

Oswald Garrison Villard

A founder of the NAACP (1872 – 1949)



Villard is pictured with Daisy Gatson Bates, who mentored nine black students who enrolled at all-white Central High School in Little Rock, in 1957.

Villard was born in Germany, while his parents were on a vacation. He graduated from Harvard in 1893, began a career in journalism, and joined the staff of his father's *New York Evening Post*. Upon his father's death in 1900, he became president and owner. Like his grandfather, he was a pacifist and was against the U.S. entry into WWI. Later, he was a member of the America First Committee, which opposed the U.S. entering WW2. He sold the *Post* in 1918 but retained control of its weekly edition *The Nation*, which he molded into a journal of social protest. He stepped down to the position of contributing editor in 1932 and sold the magazine in 1935.

Following a lynching and race-related violence in Illinois in 1908, philanthropist William English Walling visited the Springfield scene and was shocked not only by the carnage, but that such race-motivated violence could occur in the North. Demanding a response, he wrote about what he'd seen and reached out to other reformers, including Villard, Jane Addams, Lincoln Steffens and editor WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS. With others, Villard and his mother were founders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1909. For years he served as its treasurer.

Villard was the author of a number of books, including an autobiography *Fighting Years*. His oldest son HENRY HILGARD VILLARD was head of the economics department at City College and the first male president of Planned Parenthood of New York City.