



Minnie McDaniel, June 5, 1911

The portrait of Minnie Anderson McDaniel (1889-1956) shows no trace of the poverty that she experienced most of her life. Indeed, her attire and pose suggest that she was a woman of means. She was born in Nelson County to Robert Anderson, who farmed and worked as a manual laborer, and Betty Jackson Anderson. She commissioned her portrait a year after her marriage to Robert McDaniel (b. 1889), a laborer from Charlottesville. The marriage soon dissolved, and, in 1917, she married George Anderson and relocated to Covington, Virginia, where she worked out of her home as a laundress. She was buried in Covington.

H24592A, *Holsinger Studio Collection* (MSS 9862).



Dr. George Ferguson, February 22, 1917

Dr. George Ferguson, Sr., (1877-1932) and George Ferguson, Jr., (1911-1993), pictured here with their daughter and sister, Louisa Ferguson (1907-1991), were among the most prominent figures in the history of Charlottesville. Dr. Ferguson was one of the first African American physicians to open a practice in Central Virginia. As a member of the Republican Party, he fought to protect the civil rights of the Black community, until the party's "lily white" movement made African American participation impossible. As president of the local branch of the NAACP, in the 1950s, George, Jr., was a key leader in the movement to desegregate the University of Virginia's hospital and the Charlottesville public schools. Louisa had a long career as a librarian in the Cleveland, Ohio, public library system. Luella Brown Ferguson (1875-1924), the wife of George, Sr., and mother of Louisa and George, Jr., is not pictured in any of the Holsinger Studio portraits.

X04851A1, *Holsinger Studio Collection* (MSS 9862).



Cora Lee Thompson Ross, June 21, 1911

Everything about Cora Lee Ross' (1884-1969) portrait suggests that she was an extraordinary woman—strong, proud, and wise. Her life story confirms that she faced the triple challenges of racism, sexism, and economic exploitation with an indomitable spirit.

When Ross commissioned her portrait from the Holsinger Studio, she lived in Charlottesville with her husband, James Lemuel Ross, and their five children—four girls and a boy. Cora was a housemaid, and James was a manual laborer. The couple would eventually have several more children—a daughter and two sons. Cora and James remained married until his death, in 1952.

By 1920, the family had moved to a farm in Albemarle County. James supplemented the family's income by working as a railroad guard. Cora assumed the duties of a farm wife and mother while also working as a housemaid. Cora returned to Charlottesville in late middle-age, living in Fifeville with two

of her children.

Cora's portrait befits a woman who had the strength to raise a large family while jointly running a family farm and the style of someone with cosmopolitan tastes. Nothing about it hints that she also spent much of her adult life working as a housemaid in other families' homes. That is precisely the point. As the University of Virginia historian Kevin Gaines has written, "[t]o publicly present one's self ... as successful, dignified, and neatly attired, constituted a transgressive refusal to occupy the subordinate status prescribed for African American men and women."

H24629A, *Holsinger Studio Collection* (MSS 9862).



Burnett Watson, January 14, 1919

Burnett Watson (1896-1972) was one of at least nine children born to William and Mary Watson, who lived on a farm in the Keswick district of Albemarle County. He served in the U.S. Army during World War I and was discharged after being wounded. He spent the rest of his life in Atlantic City, New Jersey, where he and his wife, Marion, raised a family of at least five children. Burnett worked as a waiter and, later, as the fountain manager at Fralinger's Salt Water Taffy, on the Atlantic City boardwalk. Fralinger's taffy is still being made.

X07294A, *Holsinger Studio Collection* (MSS 9862).