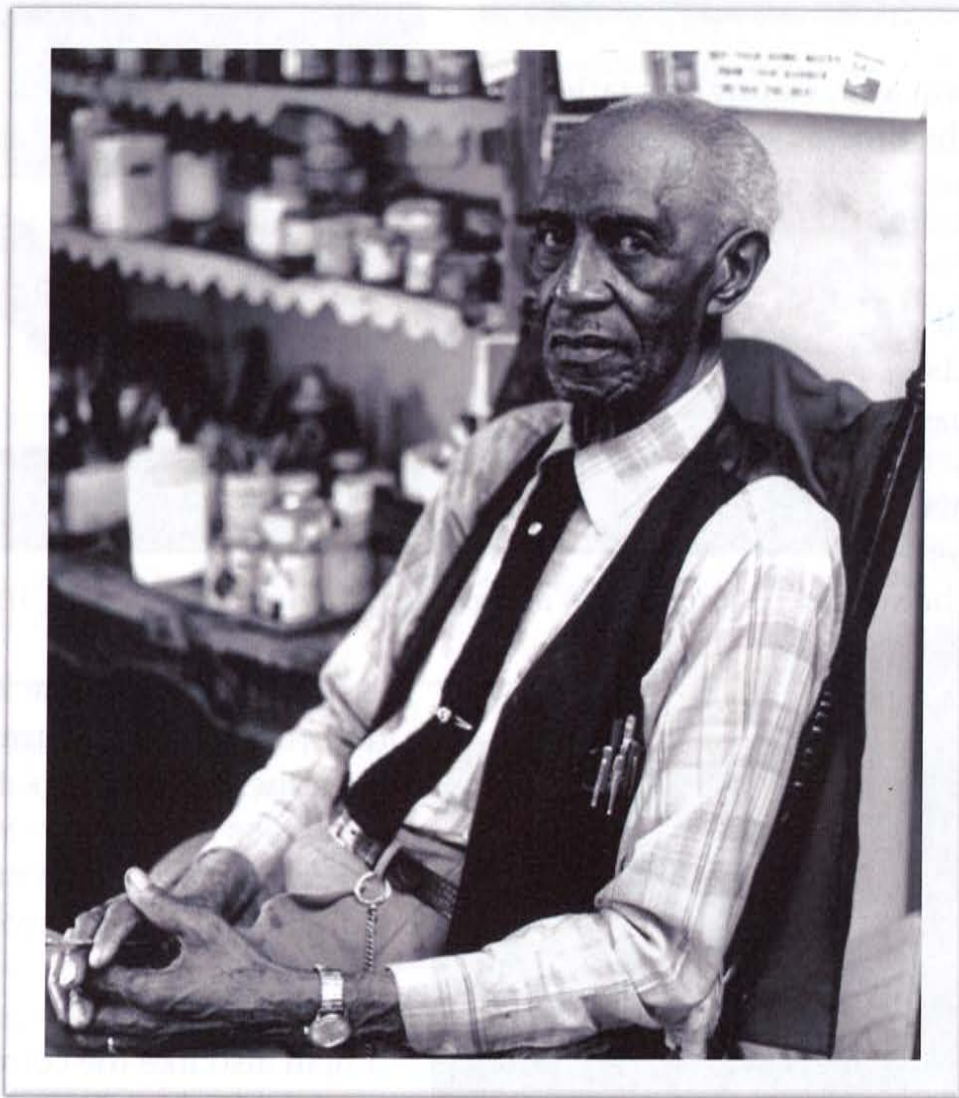
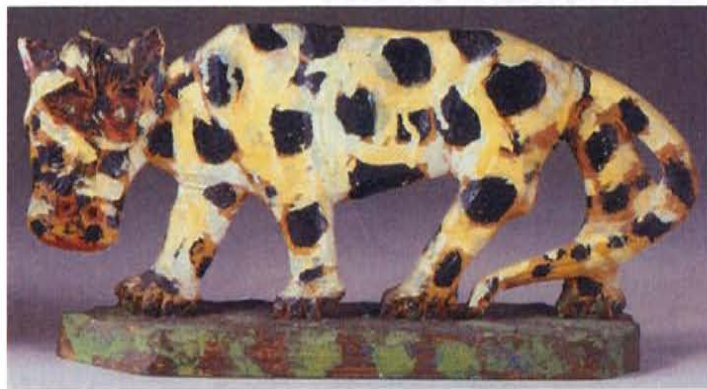


SOUTHERN OHIO
Museum

Meet Elijah Pierce



Elijah Pierce was born in Baldwyn, Mississippi in 1892. He was the youngest child of a large family. Elijah's father was a former slave.



His family had a working farm in Baldwyn, Mississippi.



When Elijah was very young, his father gave him a carving knife and taught him how to carve. By the time he was 7, he could carve animals very, very well.

Elijah's uncle taught him about different kinds of woods.



When Elijah would walk his dog to the river to go fishing, he would pick up sticks and pieces of wood on his way and then sit on the river bank and carve.



As Elijah grew up, he knew he did not want to run his family farm with his father and siblings. So, he learned how to be a barber and found work in barbershops in Baldwyn. This was a skill that he knew he could take anywhere.

Elijah also like the community aspect of the barber shop setting. People would go not just for a haircut but also to keep up with community news and politics.



Elijah got married to a woman named Zetta. Unfortunately, Zetta died shortly after they were married. Elijah was very, very sad and left home for a while and traveled. On a visit home, his mother encouraged him to follow his heart and become a preacher.

In 1920, Pierce received his preacher's license from his home church in Baldwyn, Mt. Zion Baptist Church. He would continue to preach- and carve- for the rest of his life. Elijah used his skills as a carver to illustrate bible stories. Each of his biblical carvings had a sermon to go with it.

During this time there were many African Americans moving from the south to the north. Elijah decided to go north and moved away from his family. He first went to Danville, Illinois- **find it on the map!** There he met Cornelia. Cornelia was from Columbus, Ohio. Cornelia left Danville

and moved back to Columbus. Elijah missed her very much, and moved to Columbus with her. They got married and made their home in Columbus. **Can you find Columbus on the map, too?** There, Elijah opened a barbershop that had a studio in it for his wood carving. He continued to preach, cut hair, and carve wood. He often gave people his carvings if they liked them.

Elijah's barbershop became an important place in the community. Many people gathered there to talk about politics, community issues, and life in the African American community. Elijah also made carvings based on things that were important to community. Look at the piece below. Elijah Pierce made this for his niece. It is celebrating the involvement of African American girls in the Girl Scouts of America. **What symbols do you see?** There is an eagle, the red, white, and blue curtains, and the double V, symbolizing victory.

It wasn't until Elijah was in his 80's that he was recognized for his work. He was given exhibitions not only in Columbus, but also in many cities around the county. He was also given the esteemed National Heritage Award.

How are the ways you can be involved with your community?

Is there a meeting place your family attends to hear the news around town?

How can you illustrate your ideas or beliefs?



Add your own color to "Angel with Mother & Child in the Garden," a 1966 carving.



Southern Ohio Museum & Cultural Center
825 Gallia St.
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