



Bio & Character Sketch of Lawyer NAACP Committee **George Vaughn**

March 9, 1880 – August 17, 1949

Age in April, 1923: 43 Age at Death: 69

Age when picture was taken: est. 40

George Vaughn was an American lawyer and judge active in Saint Louis, Missouri. As a lawyer he was involved in a prominent civil rights case involving housing discrimination, most notably *Shelly v. Kraemer*, in which the eviction of an African American family from a white neighborhood was upheld By the Missouri Supreme Court, but subsequently overruled by the US Supreme Court.

Vaughn was born in Columbus, Kentucky, on March 9, 1880, the son of former slaves Monroe and Josephine Vaughn. Little is known of his early life. He attended Lane College in Jackson, Tennessee, and completed his legal training at Walden University in Nashville. Early in the twentieth century he established a law practice in St. Louis, where he became involved in local politics. He served as a first lieutenant in WW 1.

In 1919, Vaughn, along with Joseph E. Mitchell and Charles Turpin formed the Citizens Liberty League to help identify and elect for African Americans to public office. Their activism resulted in the election of Turpin to the position of St. Louis constable in 1910, the first Black candidate elected to a public office in Missouri.

After serving as an officer in an artillery unit during World War I, Vaughn resumed his law practice in St. Louis. He also became active in the St. Louis chapter of the NAACP and served for many years as chairman of its executive committee. He was an ardent antilynching crusader and investigated the [1923 lynching of James T. Scott](#) in Columbia, Missouri. He later wrote a report of the incident for the national office of the NAACP that appeared in the *St. Louis Argus* on May 4, 1923.

Vaughn was appointed Justice of the Peace for the 4th District of Saint Louis in 1936. He was also a Delegate to the Democratic National Convention.

Vaughn was a founding member and first president of the Mound City Bar Association. He was also active in the African-Methodist Episcopal Church and in several fraternal lodges, including the Masons and the Elks. George L. Vaughn died at his home in St. Louis on August 17, 1949. Burial was in the Washington Park Cemetery in St. Louis. He was survived by his wife, Eva Vaughn; a son, George L. Vaughn Jr.; and two daughters, Mary and Carolyn. His son George also became a lawyer.

In 1957, the George L. Vaughn Public Housing Project, a 660 unit housing complex, was posthumously named in his honor.



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Character Sketch

In the screenplay, George Vaughn is the guiding voice that carries us through the story, from the very beginning after the glimpse of the lynching, all the way through to the verdict in George Barkwell's trial and the closing follow through comments of each of the main characters .

In the few scenes in which Vaughn appears and has a speaking role, he is confident, charming and knowledgeable. He is a proud black man, unbent by any white racists around him. On the train platform, while Rev. Caston's head is bent down, averting his eyes to white passengers who are disembarking the train, Vaughn's head and eyes are held high.

Vaughn is well dressed, well connected (he knows DuBois) and he is a shrewd lawyer with a very firm sense of right and wrong.