

## LOCAL / REGIONAL

# ASSIST BY BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD LED TO HISTORICAL MARKER: William 'Uncle Bill' Lewis

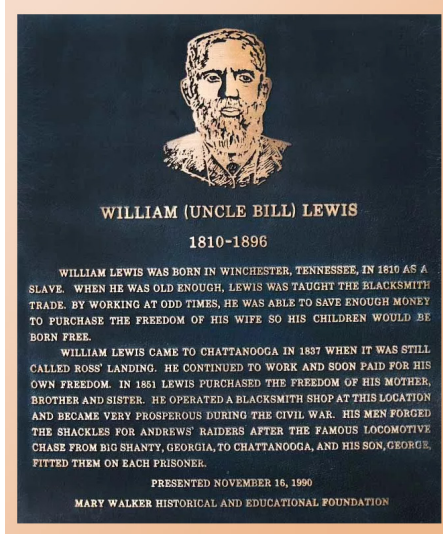
Compiled by John L. Edwards, III

While doing some research in the Chattanooga's downtown Bicentennial Library back in 1990, I ran across an old newspaper article by E.Y. Chapin, a prominent Chattanooga businessman. The article was about a man named William Lewis who ventured to Chattanooga around 1836 when it was still called Ross Landing.

Lewis was born in Winchester, Tennessee in 1810. The unique thing about Lewis was that he was still a slave. It is assumed that he had an arrangement with his owner, a Colonel Lewis, also of Winchester, Tennessee, who was also likely his father.

Amazingly, Lewis had enough money when he arrived here to purchase a plot of land. It was illegal for a slave to purchase land, so he had to do business through a white person. Lewis was a blacksmith by trade and worked odd hours to save enough money to purchase the freedom of his wife so his children would be born free. He continued to work and soon paid for his own freedom. In 1851 Lewis purchased the freedom of his mother, brother, and sister.

Lewis operated a blacksmith shop in what is now downtown Chattanooga at 7th and Market Streets where the Blue Cross Blue Shield offices were located for many years. His reputation for doing quality work spread throughout town and he became very prosperous during the civil war. His men (workers) forged the shackles for Andrews' Raiders after the famous locomotive chase from Big Shanty, Georgia, to Chattanooga, and his son, George, fitted them on each prisoner.



Lewis was a blacksmith by trade

William Lewis, lived in a large, two-story, frame house a block from Swain's Jail, and he also befriended the raiders. He raised a large quantity of lettuce and obtained permission from the guards to send some to the prisoners. Known also as 'Uncle Bill' by the many soldiers and people he helped, William Lewis had continued to prosper in his blacksmithing business at his familiar shop on Market Street. He had been able to pay for his house and to hire workers to help operate the blacksmith shop. The longtime Chattanooga resident also had enough money to send several of his children North to be educated.

William Lewis was asked by the town officials to construct a bell that would be rung to call the meeting that ultimately changed the name of Ross Landing to Chattanooga. Uncle Bill continued to prosper after the war and was said to have been well-loved by all.



In a 1990 photo, Linda T. Wynn, Assistant Director, Tennessee Historical Commission, (2nd from right) poses with the late Rev. John L. Edwards, Jr, MWF founder, 3rd from right; and officials of both the Mary Walker Historical & Educational Foundation (MWF) and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Tennessee. (Photo: MWF Archives)

He died on September 2, 1896 and was laid to rest in Chattanooga's Forest Hills Cemetery. It is said that a large number of people both black and white attended his funeral.

Infatuated by Lewis' story, I shared it with my father, Reverend John L. Edwards, Jr., founder and president of the Mary Walker Historical & Educational Foundation. He was also amazed by his story. I gathered Lewis' information and applied for a historical marker with the Tennessee Historical Society. It was approved pending a location could be approved by the city of Chattanooga and

property owners at the site proposed.

When we approached Blue Cross Blue Shield officials, they were clearly excited to approve the location of the marker. They even went a step farther and suggested they place a plaque on the corner of their building to indicate where the blacksmith shop was located.

With a commitment to diversity and inclusion, BCBST continues to recognize the achievements of outstanding black citizens during Black History month and throughout the year!

## Freeman, Cooper Detail Vision For Business Incubator & Innovation Hub At Fisk University

This article was first published by Nashville Business Journal

Darrell Freeman has just three months to flesh out the plan for a business incubator at one of Nashville's historically Black colleges and universities. He's not inclined to wait that long.

"I'm not going to take 90 days. I want to get it done fast," Freeman said in an interview.

Freeman, one of the city's most accomplished entrepreneurs, is spearheading a push to open an incubator at Fisk University at the behest of Mayor John Cooper and Metro Council. Fisk's home neighborhood, North Nashville, is an area city and civic leaders are striving to boost after decades of neglect, displacement (first by the construction of Interstate 40 and, more recently, gentrifica-

tion that's driving home prices and rents higher) as well as the 2020 tornadoes.

Funding hasn't yet been allocated. Freeman's early estimate is that the center is a \$7 million investment, coming mostly from Metro and also possible corporate backers.

