland. The "(c)" was for "colored."

**Holland F E Miss, r 212 Lake View ave.
 Holland Houston, (c) r 2124 S Flores.
 Holland James M, (c) painter r 718 E Crockett.
 Holland Marie, (c) midwife, r 720 E Crockett.
 Holland Mary, (wid) r 623 Soledad.
 Hollond Mattie, (c) servant John Gilroy. r same.
 Holland R A, mgr Holland's Tea Store, r cor N Leona, Lake**

Sometimes the black midwives could also be found in the Classified Business Directory which was usually located in the back pages of the directory. There, the midwives' names were listed with other businesses and professions under the category of midwives. For example, here is an image from the 1892 classified business directory for midwives. Marie Holland is highlighted.

²⁹ Martha Gray, Marie Holland, San Antonio City Directory (San Antonio: Jules A. Appler Press, 1892-1893), 327 & 363.

MIDWIVES.

Abalos Martina Mrs, cor Durango, S Callaghan.
 Chanders Jane Mrs, 319 Hood.
 Dathe M Mrs, 117 Duval.
 Grunder Elizabeth Mrs, 1106 Ave D.
 Haas Maria Mrs, 310 E Nueva.
 Heitgen Anna B Mrs, 921 E Houston.
 Holland Marie, (c) 720 E Crockett.
 Kraus Katrina Mrs, 305 W Market.
 Minnette E Mrs, 403 N Leona.
 Pollock Mary Mrs, 111 Dawson.
 Rose R Mrs, cor North, S Alamo.
 Shinolt M E Mrs, 522 N Laredo.

Although Martha Gray was also a practicing midwife in 1892 according to the directory, it is unclear why she was not listed in the classifieds that year.

Martha Gray was the oldest of all the documented midwives. She was listed as being 64 years old in the 1900 Federal U.S. Census.³⁰ She was born in Arkansas in 1836, therefore, it can be assumed that she was born into slavery. Gray was in her twenties during the Civil War. She was living in San Antonio in 1892 at the age of 56 when she was first recorded as a midwife in the San Antonio City Directory. Somewhere along Gray's life, she acquired knowledge and experience sufficient to practice midwifery.

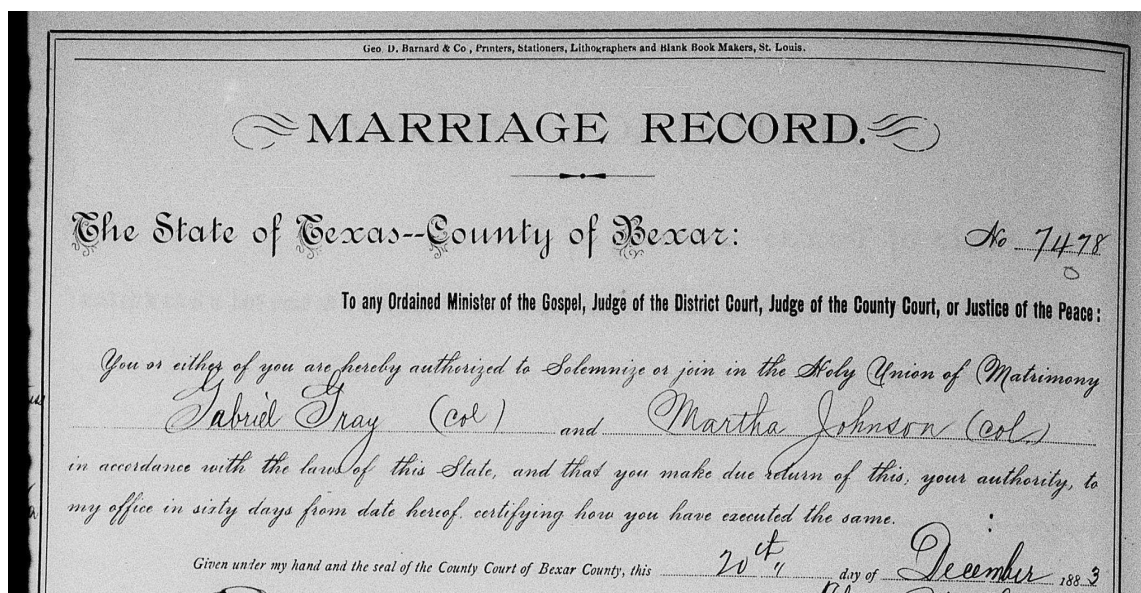
Martha Gray, who was previously Martha Johnson, married Gabriel Gray in Bexar County in 1883.³¹ Gabriel Gray worked as a messenger for the U.S. Arsenal in San Antonio.³² In the San Antonio City Directory of 1892, Martha and Gabriel were both listed as residents of 714

