

WHO WE ARE

An informal history of Tacoma's  
Black Community before World War One.

Tacoma Public Library  
Tacoma, Washington  
1992

## PREFACE

## INTRODUCTION

The Tacoma Public Library is pleased to provide this informal history of Tacoma's black community from the time of the first blacks arriving in the city to the beginning of the First World War.

It is based on accounts of activities of the black community as published in the local magazines and newspapers and from a number of other sources including interviews and searches of books of a general nature with references to Tacoma.

In most cases the entire article or news report is included to allow the reader to read the entire story without it being edited. In some cases where the wording became too long or when writers or speakers launched themselves off on to unrelated topics the judicious use of dots indicate that some things were deleted. Citations are given so that complete text can be found.

Since history is essentially the story of people there is an emphasis on individuals and their roles in the community. Only limited information was found for John Conna and George P. Riley whose labors have gone unrecorded.

One of the first black enterprises in the Northwest was Mr. Riley's Workingmen's Joint Stock Association of Portland, which was active in Tacoma in the early 1870s. Its partners consisted of one white man, twelve black men and three black women.

Black businessmen whose careers and contributions are just now being studied and understood are adding an important chapter in the history of Tacoma's growth and development.

Kevin Hegarty.  
Library Director.

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

This informal history of Tacoma's early black community is the third in a trilogy of booklets about Northwest Black pioneers issued in association with an exhibition held at the Tacoma Public Library in the late winter of 1992. It is an attempt to gather information from several sources to make it more easily accessible to users.

In the process of first gathering and then writing about events important in the development of Tacoma it was surprising to note that Tacoma's first black citizen was here in the 1860s working with a Portland, Oregon, corporation looking for land to develop. The work of George P. Riley needs to be studied and written about for he was involved in a number of commercial activities throughout the Northwest.

John Conna is another early pioneer who should be more well known. He arrived with his family in 1883, was involved in the real estate business, had a homestead near Auburn, and was a leader in black political and social events to the end of the century.

Much of what is known about the local community was obtained from the local newspapers, mostly the Tacoma Ledger. It was gratifying to see that for the entire period in question not once did the writers from the newspapers resort to racial slurs and unkind comments in their reporting about life and times of the black community.

In all cases what appeared in the Ledger seemed to be "reporting, not commenting" and there seemed to be a general sensitivity for and interest in this segment of the general community.

John H. and Ella Ryan came to Tacoma in 1903 and began The Forum, a weekly newspaper. They were careful not to focus their reporting on events of the Black community only and spent most of their editorial time writing about politics. There are, however, within the pages of The Forum powerfully written articles and editorials describing and advising the growth of not only the black community in the Northwest but throughout the nation as well.

As is always the case when work is done in the Special Collections Department of the Tacoma Public Library the staff, Jean Gillmer, Brian Kamens, and Judith Kipp, need to be thanked for their cheerful helpfulness and kind consideration.

Gary Fuller Reese.

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Six people, whose careers collectively cover the entire history of the black community in Tacoma, have been selected for additional study. Generally materials from the local newspapers have been used. From time to time additional information, as it is found, will be added to the files of the Tacoma Public Library about these and other people important in the history of the black community of Tacoma.

1. John Conna.

2. Silas Weber

3. John H. Ryan

4. Nettie Asberry

5. Eliza McCabe

6. Helen Stafford

## CHAPTER ONE. THE BEGINNINGS.

The number of black persons in the Oregon Country was small as a per centage of the total non-Indian population in the early years of settlement and did not become a numerically significant part of the population until the World War Two period.

Records exist that show that a number of blacks came to the Northwest Coast of North America as early as 1792 with Captain Robert Gray and fifteen years later the black slave, York, is known to have accompanied the Lewis and Clark Expedition. These men were, however, only "tourists" and it was nearly a half a century was to pass before black men and their families came to what is now Washington State.

The British Hudson's Bay Company, whose domain included the Northwest Coast north of California and west of the Rocky Mountains as well as Canada, had a cosmopolitan work force which had a number of blacks attached to it. Their contribution, according to one writer, was that they often built close relations with local Indian leaders who somehow felt that they could be more easily trusted than their white employers.

The 1850 census of the Oregon Territory which included all of the present states of Washington, Oregon, and Idaho but was effectively limited to settlements along the Columbia and Willamette River systems and Puget Sound showed two hundred seven persons who were listed as being black or mulatto.

An analysis shows that only fifty-four of these persons were actually black for nearly two thirds were Hawaiians or members of other racial and ethnic minorities who didn't "fit" elsewhere on the census schedules. In what is now Washington State ten blacks were listed, two in Clark County at or near Fort Vancouver and the rest in what was then Lewis County including the family of George Washington Bush, one of Puget Sound's first settlers and a prominent early citizen.

### GEORGE WASHINGTON BUSH

George Washington Bush, the first black settler to come to the Puget Sound Country, arrived at Tumwater in November 1845 as a member of the Simmons party. Bush and his family crossed the plains from Missouri with a group of friends as part of the famous Cornelius Gilliam wagon train and wintered at The Dalles on the Oregon side of the Columbia River where Mr. Bush took care of the livestock belonging to his party.

Michael T. Simmons and other friends spent the winter either at the present site of Washougal or near Fort Vancouver, the Hudson's Bay

Company post at present Vancouver, Washington. With others, Simmons "viewed the prospect" on Puget Sound and elsewhere.

Planning to settle in what was considered to be the more hospitable climate and rich soil of Southern Oregon perhaps on the Rogue River Mr. Bush and his associates were confronted with a recently passed law forbidding persons of color to settle in Oregon.

Deciding that the land north of the Columbia River would be a "safer" place to live the Bush family along with those of several friends blazed what later became known as the Cowlitz Trail and found home and farm sites near Tumwater Falls and present Bush Prairie.

The Hudson's Bay Company officials at Fort Vancouver were not pleased to have Americans move into the Puget Sound Country and had attempted to convince the Simmons party to move south. Some writers contend that this failed attempt only angered the Americans and coupled with the anti-black laws of the Oregon Provisional Legislature made it certain that the Bush family and their friends would settle on Puget Sound.

Mr. Bush became well known during the early years of American occupancy and by a private act of Congress in 1855 was given title to his land as he did not otherwise qualify under the Donation Land Law of the time. His farm was most successful and there were periods of time when his innate goodness and neighborliness meant the difference between near starvation and survival for numbers of early pioneer families.

Some writers have noted that Mr. Bush was probably the wealthiest private citizen in the Oregon Country before 1859. He died in 1863 leaving a large family which owned and operated the farm well into the Twentieth Century.

#### BLACK POPULATION IN 1860

The 1860 census showed a white population of Washington Territory at 11,560 and a black population of thirty-one which included no one as living in present Pierce County. There were a dozen blacks in Kitsap County in 1860 with a variety of occupations such as cook, lumberman, seaman, barber and steward working for the sawmills at places like Port Blakely, Port Madison, and Port Gamble. There were thirteen blacks in Thurston County, mostly children and grand children of George Washington Bush.

#### GEORGE WASHINGTON OF CENTRALIA

Another prominent black citizen of Western Washington during the

early period was George Washington who came to the Pacific Northwest in 1850 and settled on the site of Centralia in 1852. Born in Frederick County, Virginia in 1817 George Washington was raised by friends of his mother, Mr. and Mrs. James E. Cochran.

The family moved west first to Ohio and later of Missouri and Illinois. George Washington was involved in a number of business ventures and at one time was by private bill made a citizen of the State of Missouri so that he could conduct business there.

Later seeking a more free environment George Washington and the Cochrans crossed the plains and moved west first to Cowlitz Landing and later the site of the present city of Centralia where Mr. Cochran held title to the land because George Washington was ineligible to do so.

There they farmed, kept a "hotel" for visitors using the Cowlitz Trail to Puget Sound from the Columbia River, and operated a ferry across the nearby river.

George Washington lived on his farm and the town that grew up around it for the rest of his life. In the 1870s he platted part of the farm for a town he called Centerville. He began selling town lots and soon a thriving community developed. This later became Centralia and serves what one writer called "...the Hub City of Southwest Washington."

#### CHARLES MITCHELL, THE ESCAPED SLAVE

Clarence Bagley, the King County historian, reported what he called "...the only case of negro slavery, or of anything resembling such slavery in the history of the Territory or State..." when he wrote the story of the "escape" of a young man known as Charles Mitchell from "servitude" in 1860.

"When James Tilton, Washington's first surveyor-general left the Atlantic for the Pacific, a mulatto boy named Charles, born in slavery, was given him by a relative in Talbot County, Maryland. After living in the Tilton family at Olympia for five or six years, and attaining his growth and almost his majority, Charley was approached by colored men, told of the pleasure of freedom at Victoria, and induced to try to make his escape.

"The colored steward, on the steamer Eliza Anderson stowed him away one September day, (in 1860) just before the boat started from the southern end of her route. About the time the steamer got to Seattle, Charles was found by Captain Fleming. To prevent his escape Captain Fleming had Charles locked in a spare room.

"At Victoria, the colored men were waiting on the wharf, and when they learned from the steward of the situation two of them made affidavit that a "...negro boy, a fugitive slave, who had made

frequent attempts to escape and secure his freedom, was on board the steamer Eliza Anderson, detained there against his will."

"On the strength of this Henry P.P. Crease, an attorney, made application to Chief Justice Cameron for a writ of habeas corpus. Captain Fleming resisted the law for a time, but was finally obliged to release Charles from confinement, the boy walking ashore with his new found friends.

"Fleming filed a written protest, and demanded the return of Charles that he might be "...taken back to his master..." describing him as a "negro boy named Charles, the property of James Tilton, of Olympia, Washington Territory, who ran away from his master," etc.

"Governor McGill, on the boat at the time also protested, alleging that the whole proceeding was illegal and in violation of international law. General Tilton claimed that he did not regard Charles as a slave but as an orphan under his control until of legal age; and further that his services were of no pecuniary value and his escape was a matter of indifference." (Clarence Bagley, History of King County. Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1929. p. 356-57.).

#### EARLY PIERCE COUNTY

The early history of Pierce County contains fleeting references to blacks working and living in the region. Edward Huggins, the last agent at the Hudson's Bay Company post at Fort Nisqually, spent the Indian War of 1855-56 near present Roy at Muck Station taking care of the farming operations there. He wrote that the work crew was quite cosmopolitan and included a black man as well as Hawaiians, Indians, Englishmen and Scots.

Huggins noted in his journal that he rarely saw Indians during the war. He was later told that the Indians often saw him and his crew around Muck Station but since the war was between the Indians and the "Bostons" (Americans), the "King George Men" (The British and their employees) were never molested and were allowed to farm during the entire war period.

Henry Sicade, a prominent citizen of Fife for many years, wrote in his history of the Indian War of 1855-56 the following:

"After various skirmishes at White River and Green River, the warriors or part of the force returned to the headwaters of the Squally River to protect their families. The women and children were overtaken by a company of regulars (U.S. Army soldiers) and were so hard pressed the children were hid and chucked under logs and the women hid as best they could.

"A black man, either a bugler or a petty officer, heard a boy whining under a log and his older brother doing his best to make him shut up. Then he saw the boys. Peering under the other logs he saw more little children. The black man promptly rushed back to the oncoming soldiers and gave orders for the soldiers to about face.

"In double quick time they turned away from the children. These boys, in after years, used to tell us that black man's Hip! Hip! Hip! deceiving the soldiers was great music to them."

A black gun-slinger was reported to be in the area in the 1870s looking for a likely candidate to be "filled with lead." This was still during the time when claim jumpers were active and a local group of vigilantes had recently driven at least three evil doers from their claims and retribution had been promised. It was not uncommon in those days for individuals to take the law into their own hands since the criminal justice system of the time was slow, cumbersome and unsure.

#### THE RAILROADS

With the coming of the railroad in the 1870s the number of blacks in the area around present Tacoma increased. The Northern Pacific Railroad had numbers of black workers in its employ and as needed these men were sent to the western terminus of the Railroad. They worked at Tacoma on the lines, in the shops and later in the hotels and boarding houses that were built.

Quite often these men after getting settled and finding what a good place Tacoma was to live would resign from the employ of the railroad and set off on their own. They often brought their families from the east or south when sufficient funds were raised. Horace Cayton writing in 1896 noted with pleasure that there were more black farmers in the area than hotel waiters.

The concept of the frontier as being as much a "cooling off" place and a place to find a change from a former life had just as much meaning to the black community as it did to others. People fleeing from justice or injustice, from debt, from the unfairness of settled societies in the east, younger sons with no inheritance, and others were all looking for a new life in the west.

While only the Bush and Washington families were in the Northwest early enough to in any way qualify for free land from the government the concept of rich river bottom land selling for a mere dollar and a quarter an acre had a great appeal. Money was very "tight" during this period and it often took years for a family to pay off debts as low as two or three hundred dollars but it was still worth the effort.

## TACOMA'S FIRST BLACK CITIZEN

Quintard Taylor, Jr. author of A History of Blacks in the Pacific Northwest, 1788-1970, a doctoral dissertation, recorded that the first black man to live in Tacoma was George P. Riley who arrived in the 1860s. Mr. Riley started an organization called the Workingmen's Joint Stock Association in 1869 which "... managed ninety-two acres of land in and around Seattle and Tacoma." The Tacoma section of the property was known as the famous "Nigger Tract," more politely known as the Alliance Addition to Tacoma.

The company was actually organized in Portland, Oregon. The stockholders were fourteen colored people and one white man. The object of the company according to an article in the Tacoma Daily Ledger for August 27, 1899, was to "...buy real estate at whatever would be the future city of Puget Sound, so they bought at both Tacoma and Seattle."

The names of the original members of the company were: George Luviney, John Huntington, John Donaldson, Charles Howard, Annie Rooney, William Brown, George Thomas, George P. Riley, Edward S. Simon, Mary H. Carry, Mary A. Given, James Given, Charles Gilbert, George Washington and Philip Francis.

The land they bought in Tacoma was sixty acres purchased from Lewis C. Fuller and Clinton P. Ferry. They paid six hundred dollars and another five acre tract was later purchased for one hundred dollars in the name of William T. B. Nicholson.

The company was responsible for developing the property and for collections when buildings were built and either rented or leased. The Association was successful in its operations and managed to "...provide years of steady employment and income for Riley and the others involved." (Taylor p. 110).

As time passed, however, the number of owners or their heirs grew as portions of the tract were sold and by the late 1890s a number of squatters had moved onto the property taking advantage of the confused ownership.

The Association lasted until 1895 when Riley and two former associates went through an expensive court battle over the actual ownership of the company and the property.

The Tacoma Daily Ledger on September 3, 1899, in an article entitled "Picturesque side of 'Nigger Tract,'" printed the following:

Just who really owns the disputed tract known as the "Nigger Tract," will always be a question bristling with interrogation marks for the majority of Tacoma citizens, whose brains are

unskilled in the untangling of legal technicalities, and no number of rulings and appeals will ever quite settle the mixed situation finally.

The early history is clear, the land having been purchased by a regularly incorporated company of businessmen, with headquarters in Portland in 1868, at the it was expected Jay Cooke would build a transcontinental line to the Sound.

From that time until the present the transaction seems to have shrouded in mystery and wrapped in tradition.

#### PUZZLED ON LAW

What the territorial law would allow an incorporation to do was a question nobody could settle. Dolph and Mitchell, the foremost attorneys in the Northwest were in doubt as to whether a division of the land could be made, when, after Jay Cooke's failure some of the members wished their money back. They were advised to select a man to deed the land to as a corporation, and effect a division by letting him deed it back to the members in severalty.

John W. Matthews was the agent selected, and after this transaction several shareholders disposed of their interest supposing they had the right to do so. On this point hangs the trouble which has ensued, and which has made the litigation over the land exceedingly interesting to the legal fraternity and exceedingly puzzling to the general public.

#### MOTLEY SETTLEMENT

An equity standing was allowed the purchasers who had bought in good faith and so, little by little, there have crept new names into titles and abstracts and tax deeds, and all the time several hundred families have bivouacked joyously on the tract, which comprises over sixty acres of the most desirable and sightly land in the City of Tacoma.

"If nobody owns this, what's to hinder us having it?" said one and another, and so a sudden growth of mushroom sprang up and whole plantations of corn, and potatoes, beans, peas and cabbages flourished in the tiny yards and indicate to some extent the nationality of the squatters.

#### HEALTHFUL BEYOND DOUBT

It is a picturesque spot to say the least, and if the learned and distinguished doctors who are now considering the desirability of Tacoma as a health resort will take the trouble to investigate they will obtain proof positive of its immunity from sickness.

Here a large portion of the city, thickly settled with little board shacks, set flat on the ground with no sewerage, drinking water, mostly from wells, with absolutely no sanitation and peopled by a

class totally unobservant of the laws of health, yet there is almost no sickness, and there has scarcely been an epidemic during the existence of the tract.

#### HAPPY GO LUCKY LIFE

The people live in a happy go lucky way and some of them cultivate the few inches of ground around their cabins to the full limit raising fine fresh vegetables and an array of gorgeous flowers in the greatest profusion...

George Putam Riley who maintains a barber shop on Eleventh Street was the founder and president of the original corporation which bought the land. There are five members living, two in Tacoma, one in Connecticut, one in Portland and one whose whereabouts is not known.

Mr. Riley is a handsome dignified colored man of apparently not more than fifty-two or three, yet he is sixty-seven years old and has had an unusually thrilling life in the great west. He is a native of Boston and bears traces of that city of culture and refinement in his manner and speech.

He came to California in 1847 coming around by Central America and encountering many hostilities. One young man of the company who went on a little in advance was brutally murdered.