The effort is a bit of a homecoming for Freeman: He started his technology services company Zycron Inc. in an incubator and moved it to an office on North Nashville's Clarksville Pike. His first two hires were Fisk students, for a business he sold in 2017 for more than \$20 million. Among other interests today, Freeman is an investor and mentor to the trio who founded restaurant chain Slim & Husky's Pizza Beeria, which started on Buchanan Street and now has 10 locations in four states.

"A business incubator at Fisk will drive the creation of Black wealth and small business formation in Nashville and further cement Jefferson Street as a corridor of innovation — while connecting students from Fisk and [Tennessee State University] to jobs at Oracle and other businesses downtown," Cooper said in a March 7 speech to the Rotary Club of Nashville.

"I know we both believe the next Zycron and the next Slim & Husky's will come out of the incubation center at Fisk," Cooper said of Freeman.

Freeman said his mission is to offer more than just a laboratory for turning business ideas into successful startups.

"There are a bunch of cool things



Chattanooga native Darrell Freeman intent on placing a business incubator at Fisk University

about this project," he told the Business Journal. "It will increase the number of businesses in North Nashville. It will increase the number of people being employed. Metro can provide services in that building for North Nashville. Entrepreneurs will have exposure to the smart students at Fisk, Meharry, Tennessee State. "I believe you can bring hope and inspiration," Freeman added, noting that his Clarksville Pike office

was "behind the projects."

"The people who lived there never saw someone like me, dressed up, sometimes driving a Mercedes, running a company," he said. "That's the opportunity."

Freeman said he will be leaning on the Nashville Entrepreneur Center, led by CEO Jane Allen, to guide decision-making on what programming to

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### IN THE HUDDLE with Coach Jennings

#### God Got Your Back

##### TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

(Romans 8:28)

And we know that to them that love God All things work together for good, for those who are called according to HIS purpose.

##### TODAY'S WORD

For those of us who really love God should never be discouraged for long.

Because when you take a minute

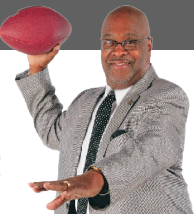
and reflect on a few of HIS promises, you will remember what said. Like, HE will never leave or forsake us, HE will be with us until the end of time. Even when we fumble the ball, God will give you another chance. God got your back. Keep being faithful to the LORD you can't go wrong. Your consistent obedience to HIS word always impresses GOD because it demonstrates your love and respect for HIM. When you pray without ceasing, God sees that you enjoy talking and listening to HIM as much HE enjoys listening to you. Our Heavenly Father got our back and I know without a doubt.

##### PRAYER FOR TODAY

Oh GOD thank you for always having my back, my front, my top and bottom. I trust you with all my heart and lean not to my own understanding. YOUR love for me will always conquer my challenges. Thank YOU LORD for always being there for me. In JESUS Name AMEN.

#### Lurone "Coach" Jennings

Mary Walker Foundation  
Executive Director



**MW**  
MARY WALKER  
HISTORICAL & EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

### NAACP: from front

like. The NAACP will continue to exercise every tool at its disposal to combat racism and cruelty wherever it is happening."

Since Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, some 2.5 million people have fled the war-torn country. Millions more have been driven from their homes. However, disturbing reports have recently surfaced of discriminatory behavior by Ukrainian police of Black families, immigrants from the African diaspora and other people of color who reside in Ukraine.

Allegations include the denial of transportation access to pregnant African women, children, and students; white and nonwhite people being separated by barricades at the border; and videos showing officers beating people of color with sticks, tearing off clothing, and slapping those attempting to board trains.

In a March 9 letter addressed to the president of the European Union's Diplomatic Mission, the NAACP wrote, "We write today with an urgent concern regarding reports that Black families, immigrants from the African diaspora, and other people of color who reside in Ukraine have been treated in a discriminatory manner as they flee the escalating war in Ukraine. Press reports and online videos reflect the

use of racial hierarchy, violence, and state action taken against refugees of color as they attempt to flee Ukraine and enter bordering states of the European Union."

The letter continues, "We understand the difficulty and fluidity of monitoring border agents across sovereign states. We urge swift and proactive action to ensure the fair and humane treatment of all refugees with special attention to nondiscrimination."

The letter was co-signed by the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law; the National Action Network; the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.; the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation/Black Women's Roundtable; the National Council of Negro Women, Inc.; and the National Urban League.

Founded in 1909 in response to the ongoing violence against Black people around the country, the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) is the largest and most pre-eminent civil rights organization in the nation.

Its mission is "to secure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights in order to eliminate race-based discrimination and ensure the health and well-being of all persons."

### BAN: from front

Ukraine," said Senator Blumenthal.

#### BACKGROUND:

- On February 26, 2022, the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and European Union announced a removal of select Russian banks from SWIFT. However, not all Russian banks are covered, nor is the Russian Central Bank targeted by sanctions.
- Without access to SWIFT, Russian financial institutions would not be able to transact with other banks.
- This resolution expresses that it is the sense of Congress that expulsion from specialized financial messaging services is a first step, but insufficient to address the scope and scale at which Moscow is waging war;
- Strongly urges the President to take all measures necessary to remove Russian financial institutions from access to specialized financial services, including working with allies and partners to execute this removal multilaterally; and
- Strongly urges the President to immediately impose sanctions on the Central Bank of Russia.