

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable William E. Ward

PERSON

Ward, William E. (William Edward), 1933-

Alternative Names: The Honorable William E. Ward;

Life Dates: December 1, 1933-July 10, 2018

Place of Birth: Lunenburg County, Virginia, USA

Residence: Chesapeake, VA

Occupations: Political Organizer; Mayor;

Biographical Note

History professor, political organizer, and mayor The Honorable William E. Ward was born on December 1, 1933 in Virginia to Annie Ward. Ward earned his B.A. degree in history in 1957 and his M.A. degree in history in 1960 from Virginia State University. He also earned both his M.A. and Ph.D degrees in American and African history in 1972 and 1977, respectively, from Clark University.

In 1963, Ward moved to Chesapeake where he began his public life as a grass-roots political organizer, helping to bring sewer and roads to poorer neighborhoods in Chesapeake and Norfolk. Between 1973 and 2000, he worked as a professor at Norfolk State University where he served as a professor and the chair of the history department. He was also the president of the Faculty Senate at Norfolk State University between 1975 and 1977 and chaired the Black History Month committee for the Faculty Senate of Virginia Benefits and Senate Grievance committees. In addition, Ward was a member of the college-wide Council of Teacher Education. In 1978, Ward ran for the Chesapeake City Council and was declared a winner forty-eight hours after having been declared a loser, when 123 uncounted votes were located. He was elected Vice Mayor under Mayor David I. Wynne between 1984 and 1986, and also in 1988 and 1990. Ward was then appointed as the city's first black mayor in 1990 after Wynne faced allegations of fraud. Ward ran for re-election in 1992 and won and in 1996, Ward ran for re-election and defeated Republican challenger John Cosgrove, earning fifty-five percent of the vote and serving until 2004. Ward was Chesapeake's longest serving mayor.

Ward was appointed to the Board of Visitors at Virginia State University in 2003 by Governor Mark Warner and in 2008 became a board member of the university. In addition, he served as the Executive Director of the Hampton Roads Partnership,

Hampton Roads Economic Development Alliance, Hampton Roads Planning District Commission, and Southeastern Public Service Authority. Additional past professional affiliations include the Virginia Society for History Teachers, the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, the Southern Historical Association, the American Historical Association and the Virginia Social Sciences Association. Ward also served as the chairman of the Chesapeake Hurricane Katrina Relief Task Force.

Ward lived in Virginia and was married to Rose M. Ward. He was also the father of son, Michael, and daughter, Michelle.

Ward passed away on July 10, 2018.

William Ward was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on May 12, 2010.

Related Entries

Clark University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Ph.D in African History

Virginia State University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

M.A. in History

Clark University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

M.A. in American & African History

Bluestone Harmony Academic and Industrial School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Central High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

University of Ghana [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Virginia State University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

B.A. in History

[EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1959 to 1962]

[EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1968 to 2000]

[EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 2007 to 2010]

B. Altman & Co. [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1957 to 1957]

I.C. Norcom High School (Portsmouth, Va). [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1959 to 1962]

History Teacher

Charles Hamilton Houston Junior High School [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1962 to 1963]

History Teacher

Rosemont Junior High School [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1963 to 1968]

History Teacher

Norfolk State University (Va). [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1968 to 2000]

Teacher and Department Head

City of Chesapeake [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1978 to 1984]

City Council Member

City of Chesapeake [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1984 to 2004]

Vice Mayor and Mayor

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Democratic Party [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

[MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

[MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Chesapeake Men for Progress [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Member and Chairman

Great Bridge Battlefield and Waterways History Foundation [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

President

Boys and Girls Clubs of Southeast Virginia [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Vice President

WHRO TV [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Board