



- *Activist*
- *Educator*
- *Founder*

Carrie Steele Logan

1829–1900

Inducted 1998

Carrie Steele Logan was a resourceful, enterprising and compassionate woman who used her \$100 a month salary as a stewardess for the Central Railroad to become one of the first black landowners in Atlanta. Then she founded an institution that has endured for more than a century, providing a home for more than 20,000 children over the years.

Born into slavery and orphaned as a young child, Mrs. Logan felt the hunger and heartache of the abandoned children she saw around her while working as a maid at Union Station in Atlanta. In 1886 she began placing the foundlings in a box car to play during the day. At night she took them to her own two bedroom home on the corner of Wheat Street and Auburn Avenue, where she gave them food, comfort and guidance.

She soon realized that her house was too small for the growing number of children she brought home. Having learned to read and write as a slave, she authored an autobiography and sold copies in the street to raise money for a larger facility. On October 12, 1888 she secured a charter for the Carrie Steele Orphans' Home. Then, after soliciting funds from the community and adding the money she made from selling her own home, she was able to purchase four acres away from the center of the city and erect a three-story brick orphanage. It was dedicated in 1892. Built at a cost of \$5,000, all of which had been raised through her efforts, it is the oldest black orphanage in the nation.

Her service as a volunteer probation officer reinforced her belief that orphans often fall prey to a life

of crime, so Mrs. Logan planned to prepare her children for adulthood, not just provide for their basic needs. All attended a school established at the home, and in addition to the regular curriculum they were instructed in domestic service and farm work. In his book *The Black Side*, E. B. Carter wrote that the children were "taught, first of all, to pray;" at the Home's Sunday

***"The mother of orphans.
She hath done what she
could."***

– Carrie Steele Logan
gravestone, Oakland
Cemetery, Atlanta

School "even the little ones can repeat chapters in the Bible." Mrs. Logan, he summarized, "placed stepping stones for the betterment of the race by striving to save the boys and girls."

In 1924 the Home became one of the original agencies supported by the Atlanta Community Chest (later, the United Way), a measure of financial security that would have pleased its founder. As chronicled by a contemporary author, Mrs. Logan had "had to address the City Council, juggle with legislative committees, and appear before large white congregations, calling for aid. Every request she made was favorably answered, and she was freely trusted in the handling of the money and the completion of the work." It is doubtless this reputation for integrity that created a foundation strong enough to last a century.

Carrie Steele married Josehia Logan, a "fine gentleman" from New York, in 1890, but very little other information about her life survives, including the autobiography that she sold to help pay for her project. It is not known, for example, whether she ever had children of her own, or what her life in slavery was like, aside from the unusual literary skills that she acquired. After she died in 1900 Mr. Logan carried on her work, remarried, and left his widow to continue after his death. Today, the Carrie Steele-Pitts Home still serves a hundred or so neglected, abused, abandoned or orphaned children. In its third location on Fairburn Road it consists of four cottages and a building which houses offices and dining facilities.

Carrie Steele Logan is buried in Oakland Cemetery in Atlanta; her gravestone is inscribed "The Mother of Orphans. She has done what she could."

"What she could" was a great deal. For her persevering compassion, her resourceful energy, her integrity and dedication, we are pleased to announce the selection of Carrie Steele Logan as a 1998 Georgia Woman of Achievement.

Additional Resources

Carrie Steele-Pitts Home

Carrie Steele-Pitts Home (Gwinnett Coalition Help Book)

Carrie Steele-Pitts Home 2003 Christmas Campaign

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Oakland Cemetery Burial Records
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