

Walls, William Jacob ^[1]

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by Grady L. E. Carroll, 1994

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8 May 1885–23 Apr. 1975



"Bishop William Jacob Walls [1885-1975]. "
Image courtesy of

William Jacob Walls, Methodist clergyman, editor, and author, was born at [Chimney Rock](#) ^[3], the son of Edward and Mattie Edgerton Walls. He received his early education in the [Asheville](#) ^[4] public schools and the Allen Industrial School in Asheville. Shortly before his fourteenth birthday he was ordained to the [African Methodist Episcopal Zion](#) ^[5] ministry at the church's [Hopkins Chapel in Asheville](#) ^[6]. From [Livingstone College](#) ^[7] in Salisbury he received an A.B. degree in 1908, a B.D. degree in 1915, and a D.D. degree in 1918. In 1922 he studied philosophy and journalism at [Columbia University](#) ^[8] and Bible history at [Union Theological Seminary in New York](#) ^[9]. He earned an M.A. degree at the [University of Chicago](#) ^[10] in 1941.

Walls served in the pastoral ministry at Cleveland in [Rowan County](#) ^[11] (1905–7), Lincolnton (1908–10), and Salisbury (1910–13). While officiating in Louisville, Ky., between 1913 and 1920, he built [Broadway Temple](#). Back in North Carolina between 1920 and 1924 he was at Charlotte as editor of the *Star of Zion*, the official organ of the [African Methodist Episcopal](#) ^[12] church. In Indianapolis in 1924 he was elected bishop and served as senior bishop from 1951 to 1968.

He was fraternal messenger to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in Atlanta (1918); a delegate to the [Ecumenical Methodist Conference in London, England \(1921\)](#) ^[13]; a fraternal delegate to the [General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal church in Kansas City \(1928\)](#) ^[14]; a delegate to the Ecumenical Methodist Conference, in Atlanta, where he made the only address by a member of his race (1936); a delegate to the [Twelfth World Sunday School Convention, at Oslo, Norway](#), ^[15] where he delivered an address on "Christianity: The Unturned Key" (1936); and a member of the president and War Secretary's Clergymen's Commission to occupied countries in Europe (1947). He also was a delegate to the [World Council of Churches](#) ^[16] in Amsterdam (1948), Evanston (1954), New Delhi (1961), and Uppsala (1968).

Walls was the author of *Wisdom for the Times*, *What Youth Wants*, *The Negro in Business and Religion*, *Joseph Charles Price: Education and Race Leader*, *The Romance of a College*, *The Dreams of Youth*, *Living Essentials of Methodism*, *Harriet Tubman*, and *The African Methodist Episcopal Church: Reality of the Black Church*.

During the period 1941–73 he was chairman of the trustees of Livingstone College and of the Harriet Tubman Foundation; vice-president of the [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People](#) ^[17]; and a member of the World Sunday School Association, National Council of Churches of Christ in America, and American Bible Society (advisory council, 1941–70). He was also a member of the American Academy of Political Science, Phi Beta Sigma, the [Masonic Order](#) ^[18], the Odd Fellows, and the Elks.

On 6 Dec. 1956 he married Dorothy L. Jordan. In 1958 he founded Camp Dorothy Walls in Black Mountain. At the time of his death his home and office were in Yonkers, N.Y. Interment was in a family crypt in Lincoln Cemetery, Chicago. Portraits of him are in the Walls Center, Hood Theological Seminary Building, Salisbury; Heritage Building, Livingstone College; and administration building, Camp Dorothy Walls.

References:

Emory S. Bucke, ed., *The History of American Methodism*, vol. 3 (1964)

Bishop Herbert Bell Shaw (Wilmington), personal contact, 4 Jan. 1976

Mrs. Dorothy J. Walls (Yonkers, N.Y.), personal contact, 20 Jan. 1976; William J. Walls, *Joseph Charles Price* (1943, biographical data on dust jacket)

Who's Who in America, 1974–1975 (1974)

Who's Who in Colored America, 1838–1940 (1940)

Additional Resources:

UNC Asheville, Bishop William Jacob Walls: http://toto.lib.unca.edu/findingaids/mss/blackhigh/biography/walls_w.html [19]

Syracuse State University Library, Archives: William Jacob Walls: http://library.syr.edu/digital/guides/w/walls_wj.htm [20]

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