

**ADDRESS: 2221 S 5TH ST**

Name of Resource: Alain LeRoy Locke House

Review: Designation

Property Owner: Chip Samith & DY Chanthy

Nominator: Kerrian France, Historical Commission intern

Staff Contact: Dan Shachar-Krasnoff, [daniel.shachar-krasnoff@phila.gov](mailto:daniel.shachar-krasnoff@phila.gov)

**OVERVIEW:** This nomination proposes to designate the property at 2221 S. 5th Street and list it on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The nomination contends that the property is significant under Criterion for Designation A for its association with Alain LeRoy Locke; it was his childhood home from 1892 to 1899. The Locke family were significant members of Philadelphia's Black community. Alain LeRoy Locke was particularly significant as a trailblazer in higher education, philosophy, the "Father of the Harlem Renaissance," and in the LGBTQ+ community.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** The staff recommends that the nomination demonstrates that the property at 2221 S. 5<sup>th</sup> Street satisfies Criterion for Designation A.



**NOMINATION OF HISTORIC BUILDING, STRUCTURE, SITE, OR OBJECT  
PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

SUBMIT ALL ATTACHED MATERIALS ON PAPER AND IN ELECTRONIC FORM (CD, EMAIL, FLASH DRIVE)  
ELECTRONIC FILES MUST BE WORD OR WORD COMPATIBLE

**1. ADDRESS OF HISTORIC RESOURCE** *(must comply with an Office of Property Assessment address)*

Street address: 2221 S. 5th Street, Philadelphia, PA

Postal code: 19148

**2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

Historic Name: Alain LeRoy Locke House

Current/Common Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

Building

Structure

Site

Object

**4. PROPERTY INFORMATION**

Condition:  excellent  good  fair  poor  ruins

Occupancy:  occupied  vacant  under construction  unknown

Current use: Residential

**5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

*Please attach a narrative description and site/plot plan of the resource's boundaries.*

**6. DESCRIPTION**

*Please attach a narrative description and photographs of the resource's physical appearance, site, setting, and surroundings.*

**7. SIGNIFICANCE**

*Please attach a narrative Statement of Significance citing the Criteria for Designation the resource satisfies.*

Period of Significance (from year to year): from 1892 to 1899

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: 1890

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: \_\_\_\_\_

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: John McConaghy

Original owner: Mary Hawkins Locke

Other significant persons: Alain LeRoy Locke

**CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:**

The historic resource satisfies the following criteria for designation (check all that apply):

- (a) Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past; or,
- (b) Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or,
- (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen; or,
- (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- (f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation; or,
- (g) Is part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural or architectural motif; or,
- (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City; or,
- (i) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history; or
- (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

**8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

*Please attach a bibliography.*

**9. NOMINATOR**

Organization Philadelphia Historical Commission Date 16 December 2022

Name with Title Kerrian France, Historic and Cultural Resource Intern Email preservation@phila.gov

Street Address 1515, Arch Street, 13th Floor Telephone 215-686-7660

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, PA, 19102

Nominator  is  is not the property owner.

**PHC USE ONLY**

Date of Receipt: 16 December 2022

Correct-Complete  Incorrect-Incomplete Date: 28 December 2022

Date of Notice Issuance: 2/9/2023

Property Owner at Time of Notice:

Name: SAMTH CHIP & CHANTHA DY

Address: 2244 S 5TH ST

City: PHILADELPHIA State: PA Postal Code: 19148

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: \_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Final Action: \_\_\_\_\_

Designated  Rejected

## 2221 S. 5<sup>th</sup> Street: The Alain LeRoy Locke House

### 5. Boundary Description



Figure 1. The boundary identifying the parcel at 2221 S. 5<sup>th</sup> Street. Source: Atlas.

Situate on the East side of 5<sup>th</sup> Street at the distance of 47 feet Northward from the North side of Daly Street in the 39<sup>th</sup> Ward of the City of Philadelphia. Containing in front or breadth on the said 5<sup>th</sup> Street 15 feet and extending Eastward of that width in length or depth between lines parallel with Daly Street 62 feet 10  $\frac{1}{4}$  inches to a certain 3 feet wide alley running Northward and Southward from Tree Street to the said Daly Street. Being known as No. 2221 South 5<sup>th</sup> Street.

Map Registry Number: 031S180181

OPA Account: 392277900

## 6. Description



Figure 2. Front façade of 2221 S. 5<sup>th</sup> Street, December 2022.

The property at 2221 S. 5th Street is a two-story Queen Anne-style brick rowhouse located between Tree Street to the north and Daly Street to the south. The building shares party walls with similar two-story brick row houses on either side.

The front facade faces west and features an entrance located four steps above grade and vinyl one-over-one double-hung replacement windows on both floors. The original red brick façade remains on the second floor, while the first floor is a brighter orange brick which sits proud of the original façade, perhaps an infill of a storefront alteration. The main brick cornice features corbelling characteristic of the Queen Anne style. The first-floor replacement brick attempts to mimic the corbelling of the original cornice (Figure 3).



Figure 3. 2221 S. 5<sup>th</sup> Street, December 2022.

The sides of the building are shared party walls and therefore are not visible. Only a very small section of the rear of the building is visible from Daly Street (Figure 4). The rear of 2221 S. 5<sup>th</sup> Street is not visible at all from Tree Street to the north.



Figure 4. View of rear from Daly Street, December 2022. Only a very small section is visible, in white.



Figure 5. The stretch of rowhouses on S. 5th Street between Daly and Tree Streets. 2221 S. 5th Street is third from left, where a new building is being constructed on the corner of S. 5th and Tree Streets. December 2022.

## 7. Statement of Significance

The property at 2221 S. 5<sup>th</sup> Street is historically significant and should be listed individually on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The property satisfies Criterion for Designation A, as it has “significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or **is associated with the life of a person significant in the past,**” as enumerated in Section 14-1004 of the Philadelphia Code.

The property is associated with the life of Alain LeRoy Locke, as his childhood home in the 1890s. Locke and his family were significant members of Philadelphia’s Black community and the development of education. Locke continued this legacy, becoming a trailblazer in higher education and philosophy, the “Father of the Harlem Renaissance,” and a key figure in the LGBTQ+ community.



Figure 6. “Alain Locke,” 1906-1920. Source: Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Photographs and Prints Division, the New York Public Library.

