



**William Alexiugs McKissack**  
**1852-1936**  
**Enslaved at Rippa Villa**

1852 August 22: William Alexius<sup>1</sup> McKissack was born to enslaved parents, Madison and Caroline McKissack. Both of his parents were owned by William McKissack.

1856 After William McKissack died in 1855, his human property was listed in an 1856 inventory in the courts in Maury County, TN. The slaves were split into six lots and distributed to William's six children in January of 1856. Lex's mother, Caroline, was listed in the court records as being given to William's daughter Jessie McKissack along his father, Madison, however in July of 1892, in a deposition for his Aunt Harriet's pension Caroline stated "*I am the wife of Madison McKissack and the sister-in-law of Harriet McKissack. Lem and Harriet and myself all belonged to the same owner, namely Col. Wm. McKissack*


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<sup>1</sup> Lex's middle name is variously given as Lexington and some family trees have it as Alexander, however the only official document that listed the middle name was the 1870 US Federal Census, which gave it as Alexius. Whichever name was his given middle name, Lex was the shortened version.

*of Giles Co., Tenn. After his death and upon the division of his estate Lem and Harriet fell to Jim McKissack and I to Major Nat Cheairs.”<sup>2</sup>*

1865-1870 Rev. Henry Eddy and his wife Mary opened a Freedmen’s school in Spring Hill. It was initially in a barn. This would have been the only school available to Lex and his siblings. The Eddy’s received death threats from the Ku Klux Klan for educating black children.

1870 By 1870, Lex was working with for the Freedmen’s Bureau in Spring Hill as an assistant teacher with Henry Eddy. The school Lex taught in was a small building newly built near the colored church in the little town of Spring Hill. It was built by the colored people of Spring Hill, most likely this would have included his father, Madison McKissack, as a builder.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lex McKissack". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background. There is a small number "3" to the right of the signature.

Lex’s signature on a Freedmen’s Bureau Report

July: The U.S. Federal Census enumerated in District 22 of Maury County, TN<sup>4</sup> showed 18-year-old Lex living with his parents and siblings: Caroline, Madison, a brick mason, Mahulda, 16, Dublin, 11, Madison, 9, Mary Ella, 4, Leura, 3 and Dick, 6 months. His parents were noted as being illiterate, while his siblings Mahulda, Dublin and Madison Jr. were noted as attending school.

1873 Lex and his younger sister Huldah were both listed as 2nd year students at Central Tennessee College in Nashville.<sup>5</sup>

1877 May 19: Lex gave a speech entitled “The Bible and Education” at the graduation of Central Tennessee College.

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<sup>2</sup> McKissack, Lem [and Harriet], Deposition of Caroline McKissack, U.S. Military Pension Application, NARA, Washington D.C.

<sup>3</sup> U.S., Freedmen’s Bureau Records, 1865-1878, (accessed ancestry.com)

<sup>4</sup> District 22 was the same District that Ripa Villa was in, so they lived close.

<sup>5</sup> U.S., School Catalogs, 1765-1935, Central Tennessee College, 1873 (accessed ancestry.com)

**Graduating Exercises at Central Tennessee College.**

The chapel of Central Tennessee College was filled to its utmost capacity last night by an audience assembled to witness the closing exercises of the term. The programme was very carefully arranged, and the manner in which it was carried out reflects much credit on both teachers and scholars. The chapel was very tastefully decorated with evergreens and flowers. There was a large number of whites interspersed among the audience.

The following was the order of exercises:

Chant—"O, Sing unto the Lord."

Prayer—Rev. E. Provize.

Music, instrumental—"Spring Flowers," Miss A. P. Martin.

Chorus, anthem—"God be Merciful."

NORMAL DEPARTMENT.

"The Bible and Education," Wm. A. McKissack.

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1879 June 13: Lex gave a speech entitled "*School Government, Its Aims and Methods.*" His future sister-in-law Cornelia Hayden also gave a speech.

