

**Katie Mae Miles email from Dave Evans to
eastlawrence@yahoo.com August 16, 2014 8:50pm**

Katie Mae Miles held Kansas and Missouri Embalmer's Licenses

J. T. Miles Funeral Home opened in 1930 at 901 N. J. St. Then it moved a few years later to 818 Vermont Street - this location continued to serve the black community as the Bowser et al Mortuary, until closing in 1982.

John Turner Miles was born May 6, 1891 in Birmingham, Alabama. Mr. Miles and his first wife, Katie Mae, resided in St. Louis, Missouri, before moving to Atchison, Kansas. Mrs. Miles was one of the few black females with Kansas and Missouri Embalmer's Licenses. From 1927 until his death on December 15, 1971, they owned and operated the Miles Funeral in Atchison - In 1930, the Miles' had opened a funeral establishment in Lawrence, Kansas but it was closed due to the death of Mrs. Miles in 1941. Mr. Miles died in 1971.

1933 (January) Telephone Directory, p. 9

Miles Funeral Home - Colored licensed director -
901 New Jersey - phone 354

1936 (November) Telephone Directory, p. 16 - Colored
Funeral Directors

Miles Funeral Home 618 Vermont - phone 366

1941 (November) Telephone Directory, p. 23

Bowser-Gleed Mortuary - 618 Vermont - phone 160

One Standard of Service - The Highest to all regardless
of financial circumstances - Ambulance Service

Bowser-Johnson Funeral Home history -

<http://www.bowserjohnsonfuneralchapel.com/history.php>

S. Newton Bowser opened his first funeral home in Topeka, KS in June 1930 at 1812 SW Van Buren Street. He later established a second branch in Lawrence, KS. Mr. Bowser operated the business at both locations

until his health failed in 1961. His wife, Pearl Bowser continued the operation during his illness and after his death in 1967.

Snedeger, B. J., & Douglas County, Kansas, Genealogical Society.

(1987). Complete tombstone census of Douglas County, Kansas. Lawrence, Kan.] (1638 Rhode Island St., Lawrence 66044: The Society, p. p. XVII

In 1930, Mr. Miles had opened a funeral establishment in Lawrence, Kansas, and it was owned and operated black business, but it was closed due to the death of Mrs. Miles in 1941. She was one of the few black females with Kansas and Missouri Embalmer's Licenses. Mr. Miles died in 1971.

Frank Jenkins - Obit

J-World (Monday) Feb. 19, 1968, p.3:4 -

<http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=ArgrAAAIBAJ&sjid=XuYFAAAAIBAJ&pg=7250%2C5028641>

Frank Jenkins, 85, of Atchison, died Friday afternoon at the Atchison Hospital. Funeral services will be at 2 p.m. Tuesday in the Ebenezer Baptist Church at Atchison with Rev. Harry L. Smith in charge. Burial will be in the Oak Hill Cemetery at Atchison. The J. T. Miles Funeral Home in Atchison is in charge.

Survivors include his wife, Louise Jenkins; four stepsons, Jerold Jackson, William Mumford, Roland Mumford, all of Lawrence; a daughter, Thelma White, and three stepdaughters, all of Lawrence.

Mr. Jenkins was born in Memphis, Tenn. He was in charge of the J. T. Miles Funeral Home in Lawrence from 1930 to 1941 and became licensed assistant funeral director with the Atchison funeral home in 1963. He was a member of the Ebenezer Baptist Church.

Bowser Mortuary

Snedeger, B. J., & Douglas County, Kansas, Genealogical Society.

(1987). Complete tombstone census of Douglas County, Kansas. Lawrence, Kan.] (1638 Rhode Island St., Lawrence 66044: The Society, p. p. XVI

Newt Bowser came from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in

1919. He opened his first funeral home in Parsons, Kansas. He founded the Bower Mortuary in Topeka, Kansas, June 30, 1931. In 1941 he opened another branch funeral home in Lawrence. For the next twenty years he devoted all of his time and service to the Topeka and Lawrence communities.

