

Williamson House

401 Cedar Street

Louisburg

John H. Williamson was born a slave in Covington, Georgia. He came to North Carolina at about 13 years of age as the property of Temperance Perry Williamson, for whom the Williamson House was built. A self-educated man, Williamson remained in Franklin County after the Civil War to pursue a career in politics. He was elected the representative from Franklin County to the North Carolina House in 1868, 1870, 1872, 1876, and 1887. In 1868 he was a member of the Constitutional Convention and in 1872 and 1884 was elected delegate to the National Republican Convention in Philadelphia.

Believing there was no hope for equal justice for African Americans in the North, Williamson introduced a bill in 1877 to the general assembly requesting that North Carolina's delegation to Congress encourage the federal government to reserve the territory beyond the Mississippi "for the sole and exclusive use and occupation of the colored race." Although Williamson's proposal was rejected, the bill attracted considerable attention. In 1881 Williamson founded the *Raleigh Banner*. He sold the paper shortly thereafter and founded the *Raleigh Gazette*, which was among the most influential black newspapers in the state. Both newspapers promoted the "advancement of the educational and industrial status of negroes in the state." [CB 6/20/75, 75001272]