Mr. Riley was in the thick of the gold excitement and was one of the party who went up and discovered gold in the Caribou Country, forty-one years ago. He afterwards settled in Portland and was for several years an appraiser in the customs department. Later he was made mail agent and was given his chose between the Walla route and the Puget Sound Route.

#### HAD WRONG INSPIRATION

"If my good angel had only given me a hint just then, " he said, " I should have chosen the Puget Sound trip and then I could have kept posted as to the conditions here, but the fact was, we all neglected and almost forgot about the land until Henry Villard came along with his Midas touch and then it had become so tangled no one could straighten it out....

The families who have lived in the tract have been of all nationalities. Some have been worthy, thrifty people, who have taken advantage of the change to live inexpensively, and at least half a dozen of them are now comfortably settled on fine farms in Pierce County.

Others, of course, have been of the thriftless ne-er-do-well sort, who drift along like the shiftless hermit crab, too lazy to develop a nice coat of mail for himself and perfectly contented to shamble through life sheltered in the cast off shells of any of his

neighbors.

#### NOW PAYING RENT

The late developments have caused a change and the settlers living on the land, recently purchased by the Bank of London and San Francisco and by Henry Mohr, are paying rent.

Mr. Mohr found it necessary to make one eviction after which the family went back and complied with his just requirements, and the most of the residents are perfectly willing to pay rent when the courts decide to whom it is due.

It is, to say the least, disfiguring and unsightly, and when Mr. Mohr clears his new property, and succeeds in getting Ainsworth Avenue opened through, it will do much towards redeeming a desirable and beautiful portion of Tacoma which as long been held in disrepute. (Tacoma Daily Ledger September 3, 1899 p. 9).

George Riley later organized, with the assistance of Horace P. Lawhorn of Tacoma and the Reverend S.J. Collins of Seattle, the Tacoma Mining and Investment Company. This organization purchased two coal mines near Issaquah and used black coal miners from the nearby communities of Franklin and Newcastle to mine the coal found there.

The company was never capitalized properly although Riley promoted sales of in the Portland, Seattle, and Tacoma black communities he was never able to invest the capital necessary for success and by 1905 the mining operation was ended.

#### TACOMA'S FIRST BLACK FAMILY

Winnifred L. Olsen, a local historian, credits the John Conna family as being the first black family in Tacoma arriving in 1883. Mr. Conna came first to Seattle but found greater opportunities in Tacoma. He filed for a homestead and in 1890 completed the process of acquiring the land in the Auburn neighborhood north of the Puyallup Valley. He later purchased one hundred fifty seven acres from the government to add to his property.

Mr. Conna was involved in the real estate business in Tacoma working for a time for Allen C. Mason, Tacoma's first millionaire. He was also prominent in a wide variety of activities including the Republican Party as well as black oriented social and cultural organizations.

He served the Washington State Senate as Assistant Sergeant at Arms of the 1889 Session and as Sergeant at Arms of the regular session of the Senate during 1890.

Horace Cayton, editor of the Seattle Republican, credited Mr. Conna with both the framing of and lobbying for the passage of the

important Public Accommodations Act which went into effect upon the adoption of the State Constitution in 1890.

Esther Hall Mumford in writing Seattle's Black Victorians, 1852-1901 (p. 182) notes that:

"The consideration of John Conna as assistant sergeant at arms for the 1889 Senate came about as a result of black people around the state expressing a desire for recognition, and a feeling of obligation by some white legislators for Blacks' past support nationwide...

"It was important to the black community to have a representative in some capacity in the capital during those sessions. For the Victorian period this meant placement in jobs such as porter, doorkeeper and sergeant at arms."

#### PUBLIC ACCOMODATIONS ACT TEST CASE

Soon after the adoption of the Public Accommodations Act Mr. Conna created a test case which consisted of a criminal action against Tacoma restaurant for refusing to provide service to him.

The Tacoma Daily Ledger for September 1, 1891, describes Mr. Conna's efforts:

"John N. Conna yesterday brought criminal action in Justice Arnston's court against L.C. Riggs, proprietor of the New York Kitchen, claiming that on account of his race Riggs had refused to furnish him eating accommodation.

"The complaint says that Riggs, "without just cause or provocation did willfully and unlawfully deny to John N. Conna the full enjoyment of public accommodation, advantage, facility or privilege in that said L.C. Riggs did deny and refuse to wait on and serve the said John N. Conna with supper when respectfully requested so to do, on account of race, color or nationality, the said John N. Conna being a colored man."

"Mr. Conna went into the New York Kitchen for supper Sunday evening. As he seated himself the proprietor came to him and on being told what he wanted, said he was sorry, as he could not give him anything. Conna went out and returned, telling Riggs that he would subject himself to arrest if he should not wait on him.

"Riggs said he would ask the waiters if they would wait on him, and going away, returned soon with the information that they refused to do it, being union men.

"Questioning the waiters at Chilberg's (Restaurant) a reporter was met by the statement from several that there was no union in Tacoma

and that white and colored men were waited on equally. At the New York Kitchen, one waiter said that they did not wait on negroes there, not because of any union rule, for there was no union in Tacoma, but because of the order of their employer.

"He stated that in Seattle, union men were employed and they could not wait on colored men. Another waiter said that he did not know about the other waiters, but he himself had never had occasion to wait on a colored man.

"The law under which the prosecuting attorney and Orra L.C. Hughes, counsel for the complaining witness, will prosecute, is as follows:

"Section 1. That all persons within the jurisdiction of the State of Washington shall be entitled to the full and equal enjoyment of the public accommodations, advantages, facilities and privileges of inns, public conveyances on land or water, theaters, or other places of public amusement and restaurants, subject only to the conditions and limitations established by law and applicable alike to all citizens of whatever race, color or nationality.

"Section 2. That any person who shall violate the foregoing section be denied to any citizen, except for reasons by law applicable to citizens of whatever race, color or nationality, the full enjoyment, of any of the public accommodations, advantages, facilities or privileges in said section enumerated, or by "aiding or inciting such denial, shall for every such offense, be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and, upon conviction thereof, shall be fined in a sum not less than fifty dollars nor more than three hundred, or shall be imprisoned not less than thirty days nor more than six months.

"Approved March 27, 1890."

Within five years of the coming of the Conna family there was a substantial black community in the City of Destiny as evidenced by reports of social, religious and cultural activities found in the local newspaper, The Tacoma Daily Ledger.

#### THE COLORED VOTE

In 1888 John Conna gave what was called a "most significant speech" in Tacoma about what the Tacoma Daily Ledger called in an editorial "The Colored Vote." (July 10, 1888, p. 2).

The writer of the editorial noted:

"The speech of Mr. John Conna at the Alpha Hall meeting Saturday night, was the most significant speech of the evening. The speaker

told some truths which the northern people, democrats and republicans, are seeking to ignore, the democrats because they derive political profit from the suppression of the negro vote, the republicans because they do not have the courage of their convictions and are afraid of being twitted with bloody-shirtism..."

The editorial continues describing the oppression of the ex-slave states of the Negro and concludes with the following:

"The democrats know this perfectly well and their alleged fear of negro domination is insincere. They do not fear negro domination. But they hate the republican party, which is the party of patriotism, and they suppress the negro vote in order to defeat the republican party in state and nation.

"If the republican party continues to submit to this outrage it will show itself unworthy of success." (Ledger, July 10, 1888 p. 2.).

Esther Hall Mumford in writing of this period of time noted:

"So fuzzy were the lines between politics and non-partisanship in the League that several men of Republican leanings were induced to join the Democratic Party in the belief that it was a branch of the Afro-American League. Upon publication of their names as new Democratic Club members they hastily withdrew and joined the Young Men's Colored Republican Club." (Mumford, p. 172).

Most American Blacks after the Civil War maintained their allegiance to the Republican party and newspaper notices of the period describe a number of attempts to provide political clout to the Black Community through several organizations.

Groups organized in 1889 and 1890 in Tacoma that were reported in the local newspaper included:

#### FREDERICK DOUGLASS CLUB

"The Frederick Douglass Republican club was organized last evening at the court house by the colored republican electors of the city.

"Twenty-one members joined the organization and signed the roll. Another meeting will be held next Friday night, when additional members will be received into membership.

"The officers elected were: T.H. Tipton, president; Seymoure R. Allen, vice president, and W.W. Keeble, secretary."

"Frederick Douglass Club," Tacoma Daily Ledger, August 24, 1889 p.

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COLORED VOTERS ASSOCIATION

"Colored voters' Association," Tacoma Daily Ledger, August 16, 1890.

The "Independent Colored Voters' Association" was organized Thursday night by about one hundred colored men of Tacoma. James H. Beach was elected President; Charles Lapsley, vice-president, H.H. Woods, secretary, and F.V. Cousins, treasurer. A committee was appointed to procure a hall for regular meetings and a committee to canvass for membership.

"Colored voters' Association," Tacoma Daily Ledger, August 16, 1890.

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JOHN BROWN REPUBLICAN CLUB

"The John Brown Republican Club," Tacoma Daily Ledger, September 2, 1890.

The colored Republicans of this city had an enthusiastic meeting at the Sons of Veterans' hall last night and elected the following as officers: President, John M. Conna; first vice president, James W. Thompson; second vice president, Jeremiah Montgomery; secretary, Frank Dishmore; corresponding secretary, J. W. Mason; executive committee, Will Turner, chairman; W.I. Ewing, Edward Brisban.

Some lively speeches were made and the men present were one and all determined to swell the republican majority. The membership is about twenty-four, which, however, it is expected to increase very quickly.

"The John Brown Republican Club," Tacoma Daily Ledger, September 2, 1890.

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"His soul marches on, a successful celebration in memory of the hero, John Brown," Tacoma Daily Ledger, September 2, 1890.

"A celebration in honor of the memory of John Brown, and in honor of republicanism was held last night by the John Brown Republican Club. About two hundred were present, John N. Conna, president of the club called the meeting to order, and in a brief, bright speech, delivered in his characteristic way, introduced the Honorable Galusha Parsons, who reviewed the history of the Republican Party and paid a glowing tribute to John Brown.

"Chairman Conna introduced Mrs. C. D. Watson, of San Francisco, who read, "The Ladder of Saint Augustine," rendering it quite impressively. C. Claypool followed in a well delivered talk on slavery and John Brown's connection therewith. "His soul marches on, a successful celebration in memory of the hero, John Brown," Tacoma Daily Ledger. September 2, 1890. p. 8.

#### THE WASHINGTON PROTECTIVE LEAGUE

In late 1890 the Tacoma Black Community sponsored a state level convention which organized the Washington Protective League. John N. Conna of Tacoma was elected president of the organization and he set out to make certain that the general welfare of blacks in Washington became a state-wide issue.

An article in the Tacoma Daily Ledger for December 26, 1890 describes the events of this convention held on Christmas Day in the Sons of Veterans' Hall in downtown Tacoma.

"L.A. Bushon, calling the meeting to order made a few remarks, stating the purpose of the league saying:

"It is our wish to form a Washington State Protective League. The business of this league shall be to look after the general welfare to protect and defend our people throughout Washington and the United States. If those to whom we offer our aid do not feel inclined to help themselves and will go down, the league will not go down with them. Our people are coming into Washington in considerable numbers and by organization we can make ourselves a power. I declare the convention ready for business...."

"Examination of the credentials presented showed the following qualified delegates to the convention...

"Pierce County--W. Turner, J.N. Conna, Thomas Harding, F.F. Keeble, J. Davis, G.P. Riley, and J.H. Bench...

"J.N. Conna and L.H. Bushon were placed in nomination for temporary chairman. Mr. Conna was elected...

"President Conna made brief remarks in regarding to the objects of calling the meeting. He spoke of the opportunities presented here for the live and energetic members of his race, and the courtesy and fairness with which they were treated by the whites. To organize and advance their interests was the purpose of this meeting; by standing together much may be accomplished for the good of the colored people of Washington.

"W.H. Lynch of Thurston spoke in response to a call. 'We organized,' said he, ' for our own welfare. If other states wish to

join us they may, but we remain an independent body. As the state of Washington has by far the best advantages to achieve that which every free and industrious man strives to gain, his own home, I think we should show by our actions the high appreciation we have for the cordial welcome that we have received. So let us all join hands, let the strong help the weak that they may take courage, come forward, and fight this mighty battle. Show the people that we can be men among men.'

"The report on the committee on resolutions was laid on the table. The committee on constitution and by laws presented a report which was adopted after several alterations and much discussion. The delegates displayed a thorough knowledge of parliamentary law and much keenness in debate. Some discussions were quite warm, but none acrimonious.

"The constitution was finally adopted, provided that the organization shall be called the Washington Protective League, to consist of all regularly organized leagues in the state. The objects as set forth are to "...encourage and assist in the formation of permanent district leagues and generally to encourage the advancement of the Citizens of the State of Washington...."

"By motion the officers elected were made officers of the state league. A vote of thanks was passed to the John Brown Republican Club. The president, in the name of the John Brown Republican Club and the citizens of the city of Tacoma, welcomed the convention to the chief city of the Pacific Coast.

"C.W. Scrutchin of Spokane was called upon for a speech, and responded, happily eloquently, and earnestly; reviewed the history of the race in their relation to the whites, and their firm and steadfast adherence to principles in whatever field they were in. He congratulated the delegates on their presence at the convention.

"S.R.Allen of Lincoln County was called on and responded, speaking of Washington and its progress in the past few years. Where a few months ago all was bare and uninhabited save by wild animals now the ring of the hammer may be heard, our waters are covered with vessels, and peace and prosperity abound. This convention is assembled to better our race, to help others to enjoy our wonderful advantages. At every turn "...I find myself welcomed into this state by white people. I think I express the feelings of the race when I say that we are gratefully to those who have so kindly received us."

"G.P. Riley of Pierce County was called up. 'I come down from a past generation,' said Mr. Riley, ' I carried a torch for the grand father of the present president, when most of you were unborn. I have seen great changes, so great that I can scarcely appreciate them."

The Tacoma Ledger occasionally took notice of the developing black community Tacoma. During that period they lived mostly in the downtown and Hilltop areas of the city. Calling the region occupied by the black homes and businesses "Tacoma's Hayti" the Ledger printed the following:

"The colored vote of Tacoma numbers about one hundred twenty and the colored population of the city about four hundred. It is increasing very rapidly and it is safe to predict from the ratio of increase during the past year, the colored population of Tacoma once year hence will not be less than two thousand.

"Darkeyville is principally confined to Opera Street, in the Second and Third Wards, and to the upper hill streets in these wards. This is substantially the Hayti of Tacoma. Negroes do live elsewhere it is true, but they do not if they can help it. Everything that happens in colored society and negro life of any importance and interest happens within the boundaries mentioned, and the ordinary Ethiopian wants to be on the ground where the news is manufactured.

"Here the genuine darky dude is to be found in all his pristine splendor. His collars are whiter and higher than to be found elsewhere, his well padded Prince Albert is cut in a later fashion and the trousers that he wears are even the envy of the dudes who flock around the lobby of The Tacoma to suck their canes or umbrella knobs.

"It is vastly entertaining to mark the elaborate politeness with which the different dandies greet each other and the impressive particularity with which inquiries concerning each other's health are exchanged and queries concerning the welfare of relatives and common acquaintances.

"The jargon of the polite world is imitated with a success that is wonderful indeed, but scarcely more wonderful than the success with which these ebony gentry imitate the paler elements of or population in every other direction it is possible to mention.

"A colored swell will wear second hand clothes, and even second hand shoes, if that is necessary, but for some reason or other, he seems to think that new hats are indispensable, and that a cane must always go with the hat. A bell boy at The Tacoma carries a cane that is perfectly fascinating to the don't-cher-know young men who frequent Tacoma's chief caravansary.

"Religion counts as a social factor among the negro population perhaps more than among white people. Religious people are held in high esteem and the crap-playing darkys, and the colored dudes and the courtesans who infest the purlieus of the city, feel and express respect for those who profess religion.

"The negro exhorter of the south would be as much a novelty to the

negro of Tacoma as he would be to his white brother.

"Throughout negrodom, society is an exact transcript of society among the white population. Social grades are defined just as exactly among the negroes as they are among the whites living in the neighborhood of the Hotel Rochester. At the ball given at Masonic Hall a few evenings ago by colored society, there was a very marked copy of that savoir faire shown among those who attend the receptions at The Tacoma Hotel.

"John Conna of Allen C. Mason's office is the leader of the best elements of Tacoma's colored society, and it is said he rules it with an influence as strong as his command of Tacoma's colored vote.

"All the balls and concerts that the negroes give in this city are practically under the supervision of the embryotic real estate dealer, and any colored belle or darky dude whom he thinks is not comme ill faut, does not receive invitations." ("In Tacoma's Hayti," Tacoma Daily Ledger, September 30, 1889.)

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During the early 1890s the Daily Ledger printed several accounts of balls, parties, receptions, and other events. "Polite society" was entertained and edified with orations, declamations, poetry readings, solos, duets, quartets, dance productions and grand marches.

It was probably comforting to the other ethnic communities of Tacoma to note that the male members of the black community, after toiling all day in helping to build the city "enjoyed" the same opportunities they had as wives had them dress in their best, set through seemingly endless expressions of "culture" and finally get dinner as they did to support the local Black Odd Fellows organization two evenings before New Year, 1890.

#### A COLORED BALL

"A colored ball," Tacoma Daily Ledger. September 26, 1889. p. 5.

"Colored society held high jinks last evening at the Mason Block where they were guests of Messrs. Will Turner, of the recorder's office and Will Robinson, chief cook of Chilberg's restaurant.

