

This was written by Mrs.
Hillie Lee Gay on 9-12-93
Benjamin Jesse Covington,
M. D., 1871-1961

Benjamin J. Covington dedicated his life to improving mankind. He was a teacher, physician, musician, businessman, fraternal brother, religious leader, civic worker and other affairs in relationship to the general welfare of the people.

Benjamin J. Covington's life began in the sixth year of freedom on a farm near Marble, Texas in Falls County. His family home burned and the Bible with his birthdate, as well as family history was destroyed. ^{Therefore, there are discrepancies in the birthdate.}

At the age of eight years old, he was operating farm machinery drawn by oxen, horses and/or mules. He planted cotton, chopped cotton, milked cows and took a keen interest in the welfare of farm animals. Since he had a "knack" for working with farm animals, he was the one called in for emergency ^{to be a doctor} ~~work~~ ^{cases} at cases. This was an indication

The rudiments of his education began in the local school near

Marlin, Texas. Thereafter, he entered the Hearne Baptist Academy,

so pay for his schooling, he became the bell ringer for all occasions and the janitor for six years.

The Houston Post, March 12, 1961, p. 2, Section 1.

He graduated from the academy on June 3, 1892 with a B. P. degree. After which, he taught for a year in a country school near Marlin. Realizing that he could not advance professionally in a small town, Benjamin came to Houston, August 7, 1894 to work as a bookkeeper for a half-brother.

The Houston Post, p. 5.

By 1895, he was back in school as a student at Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee.

With a burning desire to enter the medical field, he only had \$150.00 in hand for his tuition. Once again he swept floors and worked his way through college. Benjamin graduated

on February 21, 1900. When he graduated, there was not more than twenty (20)

"Negro Physicians in the State - namely, Austin, two; Waco, one; Fort Worth, one; Greenville, one; San Antonio, one; Galveston, two; Victoria, one and Houston, seven." (J. A. Chatman, The Lone Star Medical Dental & Pharmaceutical History, 1919-1920 (Galveston: Myers Yearbooks), p. 86.)

Before graduation Benjamin had spent a few months on a temporary permit to practice medicine in W. Harton, Texas. Therefore, he decided to begin his practice there. However, he found little encouragement

to remain there. Shortly, Benjamin moved to Yoakum where he was needed and received favorably.

Being a pioneer black doctor, he was often called upon to speak at various functions held at black institutions. One of the speaking engagements was at Gaudalupes College in Seguin, Texas where he met the charming Jennie Belle Murphy (1881-1962) they were married on September 30, 1902. ^{(2) still}

Benjamin continued to work in Yoakum, however, the following year, on June 18, 1903, he brought his young wife to Houston. ^{(1) still} The Covingtons moved to 1904 Emma Street where their only child, Ernestine Jessie Covington, was born on May 19. ^{(3) (X)} [Anne Lundy, "Conversation with Ernestine Jessie Covington Dent," The Black Perspective in Music, p. 244] I corrected it on paper. Her name is spelled Jessie.

Mrs. Dent said they lived at 1220 Emma -

Jessie

Ernestine Jesse became a concert pianist having been exposed to the playing of the piano by both parents. She received her education in the Houston Public Schools and at Oberlin College. Jesse, as she was called, was awarded a fellowship as the first African-American scholar at the famed Juilliard School