



SINCE 1841

WOODLAND

HISTORIC CEMETERY & ARBORETUM



Champion, Athlete, & Coach

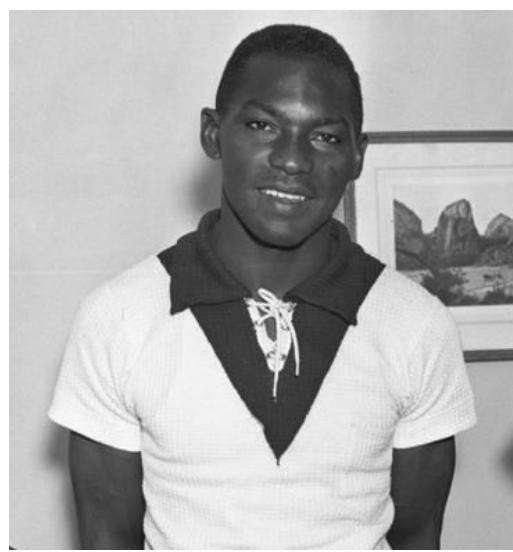
Adolf Hitler had big plans for the 1936 summer Olympics. Held in Berlin, the Olympic Games were intended to showcase the superiority of Hitler's Nazi Aryan race. Instead, Jesse "the Buckeye Bullet" Owens' outstanding athletic achievements earned him four gold medals and captured the world's attention.

But Jesse Owens wasn't alone—there were 18 Black athletes representing the United States at the Olympic Games that year. One of those courageous young people was David D. Albritton, who had been a teammate of Owens' ever since their high school days.

David Albritton was born April 13, 1913 in Danville, Alabama to Peter and Josephine Albritton. Five months later, Jesse Owens was born in neighboring Lawrence County. In the 1920's, the Albritton and Owens families both moved to Cleveland, Ohio—part of the Great Migration of Black Americans from the South to the East and Midwest.

In Cleveland, David Albritton tried out for the track team at East Technical High School, where he met Jesse Owens. They both graduated in 1934 and attended the Ohio State University, where both young men joined the track team.

It wasn't easy. Racist policies meant that Albritton & Owens were often separated from their white teammates; while on the road, they were forced to order carryout or eat in segregated restaurants, and had to stay in Black-only hotels. Despite this treatment, David Albritton's reputation as a high jumper to watch out for grew.



Above: David Albritton, just before the 1936 Olympics. Image courtesy the [National Underground Railroad Freedom Center](#).



Above: David Albritton (center), with teammate Jesse Owens (left) & a German citizen at the 1936 Olympics. Image from the [US Holocaust Memorial Museum](#), courtesy of Rosemarie Stone.

In 1936, as a college sophomore, Albritton went to New York for the Olympic tryouts; one of the first U.S. Olympic Committee-sanctioned events to draw a large number of Black Olympic hopefuls.

On their first try, David Albritton & future teammate Cornelius Johnson cleared the initial height of 6 feet, 6 inches. The bar was raised to 6 feet, 8 inches; again both jumpers cleared the bar. Then, the bar was moved up again—to one inch above the world record height—an intimidating 6 feet, 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches above the ground.

Both men failed to clear it on their first attempts. Johnson made a clean jump on his second try. Albritton belly rolled before he went over the bar, which shook slightly but did not fall.

This meant that Cornelius Johnson and David Albritton were tied for first place, had set a new world record, and were on their way to Berlin for the 1936 Olympics.

The Nazis had made elaborate preparations for the Olympic Games, intending to show the world how superior Hitler's Aryan athletes were.

A huge sports complex was constructed, including a new 100,000-seat track and field stadium. Olympic flags and swastikas bedecked the monuments and houses of Berlin. Hitler and many leaders of the Nazi party leaders were in the stands watching as the American high jumpers took the field.

Cornelius Johnson cleared 6 feet, 7 ¾ inches, winning the gold medal. David Albritton cleared 6 feet, 6 ¾ inches and won the silver medal, and teammate Delos Thurber received the bronze.

The three Americans were snubbed at the medal stand by Hitler, who had congratulated all the other winners that day. Hitler had refused to shake Cornelius Johnson's hand because he was black. The International Olympic Committee told Hitler that he must either congratulate all winners or none. He chose none.

Graduating from Ohio State in 1938, David Albritton then moved to Dayton, where he found work at Dunbar High School teaching industrial arts. He also served as track and field coach, leading his students to three state track titles. In 1960, Albritton ran for the Ohio House, where he served six terms as a member of the General Assembly.



