

**Samuel Howard Archer (December 23, 1870 - January 15, 1941)**

**Early Architect of Morehouse College**

Samuel H. Archer—frankly, he was always “Big Boy” to us—was a man's man in and out of the classroom. In any of three roles as proctor of the dormitory, as football coach, or as mathematics professor, “Big Boy” always sought to have you play the man's role, and that was “fight, fight, fight” until you are conquered. No great and profound classic statements rolled from his lips; no recital of a world-wide experience illustrated his points. His was a home-spun wisdom, born of experience gleaned by the man farthest down. All of us understood that. This man was practical.

~Dr. Ira de A. Reid, “Three Negro Teachers”

The faculty at ABC had changed considerably since Hope arrived in 1898. The school's first African American president was greeted in 1906 by a virtually all-black faculty. Among its members was tall, dark, and athletic Samuel Howard Archer, who had come to ABC a year before Hope became president.

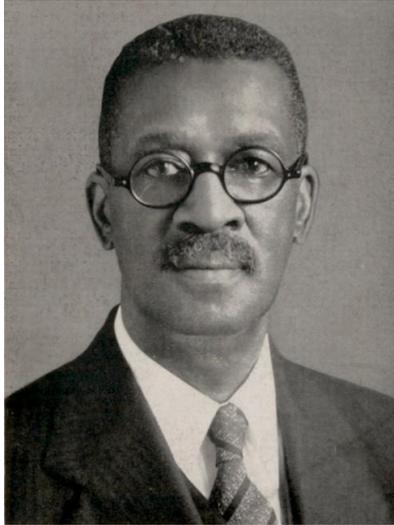
~Lerory Davis, *A Clashing of the Soul*

Like Socrates, Dr. Archer thought the unexamined life unworthy of a man...In actual fact, the Archer philosophy and influence represent, perhaps, the single most creative force in the lives of Morehouse men.

~Marc Moreland, “Samuel Howard Archer: Portrait of a Teacher”

My life? I can tell you about myself in one sentence: I was born December 23, 1870—and I haven't stopped living yet.

~Dr. Samuel Howard Archer



A thirty-four year old Samuel Howard Archer [ΩΨΦ, ΗΩ Chapter] arrived at then named Atlanta Baptist College<sup>1</sup> during the 1905-06 academic year after Roger Williams University—a prominent Black university in Nashville, Tennessee, where Archer held his first teaching position from 1902 to 1905—closed as the result of two destructive fires of suspicious origins.<sup>2</sup> He was appointed to the Atlanta Baptist faculty as the first John C. Martin Professor of Greek and English, and after only one year was appointed Chair of the Mathematics Department where he would remain until administrative duties brought him out of the classroom. A native of Petersburg, Virginia, Archer was a renaissance man who demonstrated his versatility by serving Morehouse College in several capacities during his [know your] 33 year tenure, including: professor of mathematics; professor of the classics; coach of the debate team; director of the summer school; purchasing agent; athletic director and head football coach (1905-1908, 1912-1915); acting president (1918-1919); dean (1920-1931); and as Morehouse's fifth president (1931-1937). As the successor to President John Hope II (1906-1931) and predecessor to President Benjamin Elijah Mays (1940-1967),<sup>3</sup> Archer advanced Hope's initiatives by working to improve race relations, strengthen Morehouse's academic programs, enhance its physical plant, and raise the College's level of prestige. Arguably his most visible contribution to Morehouse:

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<sup>1</sup> Founded during Reconstruction in 1867, Morehouse College was initially named Augusta Institute. In 1897, the institution changed its name to Atlanta Baptist College and granted its first baccalaureate degrees. The school changed its name for a third and final time to Morehouse College in 1913.

<sup>2</sup> See Jalen Blue, *A Blaze of History: A Prominent Black University that Endured Two Fires once was Located on the Peabody Campus*; John Hope, Morehouse's first Black president, had also been a faculty member at Roger Williams University.

