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## Charles W. Chesnutt Bookmark

Charles W. Chesnutt

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**CHARLES WADDELL CHESNUTT** (1858-1932), was the first successful American Negro novelist. Fayetteville, N. C. was the hometown of Chesnutt's parents but they had fled to Cleveland, Ohio because of the restrictions on free Negroes. It was here that Charles was born. After the Civil war, however, the family moved back to Fayetteville where Chesnutt grew up. Charles attended the Howard School and worked in his father's store. Here he heard the latest political developments discussed. Here also were heard stories of superstition and conjuration. Charles listened and learned. Much of the material was later used for his stories and novels. His keen sense of humor and sharp ear for dialect (the language spoken by many Negroes at that time) were manifest in many of his works. Charles later served as principal of the Howard School, known today as Fayetteville State University.

After Chesnutt's marriage in 1878, his concern about "closed doors" and racial prejudice in the South deepened. He decided to move his family to Cleveland, Ohio. Here he became a successful lawyer but he continued to write to "exalt his race" and protest racial prejudice. The "Goophered Grapevine", 1887, was the first work by a Negro accepted by the Atlantic Monthly. The *Conjure Woman*, 1889, was his first book.