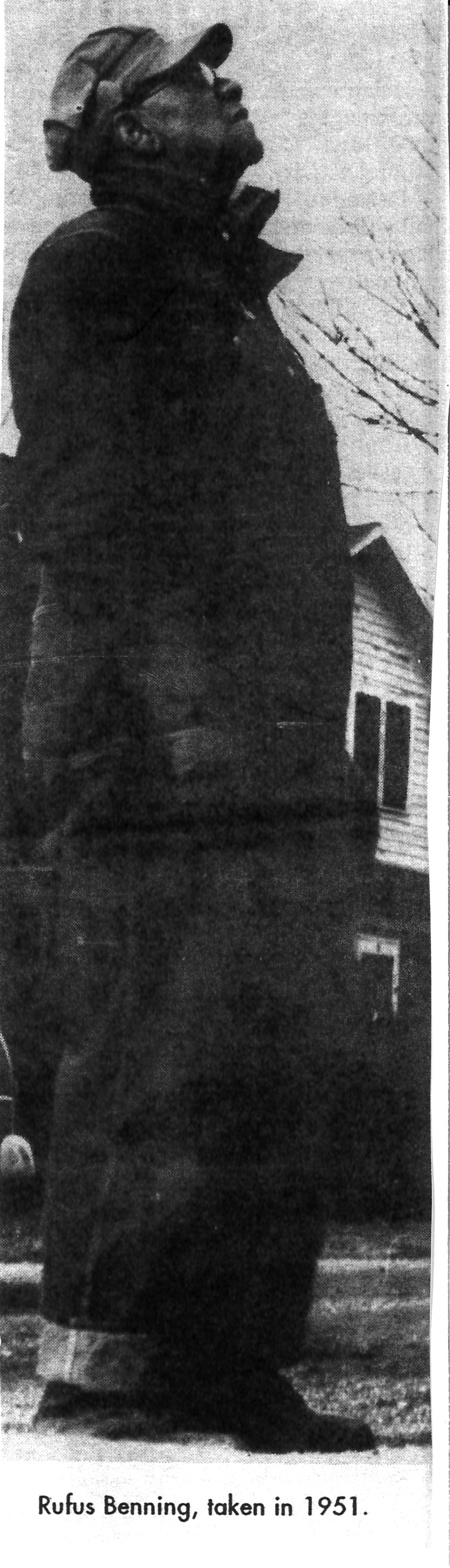
**Ralph “Rufus” Benning**

**(1897-1973)**

In the 1920s each evening as the street lights came on in Yellow Springs an African American man was standing somewhere in the Village with his eyes on them, and with the first flicker, his head would turn as his eyes checked the lights as far as he could see in either direction.

Ralph “Rufus” Benning, six feet four inches in height and 218 pounds, could be seen riding through the dusk in a yellow truck marked “Village of Yellow Springs No. 5,” still checking. He had been doing this since 1923 and it all began on a now and then part-time basis back in 1914 when he was 17 years old and began repairing transformers for C.H. Ellis who was the superintendent of Yellow Springs utilities. Rufus was devoted in his service. On black, stormy nights when winds were tearing wires and lightning had ripped lines inactive, you could always find Rufus in the midst of it “looking after” Yellow Springs utilities. It had been a dangerous business for him over the years. He was seriously burned three times. His brother Chet who also worked with him was injured and a third brother Doc was killed while working on a pole in 1948, but through it all Ralph been was loyal. Almost everyone in town knew him and hailed “Rufus” as their own personal friend in the more than 20 years that he also read meters throughout the Village. He was acknowledged by th e Village during the Centennial Celebration with keys, and plaque, and was also made Village Man of the Year in 1956.

Rufus was the son of Cora Mae Thompson and Andrew Benning, born in March of 1897. He was married to Eizabeth Gillim with whom he united in wedlock in May of 1926. They resided at 130 E. South College Street until Rufus passed on November 3, 1973. Rufus Is pictured in a photograph on a wall in the Village offices, giving tribute to the remarkable and famous “Benning Brothers” whos oerall contribution to the Villag of Yellow Springs remains outstanding.

Isabel Newman

Adapted from *A Guide to Yellow Springs,* 1993-94; Obituary, *Xenia Gazette,* November 5, 1973