### History of the Site

The building at 2221 S. 5<sup>th</sup> Street is attributed to builder John McConaghy and was constructed in 1890. Prior to this time, Philadelphia saw a significant increase in population throughout the late nineteenth century. The area where the site is located was previously within the Township of Moyamensing, and development mainly occurred north of the Township during the early nineteenth century. In 1854, Moyamensing officially became a part of Philadelphia. By the 1870s, communities from Europe, predominantly Italy and Eastern Europe, rapidly immigrated to Philadelphia. In addition, the city saw migration of African-Americans from southern states. These groups primarily settled in areas such as



South Philadelphia, leading to southward development of the area by the end of the century.<sup>1</sup> The following historic maps illustrate the development of the area from c. 1750 through 1895.



Figure 7. N. Scull and G. Heap, "A Map of Philadelphia and Parts Adjacent, 1750 (circa)." Source: Athenaeum of Philadelphia, accessed by the Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network, <https://www.philageohistory.org/tiles/viewer/>.



Figure 8. John Hills, "A plan of the City of Philadelphia and Environs, 1808." Source: Athenaeum of Philadelphia, accessed by the Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network, <https://www.philageohistory.org/tiles/viewer/>.

<sup>1</sup> Russell Frank Weigley, et al., *Philadelphia: A 300-Year History* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1982), 488-490.

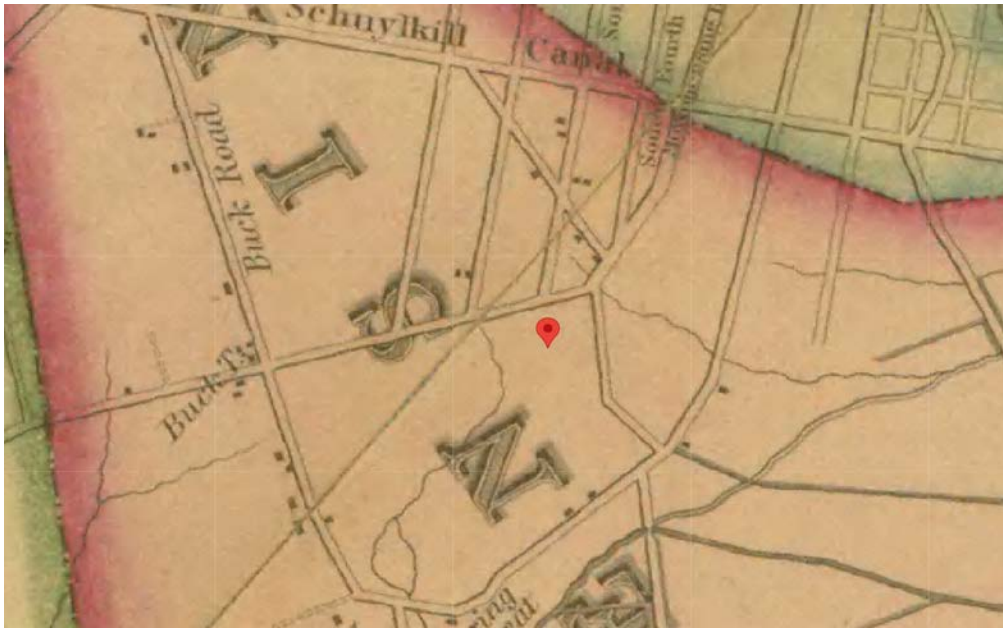


Figure 9. Charles Ellet, Jr., “A Map of the County of Philadelphia from Actual Survey, 1843.” Source: Map Collection Free Library of Philadelphia, accessed by the Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network, <https://www.philageohistory.org/tiles/viewer/>.



Figure 10. R. L. Barnes, “New Map of the Consolidated City of Philadelphia, 1855.” Source: Map Collection Free Library of Philadelphia, accessed by the Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network, <https://www.philageohistory.org/tiles/viewer/>.

### Development of 2221 S. 5<sup>th</sup> Street

Residential development in South Philadelphia occurred to accommodate for the increase in population, with the site’s area on S. 5<sup>th</sup> Street being deeded in 1889. The building was constructed a year later by builder John McConaghy. McConaghy was born in Antrim, Ireland in approximately 1845, immigrating to the U.S. in 1868.<sup>2</sup> McConaghy predominantly worked in Philadelphia, first being noted as a carpenter in the 1877 Philadelphia City Directory. As a builder, he worked on residential developments in South

<sup>2</sup> United States Census, 1900; Census Place: Springfield, Delaware, Pennsylvania; Roll: 1406; Page: 2; Enumeration District: 0185; FHL microfilm: 1241406.



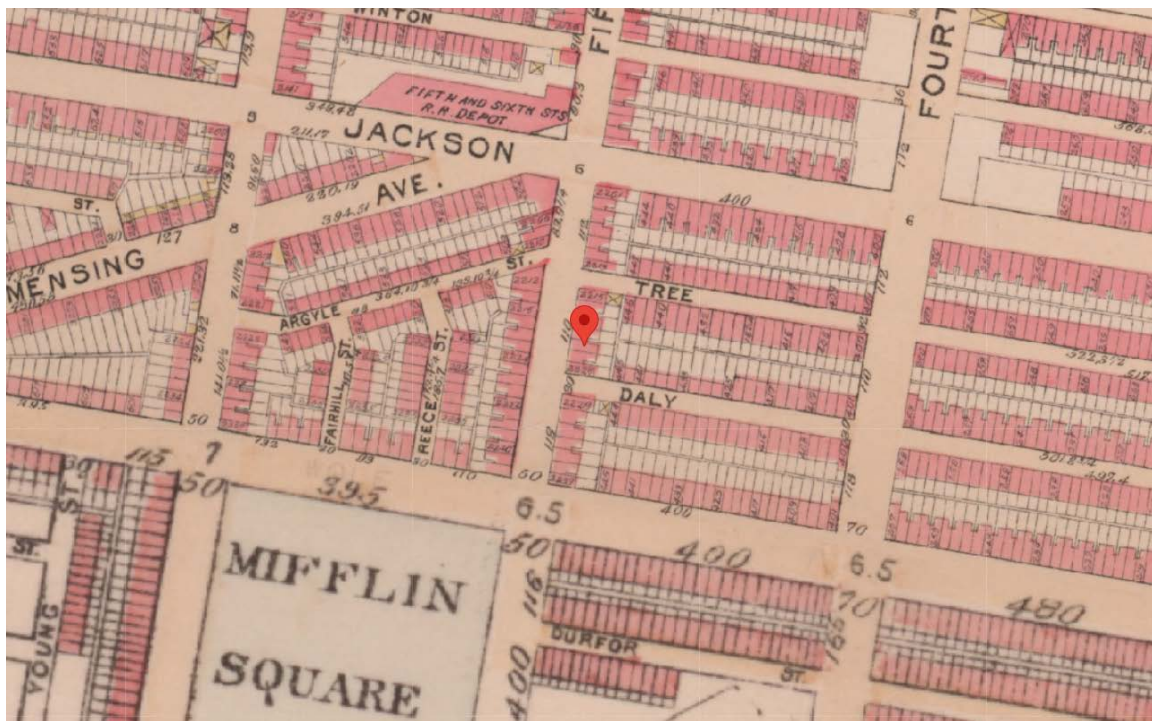


Figure 13. George W. and Walter S. Bromley, "Atlas of the City of Philadelphia, 1895." Source: Athenaeum of Philadelphia, accessed by the Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network, <https://www.philageohistory.org/tiles/viewer/>.

