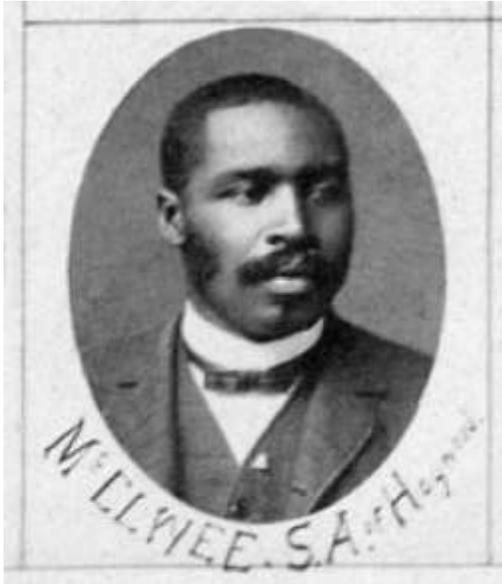


Haywood County Representation at The 1884 TN Convention of Black Men

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A convention of Tennessee African American men met February 29 thru March 2, 1884 at the State Capitol in Nashville. The convention call was issued Christmas Eve 1883. The purpose of the statewide meeting was to consider steps to take to promote the moral, educational, industrial and political advancement of black people. Specifically, the convention was concerned with securing federal aid for education, equal privilege to the jury box in Tennessee courts and the equitable distribution and protection of civil and political rights.

The Honorable J. C. Napier of Nashville called the convention to order. Representing West TN on the credentials committee was Samuel A. McElwee from Haywood County, C. H. Phillips from Madison County and J. Thomas Turner from Shelby County.

Three hundred twenty-four (324) Tennesseans attended the convention as delegates. Many more attended as observers, including many women. There were 49 delegates from Haywood County, the third largest contingent, surpassed only by Shelby with 62 and Davidson County with 52. Delegates came from 17 Tennessee counties. Unfortunately, the names of the other 48 men from Haywood County have yet to be found.

The Honorable Samuel A. McElwee spoke to the convention on Saturday, March 1, 1884. His speech focused on the trampled rights, insults and outrages experienced by black Tennesseans. During the day's sessions, Ed Shaw from Memphis noted that the Republican Party was okay with black men running for county magistrate or letter carrier but reserved the big offices and control of the schools for white republicans.

Delegates P. F. Hill, J. Thomas Turner and E. W. Mosely introduced a resolution censoring Nashville and its Mayor Phillips for vetoing a resolution asking for the appointment of black men to the police force.