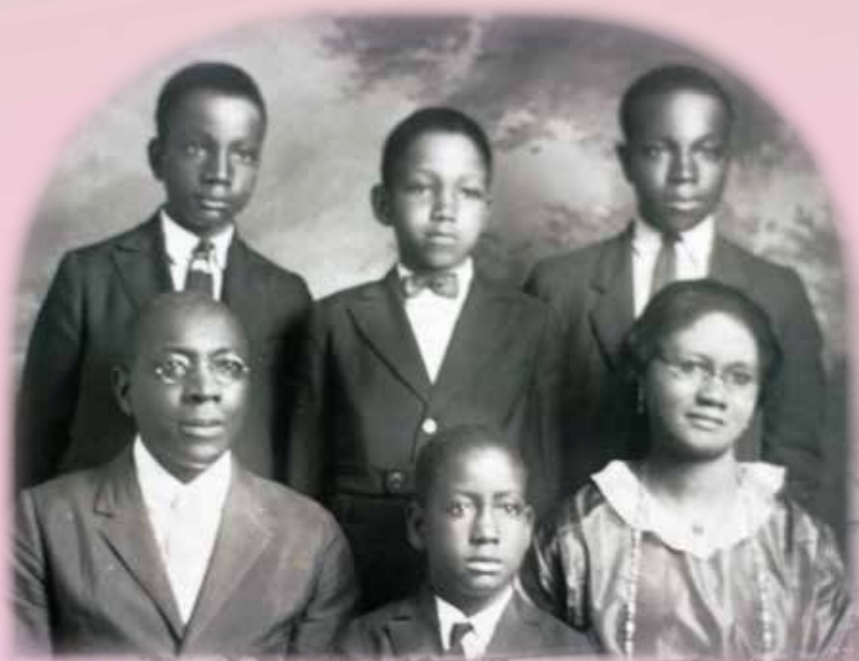


# ROBERTA'S BOYS



## FOUR PITTS BROTHERS OF MACON, GA

ANN B. CARLSON

FOR

THE PITTS FAMILY TRUST

*Home*

Four Men  
and a Woman

Just four men –  
Once, they were babies  
Toddling on her knee,

But now –  
Grown to manhood,  
They push their way  
into the world  
United, undaunted  
and unafraid,  
Despite the color of  
their skin –

Just four men,  
Her sons!

The Woman –  
Once she shielded them  
From frustrations of despair  
and trouble;  
Placed before them ideals –  
ambition!

Now –  
Waning years find her  
standing by  
With prayer and spirit,  
Still hoping!

Their Mother–  
Four Houses and a Builder!  
A Woman and her sons!

Willis Pitts, Jr.  
(September 1938)

# ROBERTA'S BOYS

Proceeds from this book will go,  
in part, to support creativity in  
the arts, humanities, and sciences  
as they relate to cultural diversity  
in its broadest sense.

ROBERTA'S BOYS  
FOUR PITTS BROTHERS  
OF MACON, GA

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*Ann B Carlson*

for

The Pitts Family Trust



Ann Carlson  
Publishing

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*for Ray*

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I am grateful to Ethleen Brooks and Barbara Dortch, Pitts relatives and avid genealogists, who shared with me their research on the family's more distant relations. I had many enjoyable discussions with other Pitts relatives and friends, as well as with several Macon, Georgia, residents who gave me valuable insights into the era during which the Pitts family made that city their home. The staff of Macon's 1842 Inn, where I stayed during my research trips, also deserve special mention for their warm welcome and helpfulness.

During the too-many-months I spent on this project my partner, Jan, has been patient, supportive, and my most enthusiastic cheerleader. Our cats, Amí and Sophia, were also enthusiastically helpful: habitually lying on the keyboard or sitting directly in front of the screen to enhance my writing experience. They made long hours in front of the keyboard probably less productive, but significantly more entertaining.

Finally and most of all, I feel deep gratitude to the men and women about whom I have written. Their lives are an inspiration to me. I hope what I have written will allow them to continue to inspire future generations.



