

The Doram Family of Danville, Kentucky



Collections of the Kentucky Historical Society • Accession Number 2000.29.1
(Dennis Doram) & 2 (Diademia Doram) • 29.25" H x 23" W x 0.75" D

Michael J Denis
Charles DeRoy Grey
African-American
Genealogy Group
of Kentucky
March, 2016

Doram Portraits

Around a corner in the Kentucky Historical Society's permanent exhibit, "A Kentucky Journey," two portraits sit enclosed in a large glass case.

These are the images of Dennis and Diadamia Doram, dated 1839.

Like many prosperous 19th century Kentuckians, the Dorams paid to have their portraits made.

The difference is that these two people started life as slaves.

Despite cultural and legal obstacles, they became business and land owners in Danville, KY, well before slavery was abolished.

Looking at their faces, it is easy to imagine they are gazing at the American dream in the distance.

It is not the same view as the European-Americans in their community, yet the Doram family was able to achieve many of the things that make up the American dream: home ownership, successful businesses, educated and successful children, social standing, and freedom.

Treasure Found

- Albert Hawkins, antiques dealer in Danville acquired paintings in 1995.
- He purchased the contents of a barn owned by the Bartleston Family in the Clifton Community of Boyle County
- The Bartlestons were descendants of the Dorams.
- He really had little idea of the significance at the time.
- He dusted the portraits off, and noted that “These are Black folks!”
- The Governor Owsley House in Lancaster was interested in purchasing them, but Hawkins would not sell at the time.
- KHS inquired, and again, Hawkins refused to sell.

Treasure Saved

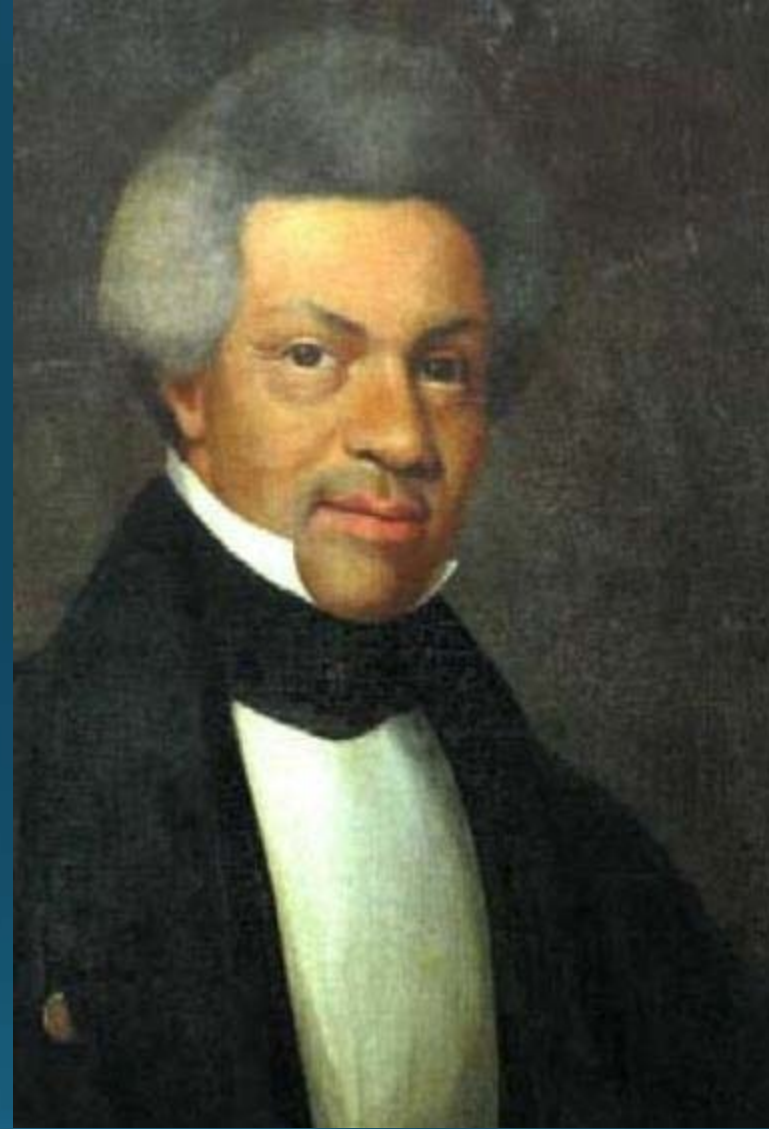
- At this point, Hawkins began researching the painter; his findings convinced him that he had to share the portraits with the public.
- After several years, KHS contacted him again, and told him it would take several thousand dollars to restore the paintings.
- At this point, Hawkins decided to sell.
- KHS raised funds to purchase the portraits in July 2000.
- After cleaning and conservation, can now be seen in permanent exhibit, *A Kentucky Journey*.

