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## REVIEW: Benjamin Elijah Mays: A Pictorial Life and Times

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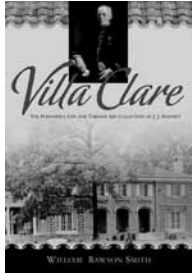
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or two. I have walked the Shiloh battlefield, remembering an ancestor who was wounded while serving there with the 72nd Ohio. My understanding of the hardship and valor of those days is broader, deeper, and less settled after reading this book. This volume deserves a place on the shelves of a serious Civil War collection seeking to challenge our understanding of that terrible conflict.

— Reviewed by **Wallace B. Eberhard**  
*University of Georgia (Emeritus)*

### **Villa Clare: The Purposeful Life and Timeless Art Collection of J.J. Haverty**

by *William Rawson Smith*  
(Mercer University Press, 2006; ISBN 978-0-86554-922-0, \$35.00).

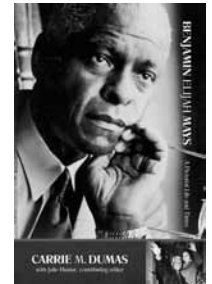


The life of J.J. Haverty, who died as a millionaire father of 10 children, is almost a classic tale of “rags to riches” during the industrial age and its aftermath. Haverty was able to see trends ahead of time and move on them; this ability served him well in his art collection. His main interest in collecting was American artists, and he collected many that were not well known at the time but are important now. Unfortunately the High Museum did not have the same vision he did, and many of the pieces were either returned to his family or have disappeared. After the Civil War, the middle class began to appear all over the United States. In Atlanta, J.J. Haverty, the son of an Irish laborer, was perfectly suited to his time and place. He began working as a clerk in a department store and founded a chain of furniture stores with A.G. Rhodes. The stores were known as Rhodes-Haverty until they split in 1908 and became two separate chains of furniture stores; Haverty’s Furniture stores are still in business. This slim volume, written by Haverty’s great-grandson, tells how he became a millionaire businessman who developed an interest in art, especially American art. J.J. Haverty began collecting art after he built Villa Clare (named for his wife, Clara, and County Clare in Ireland). Widowed in 1918, he turned his energy and money to serious art collecting in the 1920s and 1930s. Haverty was instrumental in building Christ the King Cathedral and the Stone Mountain Monument and in beginning the High Museum of Art. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, he opened his home to art lovers on Sunday afternoons. Upon his death and the death of his daughter, nearly all of his collection was donated to the High Museum of Art. It was the first major collection to be given to the museum. J.J. Haverty also gave the High his collection of art books, the funds for a library, and an endowment to help purchase other art. His collection helped the High Museum transition from a nearly moribund museum to the vibrant home of art it is today. This book tells how he became an

art collector and relates his life to the life of Atlanta. He was a small boy when Sherman’s soldiers burned his home, and his family had to start over with nothing. His life makes a very interesting story and is well told in this volume, which is also illustrated with more than 30 plates of paintings from his collection and short biographies of his favorite artists. A worthwhile book on art in Georgia that should be interesting to many readers.

— Reviewed by **Judith Gollihar**  
*South Georgia Regional Library*

**Benjamin Elijah Mays: A Pictorial Life and Times** by *Carrie M. Dumas*; *Julie Hunter, contributing editor*  
(Mercer University Press, 2006; ISBN 0-88146-016-8, \$45.00).



Benjamin Elijah Mays’ impressive life, positive and far-reaching influence, integrity, strength, and intelligence are a beacon of promise to all who encounter his legacy. Anyone acquainted with Mays and his work, either through study of his most famed students or discovery of the man himself, cannot help admiring his effectively nuanced instructional sermonizing and leadership-by-example lifestyle. During his 27-year presidency of Morehouse College, from 1940 to 1967, Mays touched the lives of thousands of men, including Martin Luther King Jr.; this volume adds to a burgeoning scholarship on Mays that will hopefully touch and motivate thousands more. Author Carrie Dumas and editor Julie Hunter recount Mays’ life and work through imagery and compiled reminiscence. Despite fascinating characters and thorough research methodology, evidenced in the variety of archival institutions and personal collections referenced, the execution of the work detracts from its cohesion. The subject-based arrangement does comprise an organizational scheme, but this reviewer would have significantly preferred a straight chronological narrative. For example, seeing a circa 1981 image in a chapter titled “Early Years” is illogical. Further, many notable figures (JFK, Hank Aaron, and Jimmy Carter, to name a few) languish in the “Additional Photographs” section when a chronological arrangement would have effectively juxtaposed Mays’ celebrity encounters with his academic honors. To some degree this volume bolsters examination of larger issues, 20th century African-American education and community leadership. However, captions are inconsistent, and the volume lacks an index. The book is nonetheless a valuable and enjoyable addition to any library collection as it offers a fresh and visual perspective on Benjamin Mays and his important work.

— Reviewed by **Jewell Anderson**  
*Armstrong Atlantic State University, Lane Library*