<sup>3</sup> Charles Dubois Hubert was Morehouse's Acting President from 1937 to 1940. Three Omegas—Archer, Hubert, and Mays—consecutively occupied Morehouse's presidential office from 1931 to 1967.

Archer selected maroon and white as the school's official colors, the same as his alma mater, Colgate University.<sup>4</sup>

### *Maroon and White*

While Archer was teaching and studying at Wayland Academy in Virginia, he encountered two African-American alumni of Colgate, Rev. Joseph Edom Jones and David Nathaniel Vassar, who encouraged him to attend the Hamilton, New York, university; Archer was 27 years old when he enrolled at Colgate in 1898 and 32 when he graduated with the Class of 1902.<sup>5</sup> He was president of his junior class, and proved to be an exceptional guard on the varsity football team; likely he was the first African American to play football at Colgate. His handwritten notes indicate he took a broad undergraduate course of study that included subjects such as: ethics, logic, mathematics, latin and greek, church history, the life of Paul, the New Testament, and the teachings of Jesus. Archer was also a talented public speaker who won several oratorical awards—he won \$50 for a speech titled “The Ethical Ideal in American Life”—and was one of six students selected to speak during his commencement exercises. In a prize winning speech titled “The Disenfranchisement of the Negro,” Archer proclaimed, “Grant to him an equal opportunity with others to weave about his soul a character noble, exalted, divine.” He firmly believed education exalted humanity, a position that put him at odds with the vocational vision of Booker T. Washington and aligned him with the intellectualism of W.E.B. DuBois. While teaching at Roger Williams University in 1904, Archer wrote a letter to his Colgate classmates that promoted “an education which will take an undeveloped soul and make, not a carpenter or a blacksmith, but a MAN.” His philosophy that education was integral for developing principled manhood lay the cornerstone of his longstanding and influential Morehouse career.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Edward A Jones, *A Candle in the Dark: a History of Morehouse College* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1967), 12, 76; Morehouse College (Atlanta, Ga.). Letter from Morehouse College to W. E. B. Du Bois, July 28, 1924, W. E. B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312), Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries, Accessed at <https://credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/mums312-b168-i348>.

<sup>5</sup> New York State issued Archer a professional teaching certificate in addition to his bachelor's degree when he graduated in 1902. Colgate awarded Archer an honorary Doctor of Divinity in 1932.

<sup>6</sup> Inspirational Educator: Samuel Howard Archer, Accessed at <https://news.colgate.edu/scene/2017/11/samuel-howard-archer-president-morehouse-college.html>.

### *Archer's Athletics*

Samuel H. Archer and George L. Hayes (who became superintendent of the Indianapolis Public Schools) were two of the first known African Americans to earn varsity letters on Colgate's 1899 football team.<sup>7</sup> Archer's passion for football was further demonstrated as Head Coach of a winning team at Morehouse where football was introduced as an intercollegiate sport in 1900. Two students, Benjamin Griffith Brawley and Charles H. Willis, organized Morehouse's first team, which lost its first game to Clark Atlanta University 35 to 0.

Head Coach "Big Boy" Archer served as director of the athletic department and coached Morehouse football from 1905 to 1908 (pausing his athletic commitments to devote more time to other collegiate endeavors) and again from 1912 to 1915, with an overall winning record of 35–2. His teams won four consecutive championships 1905-1908. His 1905 and 1908 teams were never scored upon, and in 1906 and 1907 his teams held their opponents to a total of fourteen points; his 1912 team scored 205 points to the opponent's 9. Archer retired from full-time coaching at the end of the 1908 season but returned in 1912 to 1915. During his second head coaching period, two Morehouse athletic greats worked alongside Archer as assistant coaches, Mordecai W. Johnson, [C/O 1911] and John W. Davis [C/O 1911], who later became Presidents of Howard University and West Virginia State College, respectively. Archer's dynamism and effectiveness as a leader was also reflected in the contributions he made to establish the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference.<sup>8</sup>

Archer demonstrated his signature "snap, dash, and enthusiasm" as an example of proper conduct both on and off the gridiron. He engendered sportsmanship and teamwork in his players. On one occasion, he took a player out of the game after they executed a dirty play. Amidst his protest the player stated that he was only trying to win the game, to which Archer replied:

"Ah, son, I'd rather lose the game through clean playing than to win it through dirty playing."