³⁰ Year: 1900; Census Place: San Antonio Ward 6, Bexar, Texas; Page: 13; Enumeration District: 0103; FHL microfilm: 1241611

³¹ "Texas, County Marriage Records, 1837-1965," database with images, FamilySearch (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QV1-3FK2> : 23 February 2021), Gabriel Gray and Martha Johnson, 24 Dec 1883; citing Marriage, citing Bexar, Texas, United States, Texas State Library, Archives Division, and various Texas county clerks; FHL microfilm 24,921.

³² Gabriel Gray, San Antonio City Directory (San Antonio: Jules A. Appler Press, 1892-1893), 325. Gray was a veteran of the Civil War. He fought for the Union in the U.S. Colored Troops. He was a private in the 40th Regiment, United States Colored Infantry. (National Park Service. *U.S., Civil War Soldiers, 1861-1865* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2007.)

E. Crockett St.³³ Together they purchased a lot near East Crockett street on July 9, 1893 for one-hundred dollars.³⁴



“Gabriel Gray (col) and Martha Johnson (col)” Bexar County marriage record for 1883.

In 1899, Martha Gray was again in the San Antonio City Directory but that year her occupation was listed as “nurse.”³⁵ It is not clear how Gray practiced her nursing but she had broadened her midwifery to include other healthcare. Her nursing line of work was a significant revelation. Jenny Luke wrote that “the midwives whose expanded realm of work also included caring for the sick and elderly were typically older women with an accumulation of experience, specialized knowledge, and a sense of autonomy that allowed them some freedom of judgement in the implementation of that knowledge.”³⁶ Luke’s description of midwives’ work fit well into Martha Gray’s life description. Gray was practicing midwifery but was also involved in

³³ Martha Gray, Gabriel Gray, San Antonio City Directory (San Antonio: Jules A. Appler Press, 1892-1893), 325 & 327.

³⁴ Abe Ash grantor, Gabriel Gray and Martha Gray grantees, Deed signed July 19, 1893. Deed document number 99991558690, Deed book vol 127 p. 82. <https://bexar.tx.publicsearch.us/>.

³⁵ Martha Gray, San Antonio City Directory (San Antonio: Jules A, Appler Press, 1899), 283.

³⁶ Luke, *Delivered by Midwives*, 22.

performing the work duties of a nurse. Gray was a healthcare worker in her community, and she was likely to have treated people with ailments outside the field of maternity care. Her familiarity in caring for women had gained her experience that she was able to use to help tend to others. In San Antonio in 1899, Martha Gray's presence was incredibly fortunate to her neighbors in need.