"Every local beau and belle was present, as were many from Seattle and Portland. Among these later were William Thompson, resplendent in evening dress, white kid gloves and diamonds; C.W. Sapley, J.H.

Bech, and D.H. Fletcher of Seattle; and Misses Irving, Yates and Scott, Portland and L.H. Bushong of Olympia.

"Dancing was engaged in until the "wee sma' hours" of the morning and the entire evening was an event of unalloyed pleasure to those present."

"A colored ball," Tacoma Daily Ledger. September 26, 1889, p. 5.

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#### TACOMA'S COLORED ARISTOCRACY

"Tacoma's Colored Aristocracy," Tacoma Daily Ledger. December 31, 1889, p. 4.

"The Puget Sound Association, consisting of the elite colored people, gave a concert, followed by a ball and banquet at the Germania last night. The music was excellent and was furnished by Delangivine and Getchel's orchestra.

"The party was a very elect one. The entertainment given was as follows:

Address by Hon. H. F. Garretson.

Address by Hon. George P. Riley.

A solo by L.H. Watkins.

Instrumental solo by Van Deventer and Weeks.

Vocal solo by T.M. Smith.

Recitation "Spartucus' Address to the Gladiators at Cupua," by Professor F. Fritz Keeble.

Trio by Messrs Minor, Johnson and Dyer.

Master of Ceremonies: F. Fritz Keeble.

"When the programme had been rendered, the banquet opened with a grand march and waltz after which several prizes were awarded by a committee of five judges.

"The object of the ball was to raise funds with which to establish a lodge of the G.U.O.O.F. which will be organized in about two weeks."

"Tacoma's Colored Aristocracy," Tacoma Daily Ledger. December 31,

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### MACBETH COMES TO GERMANIA HALL

Culture for its own sake was not avoided by the local Black community. Apparently the attempt to introduce Shakespeare to the local elite met as it did in many other places in the west with less than total success. One has to feel sorry for the small cast of professionals having to rely on the talents of locals and on organizers who were merely trying to raise the "cultural level" of the community.

Entitled "A venture into Tragedy," the Tacoma Daily Ledger. of December 2, 1890 described the event:

"It was the colored folks turn last night and they enjoyed a rousing season of music, mirth, and tragedy, winding up with a "cake walk" at the new Germania Hall. Mrs. C. V. Watson, late of San Francisco, and George P. Riley, a tonsorial artist who runs a shop on Pacific Avenue appeared in Shakespearian roles for the edification of a large and enthusiastic audience of colored folks.

"To say that the colored folks enjoyed the play would be putting it mildly. They fairly shrieked with delight and when some of the most tragic scenes from Macbeth were portrayed, several of the dusky belles with their escorts were obliged to leave the hall lest they should disturb the performance so great was their hilarity.

"Mrs. Watson essayed the role of Lady Macbeth and the barber appeared as the murderous Mac with a sharp edged dagger in each hand. Both, that is the artists, not the daggers, possess a high order of histrionic talent, and their conception and rendition of the lines from this great play were faultless.

"For several years Mrs. Watson has appeared successful in tragedy in the San Francisco theaters, and has received many compliments from such great tragedians as McCulloch, Booth, Barrett and others. In his profession, both as an actor and a barber, Mr. Riley stands at the head. The reason he doesn't follow tragedy as a regular business is that he gets worked up to a high pitch of excitement in the climaxes and fears he might injure some of the subordinates.

"It was thought best by the management not to give the entire play last night. Scenes from act one, act two and act five were given, and they afforded sufficient amusement. The spaces between the acts were interspersed with songs and recitations by aspiring young people who knew nothing of tragedy.

"First on the programme was a recitation entitled "The Tramp" by J. Jones, a pie colored youth who had expended much thought in

arranging the details of his costume, and which could have been better employed in perfecting his lines. Mr. Jones spoke his piece in a very low tone of voice and kept shuffling his heels at the same time, presumably to show the restless disposition of tramps.

"He got somewhat mixed in his lines towards the last, but managed to struggle through with the aid of a prompter in the wings. A Budweiser beer bottle protruding from the outside breast pocket of Mr. Jones' coat occasioned much merriment on the part of the audience.

"When Mr. Jones had finished, J. Perie, came on and sang a solo to the piano accompaniment by Mrs. Rosa Sharpe, daughter of the distinguished tragedienne, Mrs. Watson. Mr. Perie, who has successfully appeared in the leading restaurants of Tacoma sang "The Heart Bowed Down," in a most artistic manner, and without once removing his eyes from the piano on which Mrs. Sharpe was playing the accompaniment. For the occasion, Mr. Perie wore a mild boutonniere and a pair of tan colored gloves in which all the available space was occupied. His effort was heartily encored.

"These two numbers concluded the introductory or prelude to the tragedy which opened by the appearance of Lady Macbeth clad in a crispy black silk robe en train and a plaid sash. Her rendition of the lines was admirable and called for loud and continued applause.

"In the scene where she commissioned Macbeth to kill the king, the tragic effect was somewhat marred by shouts of laughter in the audience. Not that there was anything funny in the act of butchering a king, but it effected the visibilities of the spectators to see the familiar form of the barber clad in Highland garb and flowing side whiskers. In spite of these drawbacks, Mr. Riley acted his part well.

"During the intermission between acts one and two, Mrs. C. A. Williams, another daughter of the tragedienne sang a solo "Ecstasy or death," in a very artistic manner. In response to an encore the vocalist came out and sang "Oh, Spirit Hear Me Here."

"In the second act but one scene was given. Macbeth spurred on by the bloodthirsty Lady Macbeth, rushes into the bed chamber of the king and there kills him as per directions. The part of the king was able portrayed by Mr. Lapsley in a gorgeous robe and a pair of congress gaiters.

"When the curtain fell, at the conclusion of the murder scene, Macbeth and his wife were called out and greeted with a storm of laughter by way of appreciation and to which they responded by blowing low before the delighted audience.

"During the next intermission Mesdames Lapsley and Williams sang a duet, "Golden Chains," with Mrs. Rosa Sharpe presiding at the piano. In the last act Lady Macbeth appeared in the famous sleep walking scene, in which she was greeted with shouts of uproarious laughter.

Her action was splendid, but here frilled nightcap and gown ruined the effect of the scene as far as the audience was concerned.

"Everybody laughed, even when the somnambulist knelt and tried to wash the imaginary blood stains from her hands in an imaginary basin of imaginary water.

"The performance concluded with a grand cake walk, in which all hands took part. The proceeds of the play are for the benefit of the colored church.

"Tragedy in mourning, 'twas a great night for the colored population," Tacoma Daily Ledger. December 2, 1890, p. 7.

### RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES

A notice appeared in the Ledger in the fall of 1889 that a church for black communicants was being organized by the Rev. A.M. Taylor. In a letter to the Ledger the Rev. Taylor writes:

"The African Methodist Episcopal Church was organized on October 9, 1889, at 1313 Tacoma Avenue, for the purposes of bettering the condition of our race, and to find those who are wandering from place to place without shelter or any protection in the way of spiritual instructions.

"Many friends who are a long way from home and from Christian society, young men, who might and would become useful to society had they a place to attend that they have an interest in, young ladies who are going astray and fall into temptation and evil devices, whose souls we long for and desire to lead to a higher life.

"One says there are plenty of churches to which our white friends invite us. For this we are very thankful, but we all feel better at home in our house. We all love to have our own homes so that we can share all of its blessings. So it is with our churches.

"There is a command given to each of us as servants of God which is found in the 28th Chapter of St. Matthew, 19th and 20th Verses, the great commission. Today we are on that commission.

"While the white shepherds are looking after the white sheep, the black shepherd is looking after the black sheep. We ask the prayers of our Christian friends of the city for our success. Our place to hold services will be found in the basement of 1313 Tacoma Avenue.

Rev. A.M. Taylor, "The A.M.E. Church organized," Tacoma Daily Ledger, October 11, 1889 p. 3.

Some years later Mrs. E.F. Edson, whose family were early members of the Church in Tacoma wrote the following which she entitled "History of Allen A.M.E. Church."

"Forty years ago a young man by the name of A.M. Taylor was sent from the East to look over the possibility of church work here. He started a society which met in the rear of a building on Tacoma Avenue near 14th Street, on the east side, those attending having to enter through the alley.

"In a short time the room upstairs was secured. Then we moved next door to a saloon, but everyone concerned was very glad of the change as we had only Sunday School and evening church. Later the site on G Street was selected at a price of \$4,000 with interest at ten per cent.

"We occupied this building until Rev. S.J. Collins moved it to 1407 South Yakima and it has recently been torn down to make way for the new church which we are about to dedicate. The old building was placed on this present site without any special service.

"The first trustees were John Mason, Hiram Moore, and the pastor A.M. Taylor. The first choir was organized by Mrs. E.F. Edson on October 26, 1890 with Mrs. Edson as organist. The members of the choir were Mr. and Mrs. A.M. Taylor, Mr. and Mrs. John Smith, Mrs. G.E. Anderson, Mr. John Davis, and Miss Mamie Skinner.

"The Church did not have an organ but the pastor had one. We practiced on this which the male members would bring from the parsonage taking it back to the house on Sunday evenings, until the present organ was purchased.

"The first society of the church workers was called the Willing Workers with the following membership: Mrs. H. Skinner, Mrs. J. Carpenter, Mrs. G.E. Anderson, Mrs. J. Mason, Mrs. S.A. Jenkins, Mrs. S. Sledge, Mrs. E.F. Edson.

"The first money raised was sixty dollars on May 15, 1891 which was deposited in the Pacific National Bank by Mrs. Skinner and Mrs. E.F. Edson. The number of the check drawn in favor of the trustees was 29018. On May 18, 1892, \$53.45 was deposited and the second check drawn was 29034. Total from the May fair was \$113.45.

"Our first presiding elder was P.R. Green, 1890-91. Second was L.S. Blakency, 1892, Third, G.C. Clark, 1893 and Fourth, A. McKenna, 1894.

"The general conference of the A.M.E. Church sitting in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in May of 1892 ordered the organization of the Puget Sound annual conference including all of the work within the States of Oregon, Washington, the territories of Idaho, Montana, and Alaska, and the province of British Columbia.

"The first general conference of the A.M.E. Church met here on

Wednesday, August 10, 1892. The Rite Reverend B.F. Lee called the convention to order by announcing hymn no 640 "Guide Me, Oh Thou Great Jehovah."

"Roll call. Bishop Rite. Reverend B.F. Lee, presiding. Traveling Elders P.R. Green, G.C. Clark, L.S. Blakeney. Traveling Deacons, A.M. Taylor, G.W. White, Licentiators, J.M. Braxton, and A.D. Harris. (Mrs. E. F. Edson "History of the Allen A.M.E. Church.").

In 1890 The Ledger announced that the:

"Trustees of Allen African Methodist Episcopal Church have contracted with Ben E. Hervey for his eight room house on lot 3 block 1414 for four thousand dollars. They have closed the contract by making the first payment and are now working very earnestly to raise a sufficient amount to build a church upon the lot." (Tacoma Daily Ledger. June 19, 1890 p. 5).

Steven Maynard of the Tacoma News Tribune interviewed Worther Hamilton, an early member of the Church, in 1989. Mrs. Hamilton, who was then one hundred years of age, noted that she balked as her mother led her into a one room church as they stepped off a Tacoma cable car near 14th and G Streets in 1899.

"I didn't want to go into that old barn," said Mrs. Hamilton, who was eleven when she first stepped into Allen African Methodist Episcopal Church.

What was started by a small band of people in austere surroundings has perservered as Tacoma's oldest black congregation.... Mrs. Hamilton had traveled with her mother from California to Tacoma Church became her home congregation until twenty years ago when she left the area eventually settled in Detroit where she attends an inner-city A.M.E. Church.

Hamilton said she make her mark in Tacoma's history as the first black graduate of Tacoma High School, which became Stadium High....

During Mrs. Hamilton's early years in the church, her mother, the late Ellen Goldsborough, was one of the church leaders known as stewardesses, who were called upon by police to help people who had had too much to drink. The women, wearing black dresses and bonnets, cared for the intoxicated and disorderly at Tacoma saloons, Mrs. Hamilton said.

In the same newspaper article by Steve Maynard was a report of an interview with Helen B. Stafford. Of Mrs. Stafford, Maynard wrote:

"Tacomans Helen B. Stafford became part of the congregation after she was married in the church in 1926.

"The church was still operating in meager surroundings, a single

room lit with oil lamps. Prostitutes and other people from the town saloons would visit the church on New Year's Eve, she said.

"They thought it would bring them luck," she said.

"The Church also was a refuge from discrimination for Tacoma's blacks. Even though Tacoma was supposed to have been a place without public prejudice, Stafford said, blacks experienced a far different reality outside their church.

"Many years later the church still tries to help people recover from social evils...." (Tacoma News Tribune, February 11, 1989 p. A-4).

## CHAPTER TWO-THE 1890s COMMUNITY

The 1890 Census of the United States showed the black population of Pierce County to be three hundred seventy-six with seventy-six persons of black ancestry in Thurston County and five hundred thirty three in King County. Numbers of the black citizens of King County were involved in the coal mining activities as were some of the Pierce County residents.

Tacoma, in the 1890s, went through several "boom and bust" cycles. The economy was closely tied to the fortunes of the great railroad companies and to the logging industry and when they were in trouble so was Tacoma.

Thomas Emerson Ripley, who came to Tacoma during the boom of the 1880s described what happened in the City of Destiny as the great depression began:

"It all happened almost overnight. Men who had gone to bed proud of the ornate buildings they had built, became their own janitors in the morning and carried out the garbage. Even the garbage job petered out when the rent free tenants ceased to accumulate it.

"Women who had worn pearls at breakfast rolled up their sleeves at lunchtime and handling the frying pan. Mrs. Allen C. Mason, in her castle in Mason's Addition, held her head high above the thousand dollar Indian shawl that she had acquired on her memorable trip to the Orient, but she shivered at the same time, lacking fuel for the oil stove.

"Rattling street cars ran empty while they jingled importunate bells, for men who had driven to the office in grand carriages now had no nickels to spare from the demands of the stomach." (Ripley p. 102).

More than once during the decade, according to Francis W. Cushman who later became a United States Congressman, Tacomans had to eat

so much free and inexpensive sea food gathered from the beaches, coves and bays on Puget Sound that "...their stomachs rose and set with the tide."

Mr. Ripley noted that "Housewives vied with each other to invent new ways in which to set forth a feast of clams. Raw clams took first place, for they required no outlay for fuel, but we had steamed clams, roast clams, clams au naturel, and clams camouflaged. Although little clams were our first choice we also dug the big goeduck....I was guest at one dinner at which there were no less than twelve courses of clams, all bearing different names..." (Ripley, p. 116).

Those whose professions included service work, the janitors and custodians, workers at the hotels, laboring men and women, everyone suffered during this period.

#### LABOR TROUBLES

As the Depresssion deepened there were in the Spring of 1891 troubles in several of the coal mines in the neighborhood of Franklin, Gilman, and Black Diamond in eastern King County. The local union, Knights of Labor, threatened to strike because of what they considered unsafe conditions and unfair labor practices.

Managers of the mines claimed there was an oversupply of coal and two pits were closed idling nearly one hundred workers. Later after further troubles the Knights struck and the mining company began their offensive operations by evicting striking miners and their families living on company property.

Meanwhile in the mid-west the mining company recruited replacement workers many of whom were black. Western Central Labor Union from St.Louis sent word to the local Knights of Labor that six hundred fifty men were being sent to work the mines that had been struck.

These men immediately called "scabs" or "strike breakers" by the local labor organizations arrived in mid May, 1891, and were placed in camps near the mines but were not allowed to communicate with the workers on strike. They began work "supported" by guards hired by the mining company.

There were protests and counter protests, meetings and rallies and fairly soon "...on realizing their position, some of the blacks signified their willingness to leave the area if they had transportation."

A communication from E.J. McConnell was presented at the Tacoma Trades Council meeting May 28, 1891:

"Asking endorsement for bearer to Conductors and Brakemen's Unions.

Laid over as not looking o.k....Colored men returned with regular credentials from the Western Central Labor Union... Voted to endorse credentials recommending men to assistance of all Union men in all honorable ways.

"The blacks with credentials from the Western Central Labor Union were union miners helping the strikers by convincing black scabs to quit and getting them away from the mines. Their purpose in talking to the conductors and brakemen's unions may have been to persuade train crews to let departing blacks ride the freights unmolested.

"Twelve to fifteen blacks were deserting the Franklin mine each day and making their way to Tacoma, destitute. There the police ran them out of town."

Events went from bad to worse as the unions struck other mines in the eastern King County. There were shootings, further lock-outs and many incidents of violence. Eventually Governor Elisha P. Ferry ordered the militia to "disarm all unauthorized armed bodies in Franklin, Gilman, or elsewhere in King County where there is danger of a riot or breach of the peace."

This was an especially difficult time for the Black community Tacoma. Unions and the concept of collective bargaining was as deep seated in the black working man of Tacoma as it was other workers. The use of "scabs" who happened to be black did not lessen the desire of all working men to protect their jobs.

There is evidence that the workers imported from Missouri were not told of the labor troubles in King County and when confronted with the charge of being "scabs" or "strike breakers" they left the area as quickly as they came, destitute, hungry and disillusioned.

It was perhaps comforting to the black community to know that within a few years the Tacoma Mining and Investment Company, organized by George P. Riley, the Rev. S.J. Collins of Seattle and Horace P. Lawhorn, purchased and managed two mines in the coal region of King County.

