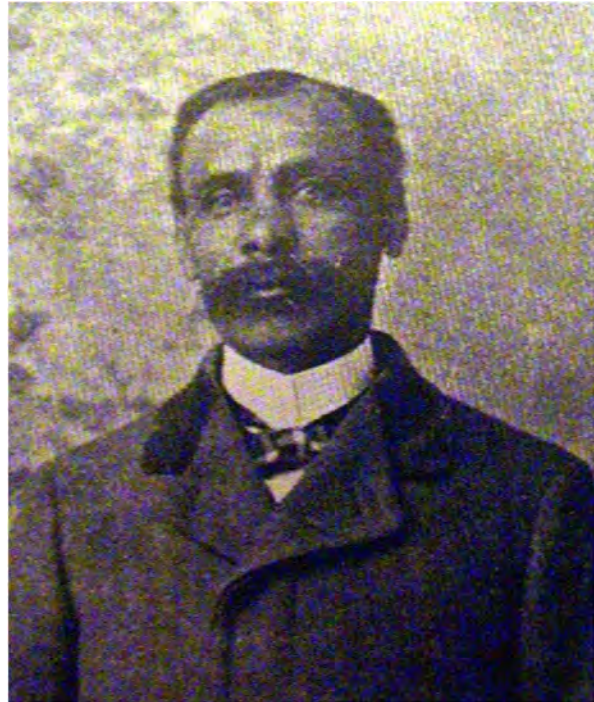


BURGESS E. SCRUGGS, M.D.
(1860-1934)

Some of the people who were interviewed said their doctor was Dr. Scruggs. A biography of the doctor and the picture shown here is presented in the book *Medicine Bags and Bumpy Roads* (pp. 187-189) written by Jewell S. Goldsmith and Helen D. Fulton in 1985. The following information was drawn from their book.



Burgess E. Scruggs was born in Madison County on October 16, 1860. He was the son of Berry and Peggie Scruggs, who were the slaves of Thomas Sanford and Caroline McCalley. Upon receiving his freedom, and after acquiring all of the schooling that was available in the basement of Lake Side Methodist Episcopal Church, he was graduated from William H. Councill High School and decided to become a physician. He was encouraged by the spinster daughters of his former master.

He worked his way through a Black medical college in Tennessee and was one of two Black physicians in Alabama when he opened his practice in Huntsville in 1879. He was a courteous man who was always ready to accommodate, but he was also a determined man, and when he set out to do something, he never wavered. He was president of the Black Fair Association and a trustee of Rust Normal School in 1884, which enabled him to be instrumental in purchasing a lot where a non-sectarian school for Black children could be built. It was supported by the Lakeside Methodist Episcopal Church. Scruggs stressed that education was more valuable than money. He strived to improve the plight of the Black people.

He was elected City Alderman and served four terms (1883-1885 and 1893-1899). He served on the United States Board of Examiners, Board of Pensions from 1891-1897. Dr. Scruggs was held in high esteem by the White members of the medical profession, who were ready to extend to him due professional courtesy.

He was a typical horse-and-buggy doctor who loved the countryside. He owned property in the city and a farm, where he enjoyed supervising the growth of crops; however, being a doctor did not bring him great monetary wealth. For example, he was paid \$37.75 by the City of Huntsville for treating patients with smallpox at the Negro Annex of the Huntsville Hospital for the years 1902 and 1903. Dr. Scruggs is remembered by the Black community of Huntsville as a fine physician and an outstanding citizen.