### Early Life and Family

Though Alain LeRoy Locke was known for his achievements in education and the Harlem Renaissance, his legacy began with the past accomplishments of his family. His grandfather, Ishmael Locke, was born in Salem, New Jersey in 1820 and excelled academically, later teaching in Salem and at a missionary school in Liberia. Ishmael Locke later received sponsorship from the Quaker Society of Friends to attend Cambridge University, becoming one of the first African-Americans to do so. Upon returning to the U.S. Ishmael taught at schools in Rhode Island and New Jersey, and was later selected as the principal for Philadelphia's Institute for Colored Youth.<sup>6</sup> The Institute was founded in 1837 and was the first high school dedicated to educating African-Americans in the United States. The Institute was founded by Richard Humphreys, who dedicated the finances of his will to have a group of Quakers form the school, initially at 716-718 Lombard Street, then later at 915 Bainbridge Street. As principal, Ishmael Locke educated gifted Black students, which included his son Pliny Locke and Pliny's future wife, Mary Hawkins. Pliny Locke, Alain's father, later taught at the Institute and at the Freedman's Bureau school in Tennessee. Pliny Locke later attended Howard University and graduated in the fourth class of the Law School.<sup>7</sup> Pliny found difficulty in finding employment opportunities for African-Americans in the law field and later became the first African-American to take the federal civil service exam. After passing the exam, Pliny Locke became the first African-American to work for the U.S. Postal Service.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Amy Cohen, "Alain LeRoy Locke: Father of the Harlem Renaissance and Philly LGBTQ Hero," Hidden City, June 2, 2021, <https://hiddencityphila.org/2021/06/alain-leroy-locke-father-of-the-harlem-renaissance-and-philly-lgbtq-hero/>.

<sup>7</sup> Cohen, "Alain LeRoy Locke: Father of the Harlem Renaissance and Philly LGBTQ Hero."

<sup>8</sup> William C. Bolivar, "Alain LeRoy Locke," *The A.M.E. Church Review* 24, no. 1 (1907): 17.



Figure 14. The Institute for Colored Youth, where Alain Locke's grandfather taught and both of his parents attended. Source: Hidden City: Exploring Philadelphia's Urban Landscape. Date unknown.

The family of Mary Hawkins had a strong military history, and they received the best education available at their time. Hawkins' grandfather, Charles Shorter, was a freeman born in approximately 1790 and fought in the War of 1812. Hawkins' uncle, Thomas Hawkins, fought in the Civil War and received a governmental medal. Mary also had a background in education and worked as a teacher.<sup>9</sup> Mary Hawkins and Pliny Locke married in 1879 and Alain Locke was born as Arthur LeRoy Locke on September 13, 1885. Locke also went by the nickname of "Roy" during his childhood. Mary instilled the importance of cultural institutions with her son, as they "attended concerts at the Academy of Music, heard Greek myths read aloud at the Free Library of Philadelphia, took in exhibits at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, learned about science at the Franklin Institute, and went to lectures at the Ethical Society."<sup>10</sup> During this time, the Locke family lived at S. 19<sup>th</sup> and Addison Streets, before moving to S. 6<sup>th</sup> and Tasker Streets in 1890. Pliny Locke worked as a night janitor to dedicate time to educating Arthur (Alain) at home until he passed away in 1891. A year later, Mary Hawkins Locke purchased the home at 2221 S. 5<sup>th</sup> Street where the family lived until 1899.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Bolivar, "Alain LeRoy Locke," 15.

<sup>10</sup> Cohen, "Alain LeRoy Locke: Father of the Harlem Renaissance and Philly LGBTQ Hero."

<sup>11</sup> Cohen, "Alain LeRoy Locke: Father of the Harlem Renaissance and Philly LGBTQ Hero."



As a teen, Arthur Locke changed his name to Alain, which he carried for the rest of his life. Locke was described as being “a sickly but bright child” that was very involved in his education.<sup>12</sup> Locke suffered from rheumatic fever throughout his childhood, which affected his physical abilities and led to his focus on academics. At the age of thirteen, he was admitted to Boys’ Central High School, now Benjamin Franklin High School and the Science Leadership Academy, where he later graduated second in his class. He then attended a teacher training school, the Philadelphia School of Pedagogy, and graduated first in his class.<sup>13</sup> Locke decided to shift from pursuing a career as an educator in Philadelphia due to a lack of opportunities for Black teachers, and decided to attend Harvard University to study philosophy.<sup>14</sup>

