

ULYSSES AND VIVIENNE GRAY

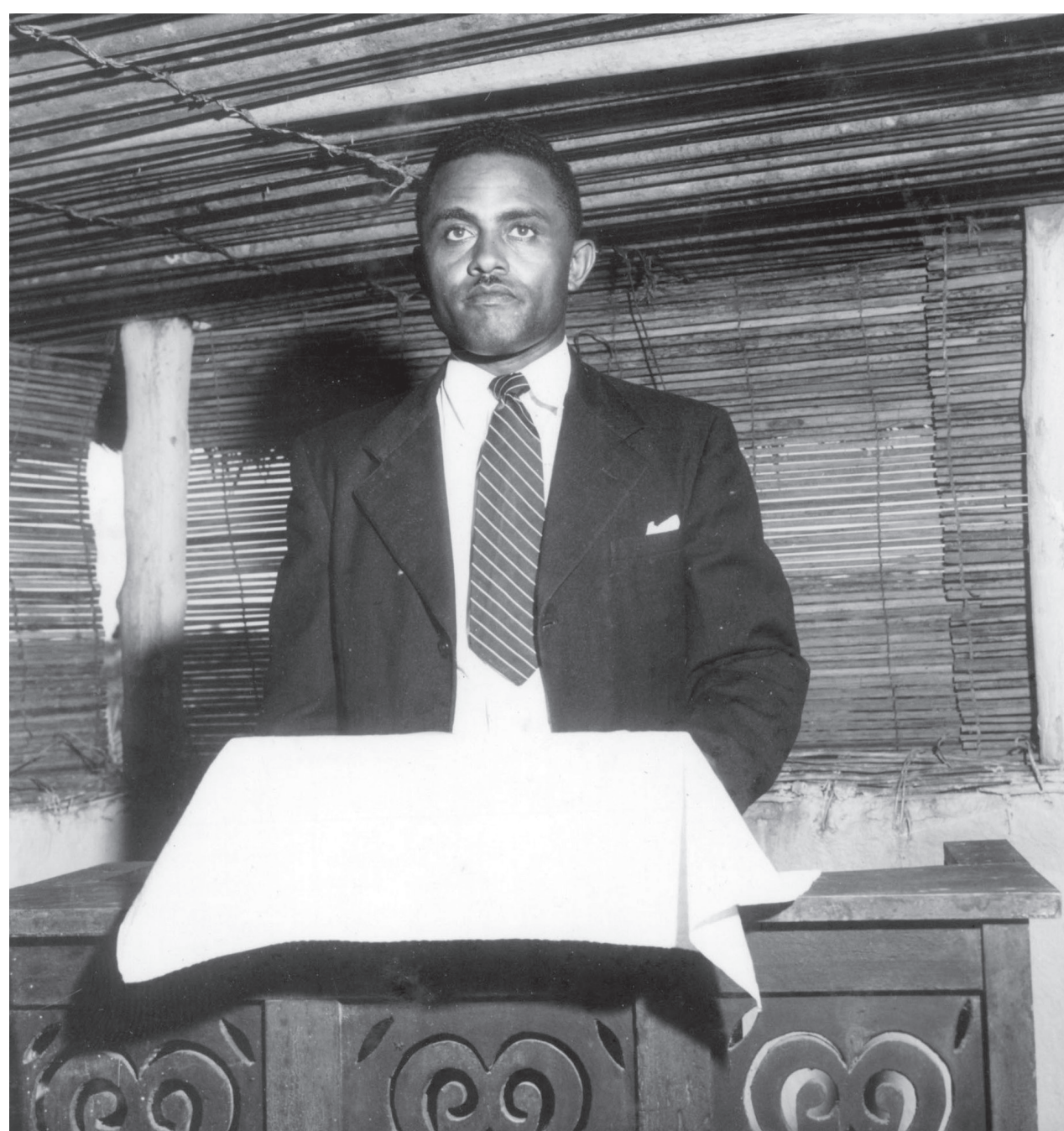


Photo: General Commission on Archives and History

The Rev. Ulysses S. Gray, missionary pastor and agriculturalist in Gbarnga, Liberia, in his pulpit.