To this, the guilty player had no rejoinder; and the moral message reached home. Over the years this basic, red-blooded honesty was a major factor in the building of Morehouse men.<sup>9</sup>

On November 14, 1964, Archer was posthumously elected to Morehouse College's Athletic Hall of Fame. Dean B.R. Brazeal [Ψ Spring 1925 • C/O 1927] said the following on the occasion of his election: "Capitalizing on his experiences as a varsity football player at Colgate University, Dr. Archer

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<sup>7</sup> The "Colgate Football" magazine lists Samuel Archer as a letter man in 1899.

<sup>8</sup> Jones, 284.

<sup>9</sup> Jones, 124.

coached football at Morehouse College during the periods 1905-1908 and 1912-1915. Good sportsmanship, teamwork, dash, and enthusiasm characterized his teams.”<sup>10</sup>

*A Man of Scholarship and Uplift*

As an instructor, Archer educated not just the minds of Morehouse students but their total personhood as well. The article “Samuel Howard Archer: Portrait of a Teacher” by Morehouse alum Marc Moreland [C/O 1929] illuminates how Archer’s pedagogical style, intelligence, strong character, charisma, integrity, and bold personality deeply impacted Morehouse’s collegiate body. Allow me to use the following passages from Moreland’s article to illustrate.

Samuel Howard Archer was more than the favorite teacher of several generations of Morehouse men; he was the great friend of youth everywhere.

One of the great teachers of this or any other time, Dr. Archer had a rare talent for handling young men. Of impressive appearance and of a wit as sharp as the fine edge of a seldom pleasure, he was, to his boys, as much man as any of them and a scholar who could at once amuse and instruct. Here indeed was a teacher who won young men and influenced them for good.

What was the secret of his influence and power as a teacher and a personality? The answer, I suspect, is to be found, broadly, in the disposition and discipline of the man’s life. That is to say, it is to be found in a generous endowment from nature—a bigness of heart and openness of mind which found expression in a big compassion and an open concern for life and its meaning; and in the deliberate, conscious, rational use he made of this endowment. More specifically, it is to be found in the unique integrity of the man, and the unity of value and action, of ideal and exertion; in his bold, informed, experimental view of life and its undertakings. Mordecai Johnson was right...when he called Samuel Howard Archer the finest integrity he had known.

A great believer, he set himself to join belief with project; a repository of a great fund of value, he was drawn on by all who felt the need to live the examined life. Like Socrates, Dr. Archer thought the unexamined life unworthy of a man.

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<sup>10</sup> Jones, 124.

Whether as athletic coach, vice president, dean, president, or teacher—Archer sought to foster a sense of integrity in his young men.

The Archer treatment, moreover, assumed the mystic nature of the human personality. His analytical powers were altogether too considerable to allow that the different accounts of man, the physical, the chemical, the physiological, the behavioristic, the psychoanalytic, the economic, the biological, the statistical, the anthropological, and the novelist's, even when 'supplemented with other accurate and complete but partial accounts worked up into a comprehensive survey,' constituted the truth about the human personality. A man's Self was more than any one of these aspects, and more than all of them together. A personality was something over and above their sum. The significance of a man equipped with such views, and strategically situated as a teacher and administrator in a preparatory school and college, is not hard to assess.

In actual fact, the Archer philosophy and influence represent, perhaps, the single most creative force in the lives of Morehouse men. Knock into a Morehouse man of the days of his years almost anywhere, and you will note the Archer influence on his speech, his manners, his reminiscences, his outlook on life. Without exception, these men will tell you that Dr. Archer was a man, and that he treated all his young men as human beings whose powers he sought to help release and organize.

