

A Guide to “Colored Notes”

*the earliest known newspaper column written by and about
the black community in Colleton County*

Compiled by Walterboro Historian Elizabeth Laney

A Brief History

“Colored Notes,” published in Colleton County’s *The Press & Standard* throughout the 1920s, 30s, 40s and 50s under various names, **is the earliest known column written by and about the black community of Walterboro, SC.** The column was first published under the title “**With the Colored People**” and was written by Preston J. Hammitt. At just 26-years-old, Hammitt was a recent addition to the community and the first principal of the newly established Colleton Training School. After writing the column for just half-a-year, Hammitt turned writing duties over to 19-year-old Rebecca Maree. Maree, having just returned from school in Augusta, GA, had been born in Walterboro and her family had roots in the community going back several generations. She would author the column under the title “**Colored Notes**” for the next few years.

By 1929 the column’s name had changed to “**Colored News**” and no longer listed the contributor although it is possible that Maree continued to write the column. The column disappeared for about eight years, but a similar column appeared in *The Press & Standard* from 1953-1958, entitled “**Negro Society**,” again with no associated writer.

Although the column, under its various names, appeared frequently in the paper, it did not appear consistently. Unlike the society columns for the white population which were published weekly, “Colored Notes” and its iterations might skip weeks or sometimes whole months and occasionally years. The column addressed everything from births, marriages and deaths, to church news, community events, town visitors, family outings, educational news, news about local college students and more. **It is a fascinating look at Walterboro’s African-American community in the early-to-mid 20th Century.**

Column Names & Publication Dates

“With the Colored People” (1926)	“Colored Notes” (1926-1929)
“Colored News” (1929-1945)	“Negro Society” (1953-1958)

Known Contributors

Prof. Preston J. Hammitt (1900-1993)

Preston Jenkins (PJ) Hammitt was born around 1900 in Clarendon County, SC. He attended the Georgia Normal & Agricultural School in Albany, GA and obtained a teaching degree. He moved to Walterboro in 1925 to become the principal of the newly opened Colleton Training School.

The very next year, 1926, Hammitt began writing “With the Colored People,” the first version of “Colored Notes.” Hammitt may have been a relative newcomer to Walterboro but his contributions to the town were significant even from the start. With his name listed as the contributing author of “With the Colored People,” Hammitt became the first known black contributor to a Colleton County newspaper. His descriptions of the comings and goings of the community **are among some of the very few known recorded accounts of Walterboro’s black community from the early 20th century** and an invaluable addition to historical knowledge of the town.

Hammitt was principal of Colleton Training School for fourteen years (1925-1939). He eventually took a job with a school in Fairfax County, SC. He would return to Colleton County in the late 1950’s where he would serve as a pastor at St. Peter’s AME Church for the next several decades. He died in 1993 at the age of 93 and is buried today in Live Oak African American Cemetery.

Rebecca Maree Brooks (1906-1954)

Rebecca Maree was born in Walterboro, SC around 1906, one of several children born to William C. Maree and Rachel Waring Maree. The Waring and Maree families were both prominent members of the local African-American community. The Marees were heavily involved in politics during Reconstruction and after, while the Warings were heavily involved in local business in the late 19th and early-to-mid 20th century. Despite her father’s death when she was only three, Rebecca’s mother went into business for herself, operating a local café and then a tourist home and managed to send all four of her daughters to college.

Maree graduated from Haines Normal Institute (Augusta, GA) in 1926 and shortly after returning home took over the writing of “Colored Notes” from P.J. Hammitt. She would write the column through at least the end of the 1920s and is the earliest known black woman columnist for a Colleton County newspaper. She was heavily involved in community life, especially in the life of her church St. Peter’s AME Church. After her mother passed away in 1936, she became a businesswoman, taking over running her mother’s business the Maree Tourist Home. In the early 1950’s this tourist home was one of two businesses listed in The Negro Motorist’s Green Book for Walterboro. Maree died in 1954 and was buried alongside her mother, father and grandfather Remus Waring in Live Oak African American Cemetery.

“Colored Notes” Index

All articles below appear in The Press & Standard, available online through
[Digital Reel: Colleton’s Online Historical Archive](http://www.colletonlibrary/e-content) (www.colletonlibrary/e-content)

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“News of the Colored People” (1926)

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