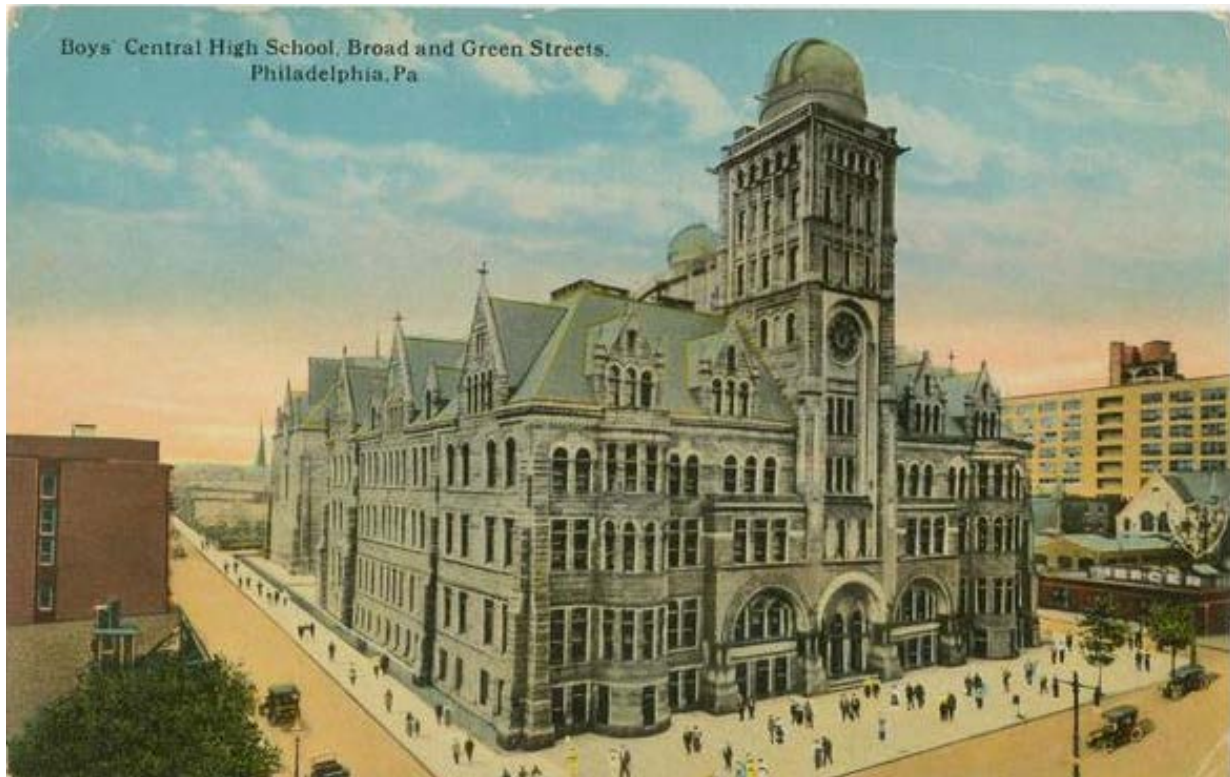


Figure 17. Postcard of Boys’ Central High School, where Locke attended school. Source: Library Company of Philadelphia, Brightbill postcards. 1900-1920.

### Leaving Philadelphia for Higher Education

At Harvard, Locke had other close colleagues that also attended Central High School, and broke barriers by becoming the first Black coxswain for their rowing team and excelled in his education by receiving the Bowdoin Prize for an English essay he wrote titled “Tennyson and His Literary Heritage.”<sup>15</sup> In 1907, Locke graduated magna cum laude and as a member of Phi Beta Kappa after only three years. Next, Locke continued his education at Hertford College at Oxford University for three years by becoming the first Black Rhodes Scholar and first known gay Rhodes Scholar.<sup>16</sup> At Oxford, he studied philosophy, literature, Greek, and Latin. While studying there, Locke faced significant adversity, with other American scholars refusing to live in the same college and stating they were “not ready to share their pedestal with a black

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<sup>12</sup> “Alain Locke (1885-1954),” Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, accessed October 18, 2022, <https://nmaahc.si.edu/alain-locke>.

<sup>13</sup> MSRC Staff, “Locke, Alain” (2015), *Manuscript Division Finding Aids*. 123, [https://dh.howard.edu/finaid\\_manu/123/](https://dh.howard.edu/finaid_manu/123/), 5.

<sup>14</sup> Cohen, “Alain LeRoy Locke: Father of the Harlem Renaissance and Philly LGBTQ Hero.”

<sup>15</sup> MSRC Staff, “Locke, Alain,” 5.

<sup>16</sup> “Alain Locke (1885-1954),” Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

man.”<sup>17</sup> Locke continued to study philosophy at the University of Berlin for two years before returning to the U.S. When he returned, he had a new interest in art, music, and theater based on his exposure to the cultural scene in Europe at the time and a global perspective on race relations.<sup>18</sup>



Figure 18. Alain Locke upon receiving the Rhodes scholarship. Source: *The A.M.E. Church Review*, vol. 24, no. 1, July 1907.

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<sup>17</sup> Frances Stead Seller, “The 60-year journey of the ashes of Alain Locke, father of the Harlem Renaissance,” *The Washington Post*, September 12, 2014.

<sup>18</sup> “Alain Leroy Locke Historical Marker,” Explore PA History, last modified 2019, <https://explorepahistory.com/hmarker.php?markerId=1-A-3F2>.





Figure 19. Alain Locke at the Oxford University Cosmopolitan Club (back row, fifth from left). Source: Howard University Moorland-Spingarn Research Center Negatives Collection.

Starting in 1912, Locke taught English at Howard University, where he led lectures such as “Race Contacts and Interracial Relations” before returning to Harvard to complete a Ph.D. in philosophy by 1918.<sup>19</sup> Locke then continued to teach at Howard University, forming one of the first philosophy departments at a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) and becoming the Head of the Department of Philosophy in 1921. During this time, Locke’s mother had moved from Camden, N.J., where she was teaching at an all-Black school, to Washington D.C. to be closer to Alain. Mary Hawkins Locke continued to live in Washington D.C. with Alain until her death in 1922.<sup>20</sup> In 1924, Locke took a short sabbatical to Sudan and Egypt until he returned to Howard.<sup>21</sup> At Howard, Locke’s advocacy work regarding equal pay for Black and White professors and his vision for Black institutions to have their own separate identity and interests led to disagreements with the university.<sup>22</sup> The administrators of the university felt that the school should be “non racial”, even disagreeing with Locke’s interest in adding a Black history course, eventually leading to Locke’s dismissal by the school in 1925. There were many protests regarding his dismissal, as Locke’s teachings on Black cultural awareness became widely popular.

During this time, Locke also became involved with the Bahá’í faith, starting in 1918. Locke was one of seven African-American members to complete the Bahá’í Historical Record card and was in close communication with the leaders of the faith.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> MSRC Staff, “Locke, Alain,” 5.

<sup>20</sup> Cohen, “Alain LeRoy Locke: Father of the Harlem Renaissance and Philly LGBTQ Hero.”

<sup>21</sup> MSRC Staff, “Locke, Alain,” 5.

<sup>22</sup> “Alain Locke Predicts New Advancement: Separate Standards Must Be Moved,” *The Chicago Defender*, February 25, 1928.

<sup>23</sup> Christopher Buck, “Alain Locke: the Pulitzer Prize, Legacy and Privacy,” Bahai Teachings, January 12, 2020, <https://bahaiteachings.org/alain-locke-the-pulitzer-prize-legacy-and-privacy/>.

