

First Black Educator

Jane A. Ruley was born Lilly Jane Archer in Berkley, Virginia in 1856. The daughter of a slave and considered a gifted child, she was educated in the General Armstrong School in Hampton, Virginia (now Hampton University) where she was class valedictorian. According to the *Bremerton News* on November 23, 1915, one of her most notable classmates was Booker T. Washington.



After graduating from General Armstrong School in 1875, she moved to the Northwest, where she settled in Kitsap County to work as a teacher. Here she proved to be a woman of excellent scholarship, prominent in the educational affairs of her community and a dedicated community worker. Local records indicate that Mrs. Ruley was the first black teacher in the area, and one of the first in Washington state.

Shortly after her move to the Northwest, Lilly Jane married Paul E. Ruley, who was born in Stuttgart, Germany in 1857. They had two children, a son Archie and a daughter Gertrude. The Ruley family was well-known in the area. It is said that in the early days, Mrs. Ruley held school in a barn on their property, which was called the "Sleepy Hollow Ranch." Later, they helped establish the first Sheridan School #22 and were instrumental in its support and upkeep.

In addition, Mrs. Ruley taught the first Sunday school for the Manette Church, introduced music to its members and served as organist.

Mr. and Mrs. Ruley were much loved and respected in the community. Their children Archie and Gertrude grew up to follow in their parents' footsteps, getting involved in community affairs as well. Archie was known in the Sheridan and Manette area as one of the fastest pitchers of his time, who kept the name of the ball team going. He also played ball at Washington College, where he attended school. Gertrude was known in the community as a talented young lady. She finished Union High School in 1914 and was the class salutatorian. At the age of 17, Gertrude entered Washington State College in Pullman, Washington, graduating in 1918 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in music.

Jane A. Ruley died in 1927. Her husband, Paul E. Ruley, died in 1913.

Bootblack

Charles Austin – nicknamed "Shine" – was a well-known character around Bremerton for many years. He could be found almost any evening along a downtown Bremerton street corner with his shoeshine box. He was said to give the best shine in town.

Little is known about Charles before he came to Bremerton. He was, however, born a slave, and was the chattel for Old Ginril Austin and Young Ginril Austin of South Carolina.

Charles Austin's death was very sudden. According to the *Bremerton News*, he was found dead in bed on March 1, 1912, shortly after the death of his wife, Sarah, in October of 1911. Charles received an impressive funeral, conducted by black evangelist Rev. George Richard Dayrell. Friends of Charles in Bremerton and Seattle attended in considerable numbers, and many floral offerings covered his grave. He was buried alongside his wife.