In the 1900 United States Federal Census, Martha and Gabriel Gray were still at 714 E. Crockett St. in San Antonio.³⁷ They had an adopted son, Willis Shepard, age 7. That year the census documented Martha's occupation as "Midwife."³⁸

		Arnold	Roman	B	F	Feb	1874	2	0										
	19234240	Whish	Chastain	Head	M	Nov	1854	45	2	0	Germany	Germany	Germany	1854	Pa	Day	Labourer		
		"	Walter	Wife	W	Dec	1855	36	2	0	Switzerland	Switzerland	Switzerland	1855	Pa				
		"	Laudian	Son	M	Dec	1891	8	0		Germany	Germany	Germany						
		"	Carar	Son	M	Mar	1894	6	0		Germany	Germany	Germany						
		"	Maris	Daughter	W	Dec	1896	3	0		Germany	Germany	Germany						
		Johnson	John	Brother-in-law	M	Mar	1825	24	0		Germany	Germany	Germany	1891	Pa	Plumber			
	714234240	Gray	Gabriel	Head	B	Mar	1831	68	15		Alabama	Georgia	Kentucky						Mrs. Wm. Arnold
		"	Martha	Wife	W	Dec	1855	44	2	2	Arkansas	Arkansas	Arkansas						Midwife
		Shepard	Willis	Adopted	B	Nov	1892	6	0		Tex	Tex	Tex						
	701234240	Kemper	Charles	Head	B	July	1876	23	0		Tex	Tex	Florida						knapsack wood yard
		Miller	Henry	Partner	B	Nov	1877	22	0		Tex	Arkansas	Tex						hairdresser

1900 U.S. Federal Census - San Antonio City 6th Ward - Precinct 15.

One of Martha Gray's neighbors in 1892 was another midwife, Marie Holland. Holland was consistently listed in the Classified Business Directory as a midwife from 1892-1899, the only one to be listed as such every year during that time period.³⁹ Holland lived at 720 E. Crockett St. in San Antonio.⁴⁰ Marie's husband was James Holland. Together, they purchased a

³⁷ Year: 1900; Census Place: San Antonio Ward 6, Bexar, Texas; Page: 13; Enumeration District: 0103; FHL microfilm: 1241611, digital image, ancestry.com, accessed [NEED DATE YOU ACCESSED THIS DOCUMENT]

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Marie Holland, San Antonio City Directories (San Antonio: Jules A. Appler Press), 1892-1899.

⁴⁰ Marie Holland, San Antonio City Directory (San Antonio: Jules A. Appler Press, 1892-1893), 363.

lot on “the corner of Willow St. and Cleveland alley” in December 1895.⁴¹ However, Marie Holland was listed as a widow that same year in the San Antonio City Directory.⁴² That points to some type of discrepancy since the directory was compiled in 1894, but James Holland signed a land deed in 1895. Today, Willow Street stops 3 blocks north of Crockett Street. “Cleveland alley” does not currently exist anymore. The land deed raises some questions that will hopefully be resolved with more research in the future. In 1897, Holland was still a midwife, but she now lived at 221 N. Swiss St.⁴³ She had moved east two blocks. In 1899 Marie Holland made another move to 108 Gonzales St.⁴⁴ That year she was listed in the Classified Business Directory under the midwives’ section for the last time.⁴⁵ Marie Holland consistently being named in the directory as a midwife for seven years, despite being in transit several times, demonstrated her dedication and persistence to her work. Like Gray, Holland was also a valuable source for maternity care in her community.

Also listed in the 1899 Classified Business Directory was Lizzie Anderson. This midwife lived at 305 Duval St. in San Antonio. She lived one mile north of Holland and Gray. It was noted in her residential entry that she was the widow of “Ed.”⁴⁶ Being a widow was something several of the midwives had in common. It was not surprising either as Jenny Luke wrote that most black midwives were older women. Not all widows were old, and Anderson’s birth date was not confirmed, however, sometimes black midwives were referred to as “granny midwives”

⁴¹ H.H. Hunt grantor, James Holland grantee, Deed signed 12/06/1895. Deed doc number 99991837909, Deed book vol 141 p.281, Bexar County Clerk’s Office, San Antonio, TX, <https://bexar.tx.publicsearch.us/>.

⁴² Marie Holland, San Antonio City Directory (San Antonio: Jules A. Appler Press, 1895-1896), 335.

⁴³ Ibid., 330.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 338.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 611.