**The Colored Institute Exercises.**

The closing exercises of the teachers' institute took place last night, at the Central Tennessee College. The programme is given below:

Essay, "The Duty of the Teacher to Study," by J. M. Simms; essay, "Singing as a School Study," by Veree Lee Moore; essay, "Responsibilities of the Teacher," by G. W. Darden; essay, "The Need of Trained Teachers," by Miss C. A. Hayden; essay, "The Teacher on the Play Ground," by Frank Gregory; address, "School Government, Its Aims and Methods," by W. A. McKissack; essay, "The Advantages of History as a School Study," by Miss E. Carney; essay, "The Relation of the Ministry to the Public Schools," by Rev. D. W. Hays.

The exercises were interspersed with singing by the "Tennesseans," under the lead of Mr. J. C. Brown and Miss Lizzie Ewing.

The College has had an enrollment of 285 in all departments during the past year, from 13 different States. One hundred and thirty-three found a home on the College grounds.

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December 8: Lex married Alice L. Hayden in Maury County, TN.

<sup>6</sup> The Daily American, Nashville, TN, Sat, 19 May 1877, pg. 4 (accessed newspapers.com)

<sup>7</sup> The Daily American, Nashville, TN, Sat, 14 Jun 1879, pg. 4 (accessed newspapers.com)

1880 Lex was listed as a Senior in the Theological Dept of Central Tennessee College.

CENTRAL TENNESSEE COLLEGE.		19
<b>THEOLOGICAL DEPARTMENT.</b>		
FACULTY.		
REV. J. BRADEN, D.D., REV. W. PATTERSON, REV. J. H. WHITNEY.		
LECTURERS.		
REV. BISHOP I. W. WILEY, D.D., REV. BISHOP G. HAVEN, REV. R. S. RUST, D.D., LL.D.		
SENIORS.		
Key, Hiliary W	-----	Murfreesboro. —
Johnson, Green N	-----	Chattanooga. —
McKinney, George W	-----	Grenada, Miss. —
McKissack, William A	-----	Spring Hill. —
Tyree, Evans	-----	Nashville. —

The speakers of the May graduation of Central Tennessee College were filled with familiar names. Lex gave a speech entitled “*Personal Liberty*.” His new sister-in-law Cornelia Hayden, gave a speech entitled “*Home Life*” and Lex’s neighbor and future wife, Rebecca Sharber, gave a speech entitled “*Nothing Great is Easily Won*.”<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Central Tennessee College, 1879-1880 (accessed hathitrust.org)

<sup>9</sup> Nashville Banner, Nashville, TN, Mon, 17 May 1880, pg. 3 (accessed newspapers.com)--note also giving speeches were Mattie J. Evans, Mallie Otey Johnson’s sister-in-law and Mattie’s future husband Bishop Isaiah B. Scott.

**Central Tennessee College Exercises.**  
 The commencement exercises of Central Tennessee College, colored, will be held in Thompson's Chapel, on Wednesday and Thursday, commencing each day at 10 o'clock a. m.

The programme to be observed on Wednesday is as follows:

1. Music.
2. Prayer.
3. Music.
4. "The End Is Not Yet"—Mattie J. Evans, Franklin.
5. "Home Life"—Cornelia A. Hayden, Spring Hill.
6. Music.
7. "No One Liveth Unto Himself"—Lucy J. Hay, Mason.
8. "School Life"—Eva L. Holmes, Fin-castle, Va.
9. Music.
10. "School Friendships"—Emma J. Pickett, Nashville.
11. "Nothing Great is Easily Won"—Rebecca A. Sharber, Spring Hill.

12. Music.
13. "Crossing the Red Sea"—Green N. Johnson, Chattanooga.
14. "Personal Liberty"—William A. McKissack, Spring Hill.
15. Music.
16. Presentation of Diplomas.
17. Music.
18. Benediction.

