



SINCE

1841

# WOODLAND

HISTORIC CEMETERY & ARBORETUM



## Reverend DeSoto E. Bass

Compassionate Teacher, Community Pastor  
1865-1928



Reverend DeSoto E. Bass, pastor of First Wesleyan Methodist Church from 1895 until his death in 1928, was well-known in the Dayton community as a warmhearted clergyman and teacher.

Born in 1865 to a farming family in Darke County, Ohio, Reverend Bass attended Wilberforce University and later the United Theological Seminary in Dayton.

Rev. DeSoto Bass is laid to rest in section 126, lot 20 at Woodland Cemetery

At the age of just 28, in 1895, Rev. Bass became pastor of First Wesleyan Methodist Church. Rev. Bass was sometimes called the “Community Pastor” because of his devotion to anyone who needed help; especially children. Though not a father himself, Rev. Bass was fond of children—before he was a pastor, Rev. Bass had been a schoolteacher in Ohio and Indiana. Here in Dayton, Rev. Bass often took walks with crowds of children just for fun; listening to their stories and offering them guidance.

One contemporary claimed that during his 33 year tenure, Rev. Bass made more pastoral calls “than any man you’d meet in a year’s traveling”. Becoming something of a “missionary pastor at large” in the city of Dayton, Rev. Bass visited members of his congregation and provided for them if they were in need—even borrowing coal from the church to keep his parishioners warm. Rev. Bass was known to visit the sick regardless of their religious affiliation, and for performing other charitable deeds. For nearly 30 years, Rev. Bass led singing parties on Sunday afternoons; bringing groups to sing at hospitals like Miami Valley and St. Elizabeth’s. Groups also went to sing at the workhouse and the local jail, offering comfort and joy to all who could hear.



REV. D. E. BASS.

Above Photo: The Dayton Herald, 10/9/1928 p.28



In recognition of his devotion to his church and community, the first public housing development in Dayton was named in honor of Rev. Bass. Opening in 1940, DeSoto Bass Courts quickly grew from its initial 200 units to house essential workers who manufactured military equipment and supplies during WWII, then expanded again in 1947 to make room for returning veterans. Notable former residents of DeSoto Bass Courts include Major General Frederick Leigh and Jeraldyn Blunden, founder

of the Dayton Contemporary Dance Company.

Racism and segregation policies meant that many Dayton landlords during this period were unwilling to rent to Black tenants—so unless a person had enough money saved up to build or buy their own home, they had few options available. Until the late 1950s, DeSoto Bass Courts and its annex, Homeview Courts, were the only public housing complexes that would rent to Black tenants; providing an invaluable resource for many young families who otherwise could not afford to move out on their own.

Above Photo: DeSoto Bass Courts; Photographer: Jim Noelker, Dayton Daily News 2023

# First Wesleyan Methodist Church:



Organized in March 1842, during Rev. Bass' tenure the First Wesleyan Methodist Church was located at the corner of Scott & Bruen Street. Sometimes called the "Mother of Dayton's Black Churches", First Wesleyan served as a hub for the Underground Railroad.

Before the Civil War, members of the church, including Woodland residents Joseph & Nettie Piner, Harriett E. Wade, and Charity Broady; worked alongside anti-slavery white Daytonians like Luther Bruen (after whom Bruen St. was named) and Dr. Hibbard Jewett, to assist formerly enslaved people on their journey north—ensuring that people coming through the area were "sheltered, fed, disguised and landed safely in Canada." (Dayton Daily News, 6/11/1949)

## At Woodland Cemetery:

- Joseph & Antoinette Piner : Sec. 80 Lot 459
- Harriett E. Wade : Sec. 90 Lot 1112
- Charity Broady : Sec. 90 Lot 1581
- Luther Bruen : Sec. 102 Lot 1348
- Dr. Hibbard Jewett : Sec. 8 Lot 192





# Upcoming Events!



Join us for a special Black History month tour of the Woodland Mausoleum! This building is climate controlled and handicap accessible. Visitors will be walking on both carpet and marble floors.

Hear the stories of notable Daytonians including George C. Cooper, James Parsons, W. S. McIntosh, Bob & Norma Ross, and many more inside the Woodland Mausoleum, featuring beautiful stained glass windows and varieties of marble.