A knowledge of the beauty and structure of ideas fed his sense of integrity. The man of integrity, he was accustomed to say, is a free spirit; and knowledge is freedom. The uninformed mind and the undisciplined will conspire against a man's integrity, as the informed mind and disciplined will contribute to it. He was decidedly Greek in his view that courage, honesty, goodness, and the other virtues are species of intelligence, indicia of the rule of reason. A dishonest football player, a lying student, or a shiftless one, represented a conspiracy against integrity. "Oh," he used to say, "if you gamble, you'll lie; if you'll lie, you'll steal; if you'll steal you may end up killing!" I suppose no one ever really knew how serious he was about all this. At any rate, his saying is usually brought the fellows to a fresh analysis of their conduct.

Failure or success in a given course was not the final word on a man and his endowments. And, I suspect, this evidence of firm and steady belief in the possibilities of his young men,

succeeding or failing for the time being, is the source of that continuing affection for the man and his works.<sup>11</sup>

It is not difficult to see Archer's imprint on Morehouse's fraternal culture. His presence on the campus made a significant and enduring impact on the College's values, ideals, and aspirations.

Affectionately known as "Big Boy" by Morehouse students yet never called such directly, Archer was imbued with a commanding presence, a great sense of humor, and a vibrant personality. He was "tall, dark, athletic, dynamic" with a "booming voice, a heart of gold, and unimpeachable honesty and integrity." Edward A. Jones describes Archer's personality at length in *A Candle in the Dark* (1967) and documents the ways he shaped Morehouse's collegiate nature.

Mr. Archer brought to the College a vigorous, dynamic personality, a delightful sense of humor, an impressive physique, and a folksy philosophy which not only endeared him to all who were touched by him but which have made him one of the truly legendary builders of the Morehouse of today.<sup>12</sup>

A gangling athletic figure more than six feet tall...A dynamic man, with a heart as big as his towering frame, Professor Archer's direct manner and booming voice have been known to strike terror in the timid student on first contact; but this terror was short-lived and soon gave way to admiration and devotion, for he was everybody's friend. Great warmth and understanding lay behind his blustering exterior. Endowed with a great sense of humor, he might have succeeded as a comedian like Bert Williams. As a teacher, Professor Archer was exacting, devoted, and effective—one of the truly great teachers in the history of the College.<sup>13</sup>

Dean Archer had a hands-on approach to molding the characters of his students and he took advantage of any opportunity he deemed instructive.

Back in the days when Morehouse boarding students had to sign up to leave the campus at night and were required to be back in the dorms by eleven o'clock, some men abused this privilege by returning after hours. Finding the entrance door locked, they would slip in via the fire escape. Alerted to this ruse, Dean Archer entered the room of a late entrant and, finding

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<sup>11</sup> Marc Moreland, "Samuel Howard Archer: Portrait of a Teacher," *Phylon* (1940-1956) 10, no. 4 (1949): 351-55.

<sup>12</sup> Jones, 76

<sup>13</sup> Jones, 123-124.

him out, got into his bead. When the culprit went into his room, exultant over his successful, surreptitious ingress to the dormitory (which he was sure would go undetected), on turning on the light he found “Big Boy” in his bed. As the boy stood in open-mouthed terror, Dean Archer said, “Oh, I’m just keeping your bed warm for you, son.” Then followed a lecture and the prescribed punishment.<sup>14</sup>

Archer uplifted Morehouse students even when he chose not to do so.

On another occasion, Dean Archer entered a room and surprised some boys playing cards, a forbidden activity in the 1920’s. One of the erring lads climbed out the window and hung by his hands to escape detection. But the sagacious, if in this case somewhat sadistic, Mr. Archer calmly sat down and waited until the dangling student, no longer able to hold on, fell a full story to the ground.