Thursday's exercises will be as given below:

1. Music.
2. Prayer.
3. Music.
4. "Power of the Will"—Charles P. Westbrook, Aberdeen, Miss.
5. Music.
6. "Moral Courage"—Julius J. Holland, Georgetown, S. C.
7. "Make Haste Slowly"—Laura A. Moore, Mason.
8. Music.
9. "Pleasures of Memory"—Chas. H. Phillips, Milledgeville, Ga.
10. "Our Work and Its Growth"—Isaiah B. Scott, Austin, Texas.
11. Music.

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June 3: The U.S. Federal Census enumerated in the town of Spring Hill, Maury County, TN showed W.A.[Lex] and Alice living with his parents and siblings: Madison, a stone mason, Caroline, D.P. [Dublin], 20, Mad. Jr. [Matt], 19, Mary E, 15, Leura, 13, Rich, 10, Milton, 7 and Malinda, 4.

\*\*\*Between 1880-1884 Alice Hayden McKissack must have died.

1884 November 29: Lex married Rebecca A. Sharber in Maury County, TN. Rebecca was the daughter of Calvin and Emma Sharber. Calvin was a wheelwright/wagonmaker. The Sharber and McKissack homes were within very close proximity to each other.

1887 March 5: Rebecca gave birth to son Ira Vincent McKissack in Nashville, TN. Ira was WWI Veteran. He married Hattie Floyd and had at least four children. He died in 1969 in Chicago.

1889 August 5: Rebecca gave birth to son William Edward Asbury McKissack in Nashville, TN.  
 Dr.W.E. McKissack, a graduate of Meharry Medical College. Dr.

<sup>10</sup> Nashville Banner, Nashville, TN, Mon, 17 May 1880, pg. 3 (accessed newspapers.com)

McKissack married Callie Bell Apple and had two children, W.E. Jr and Dorothy. He died in 1959 in Gallatin, TN.

1890 The Nashville City Directory listed: Rev William McKissack living at Maple nr Garden.

1891 October 13: Rebecca gave birth to son Clinton H. McKissack in Nashville, TN. Clinton was a WWI Veteran. He had several children, including Kevin Searcy, a Negro League baseball player who played with Willie Mayes.

1891 The Nashville City Directory listed: Lexington McKissack, a teacher, living at 158 Maple St. He was also listed as a registered voter in Davidson County!

The yearly catalog for Central Tennessee College stated at the time of the Printing that Lex was a principal of the colored schools in Shelbyville, TN in 1888 and currently a teacher.

1880—*Green N. Johnson*, Normal, 1876; teacher; P. E. Little Rock Conference, Little Rock, Ark.

*William A. McKissack*, Normal, 1876; principal colored schools, Shelbyville, Tenn.; Tennessee Conference, 1888; teacher, 1890.

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1892 The Nashville City Directory listed: William A. McKissack living at Maple nr Garden.

1893 The Nashville City Directory listed: William McKissack, a teacher, living at 158 Maple St.

1894 The Nashville City Directory listed: William A. McKissack living at Maple nr Garden.

1895 The Nashville City Directory listed: William McKissack, a teacher, living at 158 Maple St.

December 21: Rebecca Sharber McKissack died in Nashville, TN. She was only about thirty-seven years old. Her address was listed as 158 Maple St. Rebecca was interred in Spring Hill.

\*\*\*This time period for Lex would have been filled with loss. His parents, Madison and Caroline, also died btwn 1892 and 1900.