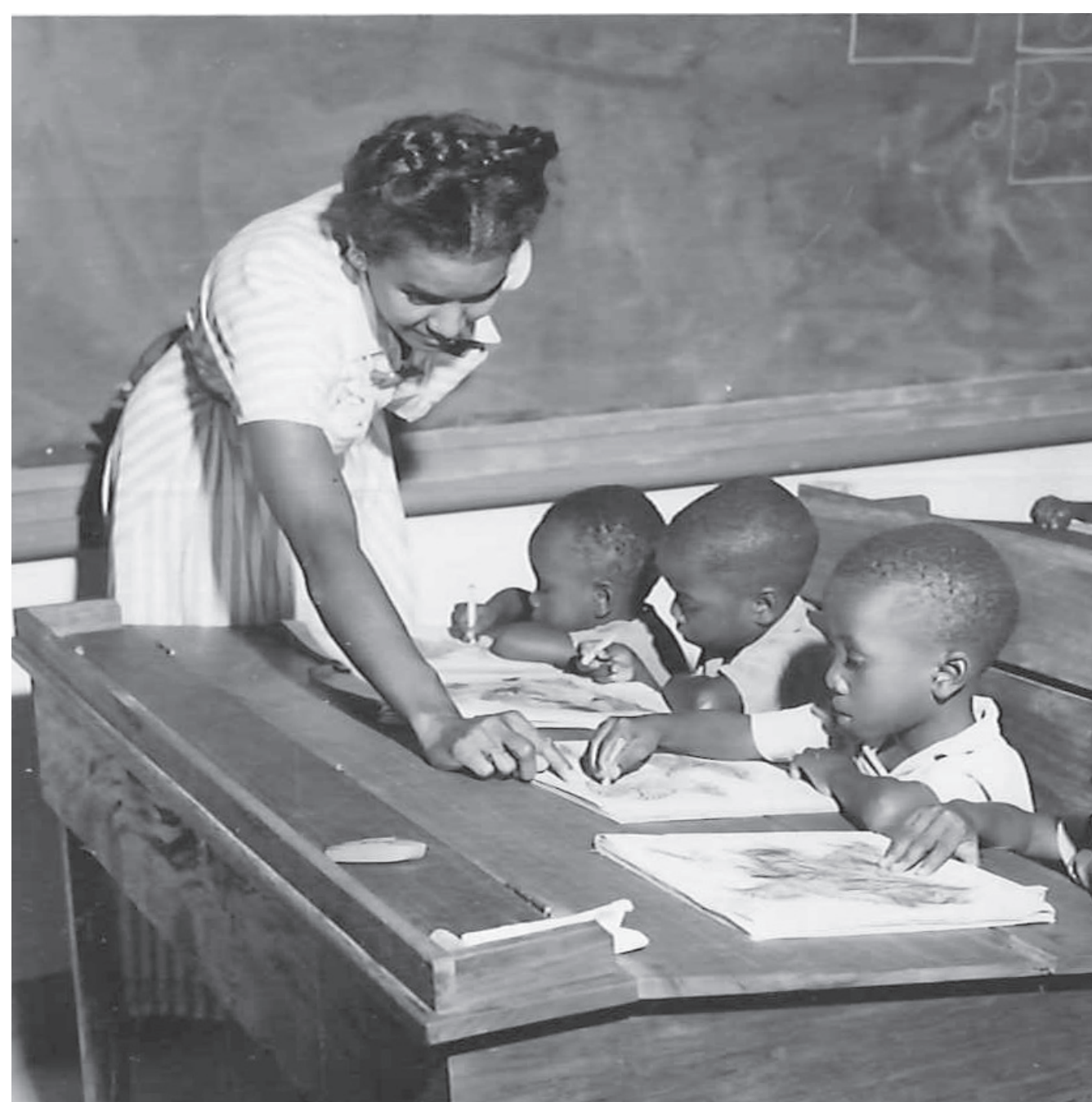


Photo: General Commission on Archives and History

Vivienne Gray teaching in her classroom in the 1950s, Harriet Tubman school.

African-American Missionaries to Liberia

The Rev. Ulysses Samuel Gray and Vivienne (Newton) Gray were one of a few African-American couples assigned as international missionaries by the Board of Missions of The Methodist Church in the 1940s. They served at the Gbarnga Mission Station in Bong County, Liberia, for nearly 27 years (1948–1974).

Ulysses, known as “U.S.,” was mission superintendent, pastor of the Gbarnga church, agricultural advisor and founder of the Gbarnga School of Theology, where he taught and encouraged young pastors. Vivienne, a teacher, established a high school in Gbarnga. She acted as a consultant for the Woman’s Society of Christian Service and taught child care, home management and literacy classes for adults. Vivienne was named Liberian “teacher of the year” in 1968.

U.S. was born in 1913 and received his local preacher’s license at age 13. He attended Wiley College in Marshall, Texas, and graduated from Clark College and Gammon Theological Seminary in Atlanta, where he met Vivienne. He was ordained by the Texas Annual Conference. Before missionary service, Vivienne was a school teacher, religious social worker, field secretary with the Woman’s Division (1945–1948), and director of alumni affairs at Wiley College.

The Grays were “parents” to a host of Liberian youngsters who became leaders in civic life and the church. The couple was honored in 1974 with the Liberian Star, the highest civilian award of the Liberian government, for their nearly 27 years of work in the country. After retirement, the Grays returned to the United States, where he resumed pastoral ministry in the Texas Conference.