#### THE POLITICAL POT

The political "pot" continued to boil in the 1890s as well. The Ledger of June 1, 1892 reported that members of the black community were planning to adopt a resolution which would encourage black voters to remain neutral in the presidential election scheduled for that fall.

George P. Riley who by this time had returned to Tacoma and was operating a barber shop was quoted by the Ledger:

"We ask no partiality. We ask only protection. We are placed on an equality with the Chinese in the Exclusion Act; we are going

backward; we are being relegated to the days of the 1859...

"The colored citizens from one end of the country to another should rise up in indignation and ask whether they are to be placed on an equality with the Mongolians or are we to remain free and equal to any citizens?"

The Ledger on June 7, 1892, reported the results of second meeting of Tacoma's black voters at the African Methodist Episcopal Church under the following headline "Stay with the Party." The author of the article wrote:

"A large number of colored people met last evening in the African Methodist Episcopal Church to continue the discussion of the resolutions introduced in a meeting a week ago by John Conna.

"Conna's resolutions pledged the colored people to remain neutral in politics, declaring that they had received no protection from either of the great parties. They were brought about by the signature of the Chinese exclusion law by President Harrison, which required that a Chinaman to prove his right to remain in the country must do so by a creditable white witness.

"The discussion was opened by Conna speaking in favor of adoption of his resolution. He was followed by Will Turner who opposed them in a short but pithy and vigorous speech. G.W. Thompson, presiding, left the chair and took the floor, speaking very strongly against the resolution.

"O.L.C. Hughes next spoke. He replied to Conna's assertion that the Republican Party had taken no means to protect the colored men. He pointed out the law now found in section 641 of the revised statutes which provides that a person dissatisfied with the state courts may appeal to the Supreme Court and pointed out five cases, in every one of which the colored men had been sustained.

"He explained that the government cannot institute police protection in the states and maintained that the offensive work referred to the white man only as opposed to a Chinaman.

"At the conclusion of Mr. Hughes he introduced the following resolutions which were adopted unanimously except for Mr. Conna's vote.

"Resolved that we have viewed with signal satisfaction the many measures adopted from time to time by Congress and put forth by the President of the United States as voicing the policy of the National Republican Party for the supression of ruffianism, violence, ostracism and bloodshed in the so called southern states, and for the protection of the ballot box, and the newly enfranchised citizens in the lawful exercise of their constitutional rights...."

In April of 1892 in response to a rumor that the black vote was going the the Democrats in local elections the Ledger noted in "Colored men for Huson:"

"On Saturday afternoon the colored men of Tacoma met to take action in answer to the boast of the democrats at the meeting in Germania Hall that the colored vote was for Parker.

"Their meeting was full of enthusiasm, and unanimous vote was passed indorsing Mr. H.S. Huson and inform him of the fact. A committee....proceeded to Mr. Huson's office in the Citizens National Bank Building to inform him.

"Charles Hughes was introduced to Mr. Huson and in a brief address pledged the support of the colored men referring to and answering the boast of the democrats.

"Mr. Huson gracefully replied, saying that he knew on account of race no difference, but judged men from their qualifications and intellect. He had spent two years in teaching a colored school on the border line of Missouri and had the highest respect for the race.

"He said that if elected he would give the colored people representation according to their number and qualification, as he would other nationalities. After a few other remarks, the colored men gave cheers for Mr. Huson and departed." (Tacoma Daily Ledger April 4, 1892.)

Ottillie Markholt, Tacoma's labor historian, wrote the following about black political activities in the 1890s.

"The Afro-American Progressive Political Club, organized in March, 1894, for "...the advancement and political recognition of the colored men," endorsed the Republican ticket in the municipal election.

#### THE BLACK POPULISTS

Later that year, at a meeting also attended by many whites, black people organized a colored Populist club.

"At a big Populist rally a few days later, W.P. Riley, a black Populist, spoke on the relation of of blacks to the Republican Party. The Morning Union newspaper reported:

"The first blood shed for American freedom was shed by a colored man was a truth and received with cheers that lasted for a minute at least.

"The reference was to Crispus Attucks, who was in the crowd fired on by British soldiers in the Boston Massacre in 1770."

Black Populists announced a rally at the foot of Fifteenth Street later during the election period. From that rally came the following:

"We, the colored populists of Tacoma, twelve in number, are tired of the fact that our race has been used as a foot stool for Republicans to climb into official berths.

"For thirty years we have been faithful to that party organization, and we have found that we had to seek our reward in our own fidelity.

"This year the Republican managers will find that there are colored votes that cannot be contemptuously bought with a few kegs of beer and more appeals to prejudice." (Morning Union, November 5, 1894.)

In 1896 Horace Cayton, editor of the Seattle Republican, published a special issue of his newspaper in tabloid format showing the growth and development of the Black Community in the Pacific Northwest.

#### PROMINENT BLACK CITIZENS OF TACOMA

Mr. Cayton devoted several pages of this special issue to short descriptions of the accomplishments of black citizens. Comments in the special about Tacomans included what he titled, Negroes in Washington.

1. Ora L.C. Hughes, formerly from the State of New York, now of Tacoma, was a few years ago quite a noted criminal lawyer, but was suddenly cut short from a brilliant career which seemed certain by losing his eye sight. He is still an advising counsel for other lawyers and prominent businessmen who want safe legal advise consult him. He owns property that cost him upwards of sixty thousand dollars.

2. Will T. Rudd is messenger for one of the largest and reliable banking houses in Tacoma. He also does accountant work and is considered very trustworthy, reliable and efficient.

3. John G. Smith, of Tacoma, is messenger and clerk for the Tacoma Lumber Company which position he has held for the past eight years.

4. The Honorable John N. Conna is the pioneer Negro real estate man in the state and he owns property all over the state. Mr. Conna

has served as deputy United States marshal and in other Federal places of trust and honor. He is now agent for one of the largest blocks in Tacoma, and is being favorably mentioned as a candidate for the next state representative for his district.

5. William Eweing was the first colored man to serve on the police force of Tacoma. He has now been a member of the forces for the past three years and makes an excellent officer.

6. W.D. Gibbs, son of the famous Judge Gibbs of Little Rock, Arkansas, is at present one of the turnkeys at the Tacoma county jail, under Sheriff Samuel Parker. He is most flatteringly spoken of by his superiors.

7. Miss Mabelle Walker has won singular honors in her studies in the Tacoma High School, and will soon graduate having won many prizes for her scholarship.

8. The Household of Ruth, the female branch of the G.U.O.O.F. has a flourishing lodge at Tacoma.

9. Tacoma has two hundred colored voters and the Republican party to which they have remained loyal has given them four honorable places in recognition of their services.

10. There are fewer colored hotel waiters and more colored farmers in the State of Washington than any other state in the Northwest.

11. Will Turner, a graduate of the Gains High School of Cincinnati, Ohio, under the management of the well known educator, Peter H. Clark, was for a number of years deputy county assessor of Pierce County. The newly elected assessor has given Mr. Turner work in the office, as he said no man in the state knew more about the business than Turner.

12. Henry J. Asberry, proprietor of the Tacoma Hotel Barber shop was born in New Orleans in 1862. He attended school until fifteen years old part of the time at Strait University. At fifteen he began learning the trade and soon became proficient in the art. For a number of years he worked on the Anchor Line steamboats in the Mississippi River.

His first business venture was at Hot Springs, Arkansas, where he had an excellent tonsorial parlor and made money rapidly. Mr. Asberry lived a few years at St. Paul, Minnesota.

Hearing of the bright prospects in the West, he came to Tacoma and entered the employ of F. Fritz Keeble. He was one of the company that opened the magnificent marble baths and barber shop in that city, which was the finest place of its kind in the West.

Selling his interest there he bought the Tacoma Hotel shop, which he now operates. Mr. Asberry is a highly respected citizen and a

thorough business man. He is married, Mrs. Asberry being a music teacher in that city. He is a member of the Puget Sound Lodge, No 3211, G.U.O.O.F. of Tacoma.

13. Frank Dishmore was born at Winchester, Missouri, May 10, 1855. When only seven years old, his father moved to Iowa. He was left with his uncle while his father went to the war. His father was killed and he was thus left a mere child to battle for himself. He worked down the farm and attended the country school. At the age of fifteen he went to Burlington, Iowa. Here he worked three years for the C.B. and Q. Railroad.

Hearing of the bright prospects of our race in the great city of Chicago, he went there, and remained seven years. He held a number of responsible positions in the city. Leaving there he went to St. Paul to go into the service of the Northern Pacific Railroad. He worked in various positions for this company for eight years.

This company, having the utmost confidence in him, sent him to Tacoma as head janitor and watchman of their general office in that city. He held this position with credit to himself and race for three years. He resigned from the employ of that company to go into business for himself.

He opened a large restaurant and did well until the hard times came, when he sold out. He was for a short time deputy sheriff under Sheriff Price, and is one of the few of our race who have been jurors. He has accumulated some property in the City of Destiny. He is a member of Puget Sound Lodge, NO. 3211 G.U.O.O.F. of Tacoma, and ranks as high as any man in the order in the state.

Being an honest, sober and industrious man, a good husband and kind father, he is one of Tacoma's best citizens.

14. John Mason, the night watchman of the City Hall in Tacoma was born in Washington D.C. His parents were free having purchased their freedom before his birth. He lived in Washington until thirteen years old, and went to New York. He worked for the Wabash railroad for a number of years. Mr. Mason then moved to St. Paul and worked for the Northern Pacific Railroad for six years coming to Tacoma in their employ.

On arriving in Tacoma he was employed at the Tacoma National Bank and remained in their service five years, or until the bank closed. Mr. Mason has a nice home in St. Paul and a number of lots in Tacoma; and a barber shop and other property on the Sound. He has a wife and one child. He is a 32nd Degree Mason, and is a member of Unity Lodge, NO. 16 and St. Mark's Chapter, No. 1 F.A.M. of Chicago and Prince Hall Consistory Valley of Illinois.

15. Charles E. Mitchell. One of the best known men in Tacoma is

Charles E. Mitchell. He was born in Wayne County, Indiana in 1856. There were no schools that he could attend, so he had to catch his education as best he could. He is a cook by trade, having learned the trade at the Richelieu and Fifth Avenue Hotels. For a number of years he was President of the Cooks and Waiters Union of Chicago.

Mr. Mitchell came to Tacoma on August 23, 1886, as an employee of the Northern Pacific, and worked for that company six years. He then began janitor work, having under him from eight to ten men. He now has charge of three of the largest buildings in Tacoma, one of which is the Fidelity block, the only fire proof block on Puget Sound.

He has charge of the Fidelity Trust Company, Puget Sound and Traders' banks. Mr. Mitchell is a prominent member of the Doolittle Republican Club, being a member of the Executive Committee. For four years he has been a member of the Chamber of Commerce. He is considered the best caterer in the City. His home is at 308 South K Street. It is a most excellent house and elegantly furnished. He has a wife and one child. Mrs. Mitchell runs a hair store and hair dressing parlors. Mr. Mitchell is a member of the Puget Sound Lodge NO 3211 G.U.O.O.F.

16. George P. Riley is well known on the Coast from Alaska to Panama. He was born in Boston, March 28, 1833. His parents were free and natives of Massachusetts. He was educated in the public schools of Boston. He attempted to enlist in the Mexican War but being under age and his parents objecting he could not.

He learned the barber trade, and ran a shop in his native city. He was present and materially assisted in the rescuing of Shadrick, the first Negro that the slave holders attempted to recover after the passage of the fugitive slave law. It was to Riley's house Shadrick was taken and protected.

Being affected by the California gold fever he came West in 1852. His first employment in the West was as bookkeeper in a boarding house in San Francisco. He then went to Sacramento and was present in the great fire and also the great flood. At this time the right of oath or the right to hold land were both denied the Negro which accounts for the race not acquiring property at that time.

Mr. Riley was a member of the memorable convention of colored men that met in San Francisco in 1858 to devise some means of emigrating to a free country. After consulting with Mexico, Canada, and San Diego, the convention decided in favor of Canada. A large emigration immediately set in toward Victoria and the Fraser River, Mr. Riley, being one of the many of them.

He spent seven years mining on the Fraser River. In 1881 Mr. Riley moved to Portland, Oregon and was employed in the custom house for six years. In 1869 he had been instrumental in forming the now celebrated Workingmen's Joint Stock Association of which he was

president. It was this company that owned the famous "Nigger Tract" of Tacoma which tract was composed of sixty-seven acres in the heart of the city.

The company also owned the "Riley Tract" of Seattle. Mr. Riley and two other members of the company are now contending in court for the ownership of the this land.

From 1880 to 1884 he was mail agent from Portland, Oregon, to Walla, Washington. He has crossed the continent six times, four times by Panama and twice by rail. He was married in Boston and has one daughter. He is a member of the Mount Moria Lodge No 4, F.A.M. of Nevada, California.

17. Lawrence Sledge. Among the cotton fields of the Mississippi Valley stands the little town of Macon. In it was born, March 8, 1874, the subject of our sketch. His parents desiring to rear their son in a community where his color would be no barrier to his progress moved West when he was eleven years old, first settling in Dakota but soon moving to Washington. Since 1890 they have lived in Tacoma.

Lawrence attended public school for a time. For a year he attended the business school in Tacoma. He is now delving deep in legal lore and will this year be admitted to the bar. He will be the second lawyer of his race to study law in this state.

It is admitted by all who know him that he is exceptionally bright, and every one predicts a bright future for him. He is a member of the Allen African Methodist Episcopal Church, teacher in the Sabbath School and one of the leading lights in the literary society of Tacoma.

#### THE SPANISH AMERICAN WAR

With the upsurge of patriotism connected with the Spanish American War and the acquisition of the Philippine Islands and Puerto Rico as well as the defeat of the Spanish in Cuba Tacoma's Black Community felt it was large enough to collectively do its part in supporting the "American Cause" of providing "civilization" to the new colonies and recently freed peoples. The Tacoma Daily Ledger reported this activity in an article appearing on July 26, 1898:

"Want to Be Immunes, Tacoma's Colored Troops make an Offer," Tacoma Daily Ledger, July 26, 1898.

"Every day sees military progress in Tacoma and this despite the fact two companies have already been furnished by the city and sent toward the front. The colored military company of the city has formally organized and offered its service as immunes..."

"Captain De Huff's company is going through the finishing process incident to organization and a new large drum corps will be ready to make martial music within a few days...

"Tacoma's colored company has elected officers with John Conna as captain, and sent a petition direct to Secretary of War Alger to be mustered in as immunes. The men hope in this way to be under the direct orders of the federal government and to escape organization through state officials.

"The company numbers fifty men, all citizens of Tacoma, who desire, they say, "to sustain the government with their heart's blood in an effort to humanize Spain and to set at liberty an oppressed and misused people."

"The following are officers of the company, Captain, John N. Conna; first lieutenant, Henry J. Asberry; second lieutenant J. F. Johnson.

"Captain Conna is one of the leading colored Republicans in the state and has taken active interest in all Republican campaigns held in the city the last several years. He says his men are anxious to get to the front. First Lieutenant Asberry is a barber.

"A meeting of the men desiring to form Company D of the new National Guard was held last night in the armory of old Company C on Tacoma Avenue.

"Twenty-five men were present and as many more have signified their intention of joining. J.J. Anderson was made temporary chairman. A petition to Adjutant-General Canton for acceptance in the Guard was drawn and signed by all the men present.

"Another meeting will be held tomorrow night at the same place to effect a more permanent organization and to elect officers for recommendation to the governor."

By the time the Immunes got themselves organized, however, there were enough local troops "...for the front..." as the Washington volunteers were sent off to assist in liberating the Philippine Islands and their services were not needed. Mr. Conna went back to selling real estate and Mr. Asberry went back to the Tacoma Hotel.

### CHAPTER THREE. THE NEW CENTURY

With the coming of the Twentieth Century there was a steady increase in black settlement on Puget Sound. The black population of Tacoma was three hundred seven in 1900 and in 1910 there were seven hundred seventy eight blacks in the City of Destiny, an increase of one hundred fifty three per cent.

## THE FORUM

John H. and Ella Ryan moved to Tacoma from Spokane soon after the turn of the century and by the first week of July 1903 began publishing a weekly newspaper called The Forum. It went through a number of changes in its nearly twenty years of existence and undertook many crusades which the editors hoped would make for a better community. (Later Mr. Ryan published a weekly newspaper called Ryan's Weekly).

Knowing that the local black population was not large enough to support a exclusively black interest paper and being very interested in politics the Ryans over the years "took out after" the Park Board, the local Chamber of Commerce, the Commission form of Government, a system of boulevards for the city, and a wide variety of public officials.

In 1908 The Forum advocated the abolition of the chain gang as an added punishment to evil doers. In the May 9, 1908, issue Mrs. Ryan published the following:

"It is proposed to abolish the chain gang. Thus does civilization, as Ambrose Bierce would remark, advance another half inch. The chain gang is a relic of barbarism, a disgrace to civilization, one of those un-American things that exist only in this land of freedom.

"It is only possible in a country where men fought to perpetuate slavery, an institution that was peacefully abolished in every civilized country but this. No man who has ever served on a chain gang could ever be the same again.

"Like the brand of Cain, the stigma would follow him to the grave. No town nor hamlet, however remote, could shield him from some of those who knew and remembered his disgrace.

"If we must punish men for infraction of laws or the atrocious crime of being poor, for that is what vagrancy charges amount to, let us do it with decency and in order. Let us not parade the fall of the individual through public thoroughfares, a mock and a sport to gaping throngs.

"The rock pile will at least give privacy to those who fall, and work out the pentinance and atonement for broken laws."

