

ARKANSAS BLACK HISTORY



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George Waltham Bell was a physician and elected politician from Pine Bluff, Arkansas (Jefferson County). Although he was born in Ethiopia, Bell's family was exiled to the British island of Malta because of his father's opposition to Ethiopian King Tewodros II (Theodore II, in office 1855-1868). When his father was killed in a coup attempt against future Ethiopian Emperor Menelik in 1859, Bell joined the British Navy and made his way to the United States where he resigned his commission. In 1879, he entered Lincoln University before attending medical school in St. Louis, Missouri. Bell was elected as a state senator in Arkansas (1890-1894), representing Desha and Chicot counties, where he opposed the Tillman Bill, which provided for segregation of railroad and trolley cars. He also founded a county medical association, authored a medical text on consumption and established the Arkansas Colored Infirmary. Over the years, his occupations included: teacher, doctor, travel agent, insurance agent, professor and president of Southland College near Helena (Phillips County).