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<sup>11</sup> Central Tennessee College, 1891 Catalog, U.S., School Catalogs, 1765-1935 (accessed ancestry.com)

- 1896 November 17: A "first" ever annual meeting was held for teachers at Oglesby. Lex attended the meeting, with a fellow teacher by the name of Green Scales Lytle. Green's mother, Joanna McGavock, was born enslaved at Carnton.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>TEACHERS AT OGLESBY.</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Pleasant and Profitable Meeting Held.</b></p> <p>OGLESBY, Tenn., Nov. 17.—(Special.) The first annual meeting of the teachers was held at Mt. Pisgah schoolhouse on the 13th and 14th insts. The first day's programme included music, by the school; prayer, Rev. W. P. Hall; paper, "The Best Method of Raising the Moral Standard of Young Men and Young Women," Prof. J. W. Wyatt. The paper was a logical one. The speaker showed that to raise the standard we must have moral doctors, moral lawyers, moral preachers, and moral teachers, and without these the standard can never be raised. A paper, "How to Secure Punctuality in School," Prof. G. S. Lytle. The paper was one which showed many ways by which we may have the children at school on time. At the night session the paper of Prof. Lytle was discussed freely by the teachers and friends, after which Rev. W. P. Hall preached a short but able sermon to the institute. His text was Matt. v. 11: "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you."</p>	<p>The second day the house was called to order at 11 a. m., followed by music by the school; prayer, Rev. Ransom; paper, "Necessity of Regular Attendance at School," Miss N. E. Simmons. Miss Simmons had a well-written paper, and did credit to herself. The following teachers were in attendance: W. A. McKissack, Thomas W. Johnson, Mary S. Johnson, R. E. Battle, Hart Battle, N. E. Simmons, M. E. Hamm, G. S. Lytle, W. J. Wyatt, and W. R. Davis. R. E. Battle offered the following resolutions: "Whereas, the good people of Mt. Pisgah have so warmly received and cared for the teachers of Davidson County, and as they have been so liberal in nourishing us and sharing their earthly substance with us, therefore, be it "Resolved, that we, the teachers in attendance, do hereby tender them a vote of thanks. Be it further "Resolved, that we thank Prof. W. J. Wyatt and Rev. D. C. Ransom for the nice arrangements they furnished; also, Rev. W. P. Hall for the logical sermon urging us to so live that evil sayings will not be our stepping stones to success."</p>
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- 1897 The Nashville City Directory listed: William McKissack, a teacher, living at 158 Maple St.
- 1898 The Nashville City Directory listed: William McKissack, a teacher, living at Maple nr Tennessee.
- 1900 June 8: The U.S. Federal Census enumerated in Nashville, Davidson County, TN showed a widowed William A.[Lex], a teacher, living with his three sons: Ira, 13, William A. Jr, 10 and Clinton H, 8. Lex's sister Linnie was living with him as well. She was most likely living with him to help take care of his sons. The family lived at 158 Maple St. in Nashville and Lex owned the house, free from mortgage.
- 1907 October 10: A memorial service was held at Clark Memorial Church for Rev.

<sup>12</sup> The Nashville American, Nashville, TN, Wed, 18 Nov 1896, pg. 3 (accessed newspapers.com)

Johnson. Lex gave an address on behalf of the class leaders.<sup>13</sup>

1910 The Nashville City Directory listed: William A. McKissack, a porter, living at 158 Maple St.

May: The Nashville Globe reported that Lex and Linnie drove down to visit their brother Richard for the day. *“Mr. and Mrs. R.E. Watkins [Linnie] and their children, of Twelfth avenue, South, and Mr. Willie McKissack[Lex] of First avenue, South, enjoyed a pleasant ride Sunday in their automobile to Spring Hill. They went there to visit Mrs. Watkins’ brother and wife, Mr. and Mrs. Richard McKissack. On the return trip they made a short stop in Franklin to see Dr. and Mrs. Alston and Mrs. Mattie Foster, of Columbia avenue.”*<sup>14</sup>

1913 Lex was listed in the newspaper as being a member of the “City Epworth Union League.”<sup>15</sup>

1920 The Nashville City Directory listed: William A. McKissack, a gardener, living at 1240 1st Ave. S.Garden.

1936 February 4: Lex McKissack died. By the time of his death he was in his 80’s and working as a janitor. His son Dr. W.E. McKissack, of Gallatin, was the informant on his death certificate. Lex was buried at Greenwood Cemetery in Nashville.

