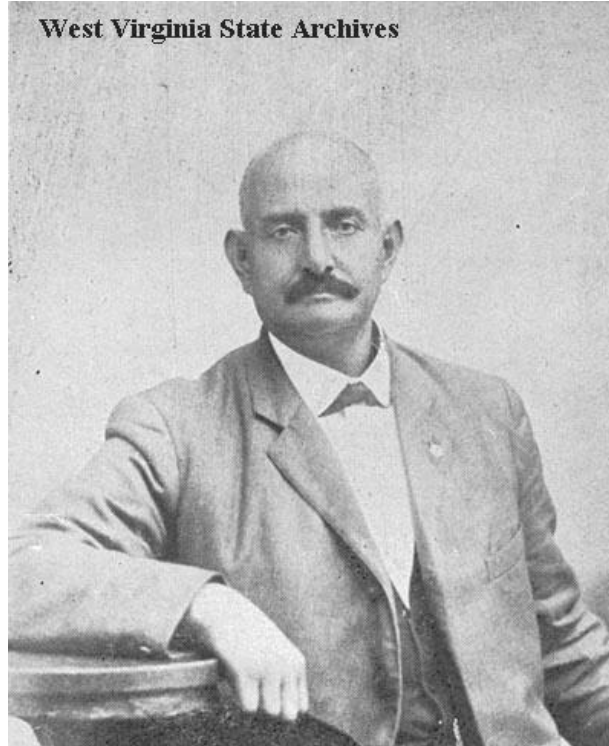


### ON THIS DAY IN WEST VIRGINIA HISTORY DECEMBER 5



**Christopher H. Payne, a Monroe County native who was the first African-American elected to the West Virginia legislature, died on December 5, 1925.**

**CSO: SS.8.23, SS.8.24, ELA.8.1**

**Investigate the Document: (*The Fayette Journal*, December 18, 1925; West Virginia State Archives Biography, "Christopher Payne")**

1. What (3) newspapers did Christopher Payne establish?
2. Why were African Americans' voices able to carry more weight in state politics during the late 1800s?
3. What position was Christopher Payne appointed to in 1917 by President Theodore Roosevelt?

**Think Critically:** How does African American history help to tell the story of West Virginia? How have African Americans enriched that story? What lessons can be learned from the experiences of black history makers?

THE  
FAYETTE



JOURNAL

THE OLDEST REPUBLICAN NEWSPAPER IN THE GREAT NEW RIVER COAL FIELD

VOLUME 49, NO. 34. FAYETTEVILLE, FAYETTE COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA. FRIDAY, DECEMBER 18, 1925.

\$1.50 a Year in County; \$2 out.

DR. CHRIS. H. PAYNE DEAD;  
EARLY LEADER IN FAYETTE

Dr. Christopher H. Payne, well known state colored leader for many years, died December 5 at St. Thomas, Virgin Islands. He was a native of Monroe County and was 80 years old.

He came to Montgomery in 1884 as pastor of the Baptist church. He served 13 years, and also pastored Hinton, Brushy Ridge, Union, Alderson, Ronceverte, Eagle, Mt. Carbon, Quinnimont and Huntington, the latter he resigned in 1903 to take the government position as United States consul to the Danish West Indian Islands. This position he held until March 1917, at which time our government purchased the islands which cancelled this consular station. After the adjustment of these islands to the American rule, he held the position as police judge, stationed at St. Thomas and St. Croix.

He held numerous other responsible positions, and was president of the West Virginia Baptist State convention for sixteen years. Deputy collector of internal revenue with an office at the capital; he was editor of a weekly paper at Huntington, known as the Pioneer, and the Mountain Eagle at Montgomery. On several occasions he was delegate to the republican national convention. He was the first Negro to be elected as a member of the legislature of the state of West Virginia.

Christopher Payne was the first African American to serve in the West Virginia Legislature. He was born in Monroe County on September 7, 1848 and was educated by his mother. As a boy, Payne worked as a farmhand near Hinton and as a servant in the Confederate Army. After attending night school in Charleston, he became one of the first black teachers in present-day Summers County. Payne was ordained as a Baptist minister and organized the Second Baptist Church in Hinton. He later graduated from the Richmond Theological Institute and State University in Louisville.

Payne was a pioneer in the field of black journalism and established three newspapers -- the *West Virginia Enterprise*, *The Pioneer*, and the *Mountain Eagle*. As southern West Virginia's black population grew in the late 1800s, African Americans carried more weight in state politics. In 1896, Payne was elected to the West Virginia Legislature as a Republican delegate from Fayette County. He represented the state's Third Congressional District at the National Republican Convention on three occasions. Payne was rewarded for his service to the party with appointments to various positions within the U.S. Bureau of Internal Revenue. He studied law and was admitted to the bar while working at the bureau.

In 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt named Payne as Consul General to the Danish West Indies (present-day Virgin Islands). After the United States acquired the islands in 1917, he served as prosecuting attorney and police judge in St. Thomas, the islands' capital. He died in St. Thomas on December 5, 1925.