

Another early urban pioneer, was Horace Cayton. Born a slave in Mississippi in 1859, Cayton was sent to school by his father after emancipation. He continued his education at Alcorn College, where he studied under Senator Hiram Revels, a renowned black Senator. Senator Revels daughter, Susie, also went to Alcorn College, where it is assumed she met Horace.

It was very unique for a black man to rise from slavery to a college education, but it was doubly unique for a black woman to have a higher education. Most women were caught up in the demands of day to day survival. During slavery women had suffered severe exploitation. After emancipation they faced the dual tasks of rebuilding their broken self-esteem and surviving in a generally hostile environment.

Many black women earned money at home, taking laundry. This was an arduous task, all done by hand. A woman would boil huge vats of soapy water, soak clothes in them, scrub stains away on a washboard and put the clothes through several rinses after lifting them out of the boiling water with long sticks. The laundry would be wrung by hand and then hung out to dry on a clothesline. This process would invariably take an entire day.

Washing was only one time-consuming task for a black woman of that era. All food preparation, ironing, housecleaning, etc., was done by hand with no labor-saving devices. In addition to keeping the house in order and raising the children, black women were expected to help their husbands in their professions. Women were encouraged to bring home additional income as well.

Most black women led lives of unrelenting drudgery, unappreciated for their hard work and perserverance in keeping the family together. Socially, they were at the bottom of society, regardless of their marital status. This is one reason that Susie Cayton was truly special in her time.



*Senator of the United States, H. R. Revels
of Mississippi, Susie Cayton's father.
(sitting far left)*