

Washington Spradling, Sr.

Spradling, Washington, Sr. (b Jefferson County, March 1, 1805; d Louisville, May 13, 1868). Barber, real estate speculator, and legal adviser. He was the son of William Spradling, an overseer, and Maria Dennis, a slave on the Isaac Miller farm. William provided for the emancipation of Maria and their children in his will in 1814. After his emancipation in 1825, Spradling moved to Louisville and established a barbershop, serving mostly wealthy clients. He was a shrewd businessman and soon saved enough money to buy, sell, and lease real estate in Louisville. As Louisville grew, the value of his land appreciated. By building dwellings and subdividing his holdings, Spradling was responsible for establishing an African American presence in the Russell neighborhood by the 1840s. his son Washington Spradling, Jr. was responsible for founding the Smoketown neighborhood after the Civil War on east end property inherited from his father.

By 1860, Spradling's real estate was valued at more than twenty-five thousand dollars, making him one of the wealthiest men in the city. Spradling also gave many African Americans helpful legal advice, and his wealth enabled him to purchase thirty-three slaves in order to give them their freedom. Spradling was also instrumental in founding at least two antebellum African American churches in the area (Center St. and Jackson St. CME). He married Lucy Ann Jackson in 1828, and their children included William, Will, Washington, Julia, and Martha. Spradling is buried in Eastern Cemetery.

Written by Pen Bogert, *The Encyclopedia of Louisville*