



SINCE

1841

# WOODLAND

HISTORIC CEMETERY & ARBORETUM



## LtC Charity Adams Earley

No Mail? Low Morale!

1918-2002

Charity Adams Earley was the first Black woman to be commissioned an officer in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAACs). At the conclusion of World War II, LTC Adams was the highest ranking Black woman in the U.S. Army.



Charity Adams was born on December 5, 1918 in North Carolina and grew up in Columbia, South Carolina. She was the eldest of four children.

Adams' father was a Methodist minister fluent in several languages. Her mother was a schoolteacher. They passed their shared love of learning and reading on to their firstborn daughter, Charity, who tested into elementary school as a second grader. Charity's later test scores would have permitted her early advancement to high school, but her parents suggested that she wait, as she was already far ahead of her age group.

After finishing high school, Charity attended Wilberforce University in Ohio, where she majored in math, physics, and Latin. Adams was also involved in campus activities and organizations like her sorority, Delta Sigma Theta.

Upon graduating in 1938, she returned to South Carolina to teach math and science at a local high school. During the summer, she studied for her M.A. in psychology at the Ohio State University. Adams would return to complete her master's degree in 1946.

Above Photo: <https://www.womenofthe6888th.org/>



In the spring of 1942, the United States military created the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps, later known as the Women's Army Corps (WACs). The WACs sent Adams an invitation to apply for officer candidacy school, focusing on the career and leadership opportunities that service in the military could offer her. Adams filled and sent in her application—then nearly forgot about it until July, when the Army sent her an acceptance letter.

When Adams enlisted in 1942, the U.S. Army was still segregated, so she was placed in a company with other women of color and assigned to officer training school at Fort Des Moines in Iowa. Charity excelled in training, which she credited to her family's instilling in her an appreciation for self-discipline.

By 1944, Adams had achieved the rank of Major, and her company was the "show company" of her post. Once, a white general told Adams, "I'm going to send a white first lieutenant down here to show you how to run this unit", to which then-Major Adams responded, "Over my dead body, sir." The general threatened to court-martial her, so she threatened him right back. They both ultimately dropped the matter.



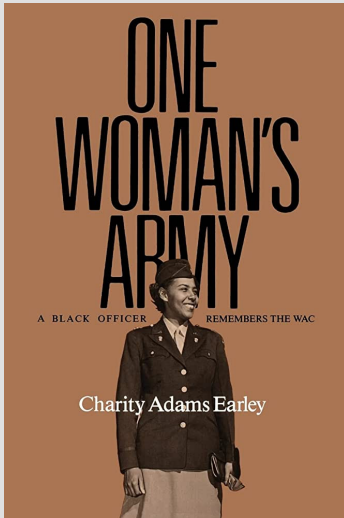
In December 1944, Adams received her first overseas assignment. In March 1945, she was appointed as the Commanding Officer of the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion (6888th CPDB). They were stationed first in Birmingham, England, where the locals crowded together to watch the troops parade.

The mission of the 6888th CPDB was to deliver mail to approximately seven million US soldiers stationed in Europe, but first they needed to clear an enormous backlog of undelivered mail. Entire aircraft hangars had been stuffed full of lost letters, incomplete addresses, and damaged wrapping. Due to wartime security measures, letters sent home also had to be read and censored.

By working around the clock in eight hour shifts, seven days a week, the 6888th were able to clear the backlog in just three months—accomplishing their goal in half the time the Army had estimated they'd need. Next, the 6888th were sent to France to do similar work in Rouen and Paris. This time they were much closer to the front lines.

By 1945, LTC Adams was the highest ranking Black woman in the military. When asked about her groundbreaking achievements, Adams responded simply; "I just wanted to do my job".





After her service in the Army, Charity finished her master's degree in psychology from the Ohio State University. In 1949, she married Stanley A. Earley, Jr. For several years, they lived in Switzerland as Stanley completed medical school, then settled in Dayton in 1952. They had two children, Stanley III and Judith Earley.

Earley devoted much of her post-war life to community service. She served on the Board of Directors of Dayton Power and Light, the Dayton Metro Housing Authority, the Dayton Opera Company, the Board of Governors of the American Red Cross, and the Board of Trustees of Sinclair Community College while co-directing the Black Leadership Development Program. She was a dedicated volunteer for organizations such as United Way, the United Negro College Fund, the Urban League, and the YWCA.

Charity E. Adams Earley died at age 83 on January 13, 2002. She and her husband, Dr. Stanley Earley Jr., are interred in section 308, lot 326 at Woodland Cemetery.

For more information about Charity's story, be sure to check out her memoir—*One Woman's Army: A Black Officer Remembers the WAC* (1989, Texas A&M University Press)



# 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!

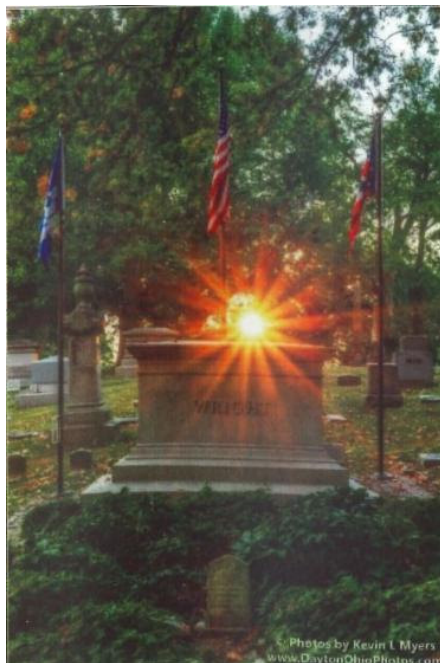
## Tours & More:

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

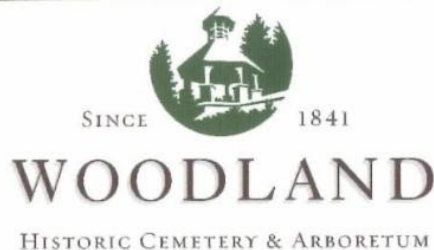
**Register for a guided tour:** visit the Woodland Cemetery website! Learn about fascinating Daytonians resting peacefully in one of America's oldest rural garden cemeteries!

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

# DONATE ONLINE!



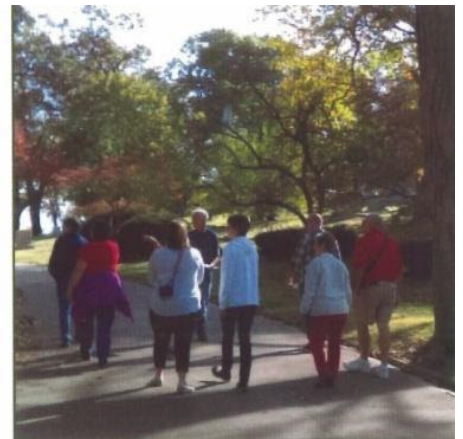
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Committed to providing dignified and caring funeral services and burial options to families of all faiths since 1841.

**Woodland Cemetery and Arboretum**  
118 Woodland Ave.  
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[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)

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