Mr. Bowser died August 12, 1967. From November, 1961, his wife, Mrs. Pearl E. Bowser, continued to manage the Topeka and Lawrence homes and served these areas for fifteen years. In 1967 Mrs. Bowser sold the business to Larry Johnson in Topeka who kept the business in Lawrence open until 1982.

Leonard Monroe - Interview with Reta Cosby -
January 4, 2006 Lawrence/Douglas County African
American Oral History Interviews

<http://www.lawrence.lib.ks.us/oralhistory/2monroe.html>

MS. COSBY: What memories of funerals do you have? I know you've probably attended a lot of funerals.

MR. MONROE: The Bowser, then Bowser-Lee was the funeral home up there on Vermont Street, the six-hundred block of Vermont.

MS. COSBY: Bowser and Bowser-Lee?

MR. MONROE: Yeah, there was Bowser, but Lee joined him later. That's where our funerals were. Bowser left Lawrence, because I guess there wasn't that much business. He went to Topeka. Most of the black folks here now use Warren-McElwain. What's the name of the one out there now? What do they call it?

MS. COSBY: Rumsey?

MR. MONROE: Rumsey's. But back in those early days, they were really prejudiced.

MS. COSBY: Rumsey's?

MR. MONROE: Right. They wouldn't bury a black person. I think that's why everybody started going to Warren-McElwain when they had to.

MS. COSBY: Were funerals typically segregated events?

MR. MONROE: No. I remember white folks being at our funerals. And we went to some of the white folks' funerals. But those would be in the churches. It didn't have nothing to do with the mortuaries.

John Turner Miles Collection, Kansas Collection,

Kenneth Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas
Libraries

BIOGRAPHY of John Turner Miles

John Turner Miles was born May 6, 1891 in Birmingham, Alabama, to Augustus G. Miles and Eliza Jane Fletcher. From 1927 until his death on December 15, 1971, he owned and operated the Miles Funeral Home (also known as the J.T. Miles Funeral Home and the J. T. Miles Mortuary) in Atchison, Kansas. Miles used his position as businessman, religious leader, and civic servant to champion the cause of minority enterprise.

J.T. Miles and his first wife, Katie Mae, resided in St. Louis, Missouri, before moving to Atchison, Kansas. On June 30, 1927, they purchased for \$250.00 a building at 707 North 9th Street in Atchison and therein opened the Miles Funeral Home on July 17, 1927. Mrs. Miles was one of the few African American females with Kansas and Missouri embalmer's licenses. On May 14, 1930, the Miles opened a second funeral home at 814 Vermont Street in Lawrence, Kansas, which they operated until Mrs. Miles' death on January 15, 1943. Later that same year, Miles married Geneva Ramsey of St. Joseph, Missouri, who became a licensed lady attendant at the Atchison funeral home. The business was licensed in Missouri and Kansas.

Upon Miles' death, his children, Etta Mae Hunter, R.N. and George Miles, continued to run the family business until it closed in 1990.

SCOPE and CONTENTS

The papers of John Turner Miles date from 1922 to 1976, and are arranged in three series: Diaries, Business Papers and Personal Papers. There are 29 diaries, dating from 1922 to 1959. They are grouped by decade and arranged chronologically by year. All but one of the diaries document J.T. Miles' personal life and business affairs as a mortician. The exception is a 1948 diary of an unidentified woman, most likely Geneva Miles. J.T. Miles' daily diary entries, which usually begin with a brief note about the weather, chronicle his activities in Atchison, the surrounding Kansas communities of Lawrence, Troy, Hiawatha, and also St. Joseph, Missouri. In addition to recording the struggles of an African American small

businessman in the mid-1900s, the diaries reveal the names of the deceased whom he embalmed and buried. Three printing blocks are housed with the diaries.

The collection's Business Papers date from 1927 to 1976 and include funeral home documents, promotional material, and newspaper clippings. Personal papers consist of Miles family birth and death records. Subject contents of these series are alphabetical, with chronological subarrangement of items within folders.

The photographs in the John Turner Miles Collection depict J.T. Miles and his daughter Etta Mae Hunter in family, business and civic settings. They are located at RH MS-P 588.

One oversized item, a 1983 wall calendar picturing Etta Mae as a young girl, is located at RH MS Q107.