

Dora A. Burton Rice

Frist African American Dayton Policewoman



MRS. DORA BURTON RICE.

Newspaper headlines for Dora Rice at the time of her death read “Widow of Slain Detective, Dies.” While the statement is true, this headline certainly was not the only notable fact of Dora Rice’s life. Her life was filled with social engagements, social work and the poetry of Paul Laurence Dunbar.

Dora Rice was born Dora Burton in Dayton in 1880, the daughter of Robert Burton and niece of Matilda Dunbar. She and Paul Laurence Dunbar were first cousins. Dora’s ancestors arrived in Dayton in the 1840s and were brought here out of slavery by the Steele family. Dora’s great grandmother bought the house on Howard Street where Paul Laurence Dunbar was to be born in 1872.

Nearing the end of his life, Paul Laurence Dunbar lived in the home of Dora during his last illness and there he composed two of his poems, “The Turning of the Children in the Bed” and “Howdy, Honey, Howdy, Won’t You Step Right In.” The latter was written for Dora as Paul would invite her into his room with the greeting, “Howdy, honey, howdy, won’t you step right in.”

In 1909, Dora Burton married Dayton Police Patrolman Lucius J. Rice. Reverend DeSoto E. Bass of the Wesleyan Methodist Church performed the wedding ceremony where more than 100 people were in attendance.

Socially and civically, Mrs. Rice was one of the first two women police officers in the city of Dayton and the first African American policewoman serving from 1922 to 1939. She was chairman of the committee of management of the Fifth Street Y.W.C.A. from 1918 until 1923. For 20 years she was treasurer of the Wesleyan Methodist Church and was organist at the same church for 16 years. She was also affiliated with the Tracteurs Club, the Una Voce Club and the Twenty-one Club. She was a founder and member of the committee of management of the West Side day nursery and held membership in the Eastern Star. Her friends included the Wilson girls, the Finley girls, Robert H. Mallory, Capt. J. E. Deaton and Dr. William “Bud” Burns.

On October 5, 1939, Dora’s husband of 30 years died from gunshot wounds inflicted by a murder suspect he was tracking in a home on College Street. Not only was Lucius a veteran policeman, he was a business man and a property owner. After moving to Dayton as a young man, he established a restaurant near Fifth and Ludlow streets and it was there in idle moments that he studied for the police force.

Mr. Rice was also socially active and was a trustee of Zion Baptist Church, a 32<sup>nd</sup> degree Mason and for three years headed the management committee for the Fifth Street Y.W.C.A. He was the owner of the Rice apartment building on Dunbar Avenue, and several residences near his own home on East Fifth Street. At the time of his death, he was the leading candidate for appointment as supervisor of the newly constructed DeSoto Bass Housing Project.

Dora A. Burton Rice died at her longtime home, 1608 East Fifth Street, on March 26, 1940. She was preceded in death by her husband Detective Sergeant Lucius J. Rice on October 5, 1939. Members of the Police Women’s Bureau served as honorary pallbearers for Mrs. Rice. She and her husband rest peacefully in Section 95 Lot 3554.



Cousins  
Dora Burton Rice and Paul Laurence Dunbar

Kendell Thompson, Superintendent of [Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park](#), sent this photo to Woodland Marketing Manager, Angie Hoschouer with the following statement, "I'm sure most of you have seen the photo of Dunbar sitting in the grass at the Dunbar House with a young woman, but we've never known definitively who she was. Some captions have said that she is a friend and others have misidentified her as Alice (Paul's wife). One of the curators I am working with from the National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center, Hadley Drodge, found the mystery woman. Her name is Dora Burton Rice and she is one of Dunbar's cousins. Her father, Robert Burton, was Matilda's brother."

It is this photo that prompted the writing of this week's Woodland Minute.



Lucius and Dora Rice



The Rice Family  
Lucius, Dora, Robert and Lillian



Dora and Lucius Rice



1608 East Fifth Street  
Home of the Burton and Rice  
Family's



Dora Burton Rice  
1880 - 1940  
Section 95 Lot 3554



Lucius J. Rice  
1876 - 1939  
Section 95 Lot 3554



## Dayton Walk of Fame Inductees

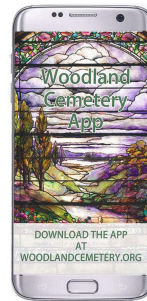
Both Lucius and Dora Rice  
were inducted to the  
Dayton Region Walk of Fame  
in 2018.

To see their induction video, [click here](#).

Guided walking tours are now available and registration is open for all tours and events. Woodland does have many hills and valleys so if walking is not your thing, you can take a virtual tour from the comfort of your couch by visiting our website at: [woodlandcemetery.org/tours](http://woodlandcemetery.org/tours).

From your phone you will be prompted to download our app. Take one of 12 walking tours we have available for your enjoyment at the cemetery. If you are on your desktop, laptop or tablet, you can take the tour right from the tour page. We will be adding more tours so come back often to learn about the men and women who made it Great in Dayton.

[Download the mobile app for your phone by clicking here.](#)



Memories of a loved one should last for generations.

Using our app, you can:

- Navigate to your relative or friend's grave using our GPS-based system
- Share stories about your family
- Upload photos and videos
- Share memories with your family on Facebook

Your loved one's memorial page is automatically created when you make cemetery arrangements with our office. You may also share and upload information by using our burial database via our website ([woodlandcemetery.org](http://woodlandcemetery.org)). (please contact our office if you need assistance)

WOODLAND  
HISTORIC CEMETERY & ARBORETUM

## THANK YOU for supporting us through our 180th Anniversary!



We hope you will continue to support the Woodland Arboretum Foundation as we move through 2022. Support of the Chapel restoration and preservation project is our most critical need as you will soon see the outside of the Chapel and Administration Building receiving new sandstone pieces and eroding and disintegrating elements replaced. Once the stonework is complete, the beloved Tiffany windows will return and be put back in place. The Tiffany mosaic floor will be restored and the beautiful interior woodwork will also receive a facelift. We are hopeful to open the doors to the public once again in late 2022.

Please consider making a first time donation or an annual donation to the Chapel Fund. Donate on our secure website by clicking below or click on the check to receive a donation form to mail in.

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