

Rep. Sampson W. Keeble

State of Tennessee Capitol Collection

1.5 x Life Bronze & Tennessee Pink Marble



SIZE 61" H x 36" W

March 29, 2010, the Legislative Black Caucus permanently placed a bronze and Tennessee pink marble monument honoring Sampson W. Keeble outside the House of Representatives Chambers in the Tennessee State Capitol.

Nashville barber Sampson W. Keeble became the first African American to serve in the Tennessee legislature when he was elected to represent Davidson County in the 38th Tennessee General Assembly, 1873-1874.

Keeble introduced several bills; one would amend Nashville's charter to allow African Americans to operate businesses downtown; a second would provide protection for wage earners and still another would appropriate state funds to help support the Tennessee Manual Labor University. He was appointed to the House Military Affairs Committee and the Immigration Committee.

As a result of his public service, Keeble was well known within the African American community and was elected a magistrate in the Davidson County Court, serving from 1877 to 1882. He later passed the Tennessee Bar and the last year Keeble's name appears in the Nashville City Directory is 1886, where he is listed as a teacher.

According to the inscription on his tombstone in Nashville's Greenwood Cemetery, Keeble was born in 1833 in Rutherford County, Tennessee. He was buried in 1887 with his daughter and son-in-law, Jeannette Keeble and Benjamin F. Cox. Sampson W., Jr and Jennie were his two surviving children by wife, Rebecca Cantrell Gordon.

Roy W. Butler | *redefining the Art of Life*

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THIS BUST CREATED IN THE LIKENESS OF
SAMPSON W. KEEBLE

THE FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN REPRESENTATIVE TO THE TENNESSEE STATE LEGISLATURE. ALSO SERVES AS A COMMEMORATIVE EMBLEM TO ALL FOURTEEN AFRICAN AMERICAN LEGISLATORS ELECTED IN THE 19TH CENTURY

SAMPSON W. KEEBLE
1873-1874, DAVIDSON
JOHN W. BOYD
1881-1884, TIPTON
THOMAS F. CASSELS
1881-1882, SHELBY
ISAAC F. NORRIS
1881-1882, SHELBY
THOMAS A. SYKES
1881-1882, DAVIDSON

LEON HOWARD
1883-1884, SHELBY
SAMUEL A. McELWEE
1883-1888, HAYWOOD
DAVID F. RIVERS
1883-1886, FAYETTE
GREENE E. EVANS
1885-1886, SHELBY

WILLIAM A. FIELDS
1885-1886, SHELBY
WILLIAM C. HODGE
1885-1886, HAMILTON
MONROE W. GOODEN
1887-1888, FAYETTE
STYLES L. HUTCHINS
1887-1888, HAMILTON
JESSE M. H. GRAHAM
1897-1898, MONTGOMERY

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Tennessee State Capitol



The stone base, fabricated from a solid block of Tennessee pink marble is also inscribed with the names of fourteen African American legislators elected in the 19th century. The base measures 36" W x 18" H x 18" D.

Sculptor, Roy W. Butler is shown completing final details on the original 1.5 x life-size clay prior to mold fabrication and lost wax process of creating the final bronze. The bronze memorial stands approximately 61" H including the marble base and weighs 1,300 pounds.

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