He was a legend and a pragmatist:

A volume could be written on the Archer legends, based on actual happenings. To boys who spoke of some hair as “good,” meaning the naturally straight variety, and other hair, in particular, the kinky type, as “bad” the beloved Dean was wont to say, “Ah, all hair is good that covers the head.”<sup>15</sup>

Any student who was brought before Archer due to “omissive or commissive mischief...came away feeling an uplift of spirit, even though he had been told to pack his trunk and go home for a spell.”<sup>16</sup> Archer’s nobility, humor, allegiance to truth, and respectful approach to uplifting youth made an indelible mark on his students and Morehouse’s overall institutional character.

Archer, alongside President Hope and Professor Benjamin Brawley, the first dean of Morehouse (1912-1920) and the College’s most prolific writer at the time, became celebrated as a “triumvirate” that became the “principal architects” of today’s modern Morehouse. “Each of these [three] men left his mark on the College by infusing into its traditions and personality something of himself.” In the words of Professor Kemper Harreld, “Hope furnished vision and culture. Brawley was the scholar who kept things in order and on time and was always talking about the ‘tone.’ Archer furnished the punch.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Jones, 124.

<sup>15</sup> Jones, 124-125.

<sup>16</sup> Moreland, 352.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Jones, 88, 91.

### *Dean (1918-1919) and Acting President (1920-1931)*

On August 24, 1918, when President Hope was called upon to travel overseas during World War I to assist Black soldiers' opposition and adjustment to the discriminatory practices of the United States Army,<sup>18</sup> Professor Archer reluctantly became acting president (he preferred teaching and coaching the football team), and was eager for President Hope to return.<sup>19</sup> During the war effort, Acting President Archer had to confront the problem of smoking among the S.A.T.C. men who were sent to train Morehouse students. In a letter to President George Rice Harvey of Virginia Union University, Archer writes:

We have had very little trouble with reference to smoking. Before I spoke to the Commanding Officer concerning smoking I called in the members of the student body and talked to them concerning the preserving of the traditions and the best things that we have obtained at Morehouse in other years and they refrained from smoking, swearing and other practices that are common in army barracks.<sup>20</sup>

Archer was acting president during a time that significantly reduced overall college enrollment in the United States among draft eligible men; only three men graduated with a B.A. degree in June, 1919, one of whom was Walter Richard Chivers [C/O 1919 • HΩ].<sup>21</sup>

Archer was relieved as acting president and appointed dean when President Hope returned from the theater of war in the first half of 1919. During the 1920-30 decade, Dean Archer and Dr. Hope made several significant faculty appointments who would shape Morehouse's pedagogy for years to follow. These appointments included: Walter R. Chivers, professor and eventual Chair of the Department of Sociology; Benjamin E. Mays [Ψ, Founder • Γ, June 5, 1919 • H • I • AΩ • EΩ] who joined the faculty in the fall of 1921 as a teacher of mathematics, psychology, and philosophy, and as coach of Morehouse's debate team; Claude B. Dansby [13 Ψ, (Principle) Founder • H, February 24, 1920 • C/O 1922] longstanding professor and eventual Chair of the Mathematics Department; Samuel M. Nabrit [Ψ Fall 1922 • C/O 1925], professor of biology, who would later become a Dean of Atlanta University, the President of Texas Southern University, and a member of the Atomic Energy Commission; and Brailsford R. Brazeal [Ψ Spring 1925 • C/O 1927], professor of economics who would eventually be appointed Dean of the College.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> See Leroy Davis, *A Clashing of the Soul: John Hope and the Dilemma of African American Leadership and Black Higher Education in the Early Twentieth Century* (Atlanta: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1998), 239.

<sup>19</sup> Jones, 99.

<sup>20</sup> Jones, 100.

<sup>21</sup> Jones, 102.

<sup>22</sup> Jones, 108-109.