From time to time they also published articles of specific black interest showing the development of the American negro community and pointed with pride to achievements of American blacks.

## VISITS TO THE SOUTH

The Ryans often visited the American South to witness what they felt were great strides being taken to improve the life of the Southern Negro. They would occasionally bring home newspaper and magazine clippings which they published in The Forum.

One such article was entitled "The Negro's Salvation," written by Dr. E. C. Branson in a publication entitled Southern Workman. The article noted that:

"The Southern Negro is working out his own salvation, not in terms of politics, not in terms of formal education, but in terms of property ownership; and mainly in terms of land in the rural regions. He is doing this without let or hindrance in the South, largely aside from the awareness of the whites, largely because of their indifference, but even more largely with the sympathy and help of his white friends and neighbors.

"He is lifting himself by tugging at his own boot straps, a figure commonly used to indicate an impossible something; but in civilization, as in education, it is the only possible means of elevation.

"The Negro is emerging from jungleism and winning civilization mainly and necessarily by his own efforts. His progress every inch of the way is marked by struggle, struggle within himself for mastery over himself and struggle with outward surrounding circumstances.

"The Negro problem will not be solved by editorials, creeds, or statutes; by conferences, congresses, or assemblies; by pride, prejudice or passion. The development of the Negro can be stimulated, safeguarded and directed wisely and beneficently.

"The stream of tendencies can be kept clear of injustice and cruelty, brutality and inhumanity and it will be so if we have any Christianity worth the name." (The Forum April 18, 1914).

#### SOCIAL NEWS

When The Forum was first established it featured articles of a political nature, had social news, and generally promoted Tacoma and Pierce County. Its masthead read The Forum, devoted to the upbuilding of the State, Tacoma, and Pierce County in particular.

In first dozen issues the Ryans, new to the city, chronicled the social events of the black community almost exclusively but as time passed they created a city wide audience by describing events and activities of many societies.

Quintard Taylor, Jr. in writing his dissertation about blacks in

the Pacific Northwest noted that "Ella Ryan wrote some of the most articulate and forceful editorials attacking discrimination against blacks in the city and nation." (Taylor, p. 144).

For the summer and fall of 1903 a record exists of the activities of Tacoma's black elite and the "news" of Mrs. H.P.Lawhorn's extended vacation in the mountains near Issaquah where Mr. Lawhorn had interests in the Tacoma Mining and Investment Company was chronicled as was her trip to Seattle with daughter Daisy in early August. She returned home the first week of September to host the Ladies Aid Society of Allen Chapel (African Methodist Episcopal Church) in a moonlight picnic at her home. On the third of September Mrs. Lawhorn gave what was called a "...delightful supper..." to Mr. and Mrs. Cooper of Kankakee, Illinois.

#### OLIVET BAPTIST CHURCH

One of the first notices of activities of the congregation of the Olivet Baptist Church occurred in October of 1901 when the Ledger printed an account of a speech offered by the Rev. J. Gordon McPherson at the church. The reporter from the Ledger wrote:

It was a small oblong hall, with a foot high platform at one end. On the platform was a plain reading desk, a bible and a hymn book lying on the top. To the right of the desk was a small American organ, over which the player had thrown her cloak.

At one end of the wall behind a gaudy lithograph of Joseph Exalted was pasted at the other a black hat hung on a nail. Down the middle of the hall ran a strip of well worn red carpet, rows of battered wooden chairs ranged on either side. A cheap stove and a large black board displaying the quarterly lesson completed the furnishings of the place.

Such is the interior of the Mt. Olivet Church at 1734 South E. Street.

About fifteen persons, nearly all colored, formed a scattered audience last night to hear the Rev. J. Gordon McPherson, who was to address the waiters of Tacoma on the "Corn Cribs of Egypt."

The building was mean, the audience was small; but better a shack where earnestness is than a cathedral without earnestness last night. The speaker was followed with unswerving attention as he told the familiar story of Joseph. And Mr. McPherson's manner of telling it would command attention for a worse story than that of Joseph, perhaps the most fascinating in the Bible.

Simply and with dramatic effect the speaker told of Joseph in Egypt and of his building the corn cribs.

At the end of the address Mr. McPherson spoke briefly of waiters and waiting, the scriptural reference to Pharaoh's butler forming the peg upon which he aptly hung his discourse.

"The waiter's profession," began the address, " is the most honorable in the world. Take the class of men who are waiters today, like other professions, vain men, vile men have stolen and brought it into disrespect. But there is no profession where vain and vile men have not stolen in. Take the ministry which should have men that should be respected, yet we find black sheep there."

"Take waiters," continued the speaker, "If you want to learn human nature, I advise men who want to enter professional life to be waiters, where they will learn human nature. If these smart newspaper men want to find out anything about a man, they don't go to his wife, but to his butler."

"There's the great J.P. Morgan that was in the town yesterday. He bears the reputation of being a man of few words and hard to approach, but if I wanted to approach him I would go to his butler, and find out his weak spots, and if you know a man's weak places you can generally get into his castle."

"Waiters are better posted than some of your lawyers and even governors. Waiters know the weaknesses of the prominent men of the day. There's colored waiters today in this country that have secrets of prominent men that if they were to disclose it would come like a thunderbolt from a clear sky.

"A waiter is a noble man, and we are weeding out the ignoble men from the profession. The church today that has the waiters is the only church. In the West you don't pay sufficient respect to waiters and porters and some of them you have a right not to, but a waiter should not be lowly, for he comes in touch with the best men of the country and hears the best arguments.

"If I had to begin life again, I would first be a waiter, and get posted and then be a soldier, do you know the reason? There's many boys round the town today that will never learn discipline and may grow up to disgrace us, but put them in the army for three years and then under a good head water for three years and they will have discipline and be posted and able to carry on their own business too."

When the speaker had taken his seat, one of the congregation took up a little basket: "Our minister," he began, "doesn't ask you for anything for himself; but he does ask you for something to fix up the church."

"Look at that," he said, pointing to a discolored patch on the plaster, "and that," pointing to the torn and blistered paper that ran dado-wise around the walls. The bolt was well shot, and found at least one joint in the harness of the audience. (Tacoma Daily Ledger. October 21, 1901 p. 5).

In August The Forum reported that the Reverend Francis J. Davidson, pastor of the Olivet Baptist Church at 1734 South E Streets had returned to Tacoma after spending three months in Louisiana. The August 21, 1903 issue noted that the Reverend "...was accompanied on his return by nine sturdy persons who are intent on pitching their tent in this the Evergreen state..."

The Forum devoted space in its fourth issue (July 24, 1903) describing events of the Baptist convention held in Seattle and the visit of Rev. R.H. Boyd of Nashville, Tennessee, who The Forum called "...the embodiment of a self made man, a pleasing and practical talker and an effective and devoted Christian worker."

Dr. Boyd preached at Olivet Baptist of Tacoma. A local newspaper reported that:

"Whether there are any greater or not, Mr. Boyd is certainly an eloquent speaker, and his discourse, charged with facts that indicate a marvelous progress of the negro, was nevertheless enlivened with wit and drollery that amused and entertained while it instructed.

"Starting with the period, so recent as 1865, when the laws of all of the southern states made it a crime to instruct a negro in reading and writing, with a result that not five per cent of the colored population could either read or write, he traced the progress of his people to a time when the census enumerator of 1900 credits sixty five per cent of the colored people of the south with the ability to read and write; when from a period of propertyless slavery they now pay taxes on millions of property, although still under great restraint in the matter of engaging in any kind of mercantile business."

About the same time the Rev. S.J. Collins and wife attended the annual conference of their church in Spokane. A recently ordained minister, the Rev. Nichols, held services at the Allen Chapel while the Collins family was gone. Later in the summer The Forum noted the following:

"Arrangements are about completed for the removal of the Allen Chapel from 14th and G Streets to the site on Yakima. It appears that the visit of the bishop has so stimulated all the members of Allen that nothing in reason now seems impossible and the present site will soon live only in memory."

The Forum on February 19, 1904 described the attempt to revitalize the Frederick Douglass Republican Club which had first been organized in Tacoma in 1889. The Ryan's wrote:

"The Frederick Douglass Republican Club met at Union hall Wednesday evening and perfected an organized by adopting a constitution and by-laws. According to the preamble, the object and purpose of the club is to strengthen the republican party organization and to promote by all honorable means the success of the party and its

candidates.

"The members of the club before enrolling are required to sign a pledge that they will stand by and support the constitution and by laws of the club and all nominations made by the party in regular convention...

"One striking thing about this organization is this; only Republicans need apply and they will take no part in factional party politics, simply use their best efforts to aid the ticket when nominated, all of which shows a marked degree of good judgement. (The Forum, February 19, 1904).

#### TACOMA AFRO-AMERICAN CLUB

On May 26, 1908 a group of Black citizens of Tacoma gathered themselves together to form a corporation under the laws of Washington as a social, charitable and educational group. Choosing the name, Tacoma Afro-American Club, the thirty-one incorporators listed their objects and purposes as:

"To promote the principles and interests of The Republican Party in the State of Washington, and especially with reference to the colored race; to educate and instruct the voters of the colored race in the principles of the Republican Party; to establish and maintain places for reading rooms, libraries, or social meetings; and to establish and maintain social club among colored voters who believe in Republican principles."

Representatives of the Jordan, Covington, Swope, and Weber families were members of the club and many of the men were employed at the several large hotels in Tacoma most especially the Tacoma Hotel.

#### THE ALASKA-YUKON-PACIFIC EXPOSITION

In 1909 the attention of America was turned to the Pacific Northwest and the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition held on what is now the campus of the University of Washington. Horace Cayton, editor of the Seattle Republican published what he called the Northwest Negro Progress Number, Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition, in which he described the status of the local black community.

In responding to the question, "Should other blacks come to the Pacific Northwest?" Mr. Cayton wrote:

"Should the Negro of the South come to the Northwest to ease his lot you ask. To which, we reply, he should if he has the inclination and likewise the necessary "wherewith" requisite for

traveling expenses. However, it would be absurd as well as fool hardly for the Negro in a body to transplant himself in the Northwest or any other section of the United States.

"In other words, it would be both well and wise for the Negro not to congregate or colonize in any one section of this country, however favorably disposed such section and its Anglo-Saxon inhabitants might be toward his physical and intellectual development, lest he soon be confronted with a similar state of affairs as he is now contending with in the South, where, in a great many of those states, he is either in an actual majority or dangerously near it.

"If the alleged "race problem" of the United States is ever settled beyond the probability of resurrection it will be when large numbers, yea, a majority of the Negroes of the various Southern states will have scattered to every nook and corner of the Western Hemisphere and ramified themselves among the inhabitants thereof.

"Not to necessarily miscegenate with the whites, but to live among them and adopt their customs, habits and industrial spirit.

"So long as the black folk are not sufficiently numerous to cause alarm in the minds of the white folk that their presence in the community might mean "nigger dominance" there will be little or no strife between the whites and the blacks, but where there is danger of such, perpetual strife does and will prevail and judging from the past, the black man always comes out at the lower end of the rope.

"Unless a "black state" is set apart in the United States where the Negro may be "lord of all he surveys" (which will never be done), then it is better for the black man as a whole that he scatter and take his chance by the side of the white man even though it be against odds.

"It is very commendable on the part of the six or seven hundred Negro residents of King County, in which the city of Seattle is situate, to own real estate conservatively valued at \$600,000. We believe that few sections of this country can make a better, yea even if as good a showing. When men can earn from three to six dollars a day and the women one day per day at regular work and a dollar and a half to two dollars at "day work" then it is plain to be seen that with a man and his wife, working it will be on "easy street" vulgarly speaking, if they live economically.

"Let's hope that hundreds of black folk tired of the everlasting warfare between themselves and the whites in the South, where they are badly congested will take the advice of Horace Greeley, and "come west," if not to grow up with the country to fill a long felt want.

"If you want work come and it is your's for the asking and of the kind as you like, but if you want "snaps" stay where you are. Do

not get the idea in your head that counting house jobs, high official positions and clerical jobs in general await your coming, for they do not and its only in isolated cases that a black person gets one of those, but there is no telling what some black man or even many may do if a sufficient number of them come thither, become thrifty, husband their earnings and stick together.

"While clannishness is depreciated, yet it pays the black man just now to not only stand together but to also help each other.

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#### WHAT TACOMA OFFERS

Mr. Cayton asked Tacoma Attorney Gustave B. Aldrich to write about what Tacoma had to offer the Black Citizen. Mr. Aldrich wrote:

(Gustave B. Aldrich, Attorney. "For the right kind of Negro, what does Tacoma offer? The Seattle Republican. p. 28-30.)

"To many people the idea suggested in the foregoing query comes as a surprise. That Tacoma, or any other town outside the Southern States has anything to offer for the presence of a "problem" seems impossible. And this is as true of Negro people as of others.

"The Negro people have so long measured themselves by the estimates of their enemies and ill informed friends that it has never occurred to them, not only in reference to Tacoma and the West generally, but to other desirable places, persons and things. And this attitude has undoubtedly handicapped black folk in their efforts to rise in the world, for the world in its estimate of persons, places, and things, is governed largely by the subject's own opinion in the first place.

"The habit of constantly deprecating Negro people, despising Negro efforts, instead of helping the situation, has generated a timidity, a fear to branch out, a distrust of Negro enterprises, and of Negro business and professional men. It has prevented Negro men from going into a new community with that self assurance which comes to every man who holds a good opinion of himself and his people.

"Very different is the white man. The first thing he does is to assure that he is as good and has as good rights as anyone else under any conditions. He never inquires if such and such a place is a good place for a white man. He never inquires how are white men treated there. Or do they allow white people to live there.

"He goes there whether he is wanted or not and if he finds he can better himself or attain his objects there he goes without regard for the other fellow's feelings on the subject and very often the other fellow has to move.

"With reference to Tacoma, it has been my observation that the masses of whites occupy as nearly a neutral an attitude toward Negro people as can be found anywhere. They are not especially friendly nor especially hostile to them. I have lived in various neighborhoods in this city during five years and my family has invariably made friends of their neighbors, so much so that we have been invited to dine time and again and to attend private parties by people who lived around us.

"Personally I have never accepted such an invitation, but my wife has attended some and has been treated with the greatest cordiality. I mention this not by way of glorification, but in order to show the almost perfect neutrality which exists. Of course, persons who would form a dislike for our family would naturally show it by bringing up the color question at the first opportunity, but by specially cultivating friendly feelings, we manage to avoid such things.

"This has its effect upon my law practice for such persons give me some of their legal work to do when they have any, and recommend me to others. A large proportion of these people are descendants of New England Yankees and Pennsylvanians, with a large sprinkling of New Yorkers and Middle Westerners; many foreigners and some Southerners who are very liberal concerning the activities of Negro people when you consider their antecedents.

"I have paid special attention to the conduct of the police and magistrates, and while the usual dislike of relations between Black males and white women crops out occasionally, I do not know of a single instance during five years here even where such relations have existed that any Negro has been severely dealt with, and in every instance that has come to my knowledge the Negro man has been punished less severely than he deserved, as it was evident he had broken the law, even had the female been of his own race.

"This has its effect upon Negro businessmen, because they come most frequently in contact with women of the dominant race; in the South the best Negroes are always nervous when they have dealings of the purest nature with a white female, because of the petty jealousy of Southern white men, but in Tacoma and the west generally so long as one obeys the moral laws and exercises good judgement there is little likelihood of trouble.

"Places of public accommodation, amusements, and recreation are open to Negro people on the same terms as to others, with one or two exceptions; men and women obtain employment so long as they will work, the greatest trouble being that many of these who are here now fail to grasp the opportunities presented them. Labor unions are, in the main friendly and several unions have Negro members; every labor parade shows Negro men in almost every department.

"It is probably true that where two men apply for work, one white and the other black, other things being equal the white will have

the preference; this is to be expected but ordinarily the Negro man has a chance to show his ability and if he makes good he is the man.

"Along business lines; as grocers, small dealers, etc. Negro chances are limited only by his capacity and astuteness. Rented houses are somewhat difficult for the unknown Negro family, but if well known and of the higher grade of Negro people, there is very little trouble in obtaining what you can pay for.

"What trouble there is, has been caused by some well known Negro people occupying property and defacing the same, without paying rent. There is a newspaper man well known over the west here who poses as a leader of the Negro race, and who lives in an adjoining state, who occupied an office in one of the best buildings in Tacoma for six months and would not pay his rent. He also owes the various dry goods stores for clothing.

"There are three or four Negro families here who occupy house after house and will not pay until they are compelled. These people together with one other class are the greatest drawbacks here.

"For this kind of Negro Tacoma has nothing to offer. There are Negro men here, grocers, barbers, brick masons, asphalt laborers, caterers, cooks, home owners, who pay their way as they go are at all time polite yet they stand back for no man.

"These men are building Tacoma as much in their sphere as the white. And the whites know of and appreciate the same. This kind of Negro will find his chances good in Tacoma, for it is the city of "square deal."

"Workmen here who work steadily, avoid saloons, and low women, buy homes and support their families are as well appreciated in Tacoma as anywhere, if not better. White neighbors notice the same and respect them.

"The question of social equality can scarcely be said to arise here, for several reasons, one of which is that few people here have time to trouble about barring someone else from something. Life is strenuous and if a man takes any time from making his own living to intermeddle with such things he will find himself and family out of it.

"The majority of people here are workingmen who are fairly sociable and easily made friends of. Negro churches here could be improved very much by the advent of one or two educated preachers from the East who are also religious for education without religion makes things very bad.

"Schools are excellent and Negro children are given every opportunity with the whites.