Above: David Albritton during his time in the Ohio General Assembly, published by *Call and Post* (Cleveland, OH), 3/23/1963.

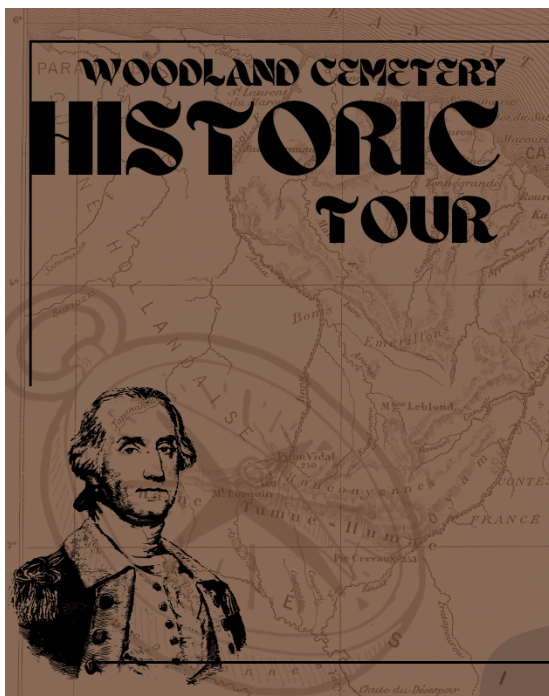


David Albritton was inducted into the National Track and Field Hall of Fame in 1980 and the Ohio State Athletic Hall of Fame in 1978.

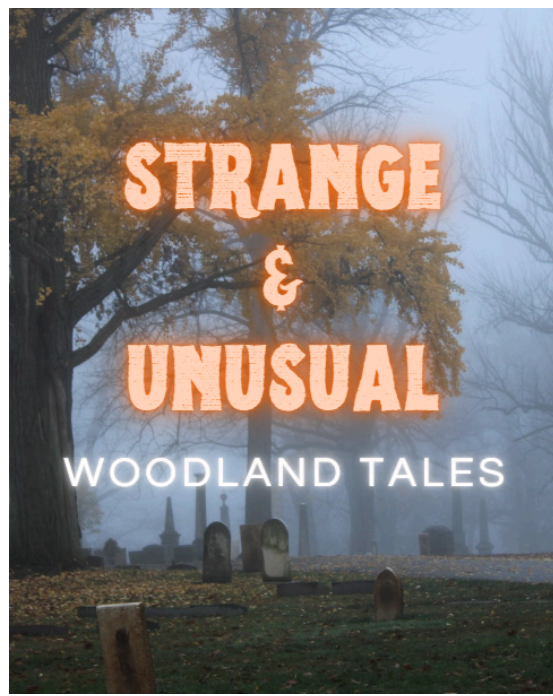
He died in 1994 at the age of 81, and is laid to rest in section 300, lot 86 at Woodland Cemetery.

Tours & Events:





[Woodland Historic Tour](#)



[Strange & Unusual Tales of Woodland](#)



Two Dayton Legacies at Woodland

This program will explore the lives of these two Dayton figures, their lasting contributions, and their connection to Woodland Cemetery. Through stories and historical context, the presentation highlights how Woodland serves not only as a place of remembrance, but also as a landscape that preserves the stories of Dayton's cultural and scientific heritage.

Chuck Johnson will be the presenter for this program. He is a dedicated public speaker on the life and achievements of C. F. Kettering and worked for the C. F.

Kettering Research Laboratory as a Senior Research Associate from 1957 to 1963. He is also a committed volunteer and historian involved in multiple Dayton community non-profits, including Five Rivers MetroParks, Woodland Cemetery, Dayton History's Carillon Park, and the City of Dayton Landmark Committee. He is currently a Trustee of Preservation Dayton, Inc., representing the Wright-Dunbar neighborhood and working to highlight its historical significance.

This program is free and open to the public but reservations are required.

[**Register / Get More Info**](#)

Above: Charles Kettering with electric self-starter. Photo courtesy General Motors.

[Click here to explore our full calendar of events!](#)



Office Hours

Monday - Friday: 8a - 5p
Closed Saturday & Sunday

Contact Us!

For questions about pre-planning, funeral services, or memorial design:

[Request an Appointment](#)

(Non-urgent) general questions:

[Contact Us](#)

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With gratitude,

Woodland Arboretum Foundation





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