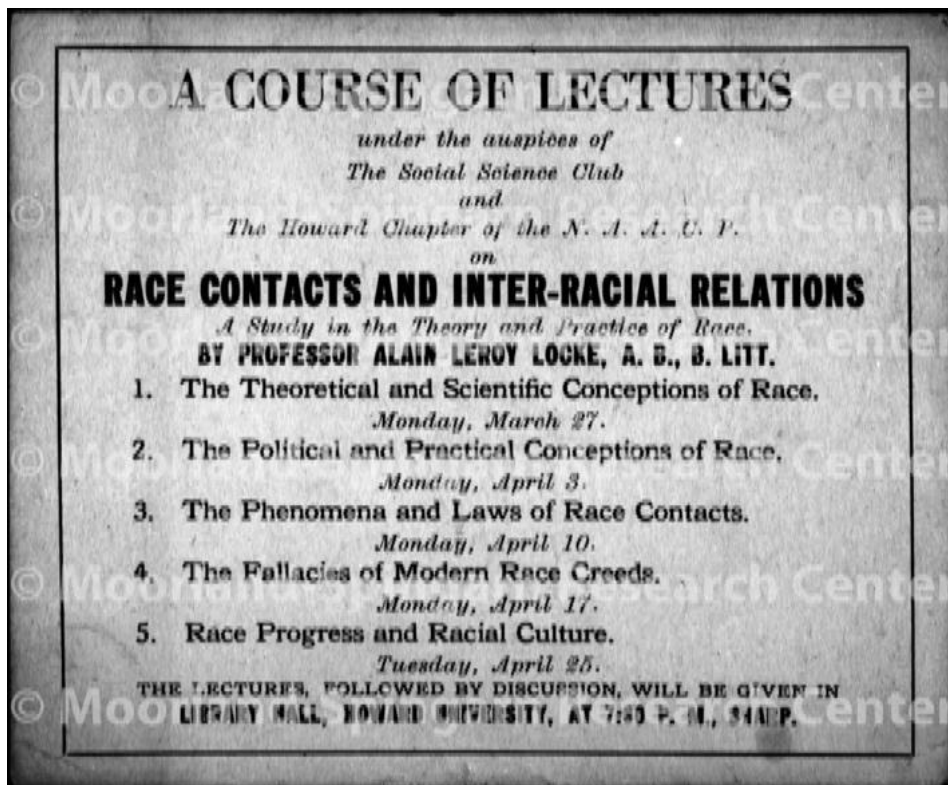


Figure 20. "Poster Proclaiming Course of Lectures by Alain L. Locke." Source: Howard University Moorland-Spingarn Research Center Negatives Collection.



Figure 21. Alain LeRoy Locke in his Harvard University doctoral graduation gown, 1918. Source: Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of American History Archives Center.

## Harlem Renaissance

After his dismissal from Howard University, Locke moved to New York City in the 1920s, where he became very involved in the promotion of Black culture, through critique and discussion with Black artists, musicians, and literary figures. Locke heralded this new movement and became known as the “Father of the Harlem Renaissance.” Locke earned recognition as a key figure predominantly through his anthology of work by Black creatives, *The New Negro: An Interpretation*, released in 1925.<sup>24</sup> The text became an initiator for what he called “The New Negro Movement” at the time, and highlighted writers, musicians, and artists in the Black community. The anthology featured work by 34 African-American and four White contributors.<sup>25</sup> The intent of the publication, and the larger movement, was to reflect the idea of the Black cultural elite that “racism could be ended by generating universal respect for the cultural expressions of blacks.”<sup>26</sup> Locke also contributed to the movement with mentorship of Black writers and the promotion of Black artists through traveling art exhibitions from his collection of African and African-American art.<sup>27</sup> During this time, Locke was associated with well-known individuals such as Langston Hughes, Richmond Barthé, Zora Neale Hurston, and Rene Maran. Locke was also a part of a group of philanthropists that became known as “The Six”, that included Jessie Redmon Fauset, Charles Johnson, Walter White, James Weldon Johnson, and Casper Holsteing.<sup>28</sup> Locke was also notably close friends with W.E.B. DuBois during this time.

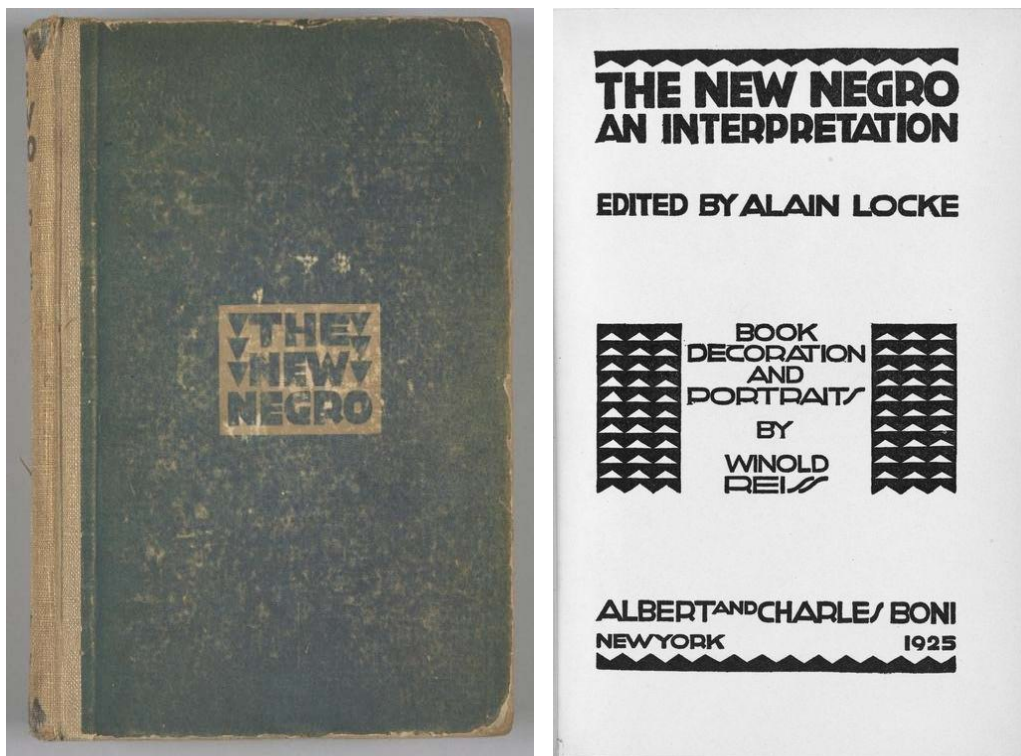


Figure 22. First edition of Alain Locke’s anthology, *The New Negro: An Interpretation*, 1925. Source: Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of African American History and Culture (left), Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Book Division, the New York Public Library (right).

<sup>24</sup> Cohen, “Alain LeRoy Locke: Father of the Harlem Renaissance and Philly LGBTQ Hero.”

<sup>25</sup> Alain Locke, *The New Negro: An Interpretation* (New York: Albert and Charles Boni, 1925).

<sup>26</sup> MSRC Staff, “Locke, Alain,” 5.

<sup>27</sup> Arthur Lubow, “Questioning the Place of Black Art in a White Man’s Collection,” *The New York Times*, August 5, 2022.

<sup>28</sup> Rodney Christopher, “Becoming a Movement,” *BLK* 3, no. 1 (1991): 15-19.

