

Forgotten history

Matthew Washington Bullock

Malden High School football coach, 1905-06

“The season does not begin until Thanksgiving Day, and should we lose that game my work for the season will be a rank failure.” – Matthew Bullock

Bullock’s exhortation to Malden fans prior to the 1906 Malden-Medford game embodies the Golden Tornado spirit that resonates to this day. But his personal story is like thousands that are fascinating in detail but forgotten by time.

His middle name was Washington, a name not uncommon to blacks as slavery came to an end after the Civil War. Bullock was born in 1881 in Dabney, N.C., to slave parents who fled the South in 1889 to Massachusetts with seven children and \$10 in cash.

Bullock was a sports standout at Everett High School. His father gave him \$50 after graduation and told him he was now on his own. In 1900 he enrolled in Dartmouth College from which he graduated in 1904, leaving behind again a record of excellence in sports and academics.

To help pay his way through Harvard Law School, from which he graduated in 1907, records indicate Bullock coached football at MHS for at least two years. He was much admired by his players, and “*The Oracle*,” the bi-weekly newspaper published by the MHS Literary Society, said in Oct. 26, 1906, “If Malden does not win out this year in football it will not be Bullock’s fault.”

Medford won 6-5.

The Dartmouth College website says Bullock is believed to be the first black man to hold the head coach position at a pre-dominantly white institution (both collegiate and high school).

Bullock was admitted to the Massachusetts Bar in 1917, and was elected to the state House of Representatives in 1922. He died in 1972 at the age of 91.

Coach Bullock – you’re no longer forgotten.