Dr. Hope served as president until July 1931 and then passed on the helm of Morehouse leadership to his colleague and good friend, Samuel H. Archer.<sup>23</sup>

#### *5th President (1931-1937)*

President Archer led Morehouse during one of the most troublesome times in the College's history. The Stock Market Crash of 1929 followed by the Great Depression ushered in an era of global austerity that drastically impacted Archer's administration. Because African-Americans were the most vulnerable to the ebbs and flows of the U.S. economy, many parents could no longer afford to send their sons to college since many were forced to wait in bread lines to secure mere sustenance. Banks collapsed, economic progress was brought to a standstill, and the financial reforms of the New Deal led by President Franklin D. Roosevelt (1933-1945) took time to restore the American citizens' faith in the nation's economy. Amidst such turmoil Morehouse could hardly keep its doors open.

Total enrollment was reduced to 296 students in the 1932-33 academic year, and reduced even further to 214 in 1933-34.<sup>24</sup> Faculty salaries were cut and often paid late. On December 30, 1933, Archer wrote in a letter to John Hope:

As fiscal matters now stand, I do not see how Morehouse College can settle last year's indebtedness, balance this year's budget and look forward to a clear sheet for 1934-35. Under these circumstances the formal well-being of Morehouse College is threatened and its endowment campaign for \$600,000 is in jeopardy.<sup>25</sup>

The College's financial straits led Archer and the American Baptist Home Mission Society to request Atlanta University to assume fiscal responsibility and budgetary control of Morehouse. The University complied on April 14, 1934, but only in part, and did not accept fiscal responsibility for the College. Morehouse's reliance on Atlanta University remained until 1942 when President Mays asked for a change.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Archer and Hope became close confidants during Hope's administration. "Hope and Archer were extremely close, as were their families. Their sons sat virtually side by side in every classroom all through their school years." See Leroy Davis, *A Clashing of the Soul: John Hope and the Dilemma of African American Leadership and Black Higher Education in the Early Twentieth Century* (University of Georgia Press, 1998), 174, 336.

<sup>24</sup> Jones, 126.

<sup>25</sup> Jones, 122.

<sup>26</sup> "By the end of 1935, with Archer's approval, Hope had managed to merge the AU and Morehouse boards of trustees. The merger would allow him to keep watch over Morehouse's finances, as he had done from 1929 until his official resignation in 1931." See Davis, 335.

Yet despite the harsh challenges, Morehouse remained afloat during Archer's administration and even achieved some noteworthy accomplishments. The endowment reached the first \$1,000,000 mark, the result of a fundraising campaign that began during President Hope's administration. Academic standards on the campus were not relaxed. Teachers and students remained steadfast to their requirements and the debate team started to compete internationally. Morehouse was "qualifiedly accredited" by the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools in 1932, later becoming a full Association member in 1957 during the Mays presidency, and has remained fully accredited ever since. The first generation of alum were earning doctoral degrees from large research institutions, Samuel Nabrit included, the first Morehouse graduate to earn a PhD and the first African American to earn a PhD from Brown University (1932). According to Jones, "The credit for keeping the ship on course in those turbulent waters goes mainly to the man who was at the helm at that time: Samuel Howard Archer." The financial reality of the 1930s was grim, yet Morehouse stayed the course and weathered the storm albeit beleaguered and battered.<sup>27</sup>

Student enrollment began to normalize in 1934-35 and by 1936-37 total student enrollment was 443. When the war ended, the U.S. Government sponsored G.I. Bills provided a range of benefits to veterans returning from the war effort, resulting in swollen postwar enrollments at American colleges, Morehouse included, which had a total enrollment of 909 students. The College could not adequately accommodate so many students and had to construct temporary emergency buildings, one containing classrooms and the other two operating as dormitories. Morehouse returned to its normal enrollment levels averaging around 800 students in the late 1940s.<sup>28</sup>