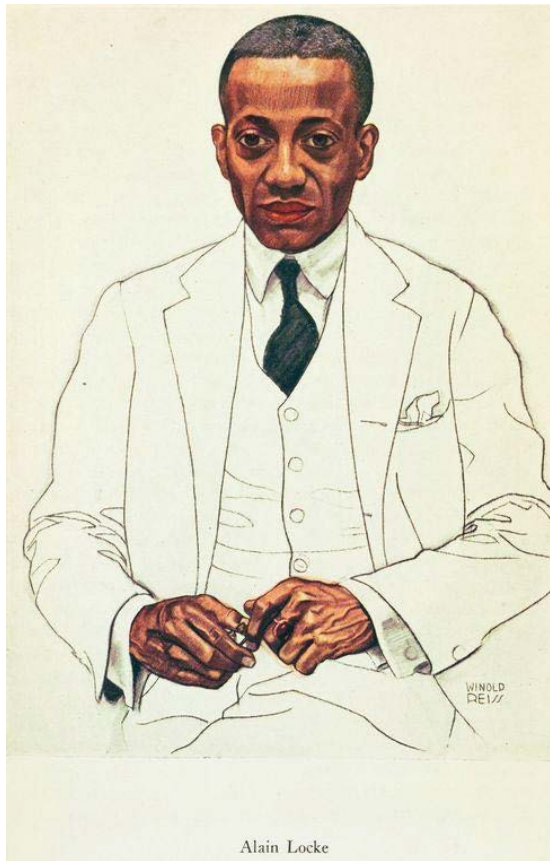


Figure 23. Winold Reiss, Portrait of Alain Locke, 1925. Source: Smithsonian Institution, The National Portrait Gallery.

Locke continued teaching by briefly serving as an exchange professor at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee from 1927 to 1928. Though Locke had no longer lived in Philadelphia since leaving for university, in 1927 he wrote a piece titled “Hail Philadelphia” for the first edition of the Philadelphia Black public-school literary journal, *Black Opals*. The *Black Opals* pamphlet was published in Philadelphia and associated with the Harlem Renaissance movement. Locke’s piece highlights Philadelphia as significant in Black family history and tradition, and he pushes the city’s Black youth to “break ground for the future without breaking faith with the past.”<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Cohen, “Alain LeRoy Locke: Father of the Harlem Renaissance and Philly LGBTQ Hero.”

## HAIL PHILADELPHIA

*Alain Locke*

**P**HILADELPHIA is the shrine of the Old Negro. More even than in Charleston or New Orleans, Baltimore or Boston, what there is of the tradition of breeding and respectability in the race lingers in the old Negro families of the city that was Tory before it was Quaker. Its faded daguerotypes stare stiffly down at all newcomers, including the New Negro (who we admit, is an upstart) —and ask, 'who was your grandfather?' and failing a ready answer—'who freed you?'

I was taught to sing 'Hail Philadelphia' (to the tune of the Russian anthem), to reverence my elders and fear God in my own village. But I hope Philadelphia youth will realize that the past can enslave more than the oppressor, and pride shackle stronger than prejudice. Vital creative thinking — inspired group living—must be done, and if necessary we must turn our backs on the past to face the future. The Negro needs background—tradition and the sense of breeding, to be sure, and it will be singularly happy if Philadelphia youth can break ground for the future without breaking faith with the past. That should be the privilege of their exceptional heritage. But if the birth of the New Negro among us halts in the shell of conservatism, threatens to suffocate in the close air of self complacency and snugness, then the egg shell must be smashed to pieces and the living thing freed. And more of them I hope will be ugly ducklings, children too strange for the bondage of barn yard provincialism, who shall some day fly in the face of the sun and seek the open seas.

Greetings to those of you who are daring new things. I want to sing a "Hail Philadelphia" that is less a chant for the dead and more a song for the living. For especially for the Negro, I believe in the "life to come."

Figure 24. Alain Locke's "Hail Philadelphia" piece in *Black Opals*, 1927. Source: The Free Library of Philadelphia.

### Later Life

In 1928, Locke returned to Washington D.C. to serve as the chair of Howard University's Philosophy department. At Howard, Locke worked on implementing a social sciences department and incorporating studies of Black-American life and his concepts on cultural pluralism into the reformed liberal-arts curriculum. Locke also influenced many students during his time at Howard, such as Ossie Davis, who

was inspired by Locke to pursue theater, and later had a trailblazing career that changed the industry for Black actors.<sup>30</sup>

In the 1930s, Locke continued his involvement in Black publications, creating the *Bronze Booklets on the History, Problems, and Cultural Contributions of the Negro* series. The booklet series was published by the Associates in Negro Folk Education (ANFE), in partnership with the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH) and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).<sup>31</sup> Some of the writers for the booklets included Ira Reid, Ralph Bunche, Sterling Brown, Eric Williams, T. Arnold Hill, and Locke himself, writing two volumes titled *The New Negro and his Music* and *Negro Art: Past and Present*. They became extremely successful “reading courses on various aspects of Afro-American history and culture,” that later became standard reference texts for African-American history education.<sup>32</sup> The ANFE was an organization that Locke helped to create, and he served as the secretary. Due to his contributions to adult education, Locke was also elected as the first Black president of the American Association for Adult Education (AAAE) in 1946.<sup>33</sup> Other organizations that Locke was involved in include the Progressive Education Association and the Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion. He also served on the editorial board of Phi Beta Kappa’s literary magazine, *The American Scholar*.<sup>34</sup> During this time, he also authored another popular book, *The Negro in America* in 1933.<sup>35</sup>



Figure 25. "Dr. Alain Locke, Dean of Philosophy, Howard University," 1936-37. Source: The National Archives Catalog, The Harmon Foundation Collection: Kenneth Space Photographs of the Activities of Southern Black Americans.

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<sup>30</sup> "Alain Leroy Locke Historical Marker," Explore PA History.

<sup>31</sup> MSRC Staff, "Locke, Alain," 5.

<sup>32</sup> "Alain Locke (1885-1954)," Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

<sup>33</sup> MSRC Staff, "Locke, Alain," 7.

<sup>34</sup> "Alain Leroy Locke Historical Marker," Explore PA History.

<sup>35</sup> MSRC Staff, "Locke, Alain," 5.



Figure 26. "Alain Locke." Photograph by Gordon Parks, 1941. The Gordon Parks Foundation.