⁴⁶ Lizzie Anderson, San Antonio City Directory (San Antonio: Jules A. Appler Press, 1899), 138.

or “grannies.”⁴⁷ That term has fallen out of favor though and is not used anymore.⁴⁸ Anderson was found twice in the San Antonio City Directory, 1897-98 and in 1899.⁴⁹ However, no other information could be found on Anderson in the Census records or otherwise.

This entry of Marie Holland and Lizzie Anderson (shown below) from 1899 is significant because that was the last time any black midwives were listed in the Classified Business Directory.⁵⁰ From 1900 to 1920, there were not any black midwives in the classifieds anymore. From 1892-1899 there had been at least one “colored” midwife listed each year. The “(c)” was still being used throughout the directories to identify African Americans, however, none of the midwives listed were so designated after 1899.

MIDWIVES.

Abalos Martina Mrs. cor Durango, S Cal-
laghan
Anderson Lizzie (c). 305 Duval.
Dathe M Mrs. 923 Dallas.
Falcom Alvina, 820 S Medina.
Haas Maria Mrs. 409 Centre.
Hardman Fred Mrs, 218 S Alamo.
Heitgen Annie B Mrs. 921 E Houston.
Holland Marie (c). 108 Gonzales.
Kraus Katrina Mrs. 305 Market.
Minnette E Mrs. 1722 Monterey.
Moehring R Mrs. 512 Indianola.
Schwartz P Mrs. 1018 E Commerce.

1899 San Antonio City Directory- Classified Business Directory.

Nonetheless, there were still practicing African American midwives in San Antonio. That is known because they happened to have their occupation listed after their names in the residential section of the directory. However, it was curious and concerning that black midwives

⁴⁷ Luke, *Delivered by Midwives*, 27.

⁴⁸ Greenfield, *The Women Who Caught the Babies*, 3.

⁴⁹ Lizzie Anderson, San Antonio City Directory (San Antonio, Jules A. Appler Press), 1897-1899.

⁵⁰ Lizzie Anderson, Marie Holland, San Antonio City Directory (San Antonio: Jules A. Appler Press, 1899), 611.

were no longer in the classifieds after 1899. Had it become too expensive to have their name or business listed? Were they carelessly omitted? Either way, this assuredly led to further difficulties in black women finding a midwife for their maternity healthcare needs. It would be like an essential business or agency today being eliminated from an online internet search.

Also in 1899, there was another practicing midwife, Annie Robinson. Robinson was listed in the residential section of the San Antonio City Directory, but she was not listed in the Classified Business Directory for that year either, as shown in the image above.⁵¹ Again, questions are raised as to why Robinson was not listed. Was it another discrepancy? Or perhaps there were issues with cost or missed deadlines to be listed in the directory? Either way, it would have been hard to search for Robinson's midwife services unless one already knew her name. Annie Robinson was in the residential section of the directory twice, 1897-98 and in 1899.⁵² She was listed as "Robinson, Annie Mrs." and lived at 307 Victoria.⁵³

Amanda Harrison, who was in the San Antonio City Directory in 1903, had similarities to the other midwives.⁵⁴ She was also a widow and was living at 430 W. Cevallos.⁵⁵ She was 62 and was born in 1848 in Tennessee. Akin to Martha Gray, Harrison was also sure to have been born into slavery. Harrison was in her teens during the Civil War. She too had made her way to San Antonio and gained experience in caring for women's maternity needs. Harrison had likely gained experience from her own life as a mother, as she had fifteen children, ten of which were

⁵¹ Annie Robinson, San Antonio City Directory (San Antonio: Jules A. Appler Press, 1899), 611.

⁵² Annie Robinson, San Antonio City Directory (San Antonio: Jules A. Appler Press, 1897-1988, 1899), 490 & 611.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Amanda Harrison, San Antonio City Directory (San Antonio: Jules A. Appler Press, 1903), 238.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

living in 1910.⁵⁶ Her own life experiences with childbirth certainly qualified her for midwifery. Harrison's pregnancies gave her knowledge and wisdom that allowed her to assist other women through the challenges of giving birth and caring for a newborn baby.

