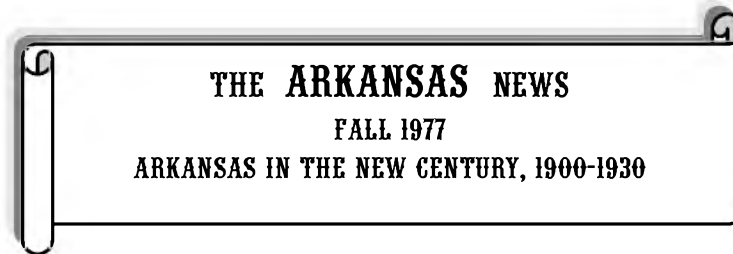


The researcher asked a number of people about the “Royal Circle of Friendship” symbol that is on Henderson Holdings’ Monument. Lloyd C. Lanphere of Madison, Alabama provided a copy of an article from *The Arkansas News*. It is typed in its entirety below:



**Article Title: “Arkansas Creates African-American Organization”**

Helena – The years between the end of the Civil War in 1865 and the beginning of the Great War in 1914 became a time of great advancements as well as setbacks for African Americans in the Arkansas Delta. From slavery to emancipation to citizenship, some would emerge in this period as politicians, ministers, educators, and business owners.

W.E.B. DuBois, scholar and founder of the NAACP, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, believed this educated group, the “Talented Tenth,” could save American blacks, both culturally and economically.

One member of this group from the Delta was Richard A. Williams, physician and founder and Supreme President of the Royal Circle of Friends of the World.

Dr. Williams was born in Forrest City on September 13, 1874. He completed his course work in the public school by the age of 12. At the age of 19, Williams entered Walden University-Meheny Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee. The college was one of five predominantly black medical schools in the country. It was associated with the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Williams received his medical degree in 1902 and three years later, he and his wife moved to Helena, Arkansas, where he set up his medical

practice. Helena then had a population of 5,550 – 3,400 of whom were black. Six African American physicians and surgeons practiced there.

In September of 1909, Williams founded the Royal Circle of Friends of the World. The fraternity’s primary goal was to promote the moral, physical, intellectual, and material welfare of its members.

By 1911, the organization had grown to a membership of more than 9,000, with 300 lodges in rural communities in Arkansas, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas.

The success of the Royal Circle was partly due to blacks’ mistrust of government and white owned banks. The Royal Circle of Friends offered great returns for small investments, with the support of friends, neighbors, churches, and respected black business leaders.

The fee for joining the Royal Circle, including a medical examination, was \$2.50. Members then paid \$1 per quarter, which paid \$300 to the beneficiary after the member’s death.

For years to come, in rural black cemeteries loyalty to the Royal Circle of Friends was indicated by the distinctive headstones that displayed the organization’s symbol of the majestic lion and letters RCF.