### *Omega*

President Archer longed for the peace and quiet of retirement away from the ongoing demands and frustrations of college administration. The Board of Trustees approved his retirement in 1937 after he fell ill towards the end of his presidency and conferred him as President Emeritus in 1938. His appointed successor as Acting President was Charles Dubois Hubert [C/O 1909 • HΩ], a longstanding teacher in the School of Religion who also served as its Director.<sup>29</sup>

Samuel Howard Archer, who was born in Chesterfield County, Virginia, to Nelson and Kesiah Archer five years after the civil war had ended, died in Atlanta, Georgia, on January 15, 1941, at the age of seventy-one when his lingering illness proved terminal. James P. Brawley and Martin Luther King, Sr. were two of the honorary pallbearers at his funeral. He married Anna Courtney Johnson on

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<sup>27</sup> Jones, 127-128.

<sup>28</sup> Jones, 126.

<sup>29</sup> Jones, 138.

September 7, 1904, and had four children: Rosalind, Nelson Thomas, Leonard Courtney, and Samuel Howard Archer, Jr. All three of his sons attended Morehouse.<sup>30</sup>

Nelson Thomas [Y Spring 1929 • C/O 1930] earned an M.A. from Columbia University, became a faculty member at Prairie View A.M., and also worked for the juvenile courts of Atlanta. Leonard Courtney Archer [Y May 30, 1932 • C/O 1934] earned an M.A. from Toronto University, a PhD. from Ohio State University in 1959, and was a professor of English at Tennessee State University. He also published a workbook in 1963 titled *A Study of World Literature*. Samuel “Hank” Jr. [Y November 13, 1924 • C/O 1927 • E] earned an M.B.A. from New York University and became a veteran teacher in the Atlanta public school system. While attending Morehouse, Samuel “Hank” Jr. followed his father’s footsteps as an accomplished athlete and a man of consequence on the gridiron. *The Oracle* notes: “Brother Archer is an athlete—one of the leading athletes of the South, what with being All South basketball guard, All American mention in football and very versatile on the cinder path.”<sup>31</sup> He was also a football coach at Morehouse during the 1940s when the team’s winning record went into a sharp decline.

President Archer gave the best of himself to the College and was one of the principal builders of the modern Morehouse. He along with Hope and Brawley formed the triumvirate whose combined efforts established the institutional foundation that Dr. Benjamin E. Mays would build upon when he became president in July 1940.

The February 1941 *Morehouse Alumnus* printed a lengthy tribute to Dr. Archer that included several of the following excerpts from speeches delivered at his funeral.

He never sought recognition for his services, yet recognition came: Morehouse awarded him the honorary degree of Master of Arts in 1923. In 1832, this alma mater [Colgate] awarded him the Doctor of Divinity degree. In 1938, an award came from the Twenty-Seven Club of Atlanta in honor of his outstanding contribution as a citizen. Under Mr. Archer’s administration, which began in 1931, Morehouse received an “A” rating from the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools.

*Dr. Benjamin E. Mays:* For more than 1900 years Christian theology has insisted that the cardinal sin of mankind is selfishness—meaning that man makes himself the center of all that he thinks and all that he does; wherever he begins he ends in himself. But if the cardinal sin of mankind is selfishness, then the converse must be true: the cardinal virtue is unselfishness. And I stand before you today in the presence of my God, expressing the conviction that Samuel

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<sup>30</sup> Samuel Howard Archer, 1870-1941, “Samuel Howard Archer,” 1934/1941, Accessed at <http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/aaed/do:aar194.017-001-001>.

<sup>31</sup> *The Oracle*, November 1927, 106.

Howard Archer was as free of selfishness as any man I have ever known...It must have been men like Samuel Howard Archer of whom an eminent poet spoke when he said, "See how the mass of men worry themselves into nameless graves when here and there a great, unselfish soul forgets himself into immortality." This man forgot himself into immortality.

*Dr. Charles D. Hubert:* The deceased belonged to all of us. How universal was his thinking, how constant his activities! He was not simply interested in us here at Morehouse College, but his interest and his service were as broad as humanity.