Harrison was consistently listed in the directory with the same address until 1924. However, she was not listed as a "midwife" until 1909.⁵⁷ That was the first and only time that she had the "midwife" title after her name. However, it is doubtful that she was only a midwife for one year. It was more likely that she was just not mentioned or not listed properly, for whatever reason. The failure to have been listed as a "midwife" was like those midwives not listed in the classifieds; the reasons are just not known.

Amanda Harrison stood out in this research because a considerable amount of information on her children was available through the U.S. Federal Census records and the San Antonio City Directories. Harrison had three sons and four daughters living in her home, as well as one granddaughter, all while she was working as a midwife.⁵⁸ Harrison's four oldest children, living with her in 1910, were well employed too. Alexander, 25, was a real estate agent. Florence, 24, was a dressmaker. Moseby, 22, was a porter at the railroad. And Ada, 19, was a music teacher for private families. All the children in the household, the youngest being 9, could read and write. It is evident that Harrison was able to help her children succeed despite living through the days of segregation, the Texas Black Codes, and continual inequality. Harrison's accomplishments were no small feat considering the work of a midwife was challenging and had inconsistent hours. Midwives were known to stay by the side of women giving birth all day and

⁵⁶ Year: 1910; Census Place: San Antonio Ward 1, Bexar, Texas; Roll: T624_1531; Page: 2A; Enumeration District: 0006; FHL microfilm: 1375544. Ancestry.com. Obtained February 2021.

⁵⁷ Annie Robinson, San Antonio City Directory (San Antonio: Jules A. Appler Press, 1909), 425.

⁵⁸ Year: 1910; Census Place: San Antonio Ward 1, Bexar, Texas; Roll: T624_1531; Page: 2A; Enumeration District: 0006; FHL microfilm: 1375544. Ancestry.com. Obtained February 2021.

throughout the night.⁵⁹ Midwives would also return for days after to check on new moms and their babies.⁶⁰ Harrison's work and example to her family no doubt had a positive impact.

Amanda Harrison's descendants continued to live in San Antonio and her family could be traced down to today, 2021, in San Antonio.

Another midwife with Tennessee roots was Katie Phoenix. Phoenix was born in Texas, but both her parents were born in Tennessee.⁶¹ Phoenix's birth year estimate was 1858.⁶² She was first listed as a midwife in San Antonio in 1916, when she was approximately 58 years old.⁶³ However, Phoenix had been a midwife since she was at least 40 years old.⁶⁴ In 1910, she and her husband Henry Phoenix, were living in Austin, TX and her occupation was listed as "Mid Wife" working for "private families."⁶⁵ After moving to San Antonio she continued to work as a midwife till at least 1918. Phoenix's work experience was fascinating as she was the longest documented working midwife in this study, at almost 20 years. However, Katie Phoenix lived till she was 82 years old, so it is very likely that she had a much longer career in midwifery than

⁵⁹ Katy Dawley, "Campaign to Eliminate the Midwife," *The American Journal of Nursing*, 100, no. 10 (October 2000): 50-56, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3522317>.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ "United States Census, 1920", database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MHBV-ZFC> : 3 February 2021), Katie Phenix in entry for William Savers, 1920.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Katie Phoenix, *San Antonio City Directory* (San Antonio: Jules A. Appler Press, 1916), 503.

⁶⁴ "United States Census, 1910," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M2QZ-GNC> : accessed 27 April 2021), Henry Phoenix, Austin Ward 5, Travis, Texas, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) ED 83, sheet 5B, family 88, NARA microfilm publication T624 (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1982), roll 1595; FHL microfilm 1,375,608.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

the approximately 20 years that were noted here. Katie Phoenix died on September 27, 1939 in Bexar county.⁶⁶

Many of the midwives, or their mothers, had somehow made their way across the old South to San Antonio. Annie Williams was also one of those women. Williams was born in Mississippi in 1842.⁶⁷ Her husband was named Henry Williams.⁶⁸ Annie Williams also undoubtedly endured slavery and lived through the Civil War as a young woman. She was another midwife who carried the legacy of midwifery knowledge from slavery days.

