

# Alton's Black History: A medical pioneer

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer  
February 12 2018 9:59 AM



ALTON - Dr. Clarence Pennington Horton was the first surgeon at Alton's former St. Joseph's Hospital, beginning in 1945.

Dr. Horton was born in Roma, Georgia in 1910, according to *20th Century African American Leaders in Alton* (a book available for purchase at the Alton Museum of History and Art from which this series of article is inspired). He received his education in the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania School System and at Bluefield State Teachers College in Bluefield, West Virginia. He graduated from the Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee, and served his internship at Homer G. Phillips Hospital in St. Louis, Missouri, and did his surgical residence at the People's Hospital, which was also in St. Louis.

He came to Alton in 1942, and became the Chairperson of St. Joseph's Hospital Emergency Medical Services after being named the hospital's first black surgeon.

While at the hospital, Dr. Horton started a Methadone program for the treatment of drug addiction, served as a member of the 708 Board for Mental Health in Madison County and even served as the chairperson for the drug committee section of the GAAC Law and Order Committee. He was also Madison County Deputy Coroner for some time.

Dr. Horton served as a member of the International College of Surgeons. He retired from practicing medicine in 1990, and later died in 1998.

Outside of medicine, Dr. Horton played in the Negro Baseball League, and was a part of the Iota Theta chapter of the Alphi Phi Alpha Fraternity. He was also a 33rd Degree Mason of the Prince Hall Masonic Order.

In Alton, Dr. Horton served as a member of the Executive Committee of the Greater Alton Association of Commerce, Directly of weekly publication, *The Question*, served on the YMCA Board of Trustees, was a member of the Anniversary Club, The Nomads Golf Club, and the Pinochle Club.