*Spelman College President Florence M. Read:* When I think of Mr. Archer, the first trait or quality that comes into mind is his vigor of spirit. He was a whole person who put all of himself behind what he was saying and doing. His vitality and enthusiasm shone out in his words and in his actions. The next quality that comes to mind is his straightforwardness and honesty. He spoke out of honest convictions. He inspired in the boys whom he coached in football or baseball that liking for good sportsmanship which made them contemptuous of victories not won through fair play. Then, I think of Mr. Archer's Friendliness. It always did me good to talk with him. He had a way of using homely expressions that just seemed to hit the nail on the head. There was color and flavor in his comments and in his figures of speech. He was what I call a real person, one without sham or hypocrisy. He had shrewdness and keenness of mind and a great way of getting on with people. He was my friend, and I shall miss him.

*Dr. Mordeici Johnson:* He was a man who possessed a living and vigorous moral integrity of the most inspiring kind. For this I owe him the most precious debt which one man can owe to another. I shall be grateful to him as long as I live. I have named one of my sons after him and I shall continue to teach my students to know and revere him as I do.<sup>32</sup>

Among his personal papers is a handwritten letter from Dr. and Mrs. W.E.B. Du Bois to Archer's widow expressing "their own sense of personal loss at the death of an old friend."<sup>33</sup>

### *Archer Hall*

The ground-breaking for the Health and Physical Education Building took place on February 18, 1957, at 3:30pm. Dr. John Davis [C/O 1911] delivered the dedication speech titled "Morehouse

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<sup>32</sup> Jones, 148-149.

<sup>33</sup> Samuel Howard Archer, 1870-1941. "S.H. Archer-Letters of Condolence," 1941, Accessed at <http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/aaed/do:aar194.017-001-009>.

College, Full Speed Ahead." The building included a pool and in 1958 swimming was added to the Morehouse curriculum as requisite. At its April 1962 meeting, The Board of Trustees approved official names for campus buildings not previously named. The Health and Physical Education Building became the Samuel H. Archer Health and Physical Education Building (or Archer Hall) to honor the man who had served the College for thirty-three years.

Of all the athletic competition conducted at Archer Hall, none held greater historic significance than the September 2, 1970, boxing exhibition match between George Hill and Muhammad Ali, who was training for his October 26, 1970, match against Jerry Quarry. Ali was arrested and stripped of his heavyweight title in April 1967 after proclaiming that "he had no quarrel with them Viet cong" and thus refused to join the draft or publicly support the Vietnam War effort. The New York State Athletic Commission stripped Ali of his heavyweight title and suspended his boxing license. Other states were quick to follow suit. It would be three-and-a-half-years before Ali would reenter a professional boxing ring, a return Morehouse alumnus Leroy Johnson [C/O 1949] proved instrumental in orchestrating in the face of significant racist animus and resistance

On February, 23, 1996, Archer Hall was closed to renovate and update its facilities (which had noticeably declined over thirty-nine years), and to prepare for the opening of Forbes Arena, a 6,000 seat facility that was constructed as part of the \$51 million-plus dollar investment made by the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games to the Atlanta University Center. Forbes Arena, home court for the Maroon Tigers Basketball Team, is adjacent to Archer Hall, which was reopened c. 1999.

Today Archer All is the main athletic facility for Morehouse students. The 53,808 square foot provides students with a swimming pool, gymnasium, locker rooms, TV lounge, news programming, a game room, and conference rooms. Archer Hall is also home to the Student Government Association, Office of Student Life and Planning, *The Maroon Tiger* news publication, and *The Torch* yearbook.

### *Atlanta Public Schools*

Samuel Howard Archer High School was a high school in the northwestern part of Atlanta, was in operation from 1950 through 1995, and then merged with Harper High School to form Harper-Archer High School, which subsequently closed in 2002.

Harper-Archer Elementary School now stands on the same grounds where Harper-Archer High School once stood.

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