Doram Portraits

- Painted 1839 by Patrick Henry Davenport (1803-1890), son of Danville tavern owner and banker.
- Davenport educated at Danville Academy, became accomplished portrait artist despite little training.
- Believed to be the only paintings of African Americans Davenport created.
- Today, portraits are in very good condition.
- Once again possible to study faces of these extraordinary people and their story.

Dennis Doram

- Dennis and Diadamia Doram notable for achievements at a time when social and political forces aligned to prevent any glimmer of the American dream for Blacks.
- Dennis Doram born into slavery at Indian Queen Tavern, estate of Thomas Barbee, Danville 1796.
- His mother Lydia Doram owned by General Thomas Barbee, who was also her father.
- Dennis's father also named Dennis Doram. Family stories say he was part Native American and was not a slave.



Dennis Doram

- When Barbee died, will Feb. 7, 1797 freed daughter Lydia Doram and her children.
- Freedom came for children after they reached a particular age, 26 for females, 31 for males.
- Will stipulated that all of the children were to be educated in reading and writing, and the boys were also to be taught mathematics.
- Dennis received his freedom in the 1820s.
- Dennis's freedom and chance at an education provided him with the opportunity to succeed.

Dennis Doram

- He founded several businesses including a rope and hemp factory and proved to be civic minded, as he helped establish the Caldwell School for Women (Talbott).
- One family historian found evidence that Dennis Doram was conducting business as early as 1814.
- His 31st birthday and freedom arrived in 1827 and Dennis was working and farming for himself.
- It is clear that he was successful because in fewer than ten years he was buying Danville town lots.
- When and how he met Diadamia Taylor is unknown.

Diadamia (Taylor) Doram

- Diadamia Taylor Doram born 1810.
- She, mother Cloe, and siblings were slaves of Moses O. Bledsoe of St. Louis, MO.
- Diadamia's father, Gibson Taylor, was a free man of color.
- In 1814, Gibson Taylor paid Bledsoe \$700 to free wife and children (document shown later).
- Taylor family moved to Kentucky shortly afterwards.
- Diadamia raised in Harrodsburg, KY, but little else known about her youth.



Diadamia (Taylor) Doram

- The next documented event in her life is her marriage to Dennis Doram Feb. 15, 1830 in Mercer County, KY.
- Together, two former slaves embarked on journey that other African Americans with less education and fewer opportunities could not take.
- DORAM, Diadama, “Ordered to be recorded and certified that Diadama Doram who is present in Court, aged 42 Years, Weighs 160 pounds, Yellow Color, 5 feet 1 inch high, no particular marks, Emancipated by G Taylor a free man of Color her father who bought her from Moses Bledsoe Decd, recorded in the Spencer County Court Clerk’s office.” (Boyle County Order Book, Vol 2, 1850, p376).

Diadamia's emancipation document

- Deed of emancipation between Moses O. Bledsoe and Gibson Taylor, St. Louis, MO, 7 March 1836.
- Gibson Taylor, “a Free man of colour” paid \$700 on 11 April 1814 for his wife Cloe and their children: Jerome, Susan, Ann, James, Josephus, Gibeon, Diademia, Lucinda and William Henry.
- Document traces legal emancipation process from 1829 when Bledsoe began to 1836 when Diademia's emancipation was finalized.

Diadamia's
"Freedom
Papers"

Know all men by these presents that I Moses O. Bledsoe
of the County of Saint Louis and State of Missouri
for and in Consideration of the Sum of Seven hundred
Dollars to me in hand paid in pursuance of a certain
Contract now of record in the Clerk's office of the
County Court of Merion entered into on the eleventh
of April 1814 between myself and a certain
M. Gibson a free Man of Colour the husband of the
hereinafter named Bloe and the father of Jerome
Susan Ann James Josephus Gibson Diademia Lucinda
and William Henry the receipts of which said Sum
of Seven hundred Dollars is hereby acknowledged
Now I the said Moses O. Bledsoe do by these
presents forever set free and emancipate the said
Bloe and her said children to wit, Lauson Jerome
Diademia Lucinda Ann Jane Josephus Gibson
and William Henry and do hereby forever warrant
unto the said Bloe and her children as aforesaid