"I find that whites who in their youth who have attended school

with Negro children are far less apt to give way to race feelings than others. Reality values are increasing rapidly, but there is land in plenty, and Negroes have equal opportunities to purchase. The advent of new railway lines is making this the queen city of the Pacific Coast, and it is confidently asserted that Tacoma will usurp the place of San Francisco as New York succeeded Boston on the Atlantic Coast. For the advanced type of Negro people Tacoma has unrivaled opportunities.

"The degraded Negro man, who dresses flashily or not at all, frequents saloons and who is constantly in trouble about women is not wanted; it is to be hoped that some day not far distant our Negro men here will arise in their wrath and drive out all vicious characters as are here not.

"There is no use to defend that sort. A few Sundays ago, my wife and I were on the streets of Seattle, our neighboring city, attending the Seattle Sunday Forum. At the intersection of the Second Avenue and Madison Street car line, we noticed an ugly Negro man, dressed in the height of fashion following and ogling a white lady.

"When the crowd gathered to enter the car, this thing deliberately elbowed the lady to attract her attention and then leered in her face with what he thought was a smile. The lady turned pale and red by turns and reading his desire in his eyes attempted to get away from him without creating excitement.

"Entering the car, she sought the farthest seat. My wife and I, feeling that indignation which comes over any one seeing such a thing, immediately sandwiched ourselves between the man and his would be victim, so that he got no seat when he got aboard. The lady appeared to be a woman of refinement and culture and to be rather intelligent.

"The Negro man came as near her as possible and was soon seated beside her, crowding her. The lady quietly drew away, three times and the brute deliberately closed up to her each time, till other passengers, noticing him, invited the lady to exchange seats. All through this he showed his brutal desires in every move, not taking his eyes from her person for a moment.

"Such men as these are the cause of sorrow elsewhere, and no mercy should be shown them. The lady showed no evidence of ever having known him and was evidently far beyond his reach in every way, even had she been as black as coal. There should be a Negro Civic Society to rid us of such men.

"Openings exist here for Negro restaurants, caterers, physicians, druggists, fruit dealers, ice cream parlors, real estate men and divers other lucrative employments can be worked up by the Negro who respects himself and family.

"The people of Tacoma think well of their respectable Negro element

and everyone who makes good finds his way into the hearts of the community. No one here expects Negroes to lick their feet, as elsewhere, the Negro who is a home builder, a family man, who pays his debts, works steadily, obeys the laws, and uses good judgement can work out his salvation here.

"For such Negro people, Tacoma has the kindest welcome, and Tacoma and the West generally offer to them homes, the respect of neighbors, the equal protection of the laws and every opportunity for advancement." Seattle Republican. Northwest Negro Progress Number. Volume XIV # 1.

#### TACOMA'S BLACK POPULATION AND ITS REAL ESTATE

To demonstrate that Tacoma's Black community was developing real roots in the community Mr. Cayton also wrote about the efforts made by residents of the City of Destiny to own their own homes. After a positive description of the city homes and other real property owned by the black community in Tacoma was listed under the title "Tacoma Tells a Tale."

"Few towns on the Pacific Coast offer better opportunities to the Negro than does the "City of Destiny." The inhabitants of Tacoma of both races are industrious and economical, broad minded and liberal. They are thrifty, energetic and progressive without that "frenzied" financial spirit that dominates some of the other cities on the coast.

"The development of the city is steady, safe and enduring and Negroes are rapidly securing real estate that will soon become an important asset in determine valuations in that city.

"The following list of property owners will be found nearly correct and also showing a conservative valuation on each parcel.

1. Louis Chase, house and lot, \$5,200.
2. E.T. Edson, house and lot, \$8,000
3. H.J. Asberry, house and lot, \$8,000.
4. William Eweing, house and lot, \$6,000.
5. H. Harris, house and lot, \$10,000
6. Albert Sterns, house and lot, \$500.
7. James Dupree, house and lot, \$1,000.
8. Samuel Pierre, house and lot, \$1,500
9. Cal Black, house and lot, \$2,500.

- 10.J.H. Doage, house and lot, \$2,500.
- 11.L.C.Copeland, house and lot \$2,500.
- 12.J. R. Hawkins, house and lot, \$2,500.
- 13.S.J. Collins, house and lot \$2,500.
- 14.J.A. Nelson, house and lot, \$2,000.
- 15.Arthur Wright, house and lot \$2,000.
- 16.Lawrence Sledge, house and lot, \$2,000
- 17.George Wright, lot, \$200.
- 18.Nicholas Johnson, house and lot, \$2,000.
- 19.Edward Taylor, house and lot, \$800.
- 20.Enoch Lingress, house and lot, \$2,000.
- 21.H.P. Lawhorn, home \$3,000
- 22.H.P. Lawhorn, other property, \$5,000.
- 23.Will Turner, lots, \$1,000
- 24.B.A. Day, lots, \$500.
- 25.Daisy Lawhorn, lots, \$200.
- 26.R. Robinson, lots, \$250.
- 27.L.E. Clark, lots, \$500.
- 28.Mrs. Annie Lawhorn, lots, \$250.
- 29.P.A. Ury, lots, \$500.
- 30.J. C. Richardson, house and lot \$1,000.
- 31.Mrs. L.C. Freeman, lot \$350.
- 32.Richard McGee, lot \$500.
- 33.Mrs. Addie B. Stewart, lot, \$350.
- 34.Mrs. Lizzie Williams, lot, \$250.
- 34.J. R. Curd, lot, \$500.
- 36.Charles O. Monroe, lot \$500.

"There are to be added to this list about \$10,000 worth owned by persons living in Seattle who have purchased lots and blocks in the new additions that are being opened up in and around the city."

"Tacoma Tells A Tale," Seattle Republican. p. 26.

#### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF PROMINENT TACOMA BLACKS

As he did in his 1896 special edition of the Seattle Republican Horace Cayton wrote short biographical accounts of black people he felt were prominent in their communities. The 1909 Tacoma group included:

1. Gustave B. Aldrich is a prominent attorney of Tacoma where he has lived for the past five years. By industry, thrift and integrity, he has made himself an important factor in the affairs of that growing metropolis. In his profession he is rapidly gaining an enviable position, and is securing it on his merits. He is a man whose every thought is for the betterment of mankind irrespective of race, color or creed.

2. Nettie Asberry. A graduate from the Conservatory of Denver she has lived in the West for sixteen years, twelve years of which she has lived in Tacoma. She is a music teacher of rare ability and has always had a large number of pupils. she is regarded as one of Tacoma's expert pianists and a lady of rare accomplishments, speaking French and German fluently.

3. William Eweing of Tacoma is the colored money king of the state, but "...he was not always thus." He came to Tacoma twenty years ago from Iowa, and his life has always been one of hard work and rigid economy. He engaged in different occupations in that city for a number of years and although he always lived well he always managed to save something from his earnings.

For a number of years he drove the patrol wagon, and a most efficient drive he made. In 1895 he decided to seek his fortune in the gold fields of the north and left for Alaska soon thereafter. These were the days when Five Mile was the center of operations and he went there.

When the strike at Dawson was made he was one of those who were too busy to follow fake stampedes and so did not get a claim there. He, however, went to Dawson later and made a few thousand dollars in the winter of 1897 while there.

When Nome was struck he walked from Dawson, a distance of seventeen

hundred miles in order to get there before the rush, and it was here he laid the foundation for his fortune.

He is still interested in mines in and around Fairbanks, but does not spend his entire time there as of yore. He being of a speculative turn, has placed his Alaska earnings in California and Washington real estate, and that has increased in value very rapidly. Mr. Ewing is at a low estimate worth one hundred thousand dollars and yet he is only a middle aged man. He is well preserved and unmarried.

4. Mr. H Harris is the pioneer merchant of Tacoma having been in business in that city for the past fifteen years. He is conceded by all who have had dealing with him to be one of the shrewdest business men in the City of Destiny. Mr. Harris by industry and fair dealing has built up a lucrative grocery business and is one of Tacoma's most progressive citizens. He has accumulated considerable property and is a credit as owning real estate second in value to that owned by any Negro in Tacoma. His trade extends to Alaska and in a limited way even to the Orient.

5. Mr. J. R. Hawkins is an Indianian by birth, but lived for a number of years in Graham County, Kansas where he was twice elected clerk of the district court of that county. He retired from the office with the respect and esteem of all classes of citizens. He was admitted to practice law after leaving office, but on coming to Tacoma a few years ago he decided to engage in the tailoring business at which he has been a success.

He owns a business block in South Tacoma, where, assisted by his wife, he conducts his business. He is active in Baptist Church circles and does not lag in anything which has for its object the elevating of mankind.

6. Louis Hill is one of the pioneer Negroes in Tacoma. Few men are more generally or more favorably known in his town than he. As steward of the Union Club, the largest and most fashionable club in the city, he has a very responsible position and one he has most creditably filled for a number of years. Mr. Hill is a society man and a most popular gentleman.

7. J. F. Johnson was for a number of years head waiter for the Tacoma Hotel of Tacoma. As a head waiter Mr. Johnson was a brilliant success. He is one of the stockholders in the Defiance Investment Company and has a small ranch near the city where he puts in his spare moments raising chickens for the Tacoma market. Mr. Johnson is a thorough businessman and has made a success of all his undertakings.

8. James A. Jones is well known in this state, being at one time champion bicycle rider of the Northwest. No man in Tacoma does more to promote the interest of the secret societies than does Mr. Jones, He, with his wife, is proprietor of an excellent dining room which caters exclusively to the more wealthy class of citizens of that city and he is doing a satisfactory business. Intelligent progressive and wide awake he can be called one of Tacoma's substantial citizens.

9. F. Fritz Keeble is one of the pioneer business men of the Puget Sound Country, having for a number of years operated the Hamam baths at Tacoma, later moving to Seattle and opening the first bath house in the city. At the same time he has always conducted a first class barber shop in connection. Mr. Keeble is now at one of the prominent hotels in Seattle and as soon as the regrade on 4th Avenue is completed will open one of the finest shops in the city. As a hustler, he is in the first rank, and will always "make good."

10. Horace P. Lawhorn came to Tacoma from Indiana some sixteen years ago. He has at all times been connected with some business enterprise. He was the manager of the Farmers' market that flourished there some years ago. He is now in the real estate business and is handling some large blocks of land and a great deal of which he is selling to enterprising Negroes.

He is closely identified with the A.M.E. Church and especially the Sunday School. On the whole Mr. Lawhorn is one of Tacoma's most enterprising energetic and popular citizens. He has always been more or less active in politics and for four years was on the Tacoma police force.

11. Rev. A. Nelson is pastor of the Olivet Baptist Church of Tacoma. He was born in New Orleans, Louisiana in 1872 and was educated in the public schools of his native town. He joined the Baptist Church in 1874 and was elected educational missionary of the Third District Baptist Association. He came to Tacoma in 1903 and was elected pastor of the church there in 1905. Rev. Nelson is an active, energetic man and though an ardent church worker does not forget that the temporal man must be looked after as well as the spiritual and is accumulating some valuable property in that city and community.

12. Samuel D. Pierre is one of Tacoma's younger businessmen. He operates a first class as well as up to date tailoring establishment and ranks among the best in his line. Mr. Pierre for a number of years in company with his brother, operated a shop at Victoria, British Columbia. Since coming to the States he has

married, bought property and is fast becoming one of the substantial men of the city. Being a first class workman, his patrons are the wealthy, fashionable young gentlemen who want the best and appreciate and patronize the place where they get it.

13. Mrs. Ella E. Ryan has been a resident of this state for a number of years having for years owned and operated a hair dressing parlor at Spokane where she accumulated some very valuable property. She was for a long time associated with her husband in conducting the Forum of Tacoma, but she afterwards assumed the entire control of it. She is now manager of the Forum which has been quite a success under her management.

14. John H. Ryan is an Ohioan by birth, but has lived in this state for the past eighteen years. He was a resident of Eastern Washington eleven years and was engaged in business in Spokane and other towns on that side of the mountain. He came to Seattle in 1900 and engaged in the newspaper business, but seeing an open field at Tacoma moved there and continued his newspaper work. He has always been prominent in politics and has published three legislative manuals for this state. The one appearing this year being the best.

15. Lawrence Sledge is a Mississippian by birth, but has been in Tacoma since he was a mere youth. He is a graduate of Tacoma High School. Being in moderate circumstances he had to work to earn sufficient money to pay his expenses while studying law. He passed a brilliant examination, and has made a successful lawyer, having won some notable criminal cases.

Tacoma, in general, is proud of her elevator boy that learned to be a lawyer despite his "ups" and "downs" day after day.

16. William Turner was born in Cincinnati and graduated from the Gains High School of that city. For some years he was a teacher at St. Louis, where he ranked among the best. He came to Tacoma twenty years ago and since that time and has been active in the politics of Pierce County. He has been a delegate to every county and state Republican convention since this has been a state and has been deputy county assessor of Pierce County for ten years serving one term under a Democratic administration.

He is now engaged in the real estate business in which he is doing exceedingly well owing to his wide acquaintance in the business world.

CHAPTER FOUR THE END OF ONE ERA AND THE BEGINNING OF ANOTHER

## A YOUNG MAN OF PROMISE

Just as Horace Cayton probably gladdened the hearts of Tacoma's black spinster population in 1909 by noting that William Eweing "the colored money king of the state..." was worth a hundred thousand dollars and was "well preserved and unmarried..." Ella Ryan in introducing Roger W. Watts to the Tacoma community the same year noted that he was single, a college man and an attorney. An accompanying photograph in The Forum showed him to be young, thin, and good looking.

He was a twenty-six year old graduate from the law department of Howard University who came to Tacoma in 1907 to further his career. Ella Ryan published the following in The Forum :

"It may be of interest to many of our readers to know that Roger W. Watts is making a good record as stenographer of the State Senate. Mr. Watts came here about eighteen months ago at which time he identified himself with the Young Mens Christian Association.

"Shortly afterward he was one of the volunteers who assisted in collecting the building fund. He also volunteered his services to the Young Men's Republican Club and did valiant work wherever assigned for the good of the party, and his hustling, energetic manner brought to his side many friends.

"He was one of the school census enumerators last spring, at which he made good. He has in fact made good in every vocation he has essayed to fill. The West is pregnant with opportunities for young men of the Watts type... The Forum is extremely gratified at Mr. Watt's success." (The Forum January 23, 1909, p. 2).

The next year Mrs. Ryan again called attention to Mr. Watts in the columns of The Forum. This time she praised his work as Chief Clerk to Guy E. Kelly of the Census Bureau.

Mrs. Ryan wrote:

"The subject of this sketch has worked indefatigably for the success of the census taking task now on....He is skilled in clerical ability. His first work in the state as stenographer in the Senate marked him as a man of ability, and at the close of the session R.W. Watt had endeared himself to every senator.

"His efficient work there promoted him to the Alaska Yukon Pacific Exposition publicity bureau where he held a prominent place and made good. His appointment as chief clerk to Mr. Kelly was rapidly followed by an appointment as special agent of the census bureau, which place he now holds in addition to be chief clerk.

R.W. Watt is the type of men who make it good. He enters upon a task with a thought singly to seeing how much he can accomplish. Time does not count with him. We know that he burned the midnight

oil while at Olympia without complaint, when the state was running short of stenographers. With Watts "service is not so much a matter of time, but rather of intelligence." (The Forum April 16, 1910 p.4).

Although he was not successful as a candidate for public office Mr. Watts ran as the "Lincoln-Roosevelt Candidate for Representative in the thirty-seventh district" for the Washington State Legislature in 1910.

In the flowery language of the time The Forum supported the candidacy of Roger W. Watts with the following editorial:

"On the question of taxation he hit the nail squarely on the head in a recent article in The Ledger which appeared over his name under the heading "Voice of the People." He clearly pointed out that the city assessment is too high and that sane retrenchment and legislation is the only alternative to remedy the existing evils.

"The article shows that Mr. Watts has a profound insight into the matter of taxation and that he knows just what is needed in the way of legislation to remedy the situation and to bring about the desired results.

"Moreover as Mr. Watts is a practicing lawyer of large experience, and has had previous legislative experience, and there is not the slightest doubt that he, with his recognized ability and untiring energy will succeed in getting such laws passed at the legislature as will bring home the best possible results to the people of Tacoma.

"Mr. Watts has given close and diligent study to the needs of Tacoma along all lines and probably has at his command as thorough and accurate knowledge of local conditions as any of his opponents. The knowledge and influence which he gained at the A.Y.P. Exposition...as well as his connection with the federal census...has afforded Mr. Watts a decided advantage and a timely one which voters will be quick to recognize...

"He is a good lawyer, a college man, an orator, a man of recognized ability, possesses a keen insight into the intricacies of the law, has a pleasing personality and is an untiring worker. He has already proven his loyalty to Tacoma, is known to stand for right principles and has always fought a winning battle in any good cause..." (The Forum August 20, 1910 p. 8).

Mr. Watts continued working in the City of Tacoma through the second decade of the 20th Century having law offices in a number of downtown locations until the First World War. He left the City of Destiny in 1917 and when he returned for a short time in 1920 he listed his occupation as "ship worker" referring to his service to the nation during World War One.

## A PLEA FOR LIBERIA

By 1910 the Black community of Tacoma was of a size and wealthy enough to have the editors of The Forum, call for help for the nation of Liberia:

"Liberia has called for money and men. Let every Afro-American answer this call, and set aside, Thursday, September 22, 1910, as a contribution day and help raise a fund to be turned over to the authorities of Liberia for the education and Christianizing of our brother Liberians, and thus help develop that country.

