

George Alfred Busby (1857-1934)

In an article in the *InCity Times* of Jun-15-2009, "Black like me: Worcester's Black leaders – a brief history," William S. Coleman III stated that "The first black man to serve in Worcester's city government was George Alfred Busby. He served in 1903 and 1904."

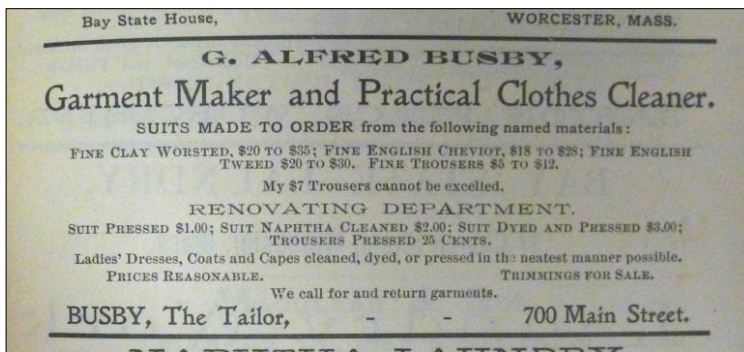
In 1902, Busby was nominated by the Republican Party for a seat on the Council from Ward 1, a generally Republican ward, and he carried the December 9 election with about 60 percent of the vote. Busby and his political fortunes were covered in a book by Janette Thomas Greenwood, Professor of History at Clark University, *First Fruits of Freedom: The Migration of Former Slaves and Their Search for Equality in Worcester, Massachusetts, 1862-1900* (University of North Carolina Press, 2009). As the title suggests, the subject of the book is far more encompassing than local politics, and it may be the best source on the subject of the African-American population of the city during that era.

This overview of George Alfred Busby does not purport to cover his successes or shortcomings in city politics. Rather, it employs commonly used methods and sources of genealogical research, including city and house directory listings; U.S. Census records between 1850 and 1930; state records of birth, marriage, and death; records of immigration and naturalization; draft board registrations for the two world wars; records of military service and veteran status, from the revolution through modern times; passenger lists of ships; and organizational publications, such as high school and college yearbooks.

G. Alfred Busby, as he chose to be called, was born in 1857 on the island of Barbados in the West Indies. In 1874, at the age of seventeen, he immigrated to the U. S., likely to New York or Boston. He first appeared in the Worcester City Directory in 1886, meaning he was probably in the city by 1885. By occupation he was a tailor, and city directories of various years showed him working in that capacity at several locations in the downtown area.

In 1893, at the age of 36, Alfred married Jennie Cora Clough, a native of Worcester, also 36, and for the past fifteen years a teacher in the primary grades of Worcester Public Schools. When she began teaching in 1878 after her graduation from the Normal School, she was the first African American teacher hired by the city system. Unfair though it might have been, an extra burden fell on her to perform well in the job, not just for herself but for every other non-white who might follow her into teaching. If she didn't there likely would have been skeptics using her shortcomings as evidence that "they aren't capable of teaching." Jennie is the subject of a [separate entry](#) in the WorcesterThen Obituary.

Alfred and Jennie resided several years on Wachusett Street, then on Lee Street until 1909, then at 4 Fruit Street, then out to Fairhaven Road in Greendale, and then back to Fruit Street, number 15, where they remained the rest of their lives.



Advertisement, City Directory, 1897, p. 705

By 1897 Alfred was in the tailoring business for himself, as is evident in his advertisement in that year's edition of the City Directory, p.705.

Busby was making custom men's suits for prices that were affordable by the few.

His "renovating department" would later be called dry cleaning.

Alfred and presumably the entire Busby family were members of the All-Saints Church, based on his obituary notice in the *Gazette*. He was also a member of the Masons, King David Lodge, and the United Order of Odd Fellows, Integrity Lodge, of which he was secretary in 1911 and likely other years as well.

Alfred and Jennie had two sons: Alan Thacker Busby, born in 1895; and George Clough Busby, born in 1897. Allen's middle name, Thacker, was the last name of a boarder in the house from about the time of the Busby marriage to the early 1910s, Lucy L. N. Thacker. The census record for 1910 describes her occupation as "laundress," suggesting that she was part of the clothes cleaning, or "renovating," business of "Busby the Tailor." Why the Busbys named their first son Allen after Lucy's surname is unknown (here).

Both Alan (or Thacker, as he was called in his high school yearbook) and George apparently had left Worcester by 1920, when neither the census nor the city directory of that or following years found either of them in the city. They both "reverse migrated," from the north to the south, one ending up in Alabama, the other in Missouri.

Their parents were still at 15 Fruit Street. In 1920, however, Alfred was no longer listed as a tailor. He was now said to be a packer for the Wickwire Spencer Steel Company on New Bond Street. His son George had also worked there for a while before leaving the city.

Because there is a separate entry in the WorcesterThen Obituary for Jennie (Clough) Busby, the coverage of the sons which follows Alfred's obituary notice in the *Gazette* is included there, too.

Jennie (Clough) Busby died May 11, 1928, in Worcester, at the age of 71.