Transcript

Know all men by these presents that I Moses O Bledsoe of the county of Saint Louis and State of Missouri for and in consideration of the sum of Seven hundred Dollars to me in hand paid in pursuance of a certain contract now of record in the clerks office of the county court of Mercer entered into on the eleventh of April 1814 between myself and a certain Gibson a free man of colour the husband of the hereinafter named Cloe, and the father of Jerome Susan Ann James Josephus Gibeon Diademia Lucinda and William Henry the receipt of which said sum of Seven hundred Dollars is herby acknowledged Now I the said Moses O Bledsoe do by these presents forever set free and emancipate the said Cloe and her said children, to wit, Lawson Jerome Diademia Lucinda Ann Jane Josephus Gibeon and William Henry and do hereby forever warrant unto the said Cloe and her children as aforesaid that they shall go free and discharged from all and every kind of Slavery and Servitude by me or any one claiming by through or under me. In testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal this second day of February 1829 Moses O. Bledsoe State of Missouri County of Saint Louis etc.

Children

Dennis and Diadamia (Taylor) Doram's children were:

- 1—DORAM, George, born about 1833.
- 2—DORAM, Gideon or Gill J, born Jul 1833.
- 3—DORAM, Thomas Anderson, born 1835 (1850C) or 1837 (1860C).
- 4—DORAM, Jane, born 1839.
- 5—DORAM, James, born about 1841.
- 6—DORAM, Josephus, born about 1841.
- 7—DORAM, Mary A or Martha A, born 1843, died 1923; mar _____ ROWE.
- 8—DORAM, Joshua B, born 1845, Union soldier with Co. F, 114th USCT who fought in Petersburg campaign..
- 9—DORAM, Richard Cassius Clay, born 1847, Buffalo Soldier, at Ft Clarke, TX 1869.
- 10—DORAM, Diadanie E, born 1849; may have mar(1) 9 Nov 1876 Fenton GILL; mar(2) 20 Oct 1884 Lewis B SANGFORD; mar(3) 14 Jul 1886 Theodore Thomas SLAUGHTER.
- 11—DORAM, Sarah C, born 1853, died Danville 1927; mar(1) 2 Oct 1873 Mongo HANSFORD; prob mar(2) William PERKINS.
- 12—DORAM, Susan Bell, born 1857.

Doram Home Ownership

- Documented in both the Doram-Rowe Family Collection and the Boyle County records is deed for the purchase of a lot of land on “the Main” street in Danville, KY, by Dennis Doram on Feb. 1, 1836.
- Lot had a brick building on it and some outbuildings.
- Doram paid 1/3 of the cost up front and paid rest in installments over two years.
- If and how long family lived there unknown as the Dorams continued to purchase town lots.
- Includes a house on 3rd St that still stands today (now 233 Martin Luther King Blvd.) and land with a house on Stanford turnpike, 1854.

Land and Prosperity

- By the 1840's, Dorams prospered like few African Americans in the slave states.
- Accumulated several thousand dollars in bank and possessed hundreds of acres land.
- Portraits illustrate unique social position they had attained.
- Images of African Americans in the antebellum period are very rare (Talbot).
- Between 1837 and 1860 they purchased over 300 acres of land, most along the Dix River in Boyle County.
- One of the first of these purchases was made from an heir of General Thomas Barbee, Dennis's previous owner.

Land and Prosperity

- General Barbee's nephew, Thomas Barbee, sold Dorams about six acres of land 10 years after General Barbee's will freed Dennis.
- Although purchased from different owners, land lots are adjacent to each other.
- Although Doram's were the wealthiest free blacks in Boyle County they still owned only about 1/5th of the amount of land compared to largest white land owner.
- The 1860, county tax records show Doram's property valued at \$10,800.
- Included farm land, four town lots, eight horses, thirty cattle, thirty hogs, one goat, one bull and one slave.

Successful Businesses

- Land was most likely used to raise a variety of crops, including hemp.
- Family stories indicate that Doram also ran a rope factory and a hemp business.
- Account receipt, 1840, lists rope and cord sold to D. Yeiser from 1835-1839.
- One of Doram's sons and a brother listed in 1860 Census as "rope spinner."
- In same year Dennis listed as "farmer."

Willis Russell, Educator

An 1851 paid receipt in written by Willis Russell proves Doram children were educated.

