

*The BOOKER T. WASHINGTON Papers*

Wilford H. Smith to Emmett Jay Scott

New York City, May 2nd, 1904

Dear Friend: I have your favor of the 28th ultimo, and hope that I shall have the opportunity of conferring with our friend over the matter therein referred to.

I have had a bad case of the blues ever since the Supreme Court sat down on me, and I have not been disposed to have much to say. I have been doing a great deal of thinking against the Supreme Court, which I am unable to express. If, however, I could have the opportunity of forcing them to a decision, I would greatly relieve myself as much as the people of Alabama. But I am sure that I should not neglect to write my friends because I have been disappointed, so in the future I shall aim to have more to say, so as not to seem selfish.

I wish you would have the "Voice of the Negro" sent to me, and I will pay the subscription. We hope to interest you in our Afro-American Realty Company, which is doing far better than Mr. Payton<sup>1</sup> and I dreamed of when we first projected it. We have in mind to publish pictures of our ten flats which we have under five years leases, with a group of the ten partners, in the Colored American of Boston, and we hope to follow it up by a repetition in your "Voice of the Negro."

Mr. Payton and I are figuring out a good place in the concern for you when we incorporate.

I wish to be kindly remembered to Mrs. Scott and the children.  
Very truly yours,

Wilford H. Smith

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<sup>1</sup> Philip A. Payton, Jr., was born in Westfield, Mass., in 1876, and was educated at Livingstone College, Salisbury, N.C. He moved to New York City in 1899, where he began speculating in real estate. He was successful in opening Harlem to blacks desiring better living conditions and became known as "the father of Colored Harlem." In 1904 Payton organized a ten-man partnership, the Afro-American Realty Co., which specialized in leasing white-owned buildings and renting to blacks. The business had the support of many black small entrepreneurs and professionals. The first president was James C. Thomas, a black undertaker, who became known as the wealthiest black man in New York. Other officials included Charles W. Anderson, Fred R. Moore, Wilford H. Smith, and Emmett J. Scott. The company did well for a while, and became a symbol of black business success.