"An effort on the part of the colored people of this country to help our brothers in Liberia would win for us greater respect at home and consideration abroad...." (The Forum XI (February 26, 1910), p. 5.).

### THE TWENTY-FIFTH INFANTRY AT FORT LAWTON

In 1910 elements of the 25th Infantry Regiment, were assigned to Fort Lawton in Seattle for a period of time. Made up mostly of black troops there were problems in finding appropriate social activities for the men. Some elements in the community demanded that the 25th Infantry Regiment be disbanded because some of the soldiers were finding their recreation in confrontations between themselves and local citizens.

There was an apparent assault on a white man by a negro soldier. Protest meetings held in Seattle and petitions were sent to the President and War Department demanding action.

The Tacoma Daily Tribune reported the following:

"Some of the colored residents of Tacoma are aggrieved at some of the things that have been said about the colored troops at Fort Lawton, calling attention to the fact that among all other races there are the good and the bad.

"The colored people of Tacoma certainly have no reason to be ashamed of any of their race, if all were like the residents here, who are universally respected as a peaceable, law abiding, honest and thrifty people.

"Because a regiment of colored soldiers recruited from among the class of Negroes of the South should bring themselves into disrepute is no reflection on the colored people of the country, in Tacoma or elsewhere.

"It is not at all uncommon for white soldiers of the army posts to make of themselves a menace to the peace of the community, a gang of them not a week ago terrorizing one of the towns where they were stationed."

Ella Ryan, editor of The Forum, in response to the whole issue and after describing "...a few instances ....to prove the bravery of these 'black boys in blue' during their forty-one years of service to the government..." wrote:

"The government which they have loyally served intends to support these men whenever they deserve support, and the damnable acts of one of their number is not going to be a cause for the upbraiding of the whole regiment.

"The guilty one will be searched out, turned over to the civil authorities and punished as the law directs and provides. This is all that justices requires.

"No stigma or blame should rest on the remainder of the regiment. The government cannot, nor will not pander to local prejudice. This is a period of peace. All nations are on friendly terms with the United States, but who is it here that can say that this condition will always remain, and when the dogs of war have been unchained, what of the black soldier then?

"A long string of black soldiers look good to the commanding officer when shot and shell are raining...The man who will argue for the disbanding of the Negro soldiers would hire a substitute tomorrow if he was drafted to fight..." (The Forum June 11, 1910 p. 1).

After nearly twenty-four years in the Pacific Northwest the 25th was transferred to Hawaii on January 1, 1913. They had served in Indian campaigns but were most frequently called upon to stop or prevent labor violence in the region. In 1910 they were used to fight a series of gigantic forest fires in eastern Washington and northern Idaho and western Montana.

At one time they were assigned to test the feasibility of using bicycles as a mode of military transportation. They made a trip from Fort Missoula, Montana, to Yellowstone Park in 1896 and in 1897 they cycled nearly nineteen hundred miles from Fort Missoula to Saint Louis, Missouri, in less than six weeks. The government later decided against the use of bicycles as transportation for individual soldiers.

#### WORLD WAR ONE

With the beginning of the First World War one historic period of development of Tacoma's black community ended as another epoch

began. Wishing to support the war effort citizens of the county voted in 1917 to offer what became a total of seventy-thousand acres of land in the county for the development of a military cantonment or training center. The Federal government accepted the land for training purposes and Camp Lewis was established in July, 1917.

The subsequent building of the facilities for the camp and the training of thousands of troops for service in World War One changed Tacoma community. There was plenty of work to do as thousands of people flocked to the Pacific Northwest to be part of the great defense projects. At Camp Lewis alone more than 1,700 buildings were built and fifty miles of roads were constructed in what one writer called "...the largest training camp constructed during World War One."

With the increase of war industries another "price" however, had to be paid. Horace Cayton in 1896 wrote proudly that the local black community counted more farmers than it did hotel waiters. With the expansion of the military establishment in Pierce County much farmland had to be used for training purposes. Farm families were dispossed and had to find other homes and other work. The Black farmers along with the others had to make major changes in their lives.

Several large ship building concerns located in Tacoma and many new jobs were created as shipyards lined the shores of Commencement Bay. One large company continued building even after the end of the war and for years the harbor was filled with a significant number of ships built for the French government but not delivered. Some were later burned at the waterline on Carr Inlet near present Purdy.

Instead of a fairly close knit community Tacoma's black population grew dramatically and brought to it people from many places in the United States. Long gone was the time when a few men like John Conna could speak for the entire black community and influence every level of black society.

The community was still quite small. The 1920 census of the United States listed nine hundred ninety two blacks as living within the county. These numbers were gathered after the demobilization from the First World War and many war time workers had by that time returned to their former homes or sought work elsewhere.

In 1920 other minority communities within the county included 387 Native Americans and 2,718 Asians and Pacific Islanders. Twenty one and a half per cent of the total county population was foreign born.

#### CHAPTER FIVE SOME HISTORIC PERSONAGES.

## 1. JOHN CONNA

Little is known about John Conna and his family before they arrived in the Pacific Northwest in the 1880s. Mr. Conna was born in Texas and lived in Kansas City for a time. He came first to Seattle and later to Tacoma where among other activities he worked for Allen C. Mason, Tacoma's first millionaire, in his real estate business. Mr. Conna owned a farm in the Auburn area and at one time enlarged his holdings there by purchasing land from the government.

He was called the arbitrator and leader of the Tacoma's Black community by local newspapers as long as he remained in the city. He served as president or other officer of nearly every important political or social event in town and attended nearly every event of importance in the city.

That he was listened to was evidenced by an editorial in the Tacoma Daily Ledger in 1888 where Mr. Conna was quoted as providing important information about the need of the Republican Party and its allies to work to "free" the black communities in the former slave states.

His work with the legislature in 1889 and 1890 presented what was to him a typical challenge. He served as a Sergeant at Arms and is credited with lobbying for the passage of a public accommodations act which would allow black citizens equal access to restaurants and hotels in the state.

His "test" of the law in a famous case in Tacoma also demanded courage and a certain insight. He chose an eating house where he probably knew he would not be served instead of dining at the well known and popular Chilbergs Restaurant where he would have been able to dine.

Mr. Conna was elected President of the John Brown Republican Club of Tacoma when it was organized in September, 1890, and on Christmas Day of that year he was elected President of the Washington State Protective League at its first convention held in Tacoma.

In 1891 Mr. Conna was outraged to read that the Alien Exclusion Act recently signed by Republican President Benjamin Harrison had included language which would permit certain people of Chinese Ancestry to remain in the United States if vouched for by "...a credible white man..." Mr. Conna took this as an affront to the black community and organized meetings to denounce such treatment.

Mr. Conna decided that it was time for the local black community to declare their independence from the Republican Party and developed resolutions that would proclaim the intent of Tacoma's black community to remain "neutral" in politics. Other black leaders defended the party and when a vote came, as reported in the Tacoma Ledger for June 7, 1892, Mr. Conna was the only person who favored his resolutions.

He later offered himself as Captain of the Tacoma Immunes, military unit organized during the Spanish American War from Tacoma's black community.

Some years ago members of his family came to Tacoma looking for information about his impact on the local community. They indicated that after some years of "farming" in Auburn Mr. Conna accepted the challenge of seeking a fortune in Alaska where he died.

As with all pioneers there were deaths along the way and local records show that:

Libbie Conna, a four months old child of John Conna, died in Tacoma on July 13, 1889; that an infant daughter of John Conna died in Tacoma on October 31, 1890, and that Bessey Alice Conna a sixteen year old daughter of John Conna who was born in Kansas City, Missouri, died in Tacoma on March 29, 1898.

## 2. SILAS WEBER OF THE TACOMA.

Nelson R. Hong, "Weeps in recalling hotel's early glory," Tacoma News Tribune. October 17, 1935.

"Old Si," Weber had a hard job keeping back the tears as he stood watching the Tacoma Hotel go up in smoke this morning.

"That place was just like a home to me. In fact it was as much my home as the house in which I sleep," said Weber. Weber has been at the Tacoma Hotel for thirty-one years.

He has become as much a part of the institution as the huge timbers which spanned its famous lobby. He has served men, women and children from all walks of life.

### SERVED NOTABLES

The famous Negro steward couldn't remember all of the notables who have been served by him since 1908 but those who came to his mind make a list hard to equal in distinction.

There was Theodore Roosevelt, William H. Taft, Warren G. Harding, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Calvin Coolidge. Roosevelt was ex-President when he was served by Weber. Harding was President on his way to Alaska on the trip which ended in his death in San Francisco. Coolidge was vice president when he visited Tacoma, but was destined to lead the nation only a few months later. Franklin D. Roosevelt was the Democratic candidate for the vice presidency in 1920 when he visited Tacoma.

Then there was Uncle Joe Cannon, one time czar of the House of Representatives, Lord Balfour, the English shipping tycoon, and a host of others of equal or lesser rank.

Weber can always retain these memories, but there are other cherished possessions which cannot be retained or replaced.

"To me, the biggest loss was the destruction of the famous Sheffield silver service.

"This Silver service was worth more than twenty-five thousand dollars but that doesn't begin to cover the loss as the silver could not be replaced at any price. It has not been made for years and the collection the hotel had for years has been the envy and joy of collectors.

"And then there is the big punch bowl, the same one that was used for the big party when the hotel was opened fifty-one years ago. No amount of money could buy that bowl. It had been the center of many festive gatherings during the last half century.

"There was those precious champagne glasses. We haven't used them much lately because of prohibition first and the depression second, but they saw many happy days."

The Tacoma Hotel, having been built more than a half a century ago, naturally wasn't modern.

However, in one respect at least the hostelry did not have to take its hat off to hotels built more recently.

When Sanford White, famous architect, designed the kitchens of the hotel he did so with such foresight and vision of the growth of the inn's business that in more than fifty years no change was necessary.

To look at Detective Bill Turner an hour after the fire, one would never have imagined he played a hero's role.

He was walking around with a pitcher of coffee pouring out cupfuls to the hard working firemen.

A few minutes after the fire broke out, Turner was making his way through the smoke filled halls to awaken guests and direct them out of the burning building.

On his last trip into the blazing building Turner was cut off by flames and had to be rescued by firemen from a second floor ledge.

Detective A.O. Peterson and Patrolman R. Savage were among the first on hand and risked their lives going through the hallways summoning guests.

Some of the "gay old dogs" of the city, the now sedate business men

who had their fling more than a quarter of a century ago, saw one of the brightest spots of the Northwest social life of another generation go up in smoke.

"Well, do I remember the gay parties that Tacoma Society turned out for thirty years ago. They were brilliant affairs, with champagne flowing like beer does today."

"And about Christmas time, Weber would fill up the Tom and Jerry bowl. Holiday cheer was really something in those days."

Nelson R. Hong, "Weeps in recalling hotel's early glory," Tacoma News Tribune. October 17, 1935.

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"Si" Weber, Well Known Negro Dies." Tacoma Times. March 18, 1943.

One of Tacoma's most lovable characters, Silas Weber was claimed by death Thursday morning in a Seattle hospital to which he had only recently been removed after a brief illness.

"Si" Weber was maitre d'hotel at the Tacoma Hotel for the greater part of some 36 years that he served on its staff and such was his aptitude for handling the public diplomatically that he made innumerable friends, thousands in Tacoma and thousands from around the world.

Weber was a Kentucky born Negro. He admitted to the age of sixty five years though some thought him older. When he left Kentucky he became the all around man to a wealthy Chicago family, served them for many years before coming to Tacoma shortly after the turn of the century.

At that time and for many years afterward the Tacoma Hotel staffed its dining room with colored men. There Weber found his place and for long years, kept it, through several changes of ownership and management and even the type of personnel.

Twice, friends recalled, he left, one to serve in a similar capacity more than thirty years ago at Helm's tavern on 10th Street and once to head affairs at the Olympus Inn during its most thriving period.

But he always went back to the Tacoma Hotel until it burned and then he followed its fortunes in the building across A Street until last December.

Then, one of his boys joined the army, another was serving the government and "Si" decided he should be in some kind of defense work himself. He obtained a job at the Seattle-Tacoma Shipbuilding Corporation yards.

A strapping powerful fellow in his youth, he aged slowly and but for the graying hair, one might not have guessed his years. As manager of his dining room, he understood and practiced courtesy, maintained a keen interest in affairs and especially in sports. When the occasion provided he exhibited rare intelligence and good humor.

George W. Calvert present owner of the Tacoma Hotel spoke of Weber Thursday with deep affection.

"A most loveable character with friends everywhere," he said. "Old friends ask for him and about him frequently. Some were asking about him today. He came to Tacoma long before my time and he was my maitre d'hotel all the eight years I have been in charge here, until last December. I doubt if he had an enemy in the world."

Weber's home is at 1213 North 7th Street. His wife, Mrs Mamie Frances Weber, died January 19, 1943. Surviving him are his daughter, Miss Roberta Weber; two sons, Donald W. of Seattle and Corporal A. C. Weber in the United States Army and two grand children.

("Si" Weber, Former Maitre d'Hotel is taken by Death," Tacoma Times. March 18, 1943.).

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(Note on a conversation with Louis Muscek about Silas Weber.)

Shortly before Louis Muscek of Tacoma died he talked about Silas Weber with the staff of the Northwest Room of the Tacoma Public Library. Mr. Muscek, an attorney by profession, said that he remembered Weber of The Tacoma very well. He said that Weber was probably one of the most "valuable men " in town for he could get anything for anyone when needed.

If a salesman using one of the presentation rooms at the Hotel broke a part of his display Weber was able to get the right person with the right equipment to get things fixed no matter what time of the day or night it was.

If someone needed to be in Seattle, or San Francisco or Nome or where-ever Weber was able to round up the most efficient and reliable way of getting there in a hurry.

Weber knew everyone in town worth knowing and was often able to "join" the right people together for either business or pleasure. If a special food, flowers, or wine was needed Weber knew where to get it. If someone needed to see an official for a special permit permission to get something done Weber was the man to see.

According to Mr. Muscek Weber's prowess could extend to more

private matters but in all cases Weber acted as a real gentleman and took advantage of no one.

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(A note on a conversation with Cyrus Happy of Tacoma about Silas Weber.)

Cyrus Happy, who grew up in Tacoma and whose family owned an interest in the hotel property, remembered that Weber worked hard to know his regular customers, their preferences, and their special needs. He said that Weber was really not attentive to small children for he catered to the adults.

Mr. Happy noted that during the period of time Mr. Weber worked at the Tacoma Hotel the east side of Pacific Avenue in Tacoma was a man's world. He said that if he were in town with his father he may have been taken to lunch or dinner at the Hotel.

If he was in town alone with his mother she would go to another hotel for lunch or dinner but would meet her husband at The Tacoma or could be taken there for dinner or for one of the programs held in the foyer or meeting rooms.

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3. JOHN H. RYAN OF THE FORUM

John H. Ryan and his wife, Ella, came to Tacoma from Spokane in 1903 and began publishing The Forum in mid-year. Being the manager of a weekly newspaper greatly assisted him in 1911 when his father died in Ohio. Mr. Ryan was able to devote nearly a page of The Forum for July 8, 1911 as a tribute to George R. Ryan, his father. Mr. Ryan wrote:

"George R. Ryan, who passed out of this life on the 23th ult, was born near Lexington, Kentucky, on a stream designated as Crab Orchard Creek, in October, 1829 being the son of a Cherokee woman.

"Under the laws of Kentucky, he was free born. Though of mixed blood he always affiliated with the American Negro. His early training was in the horse markets of Lexington; he was known as a driver.

"At the age of thirteen he was engaged at eight dollars a month to drive a herd of horses from Kentucky to East Tennessee. It was this training, that made him a great lover of horse flesh.

"In 1862, he came north with a large party of acquaintances, many of them slaves, who followed out a Federal army. On this trip he met a slip of a girl, an Octoroon, who later became his wife, who

bore him twelve children, and still survives him.

"The party of which he was the leader, located at Chillicothe, Ohio, a beautiful spot in the Scioto Valley. It was here they decided to cast their fortunes though the prospects for a peaceful habitation were anything but reassuring. In the party then were about nine men; most of them born free and most of them from Kentucky and full of fight, and it was well such was the case for they had plenty of it to do.

"When George R. Ryan was married to Mary Elizabeth Gatliffe in Mechanic Street in 1862, he capital consisted of seventy-five cents and a borrowed white shirt. He was thirty-three and she but fourteen, yet the years to come held every promise of a bright future.

"He celebrated his honeymoon by securing a job in Van Ambergs wood yard to cut cord wood at seventy-five cents a cord, hickory at that. It appeared later that he was scabbing on the price though this word had not been coined at the time.

"So anxious was he to get work for himself and his friends that seventy-five cents seemed a big price. The nine men secured work and then the fires of prejudice began to burn. The free Negroes in Chillicothe began to designate Ryan and his friends as contrabands and would often meet at the town pump to insult his wife by calling her vile names.

"This was soon stopped by a convenient axe handle accurately and intelligently wielded by the leader of the party. This action soon secured the respect of the alleged free Negroes for George R. Ryan and his little party.

"This fight over another one was to begin. The Dennison-Campbell gang, a crowd of Irish toughs had been the terror of Mechanic Street for years, driving Negroes to their homes, assaulting women and brutally beating the men.

"This gang had issued an edict that no colored man should walk the streets. Three months after Ryan and his party arrived in Chillicothe, colored men could walk the streets with impunity.

"It was a fight every night, but those nine colored men with hickory clubs stood their ground and fought every inch of the way until their leader, Jonathan Dennison, met George R. Ryan one day and said, "There ain't no use of two good men fighting all the time, both of us are game, let's quit friends."