Dennis Doram to W. Russell 1851
Sept 17th to tuition of 4 children one session
of sixteen weeks at \$5.00 each — 20.00
from 28th July to tuition of 2 boys 7 weeks at same rate 4.25
August 18th by cash — 10.00
Received payment in full Sept 25th 1851
W. Russell

The Doram Children

- Dennis and Diadamia's daughter, Sarah, attended Berea College in the 1870s
- (Thanks to Sharyn Mitchell for these)

[illegible][illegible]

The Doram Children

- The family treasured education for daughters as well as sons.
- Gil J Doram's daughter also attended Berea College.

18	Mary S. Doram S. H.	S. J. Doram	Gram. Sch. "B." Auth. B. Gram. B. Geog. Rad. Spelling Penmanship	66 74 96 70 a 74 70 64 100 99 90 88 80 72 74 a 98 100 70 99 95 89 40 27 48 58 a 88 90 58 0 82 90	71 66 71.1 85 94 86.6 77 93 74.8
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- Grandson Thomas Madison Doram, earned a doctorate in veterinary medicine, only second African-American to do so in the United States.
- Joshua and older brother Thomas both joined 114th USCT.

Joshua and Thomas Doram

- Brothers joined Army together, as was common at the time, mustering at Camp Nelson .
- Participated in the Siege of Petersburg and Appomattox Campaign, and was in Appomattox, VA, when Lee surrendered.
- Both brothers returned home and started businesses.
- Joshua became barber and later ran grocery on 2nd Street, may have had a side business as well.
- According to the Semi-weekly *Interior Journal* of Stanford, Joshua accused of selling alcohol on several occasions in the dry county of Boyle.
- After the war, Dennis Doram loaned Thomas money to buy a farm.
- Tax records and newspaper accounts indicate Thomas was raising horses.
- Still buying horses in the 1880s and is listed in the 1895 Wallace's American Trotting Registry.
- Thomas sold farm at age 65 in 1902.

Robert and Susan Doram

- Robert Cassius Clay Doram was Buffalo soldier.
- Enlisted 1868, left service 1879 due to disability.
- Family Collection includes three letters he wrote home.
- Military records list his occupation as a mason, yet he is not listed in business or census records after 1870.
- Information on all 12 children has not yet been found, but pieces of information help tell story.
- Stanford *Interior Journal* reports dispute regarding Susan Doram's rock quarry in 1898, 10 years after she had her maiden name restored by county court.

Social Standing

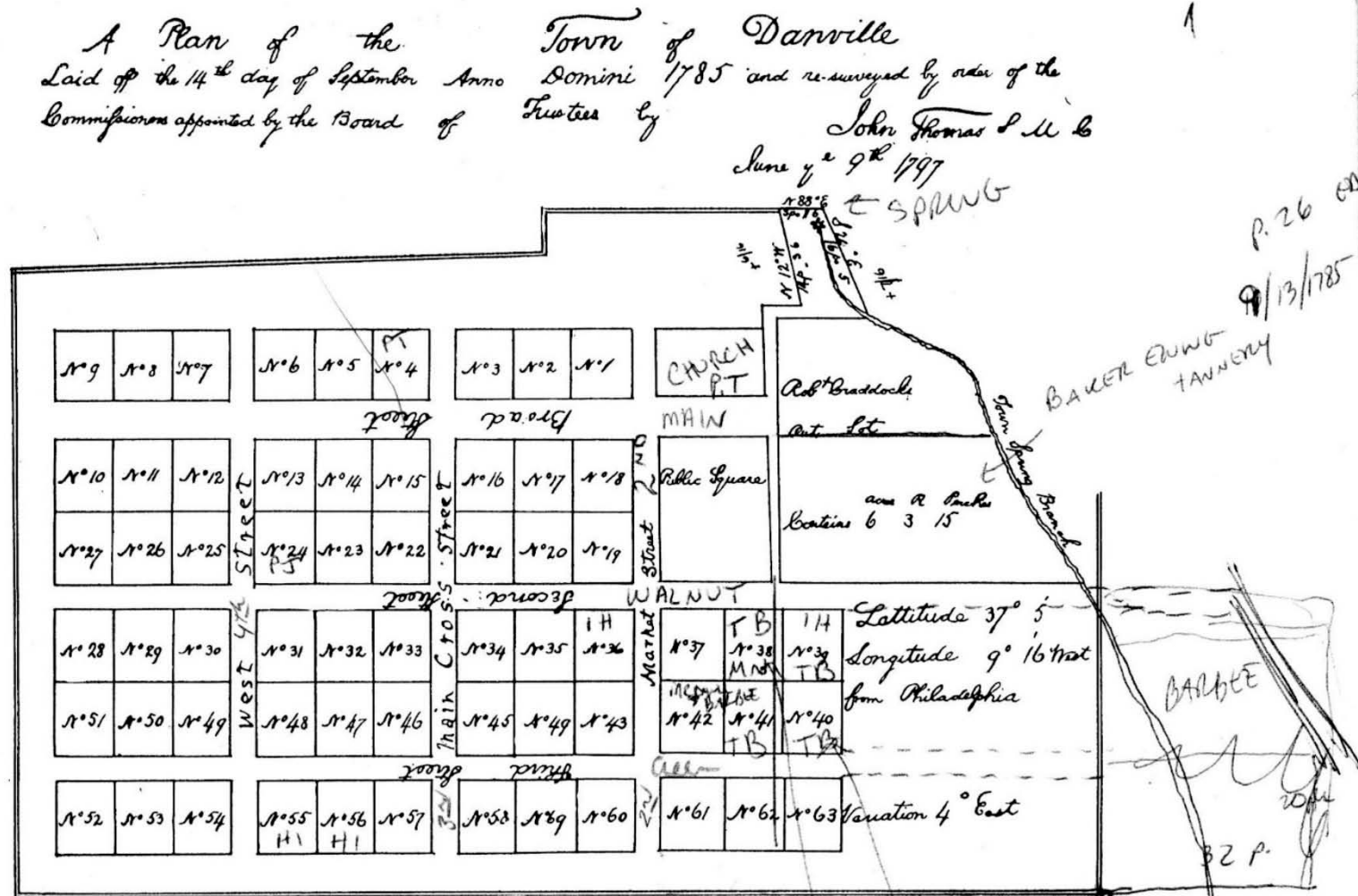
- Their roles as free blacks who were land owners speak both to their reputation and their ability to build relationships outside the African American community.
- There is one indication that Dennis Doram was not well regarded by everyone.
- In 1850, Fred Visschon refused to allow Dennis to purchase his land which was going up for auction, Visschon apparently upset that Doram was purchasing so much land.
- Doram paid another person's debt on at least two occasions.
- Elijah Irvine of the 114th USCT sent Doram \$80 to give to his wife, Sophia, requested that Dennis open a bank account for Sophia and approve how she spent that money.

