



Representation Matters.

After spending the first 41 years of his life in slavery, John Dabney, an African American bartender, was able to purchase freedom for both himself and his wife with his earnings as a bartender and caterer. Dabney became a fixture at high society gatherings in Richmond, Virginia, known for his mint juleps.

Dabney's 'Julep a la Dabney' quickly became a tourist attraction and the recipe became a tool for Richmond diplomacy. Most notably, Dabney served his famous drink to the Prince of Wales, who would later become King Edward VII. One Richmond newspaper applauded Dabney for both his cocktails and character, "All of our people are familiar with John Dabney, the celebrated colored restaurateur of our city — and those who know him best place the most implicit confidence in his honor."

Dabney's status with the Richmond elite provided him the opportunity to apply and receive a loan from a local bank. With the money, Dabney opened his own restaurant in the early 1870s, working for himself until the week of his passing in 1900.

