Assemblywoman Madeline A. (Worthy) Williams

Madaline Williams (1894-1968) was the first Black woman to serve in the New Jersey Legislature. In 1957, she was elected to the State Assembly, and was re-elected in 1959. An East Orange, Democrat, she was later elected Essex County Register of Deeds and Mortgages in 1960 and re-elected in 1965.

In March 1961, Williams became the center of a national debate over race relations after being chosen as one of New Jersey's representatives at the National Civil War Centennial in South Carolina. The New Jersey delegation threatened to boycott the event at a segregated Charleston hotel where Williams would not be welcome. Republican Assemblyman, Raymond H. Bateman lead the the move for the boycott.

"We would prefer if you did not come," said Nat Cabell, a South Carolina state representative. "There will be an awful lot of ignoring done." President John F. Kennedy intervened on Williams' behalf and arranged to move the event to the Charleston Naval Air Base.