Though Locke is widely celebrated for representing the LGBTQ+ community, throughout his life he was not fully open about his sexual orientation to the public.<sup>36</sup> Discriminatory laws and a hostile environment regarding his orientation led to Locke seeing his sexuality as a point of "vulnerable/invulnerability." Locke openly identified as gay among his peers, particularly supporting LGBTQ+ members of the Harlem Renaissance.<sup>37</sup> During the Renaissance, Locke was romantically linked to individuals such as Langston Hughes, Richmond Barthé, and Countee Cullen.<sup>38</sup> In the 1940s, Locke was connected to Maurice Russell, with whom he had his most successful and longest-lasting relationship. Russell was significantly younger than Locke and he worked in Philadelphia at the naval yard. They bonded over discussions of education in Philadelphia and the cultural events occurring in the city's Black community at the time.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> "Alain Locke (1885-1954)," Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

<sup>37</sup> Christopher, "Becoming a Movement," 15-19.

<sup>38</sup> Tobi Haslett, "The Man Who Led the Harlem Renaissance – And His Hidden Hungers," *The New Yorker*, May 14, 2018.

<sup>39</sup> Cohen, "Alain LeRoy Locke: Father of the Harlem Renaissance and Philly LGBTQ Hero."

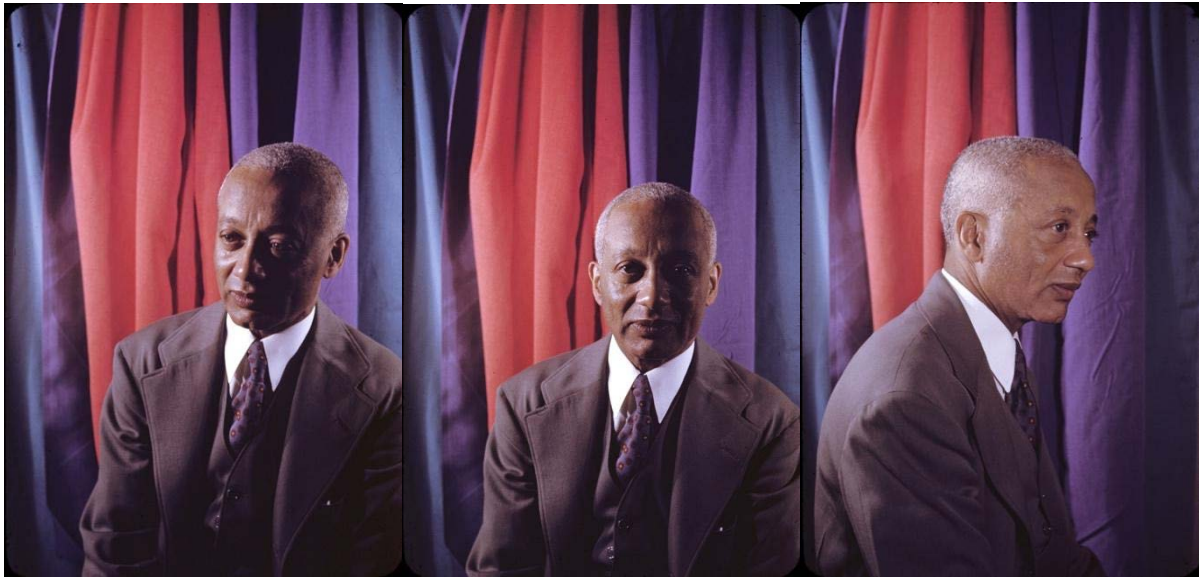


Figure 27. Carl Van Vechten's portraits of Alain Locke, 1941. Source: Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Carl Van Vechten Papers Relating to African American Arts and Letters.

In the 1940s, Locke continued writing, editing, and working in education. In 1942, Locke edited *When Peoples Meet: A Study in Race and Culture Contacts: Unfinished Business of Democracy* with Bernhard J. Stern and a *Survey Graphic* special edition. He served as an Inter-American exchange professor in Haiti in 1943, notably became the first Black man to hold tenure at a white American university by serving as a visiting professor of philosophy at the University of Wisconsin in 1946, served as a visiting professor at the New School for Social Research in 1947, and taught at the City College of New York from 1948 to 1949.<sup>40</sup> In 1953, Howard University honored Locke for his contributions in shaping the university as a center for the black intellectual community by awarding him a Doctor of Humane Letters degree.<sup>41</sup> At this time, he also helped establish the first Phi Beta Kappa chapter at an HBCU.

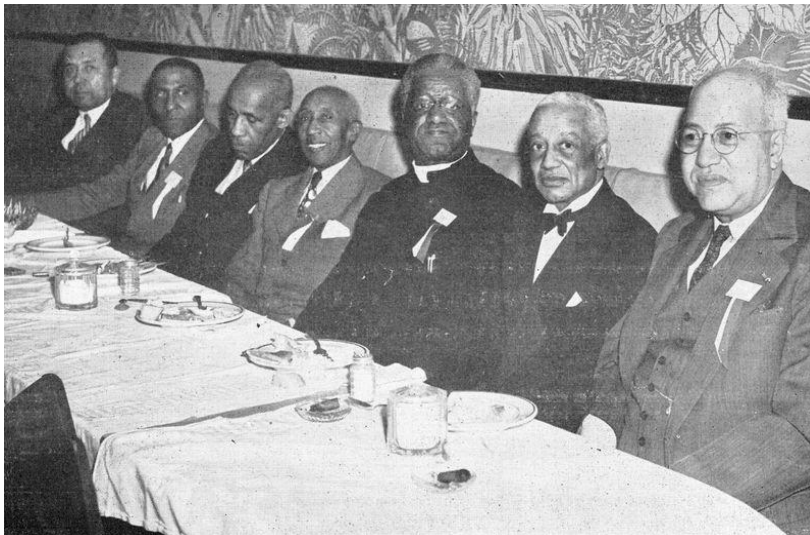


Figure 28. Alain Locke (second from right) at a dinner with brothers of Howard University's Phi Beta Sigma chapter, including two fraternity founders A. Langston Taylor (second from left) and Leonard F. Morse (third from right), 1949. Source: Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.

<sup>40</sup> MSRC Staff, "Locke, Alain," 5.

<sup>41</sup> MSRC Staff, "Locke, Alain," 4.





Figure 29. "Judge James S. Watson with Alain Locke, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Mbadwie, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Clarence Holt," 1935-1940. Source: Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Photographs and Prints Division, the New York Public Library.