## A Note on Style and Sources

This book contains a considerable amount of material that is quoted directly from family documents, memoirs, letters, and taped interviews. To visually assist the reader in navigating the frequent switches between my writing and direct quotations, I have adopted the convention of indenting and italicizing all but the shortest bits of quoted texts. Where external sources are known and available, even if only in the institutional archives of the men's personal papers, the reference is given in a footnote. If there is no reference, the source is a private document, clipping, or audio file from Ray's extensive family collection.

In attempting to preserve the authentic voices of the Pitts family members and friends, the quotations have not been edited, even to conform with today's standards of terminology, usage or style—except, very occasionally, to correct spelling or add essential punctuation.

The rights to all quoted text and photographs used herein, unless otherwise noted in the caption or reference, are, to the best of my ability to ascertain, owned by the Pitts Irrevocable Living Trust or individual Pitts family members, and are used with permission. Poems quoted, except on the dedication page, are works of Raymond, Robert, or Willis Pitts, Jr. and have not, to my knowledge or unless indicated, been published elsewhere. The Dunkerley (Oxenham) poem, opposite the table of contents, was a favorite of Ray's and is in the public domain.

# The Ways

*by William Arthur Dunkerley  
(John Oxenham)*

To every man there openeth  
A Way, and Ways, and a Way,  
And the High Soul climbs the High Way,  
And the Low Soul gropes the Low,  
And in between, on the misty flats,  
The rest drift to and fro.  
But to every man there openeth  
A High Way, and a Low.  
And every man decideth  
The Way his soul shall go.

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## Prologue

On a hot August day in 1988, nearly one hundred Pitts family members and friends met at Browns Grove Cemetery, Browns Crossing, Georgia. They were there to participate in a major family reunion: to enjoy the fellowship of close family, to reacquaint with family seldom seen, to meet new family members, and to jointly dedicate a new headstone to the memory of their common ancestor, David Peter Pitts.

Raymond Jackson (Ray) Pitts, President of the *Pitts Family Association of Central Georgia, Inc.*, addressed the crowd. He swept his arm to emphasize the vista of Baldwin County's bountiful woodlands, fields, lakes and streams. Then he indicated the humble, white-clapboard church their ancestor helped to build in the first years after the Civil War:

*This is Hallowed Land. This is the land of our ancestors, and it is our land. It is Pitts land. This is where they were born. This is where they lived happy lives, and lives with some sorrows. This is where they worked, and where some of them slaved. This is where many of them lie.*

During the program, the youngest members of the clan were addressed by one of David's great-granddaughters—now a grandmother herself—and instructed to...

*Look at me; and stand up straight and tall. Hold your chest out! Because you are part of me, and I am part of the past.*

It was Ray's dream to leave a tangible legacy of this shared past: in honor of his mother who instilled this family passion, and for the benefit of his own children and grandchildren. He wrote:

*I have promised to [my children and grandchildren] that I will give to them, and to posterity, a history of the Family from which they came. This is a 'labor of love' for me. I travel everywhere to get the information that is needed for a complete and Authentic history of the People who were my ancestors.*

Most of all he wanted to leave them his own story, and the story of his three

brothers—the lessons learned, the wisdom gained, and the successes they all achieved in those difficult and often forgotten years between the Great Depression and the Civil Rights Era.

They were David Peter Pitts' great-grandsons—through his first son Emanuel and Emanuel's fourth son, Willis Norman. Channeling the strength of their Pitts heritage, and the equal love, support and persistence of their indomitable mother—Roberta Jackson Pitts—these four brothers became prominent national leaders in education and government service: Dr. Willis Norman Pitts Jr. (1907-1988), Robert Bedford Pitts (1909-1982), Dr. Raymond Jackson Pitts (1911-2004), and Dr. Nathan Alvin Pitts (1913-1998).

Before he died, Ray managed to document most of the family's historical background and, in addition to his own, collected the memorabilia and professional papers of his three brothers. With his characteristic confidence, optimism and boundless energy, he expected and planned to live, at minimum, until he reached his one hundredth birthday. He had tasked himself with sufficient retirement projects to fill all of that time. Assuring himself that he would complete them all, he saved this most cherished family history for what he intended to be his last—his ultimate—contribution. Unfortunately for us, time caught up with him early: at age 93.

This book is not the book he would have written; yet, perhaps, the story he wanted to tell of this incredible family will survive in my retelling.