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<sup>13</sup> The Nashville Globe, Nashville, TN, Fri, 18 Oct 1907, pg. 1 (accessed newspapers.com)

<sup>14</sup> The Nashville Globe, Nashville, TN, Fri, 13 May 1910, pg. 8 (accessed newspapers.com)

<sup>15</sup> The Nashville Globe, Nashville, TN, Fri, 24 Jan 1913, pg. 4 (accessed newspapers.com)



STATE OF TENNESSEE  
STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
Division of Vital Statistics  
CERTIFICATE OF DEATH

2890  
File No. 352

1. PLACE OF DEATH  
County Davidson  
Civil Dis. 1st  
Village  
City Nashville  
Registration District No. 187  
Primary Registration District No. No. 1231 - 1 Ave. S. St.; Ward  
Length of residence in city or town where death occurred yrs. mos. de New born in U. S. M of foreign birth? yrs. mos. de

2. FULL NAME  
(a) Residence: No. 1231 - 1 Ave. S. St., Ward. (If nonresident give city or town and State)

PERSONAL AND STATISTICAL PARTICULARS				MEDICAL CERTIFICATE OF DEATH	
3. SEX Male	4. COLOR OR RACE Cauc	5. SINGLE, MARRIED, WIDOWED, OR DIVORCED (write the word) Widow		21. DATE OF DEATH (month, day, and year) 2 - 4 / 1936	22. I HEREBY CERTIFY that I attended deceased from 1926 to 2/4 1936
6a. If widowed, widower, or divorced HUSBAND of (or) WIFE of				19. I last saw deceased alive on 2/4 1936 Death is said to have occurred on the date stated above, 4:50 a. m.	
6. DATE OF BIRTH (month, day, and year) aug 22, 1852				The principal cause of death and related causes of importance in order of onset were as follows: Organic Heart Disease	
7. AGE Years 83 Months 3 Days 12		If LESS than 1 day, hrs. or min.		Contributory causes of importance not related to principal cause: Senile Debility 95B	
8. Trade, profession, or particular kind of work done, as spinner, sawyer, bookkeeper, etc. Janitor				Name of operation _____ Date of _____	
9. Industry or business in which work was done, as silk mill, saw mill, bank, etc.				What test confirmed diagnosis? _____ Was there an autopsy? _____	
10. Date deceased last worked at this occupation (month and year)				23. If death was due to external causes (violence) fill in also the following: Accident, suicide, or homicide? _____ Date of injury 19 _____	
11. Total time (years) spent in this occupation				Where did injury occur? _____ (Specify city or town, county, and State) Specify whether injury occurred in industry, in home, or in public place.	
12. BIRTHPLACE (city or town) (State or country) Tenn.				Manner of injury _____	
13. NAME Unknown				Nature of injury _____	
14. BIRTHPLACE (city or town) (State or country) "				24. Was disease or injury in any way related to occupation of deceased? If so, specify _____	
15. MAIDEN NAME "				(Signed) J. H. Vate M. D. (Address) 414-4 Ave. S. W.	
16. BIRTHPLACE (city or town) (State or country) "				25. _____	
17. INFORMANT Dr. O. B. Mc Kussack (Address) Ballwin, Tenn				26. _____	
18. BURIAL, CREMATION, OR REMOVAL Place Greenwood Cem. Date 2-6 1936				27. _____	
19. UNDERTAKER Taylor & Co. (Address) 449 - 4th Ave. No.				28. _____	
20. REG. FILE NO. 33 19. NORA HOLLISTER Register				29. _____	

<sup>16</sup> McKissack, W.A., Tennessee, U.S., Death Records, 1908-1965 (accessed ancestry.com)