G. Alfred Busby died Nov-01-1934 in Worcester, at the age of 77.

Evening Gazette, Nov-02-1934

G. ALFRED BUSBY

The funeral of G. Alfred Busby, 77, of 7 Newbury street, retired former shipping clerk at the Wickwire Spencer Steel Co., for 50 years, who died yesterday afternoon, will be held at the Darius A. Putnam, Inc., funerar parlors, 866 Main street, Saturday afternoon at 4 o'clock. Burial will be in Hope cemetery.

Mr. Busby was born in the Barbados, British West Indies, son of the late Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Busby. He was a member of All Saints' church and Prince Hall lodge, A. F. & A. M.

He is survived by two sons, Alan T. Busby of Alcorn, Miss., and George C. Busby, instructor at Tuskegee institute, Alabama, and a grandson, George C. Busby, Jr.

The statement that he worked for Spencer Wickwire Steel for 50 years seems unlikely to be accurate.

Numerous sources say he was a tailor until about 1920 and only then became a packer, or shipping clerk, at the manufacturing facility. His career as a tailor was not mentioned.

Also not mentioned was Alfred's two-year service on the Common Council.

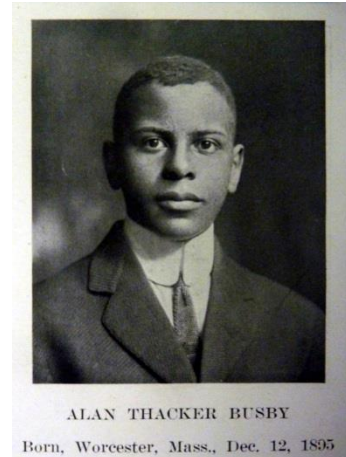
The reference to his son Alan being in Alcorn, Mississippi is the only clue to his residence between the end of the war and 1943 when he joined the faculty of Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri. Census records could not be found for Alan for 1920, 1930, or 1940.

Sons of G. Alfred and Jennie (Clough) Busby

Alan Thacker Busby graduated in 1914, a member of the last class of the combined Classical and English High. He then attended the Connecticut Agricultural College in Storrs, the forerunner of the University of Connecticut, and graduated with the Class of 1918.

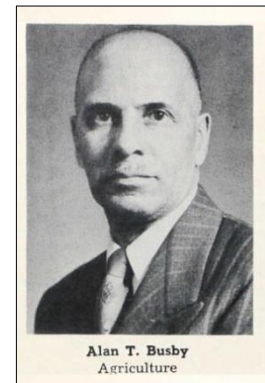
As a member of the college R.O.T.C., he became a 2nd Lieutenant in the U. S. Army in May, 1918 and in mid-September was shipped to France. He was discharged from the Army the following April, and at some date left the Worcester area, his original destination unknown, as are his reasons for leaving.

Photo from the *Aftermath*,
yearbook of Worcester High
School, 1914.



Alan's life is unknown from the end of his military service in 1919 until 1943, when he joined the faculty of Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri, teaching agriculture. After 23 years, he retired in 1966, but remained affiliated with the school as an advisor to veterans. He was married to an Edith O. Busby, but nothing is known of her or of any children they might have had. Alan Thacker Busby died in June, 1992, at the age of 96 and was buried in Jefferson City.


Photo from the faculty pages of
the yearbook of Lincoln
University, 1954.




U.S., School Yearbooks, 1900-1990 for Allen T Busby
Missouri > Jefferson City > Lincoln University > 1968

Veterans get Assistance

For more than 23 years, **Allen T.** Busby served on the University's faculty. After his retirement two years ago, Mr. Busby decided to remain around in order to serve as counselor to veterans.



Mr. Allen T. Busby serves as Veteran Counselor.



Mr. Busby listens attentively to a veteran.

A page from the 1968 yearbook of Lincoln University shows Busby in his retirement capacity of advisor to veterans.

Recommended link: A brief [history of Lincoln University](#) of Jefferson City, Mo.

from Ancestry.com

George Clough Busby

graduated from the combined English and Commerce High in 1915.


After graduation, he worked at Wickwire Spencer Steel, and he appeared in city directories through 1919. He then or soon afterward moved to Alabama, where in 1926 he married Alice Nesbitt of Montgomery, who, like his mother, was a school teacher.

U.S., School Yearbooks, 1900-1990 for George Clough Busby
Massachusetts > Worcester > Old English HS and New High School of Commerce > 1915

GEORGE CLOUGH BUSBY.

"A human with a god-like smile."

George is famous because he carries with him a smile that can be seen afar off. He is never disturbed over the conditions of affairs but takes life easy. George likes to plague his darling teachers, for George believes that all should enjoy life as he does. His favorite expression is "Hello, Billy" which he says when passing his friend in the hall. George is popular with both girls and boys.



His senior picture, with a "biography" of him by the editors.

They settled in Tuskegee where he was a bookkeeper and supply officer at the Veterans Administration Hospital located there. In his father's obituary notice he was said to have been an instructor at the Tuskegee Institute, which was also the training location of the famed Tuskegee Airmen of World War II. George and Anita had a son, George Clough Busby, Jr., born in 1930.