Social Standing

- An indicator of social status in pre-Civil War Kentucky was slave ownership, and Dennis Doram did own slaves.
- There is no documentation in the Collection that indicates ownership of slaves.
- Records show that Doram was a slave owner, in 1846, freed Mary, about 25 years old.
- In 1847, he freed a woman named Lydia.
- The 1860 Slave Schedule lists him as owning one male slave aged 56 and that there was one “slave dwelling” on his property.
- Helped start a school for the higher education of African Americans.
- Several African Americans, lead in part by his son Gibeon, created schools for newly freed slaves.
- He was also a delegate of the First Convention of Colored Men of Kentucky.
- Organization created 1866 to advance rights of African Americans in Kentucky.

Plat of Danville, 1785

Plat of Danville showing area where Dorams purchased much land (Notes by Mary Ashby, Boyle County Public Library)



More Doram-Russell Info

When early Danville schoolmaster, Willis Russell, died, Dennis Doram served as the executor of his estate. Doram had sold land to Russell in 1847.

Deed Book 2, page 280: 22 April 1847: Dennis Doram to Willis Russell

[Description of Land: being situate in the town of Danville on the Stanford Turnpike Street, bounded as follows beginning at the Turnpike road west of said road at a stake corner to Eliza Hughes the lot herin conveyed whence $_89$ W 3 chains $81/100$ chains to a stake to Eliza Hughes or Prons south west corner to the meadow or spring lot of Dennis Doram, thence dr W $2\ 66/100$ chains to the corner of Dennis' land the corner of Dr. J. Weisiger, thence E $5\ 11/100$ chains to a stake thence N $91/100$ chains to a stake thence E $11/100$ chains to the turnpike road then with said road N 50 W $2\ 78/100$ chains to the beginning, being part of the ground purchased by said Doram of Col. Thomas Barbee same on which said Russell now resides, containing one acre. . .]

As Administrator of Willis Russell Deed I would report to the Boyle County Court: that nothing has ever come to my hands as such and I have therefore no effect to make a settlement of with County Court Aug 15th 1853.

Dennis Doram

*Signed of Notary
Boyle County Ky. Oct.*

Diadamia (Taylor) Doram

- Because Dennis was responsible for most legal transactions, there is little evidence about her character.
- She listed as wife in only one deed.
- Freedman's Bank record, 1873, gives some information, but nothing of her character.
- Obituary, 1883, describes Diadamia as "a very worthy woman" and "a devoted member of the Methodist Church for over fifty years."
- Diadamia's obituary is recorded in the Kentucky Advocate 7 December 1883.

