

# Richmond Times-Dispatch

Wednesday, February 8, 2006

Ruth Nelson  
Tinsley

Ray  
Dandridge

Wyatt  
Tee Walker

Lucy Goode  
Brooks

Trey  
Songz

Curtis W.  
Harris

Edward P.  
Jones

Herb  
Scott

Robin C.  
Brooks

Lynda D.  
Woodruff

Sheila  
Johnson

Elizabeth  
Johnson-Rice

## BLACK HISTORY VIRGINIA PROFILES

**1818**

Brooks born

**1839**

Brooks marries

**1861**

Civil War begins

**1862**

Brooks' husband,  
who has already  
bought his own  
freedom, buys  
freedom of wife,  
three youngest  
children

**1865**

Civil War ends

**1867**

Richmond deeds  
lot for orphanage  
for former slave  
children

**1871**

Friends Asylum  
for Colored  
Orphans opens

**1900**

Brooks dies

## LUCY GOODE BROOKS

RICHMOND

By Olympia Meola

Times-Dispatch staff writer

**L**ucy Goode Brooks' aching love for her lost children has benefited Richmond's youth for 135 years.

The organization she started serves about 4,000 Richmond children and parents annually, yet few know her name.

Brooks was a mother, a wife, a community activist, a slave.

She was born in September 1818. Her mother was Judith Goode, a slave, and her father was a white man, writes John T. Kneebone in the Dictionary of Virginia Biography.

Brooks met her husband, Albert Royal Brooks, also a slave, in the 1830s. She taught him to read and helped him write passes that enabled him to visit her during their courtship, according to Kneebone.

The couple married in 1839.

They had 12 children, three of whom died young.

Lucy Brooks was devastated when the oldest of their children, Margaret Ann, was sold to an owner in Tennessee, where she died in 1862.

Brooks and her husband provided what comfort they could for the children who lived and were not sold. Freedom became their shared dream.

Albert Brooks worked in a Richmond tobacco factory. Some slaves were allowed to keep some of their wages. He saved enough money to buy his own freedom, then the freedom of his wife and their three youngest chil-



FRIENDS ASSOCIATION FOR CHILDREN

dren — he could not afford to buy all of them out of slavery.

After the Civil War ended in 1865, Lucy Brooks became aware of the plight of former slave children who had been sold away from their families and abandoned by former masters.

Brooks convinced a group she led — the

Ladies Sewing Circle for Charitable Works — that Richmond needed an orphanage for those parentless children. The Richmond Quaker Society of Friends sponsored the project and raised money.

In 1867 The Richmond City Council deeded a lot in Jackson Ward for the orphanage, and in 1871 the Friends Asylum for Colored Orphans opened at the corner of Saint Paul and Charity streets.

The successor to the Friends Asylum, now called the Friends Association for Children, operates in a building on the site where the orphanage stood.

The group also runs three other area branches offering child care, youth enrichment programs and family support.

"This organization is still here because it was erected on the right foundation, which is love," says Charlene Brown, leadership and training coordinator for Friends Association.

Brooks, who died in 1900, made her family a priority, and her selflessness manifested itself in concern and care for children. Brooks' selflessness has long outlived her.

"Through the pain of losing her children and then during horror of slavery, the capacity to love was still intact and unshattered," Brown says. "When you can come through all that . . . that just says a lot about her strength, her will.

"How can you not take something from the fabric of a woman so strong?"



SOURCES: Richmond Times-Dispatch  
"Dictionary of Virginia Biography: Volume 2"  
Friends Association for Children

LEARN MORE ► FriendsAssn.org

Also featured on  
NBC12 News



To see past profiles,  
visit TimesDispatch.com  
and type the keywords  
"black history" in the  
search box.

Next profile:  
**TREY SONGZ**  
Friday in Flair