After retiring from the university in 1953, Locke returned to New York and worked on *The Negro in American Culture*. On June 9, 1954, Locke passed from heart disease, which affected him since childhood.<sup>42</sup> Locke was cremated and given to several close friends including Harlem Renaissance anthropologist Dr. Arthur Fauset and Philadelphia Reverend Sadie Mitchell until being transferred to Howard University. After being held at the university, his remains were eventually buried at the Congressional Cemetery in Washington, D.C. On September 13, 2014.<sup>43</sup>

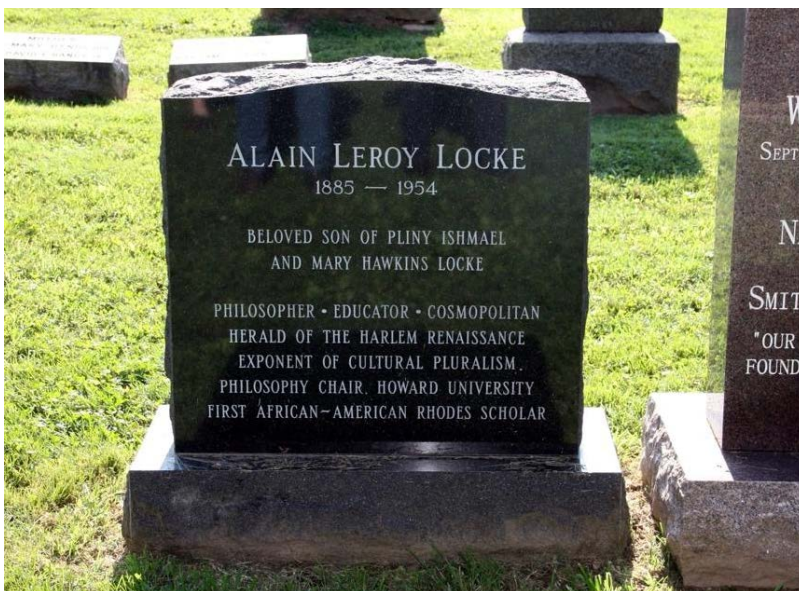


Figure 30. Gravestone of Alain LeRoy Locke.

<sup>42</sup> "Alain Locke dies in NYC: Distinguished retired HU prof," *Afro-American*, June 19, 1954.

<sup>43</sup> Seller, "The 60-year journey of the ashes of Alain Locke, father of the Harlem Renaissance."

## Commemoration and Legacy

Locke's legacy has been commemorated in many ways in his hometown of Philadelphia and the other locations where he lived and had a significant impact, including Washington D.C. and New York City. Five schools across the U.S. have been named after Locke, including The Alain Locke Public School in West Philadelphia, and others in Harlem, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Gary, Indiana, as well as Locke Hall at Howard University. At Howard University, an African studies program was implemented in 1954, the year of Locke's death, which was a change to the curriculum he strongly fought for during his years teaching there. That year, the university also received a large portion of Locke's estate, and the Howard University Gallery of Art currently holds Locke's African art collection, as well as the university's Moorland-Spangarn Research Center holding the "Alain Locke Papers."<sup>44</sup> *The Negro in American Culture* was also published posthumously in 1954 by Locke's friend Margaret Just Butcher, using his notes.



Figure 31. "African Art, Alain Leroy Locke Collection, Howard University Gallery of Art." Photograph by Faye Yan Zhang. Source: Dumbarton Oaks Mapping Cultural Philanthropy. Date unknown.

In Washington D.C., Locke's former residence at 1326 R Street NW has a historical marker recognizing his impact and contribution to the Black community as a part of the African American Heritage Trail by Cultural Tourism DC.<sup>45</sup> In Philadelphia, a historical marker was placed at 2221 S. 5<sup>th</sup> Street by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission in 1991.<sup>46</sup> According to the Commission, due to the location of the marker, it was continually accidentally hit by cars which prompted its removal. In 2021, a new marker dedicated to Locke's legacy was installed in front of the African American Museum of Philadelphia. The Equality Forum was largely involved in the new historical marker, with executive director Malcolm Lazin stating, "His influence is totally profound... this is a wonderful intersectionality of a gay and Black man who made an incredible mark on our country and the world."<sup>47</sup> A mural dedicated to Locke was painted by artist Ben Slow in 2018 at the intersection of Juniper and Spruce Streets.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Priyanka Menon and Faye Yan Zhang, "Alain Locke Collection of African Art," Dumbarton Oaks Mapping Cultural Philanthropy, accessed November 15, 2022, <https://www.doaks.org/resources/cultural-philanthropy/alain-locke-collection-of-african-art>.

<sup>45</sup> "Alain Locke Residence. African American Heritage Trail, Washington DC. 1326 R Street, NW," The Historical Marker Database, accessed October 25, 2022, <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=110915>.

<sup>46</sup> Charles Blockson, *Philadelphia's Guide: African-American State Historical Markers* (Philadelphia: Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection, 1992).

<sup>47</sup> Ximena Conde, "Philadelphian Alain LeRoy Locke, the Father of the Harlem Renaissance, gets new historical marker in Philly," WHYY News, October 3, 2021, <https://whyy.org/articles/philadelphian-alain-leroy-locke-the-father-of-the-harlem-renaissance-gets-new-historical-marker-in-philly/>.

<sup>48</sup> Cohen, "Alain LeRoy Locke: Father of the Harlem Renaissance and Philly LGBTQ Hero."



Figure 32. Historical markers dedicated to Alain Locke in Philadelphia (left) and Washington D.C. (right). Photographed by Devry Becker Jones in 2022 and 2017, respectively. Sources: The Historical Marker Database.



Figure 33. Mural of Alain Locke by artist Ben Slow in Philadelphia. Photograph by Michael Bixler, 2018. Source: Hidden City.

## Conclusion

Locke called himself “a philosophical midwife to a generation of young poets, writers and artists,” which accurately describes not only his influence in the Harlem Renaissance, but his lasting impact for generations afterward.<sup>49</sup> Starting with his prominent family in Philadelphia, they created a standard within the Black community, breaking down barriers and emphasizing the importance of education.

<sup>49</sup> Leonard Harris, ed, *The Philosophy of Alain Locke: Harlem Renaissance and Beyond* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989).

Throughout his lifetime, Locke's academic excellence and scholarship in Philadelphia, Washington D.C., and Europe led to a 40+ year career teaching philosophy, restructuring curricula to recenter Black experiences, and sharing his concept of cultural pluralism through lectures and mentorship. Locke's writings and exhibits of Black art led to his leading role in the Harlem Renaissance, where he was also able to support LGBTQ+ creatives and explore his own sexuality. After his passing, he continues to be a prominent figure in the Black and LGBTQ+ communities, as shown in the various ways he has been widely honored, notably in his hometown of Philadelphia. In 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stated, "We're going to let our children know that the only philosophers that lived were not Plato and Aristotle, but W.E.B. Du Bois and Alain Locke came through the universe."<sup>50</sup> Even with his widespread impact, Locke always honored his identity as a Philadelphia native. The Alain LeRoy Locke House at 2221 S. 5<sup>th</sup> Street has been recognized as his childhood home and continues to be significant owing to its association with his impactful life.

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<sup>50</sup> Buck, "Alain Locke: the Pulitzer Prize, Legacy and Privacy."

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