Mary Jenkins was listed as a midwife in the directory for the year 1909. She was born in Texas circa 1850 and her parents were both from Missouri.⁶⁹ Jenkins was previously “Mary Whitfield” and she was married to John Jenkins in Bexar county in 1896.⁷⁰ They lived at 1118 S. San Marcos St. Researching Mary Jenkins was challenging because there was another married black couple in San Antonio named John and Mary Jenkins, who lived on Gravel St.⁷¹

⁶⁶ Katy Phenix, "Texas Deaths, 1890-1976," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:K3MD-RN1> : 20 February 2021), Katy Phenix, 27 Sep 1939; citing certificate number 40474, State Registrar Office, Austin; FHL microfilm 2,118,258.

⁶⁷ "United States Census, 1880," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MFF2-L3F> : 20 February 2021), Annie Williams in household of Henry Williams, San Antonio, Bexar, Texas, United States; citing enumeration district ED 12, sheet 59C, NARA microfilm publication T9 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.), FHL microfilm 1,255,291.

⁶⁸ "United States Census, 1900," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M325-H2C> : accessed 9 April 2021), Annie Williams in household of Henry Williams, Justice Precinct 9 San Antonio city Ward 4, Bexar, Texas, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) 90, sheet 1A, family 6, NARA microfilm publication T623 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1972.); FHL microfilm 1,241,611.

⁶⁹ "United States Census, 1880," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MFF2-TBB> : 20 February 2021), Mary Jenkins in household of John Jenkins, San Antonio, Bexar, Texas, United States; citing enumeration district ED 13, sheet 113C, NARA microfilm publication T9 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.), FHL microfilm 1,255,291.

⁷⁰ "Texas Marriages, 1837-1973", database, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:v2MX3G> : 22 January 2020). John Jenkins, 1896.

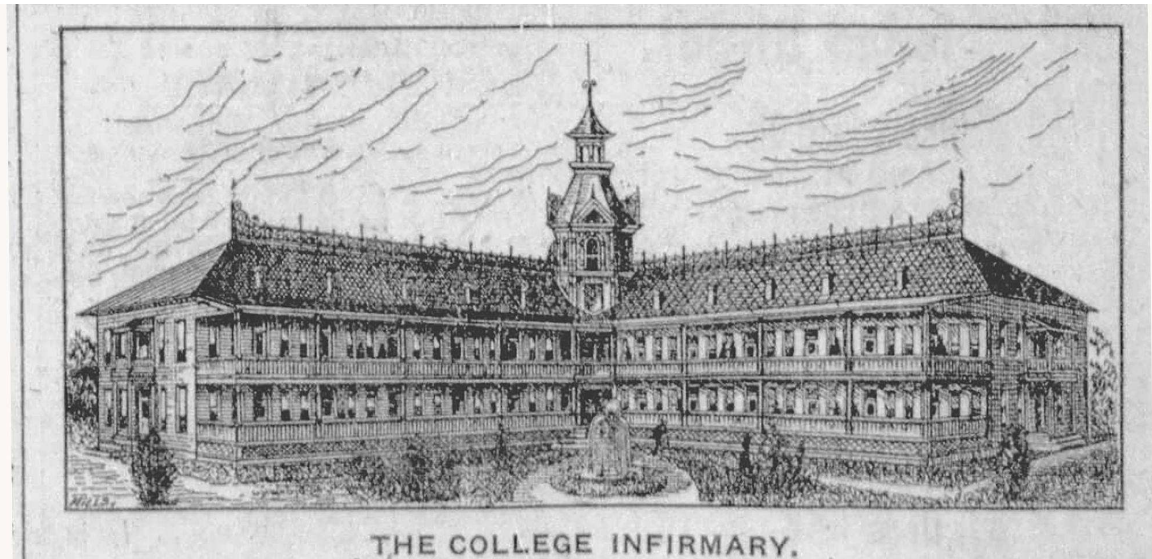
⁷¹ "United States Census, 1910," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M29R-R41> : accessed 27 April 2021), Mary Jenkins in household of John Jenkins, San Antonio Ward 7, Bexar, Texas, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) ED 55, sheet 9A, family 179, NARA microfilm publication T624 (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1982), roll 1532; FHL microfilm 1,375,545.

