

Ralph Ellison

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Bukley, William

The first Negro principal of a New York City school was W.L. Bukley, who for a time had charge of Public School No. 80. A native of North Carolina, ⁽¹⁾ Dr. Bukley received his Ph.D. from Syracuse University in 1893 and studied later at Strassburgh and Paris. ⁽²⁾ For fifteen years Dr. Bukley taught Latin and Greek at Calvin University, ⁽³⁾ Orangeburgh, South Carolina. Dr. Bukley's first teaching engagement in the State of New York came in 1890 when he taught in the public school system of Brooklyn, where he remained until the consolidation of 1898. Upon consolidation, Dr. Bukley was made principal of Public School 80, a "problem" school in the borough of Manhattan which was attended ⁽⁴⁾ by pupils of both races.

As a reward for his work at P.S. 80, Dr. Bukley was given a school downtown on the lower East Side. But here Dr. Bukley seems to have lost his identity as a Negro and little is known of him from ⁽⁵⁾ that point on. It is known, however, that he retired sometime before the outbreak of the World War and made his home in France. Following the outbreak of the War, he and his family returned to this country. After the end of the war the family returned to France where Dr. Bukley ⁽⁶⁾ established a private school at Nice. He died there in 1934.

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FOOTNOTES

1. Robert S, Dixon Education of the Negro in the City of New York, 1853 to 1900. M.S. Master thesis in Education, 1935.
2. From the magazine "Charities" issue of Oct., 1905. Schumburgh Collection, 135th Street Library.
3. ibid.
4. Interview with Miss Gertrude Ayers, New York school principal.
5. ibid.
6. Files of New York Amsterdam News .