WILLIAM EMBRY, of color, lays claim as the champion turkey picker. At Handman's pen, in this city, he picked in 8 hours 45 minutes 88 turkeys,—which it is claimed is the best record of the season.

DIADAMIA DORAM, the venerable widow of the late Dennis Doram, one of our well-known colored citizen, died suddenly last Monday. . . . Orange Tinsly, a well-known and highly respected colored man, died on Wednesday last, at an advanced age. Death is making sad havoc with the old colored people of Danville,—quite a number having passed away within this year.

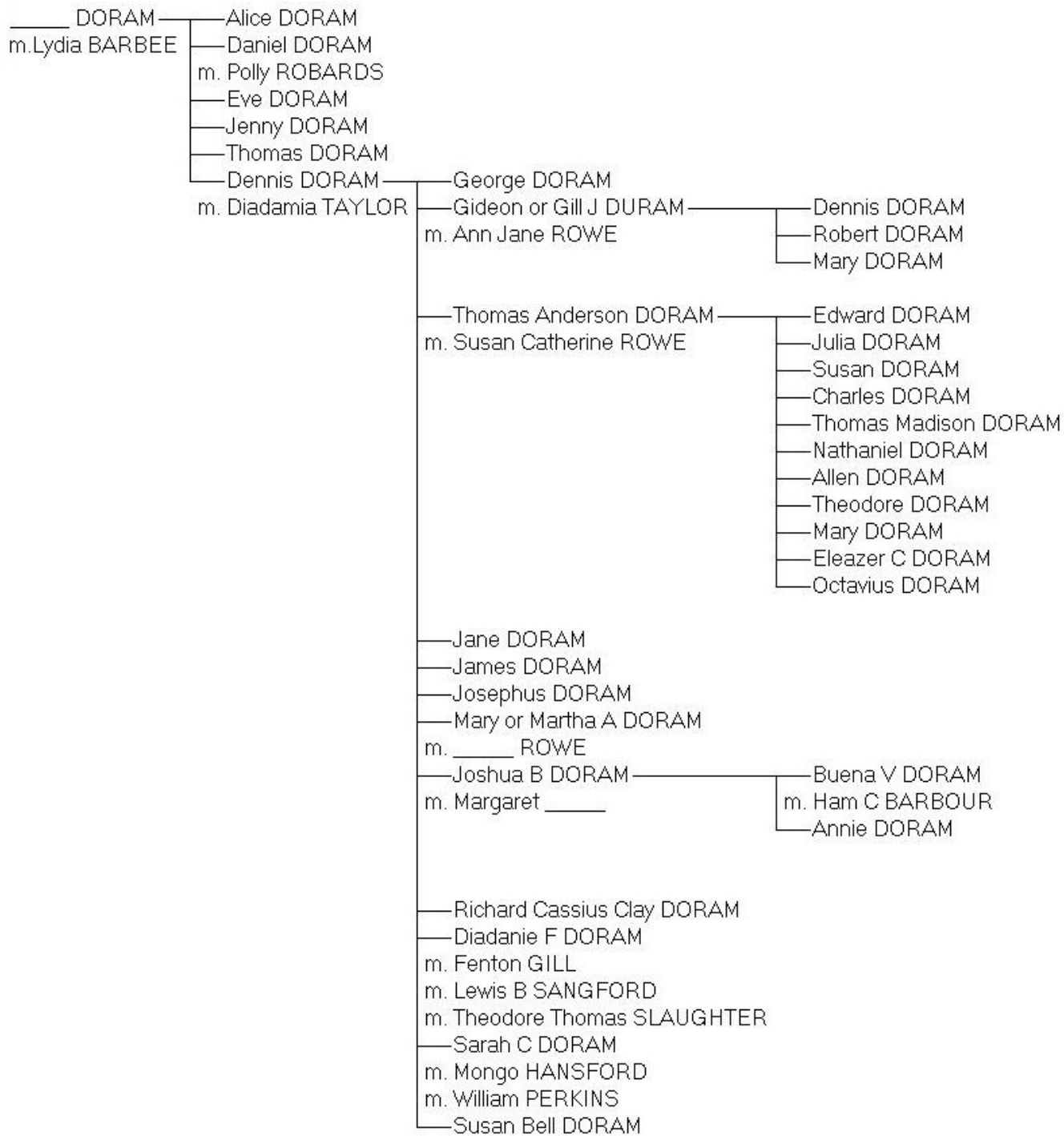
Pieces of the American Dream

- In March of 1866 Doram served on the finance committee for the First Convention of Colored Men of Kentucky.
- He and the committee drafted a very strong and intelligent statement of intentions and a number of proclamations at this meeting.
- The following is a short excerpt of one such statement:

"We are native and to the manner born; we are part and parcel of the Great American body politic; we love our country and her institutions; we are proud of her greatness and glory in her might; we are intensely American, allied to the free institutions of our country by sacrifices, the deaths and the slumbering ashes of our sons and our fathers, whose patriotism, whose daring and devotion, led them to pledge their lives, the property and their sacred honor, to the maintenance of her freedom, and the majesty of her laws. Here we are intended to remain, and while we seek to cultivate all of those virtues that shall distinguish us as good and useful citizens, our destiny shall be that of earnest and faithful Americans, and we recognize no principle, we allow no doctrine that would make our destiny, other, than the destiny of our native land and fellow countrymen."

Dennis Doram died on 18 October 1869.

Doram Descendants



Charles and Octavius Doram

Denver Post, Monday, April 5, 1904

BEARS BRAND OF CAIN

Octavius Doram Shot and Killed His Brother Charles.

ACTED AS A SELF-DEFENSE

Charles Doram was attacking the brother with an iron pipe when Octavius shot him.

Charles Doram was attacked by his brother Octavius Doram, who was armed with an iron pipe.

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FLOODS SWEEP KANSAS

Heavy Rains Send All Streams Out of Banks.

People Driven From Homes and Abandoned Homes—Many River Bridges Destroyed.

Manassah, Kan., April 28.—Heavy rains have been falling in this section of the state since last night.

The danger to the people is not only from the water, but from the mud which is being washed down the hillsides.

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LATEST PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN ALONG MOFFAT RAILWAY

ONE OF THE NEW HOGE ENGINES COMING OUT OF TUNNEL 16 ON

THE DENVER & NORTHWESTERN LINE

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PAUL ROBISON OF NEW YORK KIDNAPED

PAID \$15,000 BOND

NEW YORK, April 28.—Paul Robison, a well-known actor, was kidnapped by a gang of men in New York city.

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ONE WAY COLONIST RATES

TO SAN FRANCISCO

LOS ANGELES

LIBERAL STOP OVERTS

OVERLAND LIMITED

A MONTHLY TRIP OF PULMAN CARS

ELECTRIC LIGHTS, LIBRARY CAR, HANDBAGGAGE AND BATH.

E. R. GRIFFIN, Gen'l Agent, 941 Seventeenth St., Denver

TO SAN FRANCISCO

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TO SAN FRANCISCO

LOS ANGELES

LIBERAL STOP OVERTS

OVERLAND LIMITED

LOUBET HAS GREAT TIME

France's President in Rome—Papa May Protest.

Rome, April 28.—President Loubet of France has spent a very pleasant day in Rome.

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Don't allow the dealer to hand you a cheap substitute when you ask for



It has no substitute in value. Saves time, labor, health. Put up in the only sitting top can.

P. C. TOMSON & CO., Manufacturers Philadelphia, Pa.

ENGLEWOOD SERVICE

Do You Know What That Means?

Leaving Denver at 3:10 a. m. and arriving in Chicago at 5:30 a. m. in the morning. It is the only service of the kind in the world.

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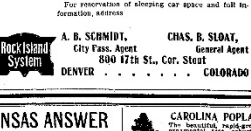
Victor Photographs, 1010 Broadway, New York.

Victor Photographs, 1010 Broadway, New York.



Rock Island System, Chicago, Ill.

Rock Island System, Chicago, Ill.



Lea & Perrin's Sauce, San Francisco, Cal.

Lea & Perrin's Sauce, San Francisco, Cal.

McPhee & McGinnity Co.

Manufacturers of Musical and Piano Pianos and other musical instruments.

KANSAS ANSWER TO COLORADO

Attorneys in Arkansas River Case in Way Back.

LEA & PERRIN'S SAUCE

San Francisco, Cal.

BEARS BRAND OF CAIN

Octavius Doram Shot and Killed His Brother Charles

ACTED ONLY IN SELF-DEFENSE

Charles Doram Was Attacking His Brother With an Immense Knife When Latter Emptied His Revolver at Him.