Researching the midwives did not always produce results. For example, H.G. Hoppie did not have any further information besides being listed as a midwife in the directory for 1918.⁷²

Walter Patterson's editorial, combined with other complaints, were likely to have pressured the city of San Antonio to accommodate the healthcare needs of the black community. In 1900, the *San Antonio Daily Light* announced the purchase of land to build a hospital for African Americans. The article read, "When complete it will be...a credit to the city of San Antonio, a token of the liberality and friendly feeling of the whites toward the colored people."⁷³ The self-congratulatory statement suggested a spin on what was likely bad press for many years. Having denied African Americans healthcare previously and even while the hospital was being built demonstrated that there was not any "friendly feeling" from the city's leaders. San Antonio was not necessarily benevolent, although the city felt a segregated hospital was a step in the right direction. It is unclear when the hospital eventually opened.

⁷² H.G. Hoppie, *San Antonio City Directories* (San Antonio: Jules A. Appler Press 1918), 427.

⁷³ *San Antonio Light* (online), 25 Mar 1900, 8. <<https://infoweb-newsbank-com.tamusa.idm.oclc.org/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2%3A1432DBB4AA9B7B12%40EANX-171CBF522CE7368F%402415104-171B5624348C8341%407171B5624348C8341%40>>



San Antonio Light newspaper image for “The College Infirmary,” March 25, 1900.

Having access to modern medicine in a hospital setting was what the African American community needed and what they had been pushing for in San Antonio. However, starting in the early 20th century, nationwide, an increased number of hospitals and physicians in the sphere of maternity care would lead to all midwives being discounted and pushed out of their line of work.⁷⁴ Beginning around 1900, this national push to have women give birth in hospitals led to a stigmatization of midwives. The work of the midwife would eventually be described as unsanitary, unsafe, and the midwives themselves discredited as practicing superstitious medicine.⁷⁵

It is uncertain if the midwives listed here were able to practice freely through the Progressive Era of San Antonio. If black women had no other option than to give birth at home or with a midwife, then it would seem logical that black midwives were allowed to practice their work. However, it was also probable that they may have suffered through instances of

⁷⁴ Luke, *Delivered by Midwives*, 10.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 49.

discrimination in their line of work. Professional, science-based, health care that a hospital could provide was an improvement for the overall wellbeing of the black community. However, doctors demeaning the work of midwifery assured that all midwives everywhere had to fight discrimination and attacks.⁷⁶

The Progressive Era midwives of San Antonio lived through difficult times, even through undeniably impossible injustices. Yet, the challenging time period in which they lived made their line of work an enormous contribution to their community. While childbirth was a natural event, it also created uncertainty, anxiety, and the potential for health complications. The midwives served to alleviate concerns and help women through their labor and delivery and also the care of their newborn baby. The midwives provided a service which assuredly brought care and comfort to women and families at a time when they most needed it. For many women, midwives were the only source of knowledge to assist them in birthing their children. For other African Americans, midwives that were knowledgeable in other wellness areas were also able to provide medical assistance when they were not able to receive help anywhere else. These black midwives were essential healthcare workers in the African American community of San Antonio. This work, herein, was intended to bring their names out of obscurity for the lifesaving work that they provided to the marginalized black community in desperate need of healthcare. They should be remembered as historical figures for their accomplishments and incalculable medical services to African American families during San Antonio's Progressive Era.

⁷⁶ Luke, *Delivered by Midwives*, 10.

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