The tour will be offered on two Saturdays , February 10th and 24th at 2:00 pm. The tour will last two hours and if weather permits, will include a walk to James H McGhee, Jordan Anderson , Paul Laurence Dunbar and other gravesites.

To register for this tour, click [HERE](#).



This is a great time see our year-round residents, winter visitors like Dark-eyed Juncos, and early spring migrants like blackbirds, and maybe even Eastern Phoebe and Ruby-crowned Kinglet.

Bring your binoculars and dress for the weather. The walk is slow-paced, and mostly stays on the road surface, but sometimes does venture "off-trail" into the grass.

All ages welcome. Dress appropriately for the weather and wear a good pair of walking shoes!

Your nature guide will be Amanda Lawson, an Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist.

Meet at the Eichelberger Plaza at the main gates of the cemetery. For reservations please click [HERE](#).

**Above Photo:** Kenneth Cole Schneider for Travis Audubon

## Share Your Story With Us:



Here at Woodland, we love to share stories of those who rest within our grounds.

It is most often thanks to family members or newspaper articles that those stories reach us, which allows us to include their loved ones in features like this.

Does your relative have a story we should be telling? Let us know by sending an email to [ashimp@woodlandcemetery.org](mailto:ashimp@woodlandcemetery.org)

## Come Visit Us!



### Volunteer opportunities

Woodland is seeking volunteers to give presentations to community groups on subjects such as local history, notable biographies, and trees.

Not into public speaking? Consider getting involved with our horticulture team, or assisting with special events & research projects.

\*If there is something you'd like to see here at Woodland please reach out to us & suggest it!



## Office Hours:

Monday-Friday  
8am-5pm

If you need help finding where someone is buried, need directions to a particular area, or have questions about pre-planning or funeral services, Woodland's Staff is here to assist you!

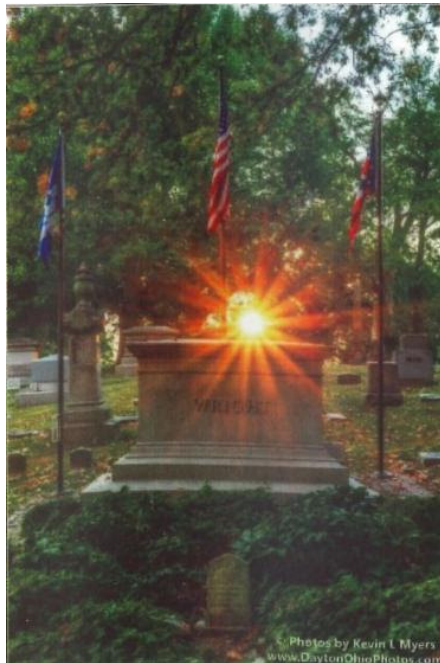
## Tours & More:

We welcome walkers, runners, and wanderers -- leashed dogs & school groups.

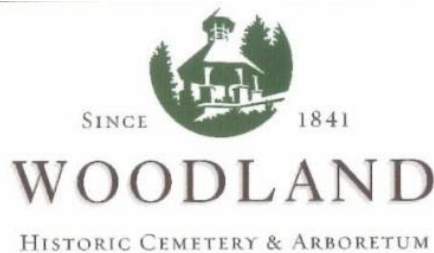
**Register for a guided tour:** visit the Woodland Cemetery website! Learn about fascinating Daytonians resting peacefully in one of America's oldest rural garden cemeteries!

Or check out our [virtual tours!](#) (if you really don't want to go outside)

# DONATE ONLINE!



Photos by Kevin L. Myers  
www.DaytonOhioPhotos.com



Committed to providing dignified and caring funeral services and burial options to families of all faiths since 1841.

**Woodland Cemetery and Arboretum**  
118 Woodland Ave.  
Dayton, OH 45409  
[woodlandcemetery.org](http://woodlandcemetery.org)

***Beautiful. Timeless. Still Available...***



Discover the men and women who made it great in Dayton on a guided walking or bus tour. Self-guided tours are available on our mobile app.

For information call 937-228-3221 or e-mail [info@woodlandcemetery.org](mailto:info@woodlandcemetery.org)

Woodland Cemetery & Arboretum | [Visit our website!](#)

Woodland Cemetery & Arboretum | 118 Woodland Ave., Dayton, OH 45409