Attacked with an enormous knife, Octavius Doram, shot and killed his brother Charles, yesterday in the alley in the rear of Edward Lewin's Louisville liquor house, at 2400 Larimer street. Both men are negroes. The stories of all the witnesses to the killing exonerate the fratricide. Witnesses say that he was trying to leave the place and keep away from his brother when attacked.

The shooting was the culmination of a feud of long standing. Charles Doram, the man who was killed, was about 40 years old, and had lived in Denver for twelve years or more. Two of his brothers, who came out later from Kentucky, formerly lived with Charles and his wife, but because of a quarrel they were ordered to leave, and for a year Charles has not spoken to them.

The cause of this disagreement was the violent abuse Charles heaped upon his wife, and from which the other brothers tried to protect her. Charles drank heavily, and always when in liquor vented his ill nature on his wife. Once, just three days before a child was born to them, he attacked her with a knife and cut her badly. He threatened to kill her, and always abused her violently.

Charles Doram Ill-Tempered.

"If he had got what he deserved he would have been in the penitentiary long ago, and I wouldn't have had to shoot him and be in this trouble," said the prisoner this morning.

Yesterday Charles Doram was drinking, as usual, and was in the bar of Lewin's saloon at Twenty-fourth and Larimer streets when Octavius entered by the rear door. Octavius, who is only 21 years old, is very moderate in his drinking. He walked into the saloon and saw his brother standing at the bar. He turned at once to go out the back way as he had come, knowing that if Charles were drinking there would be trouble if he remained. He went out, but just outside the door he was overtaken by John Perry, a well-meaning friend who had determined to make peace between the brothers. He had heard some slurring remark made by Charles, and had hurried out to stop Octavius and try to make peace.

"Say, I'm sorry to see bad blood between you and Charley," said Perry, as he stopped the younger brother. "You're both friends of mine, and I don't want to see any trouble between you."

"There's not going to be any trouble. You see me going away from here, don't you?" said Octavius. He had turned back from the bar without ordering his beer when he saw his brother, and had only stopped in a rear room to weigh himself.

"There won't be any trouble, because I keep away from him," he went on to say, "but he is always bullying me and trying to make a fuss."

Had an Open Knife.

Charles, who had started to follow his brother out, heard the last works, and ran up, declaring with an oath: "Yes, and I'll bully you some more." He drew a long knife from his overcoat pocket as he spoke. The knife had been open in his pocket. Perry stepped between the brothers to keep them apart, but Charles made a movement as if to pass around him, and Octavius drew his revolver and began shooting. He fired five times, two of the bullets striking home, and Charles fell to the ground.

The police surgeon was called and Charles was taken to the county hospital, but the surgeons there gave little hope for his recovery, and he died this morning. He had been shot in the left breast and in the neck.

Octavius, carrying the empty revolver in his hand, was arrested a few moments later by Detectives Green and Carr. He made no resistance, and merely said that he had been forced to shoot to protect himself.

"That boy comes from my old home, Danville, Ky." Said Detective Sanders this morning. "There is not a family in Kentucky that has better credit at the banks and business houses than the Dorams. They have lots of money, and they have the respect of all people, black and white. This Octavius has always been a good boy. Charley was good, too, till he got out here and got to drinking so much."

Young Doram is a plasterer and has worked for one firm for three years. He has never been in trouble before.

Dr Thomas Madison Doram

- Only the second African American to receive diploma from a US veterinary college
- Born Danville, where parents owned much farm land
- Father a carpenter, Thomas worked with him at that trade
- After finishing school 1892, entered Eckstein North University, Cane Spring, KY (p539)
- When college building burned his carpenter skills helped rebuild
- 1896, entered McKillip Veterinary College, Chicago
- First year, led his class in materia medica; second year, led class in pharmacy; third year, was senior instructor of his class
- Graduated 1899, moved to Evanston, IL

Dr. Thomas Madison Doram's Family



This is the family of Dr. Thomas Madison and Bertha Hancock Doram. They were: front row, from left to right, Glenna and Ralph; second row, Loretta, Thomas Madison Doram, Roy, Bertha Hancock Doram, and Dorothy; and third row, Roscoe, James, Madison, Arthur, Hugh and Ruth.

Some Answers, More Questions

- The portraits of Dennis and Diadamia Doram illustrate one family's quest for the American Dream.
- Not all pieces are there, and what is there prompts questions about African Americans owning slaves, rights of free blacks in pre-Civil War Kentucky, and 19th century commerce.
- At KHS, the portraits are used to ask these questions.
- They also serve as reminders that there are entire generations of African American families that have little or no documentation to reveal their story.

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