"And they did. Jonathan Dennison was killed years later by a policeman in a saloon while resisting arrest.

"This is only one of the fights made by the subject of this sketch against the damnable disease of race prejudice. He was the first colored man to serve on the police force in Chillicothe and

accepted the place only to cure some of the abuses that prevailed in the police department at that time.

"While he served four years with credit to himself and race, he caused to be changed the cruel and inhuman treatment for members of the Negro race. For nearly thirty years he was in the livery business being considered one of the best horsemen in Southern Ohio.

"At the time of his death he was engaged in the grocery business at South Walnut Street, Chillicothe, Ohio. He is survived by his widow, two daughters, Mrs. Stephen Bates and Mrs. George Hicks, and five sons, Robert L. of Chillicothe, Charles S., William H. and Pearl Ryan of Spokane and J.H. Ryan of Tacoma. (The Forum July 8, 1911).

Thirty-two years later when John H. Ryan died in 1943, the Tacoma News Tribune printed his obituary. In it was written:

"Senator J.H. Ryan, 76, publisher of a Tacoma political weekly, a former state legislator and for more than a quarter of a century a figure in local politics in Tacoma and Pierce County died Tuesday night in a private nursing home. Ryan had lived at the Croft Hotel for the last six months, but for many years lived at 4820 South D Street.

"In 1938, when Ryan was an unsuccessful candidate for the Democratic nomination for county commissioner, he went into superior court and had his name legally changed to Senator J.H. Ryan.

"Ryan was born in Chillicothe, Ohio, August 6, 1855, son of a policeman of that city. Before coming to Tacoma more than thirty years ago he lived for a short time in Spokane.

"He had been publishing Ryan's Weekly largely devoted to personal notices of politicians and their activities and to political forecasts and editorials for at least thirty years. (No mention of The Forum was made in the obituary).

"Ryan was first elected to the State Legislature in the election of 1920 when he ran as a Farmer Labor candidate for a House seat representing the 28th District. Later he was elected to the State Senate from the same district, which embraces the Lincoln High School and McKinley Hill districts. He served in the State Legislature as a Farmer Laborite, Republican and Democrat.

"Last fall he was an unsuccessful candidate for the Democratic nomination for the House from the 28th District. Ryan has been in poor health for many months, but took an active part in politics until after the general election. He was taken to the nursing home shortly before Christmas. "(Death Takes J.H. Ryan," Tacoma News Tribune January 21, 1943 p. 1.)

#### 4. NETTIE ASBERRY

Erna Bence, "Dr. Asberry, 96, founder of NAACP here, to be honored on Tuesday." Tacoma News Tribune, July 23, 1961.

In these days of "Freedom Riders," and worldwide racial unrest, few Americans take keener interest in the news than an alert little Tacoma colored woman holder of a doctor's degree, who "can't make herself believe that she's ninety-six."

She is Mrs. Nettie J. Craig Asberry, of 1919 South 13th Street. At her massive upright piano, in this home in which she has lived for more than half a century hundreds of young pupils have learned about music in her younger years when Mrs. Asberry was one of the best known music teachers. She presented classes of forty-five or more in recital each year.

"They were of all colors and walks of life," she recalls, "..for this has always been a melting pot area of the city."

Few women of half Mrs. Asberry's age have keener minds, better hearing and eyesight and more awareness of what's going on in the world. She plays her piano every day, walks around the block daily, attends many social and business affairs and listens to worthwhile programs on her radio.

She appears not a day over seventy.

#### SHE'LL BE HONORED.

It is not only for her music, but for her outstanding achievements in the field of voluntary social service that Mrs. Asberry will be honored Tuesday evening by some one hundred ten co-workers in the City Association of Colored Women at a birthday party in the club house at 2316 South Yakima. One of the women's groups in the City Association, the Asberry Cultural Club, is named for her.

Guests will be members of the Tacoma Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the first chapter west of Kansas City which Mrs. Asberry helped found.

Few women of any race were attending college to say nothing of obtaining doctorates in the era in which Mrs. Asberry was reared. For a colored girl to be able to do so was virtually unheard-of in the reconstruction era that followed the Civil War.

#### HER BACKGROUND

She was born July 15 ,1865, at Leavenworth, Kansas, attended school there, where only the grades were segregated and the state university which was free to all.

She began studying the piano where she was eight, showed remarkable

ability and took her doctor's degree in music from the Kansas State Conservatory of music.

During her childhood she remembers seeing Susan B. Anthony when Mrs. Anthony came to visit her brother, D.R. Anthony, editor of the Leavenworth Times. At thirteen Nettie was secretary for an adult Susan B. Anthony Club.

She recalls when she was ten years old, reading about the National Centennial in Philadelphia and the hectic Hayes-Tilden presidential election. Before coming to the Northwest Mrs. Asberry taught music in Kansas City and in Denver and gave much time to playing for churches and directing choirs.

News of the great Seattle fire of 1889 aroused much Midwest interest in the Northwest, Mrs. Asberry recalls. Many disposed of their belongings and moved to Seattle, Mrs. Asberry's family among them.

"We arrived in 1890 amid the bustle and excitement," she remembers. "Trains every day were bringing families from all parts of the country. It was a time of friendship and good neighborliness."

After three years in Seattle's music world, the young woman came to Tacoma and became the wife of the late Henry J. Asberry, well remembered proprietor of the Tacoma Hotel Barbershop in the heyday of the famous old hostelry. He died twenty years ago.

Patrons of Mr. Asberry included many distinguished persons including visiting presidents of the United States. In those days it was the custom to keep handsome decorated shaving mugs bearing their names arrayed in rows on the barber's shelves. Among those in the Asberry collection were names reading like a Who's Who of Tacoma; R.E. Anderson, S.A. Perkins, Superior Court judges of the day and many more.

#### GIFT TO MUSEUM

After her husband's death, Mrs. Asberry presented the collection to the Washington State Historical Society Museum. Also at the museum is the gorgeous handmade lace opera coat which Mrs. Asberry took a year to make for the opening of the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition in Seattle in 1909.

"The previous year a number of colored women of Tacoma had formed the Cloverleaf Club," Mrs. Asberry recalls. " Our exhibit to the Seattle World's Fair brought us a gold medal and two other awards for needlework, various types of painting, china painting and other arts."

The only other surviving member of the Cloverleaf Club is Mrs.

Bertha Hamilton of Tacoma who was then only seventeen years old.

"I didn't intend to devote my life to teaching," Mrs. Asberry says, "and after I was no longer young, I turned to social work for which there seemed such an endless need."

"Today we think of social workers as highly trained people with fancy salaries, but some of us have given countless hours with never a cent of pay. I didn't need it."

#### FOUNDED NAACP HERE

She read of the fine work being done by the NAACP in far sections of the country and became founder of Tacoma's number one chapter in the region including several Northwestern States, British Columbia and Alaska.

"What was our first official act? let me see...Oh, I remember," said the petite woman. "A measure against inter-racial marriage was pushed through the state legislature. We had an underground worker there who let us know and overnight we got together a caravan of several cars of people of several races, whites, colored, Filipinos, and others. We descended on the powerful rules committee as a surprise and defeated the measure."

Mrs. Asberry is devoted to her Allen African Methodist Episcopal Church, but ever more so to the Bahai' organization which is based on the true brotherhood of man.

"Baha'i includes intelligent people of all colors and walks of life," she explains, "All except men of the white Masonic lodges. They are excluded because they maintain the color barrier."

"Courage is the saving grace in this tense world racial situation," says the experience wise nonagenarian. "Courage of the white people who dare to show their fairness by helping us achieve positions of human dignity and courage of those of other races who risk insults by quietly asserting their rights as human beings."

Money fears are at the base of the prejudice, Mrs. Asberry believes, "Ministers, who must believe in our cause if their faith is sincere, are afraid to speak out lest they offend some in their congregations and lose their pulpits; school boards in many places, labor organizations which are afraid to open their doors to colored people lest some white people be put out of work...., wherever one goes, it is the same." She lays part of the blame for youth riots and delinquency of all races at the door of uncensored television.

Some have estimated then ten years will see the ironing out of most racial difficulties. Mrs. Asberry thinks it will take much longer. "And I can scarcely believe," she adds, "that I shall not be here to see it. I keep making long range plans. I don't think any different from when I was a young woman, It just can't be that I'm ninety-six."

Erna Bence. "Dr. Asberry, 96, founder of NAACP here, to be honored on Tuesday," Tacoma News Tribune. July 23, 1961.

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"Dr. Asberry feted as 'Ivory Doll'" Tacoma News Tribune. July 15, 1965.

Never in her one hundred years has Dr. Nettie J. Asberry imagined anyone would call her a doll. She's been too busy making the world a better place in which to live. Only four years ago she was still teaching young fingers how to play the piano.

But the years have stilled the melodies and Dr. Asberry is honored Thursday as "...the ivory doll." of Lincoln Park Nursing Home at 3714 South Yakima.

Mrs. Asberry helped found the first Western chapter of the NAACP in Tacoma. It took pluck and determination for her a young Negro girl to earn one of the first doctorates granted to women in her day.

#### ENJOYS RADIO

Recently getting up and down has proved too great a struggle, so she lies quiet, enjoying music from the nearby radio of a roommate. Mrs. Asberry's home was at 1219 South 13th where she lived and taught for more than fifty years.

A lifelong following of world affairs and an avid reader, Dr. Asberry now finds that reading tires her eyes. Her hearing, however, is good.

She has been honored on many occasions by women's groups, one of them being named for her, the Nettie J. Asberry Cultural Club. This group, now headed by Mrs. Freddie Barnett brought Thursday's birthday party to her bedside with a shower of cards and gifts. She wore a pink bed jacket trimmed in rosebuds and a single giant orchid.

Born in Leavenworth, Kansas, she attended school there. From early years it became apparent that music was her forte and she persevered to win her doctorate from the Kansas State Conservatory of Music.

#### CAME HERE IN 1890

Dr. Asberry as Nettie Craig, arrived in Tacoma with her parents in 1890, after teaching in the Midwest and began a career anew here. Later she married the late Henry J. Asberry, at that time the well known proprietor of the Tacoma Hotel Barbershop.

A keen student of the Bible, Dr. Asberry was active for many years in the Allen A.M. E. Church and in the Bahai' Faith.

"Most of all," said one, "Dr. Nettie Asberry is a lady in the finest sense of the word."

"Dr. Asberry feted as 'Ivory Doll,'" Tacoma News Tribune. July 15, 1965.

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"Nettie Asberry of NAACP dies at 103," Tacoma News Tribune. November 18, 1968.

Dr. Nettie Asberry, Northwest founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and one of Tacoma's oldest residents died Sunday in a local nursing home.

The long time piano teacher formerly of 1219 South 13th Street had celebrated her 103rd birthday last July.

Dr. Asberry was born shortly after the end of the Civil War in Leavenworth, Kansas. She began to study music when only eight years old and in a day when few women received a college education, Dr. Asberry graduated from the University of Kansas and later earned her Ph.D. at the Kansas State Conservatory of Music.

She moved to Tacoma in 1893 and married the late Henry Asberry, former proprietor of a barber shop at the Tacoma Hotel. Mr. Asberry died in 1939.

Dr. Asberry retained a keen interest in young people and earlier this year she donated musical instruments and library materials for a music hall in the Hilltop area. This hall is to be named in Dr. Asberry's honor.

Dr. Asberry is survived by numerous nephews and nieces and a cousin, Mrs. Ruth Edwards of Tacoma.

"Nettie Asberry of NAACP dies at 103," Tacoma News Tribune. November 18, 1968.

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"May 11 is proclaimed Dr. Nettie Asberry Day," Tacoma News Tribune. May 1, 1969.

May 11 has been proclaimed Dr. Nettie J. Asberry Day in Tacoma in memory of the music teacher and active worker in the Negro community who died last November 17, at the age of 103.

The day was recently proclaimed by Major A.L. Rasmussen, and a

citywide memorial is being planned for this day. Already fourteen thousand dollars in money and materials have been pledged toward building a memorial for her.

Highlighting Dr. Asberry Day activities will be an appearance here of the Lightkeepers, a multi-media performing group from the University of Oregon.

The student players will present "The Flowering Covenant," in lights, dance, and drama May 10 at 8:00 p.m. in the University of Puget Sound Kilworth Chapel and May 11 at 3:00 p.m. in Mount Tahoma High School auditorium.

Dr. Asberry, who was a member of the Baha'i Faith for the last twenty-five years of her life, will also be remembered through the presentation of a portrait painted by Thomas Simms, an artist at McNeil Island Federal Penitentiary.

The painting was recently given to the youth auxiliary of the Asberry Cultural Club which is planning to build and furnish a music room in memory of Dr. Asberry.

"May 11 is proclaimed Dr. Nettie Asberry Day," Tacoma News Tribune. May 1, 1969.

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Erna Bence, "Found, a very old diploma," Tacoma News Tribune. October 26, 1975.

On her 100th birthday the late Dr. Nettie J. Asberry told The News Tribune she believed she was one of the earliest, perhaps the first, black woman in the nation's history to receive a doctor's degree in any subject.

Hers was music. Somewhere in her large home at 1219 South 13th Street where she had taught generations of piano students both black and white, lay tucked away her proof, a distinguished certificate framed under glass.

But Dr. Asberry died before she found it. Possessions pile high when one lives long in a house.

Relatives came from out of state to close the house. Close friends were given, or bought, most of the things Dr. Asberry used and loved. Mrs. Joy Brinson of 1714 South 23rd took an assortment, glanced at things and put them away.

They might have been forgotten if Mrs. Brinson had not happened to watch a Bicentennial program showing the various certificates which had been earned by Abraham Lincoln. A bell rang for Mrs. Brinson.

"What was that," she asked herself." I glimpsed among Dr. Asberry's

things?"

Sure enough, it was the long lost precious certificate of her doctor's degree presented to her on June 12, 1883 by the Kansas Conservatory of Music and Elocution in the city of Leavenworth. Its glass is broken, the fine paper crumpled with age.

The discovery comes just as women of the Associated Cultural Club are planning their observance of Tacoma's Black Bicentennial. Is it the first black woman's doctorate? Quite likely.

In quaint language, phrases almost as forgotten as the word "elocution," the diplomas assures to Nettie Craig the "rights, privileges and dignities" of a doctorate in the teaching of music. Handwritten signatures are elegant in their flourishes.

Mrs. Sherwood J. (Freddie) Barnett brought the battered certificate to show The News Tribune. "We've made inquiries about getting the paper smoothed out," she said. "It looks as if it had got wet. It would be a delicate job the experts say."

Now the club members say they may leave it as it is, except for new glass. The beat-up look adds to the antiquity of the document.

Dr. Asberry didn't live to visit the beautiful club house of the Tacoma City Association of Colored Women's Clubs on South Yakima Avenue, and its music room where her picture hangs and which is dedicated to her.

During the Bicentennial festivities, the diploma will hang permanently near the picture, said Mrs. Barnett, vice president of the Asberry Cultural Club. Dr. Asberry's heavy old oak piano may be placed there too.

Erna Bence, "Found, a very old diploma," Tacoma News Tribune. October 26, 1975.

##### 5. ELIZA CHAMP GORDON MCCABE

Graduate of Wiley College, B.A., Class of 1910. Taught twenty-five years in Texas and Louisiana. Came to Tacoma in 1933. Teacher of piano. Member of the Tacoma Chapter of the Washington State Music Teacher's Association.

President Emeritus Washington State Association of Colored Women, President, 1943-1951. Past President Northwest Regional Association, 1955-57. Chaplain NACWC, Inc. 1948-1952. State Life membership in the Western Washington Women's Christian Temperance Union, Life membership in the World W.C.T.U., presented by Bethune W.C.T.U.

Candidate for Freeholder 1952. Member and teacher of Adult Bible

Class, Allen African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Family: Stepson: Hubert McCabe.

Son: Lionel V. Gordon.

Daughter: Mrs N. Lois Bradford.

Adopted daughter: Mrs. Rosalie C. Douglas.

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"Mrs Eliza McCabe to be feted on birthday," Tacoma News Tribune.  
March 4, 1965 p.B-11.

Mrs Eliza McCabe, founder of the McCabe Twenty Club, will be honored on her birthday at a tea being given by the members of the club at the home of Mrs. Frank Hooks from two to five p.m. Sunday.

Presiding at the collation table will be Mesdames Joseph Antoine, R.C. Brazel, Richard McNeal, Willie Mae Huff, Emory Johnson, G.A. Stricklin and W.E. Lewis.

The organization founded by Mrs. McCabe in 1946 became affiliated with the state and national association of colored women's clubs and contributes toward scholarships for girls and young adults and promotes women's activities and inter-racial understanding."

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"Twenty Club to Honor Founder Eliza McCabe," Tacoma News Tribune.  
March 5, 1971 p. A-16.

The McCabe Twenty Club will honor its founder, Mrs. Eliza Champ McCabe, Sunday from two to five p.m. at an annual birthday tea in the Tacoma City Association of Colored Women's Clubhouse. All friends are invited.

Mrs. McCabe has been influential in churches, civic organizations, community activities and home life in Tacoma. She has organized several clubs in Tacoma and spearheaded many community and church projects, among them the building of the new club house on South Yakima Avenue.

Mrs. McCabe is a teacher of piano. She taught twenty-five years in Texas and Louisiana, Tacoma has been her home since 1933.

A widow, Mrs. McCabe has one daughter, Mrs. N. Lois Bradford, an organist and music teacher, and a son Army Major Lionel V. Gordon, (Retired) an architect.

Mrs. Earl Blackshear will be guest speaker following the tea. She is supervisor of the Pacific Northwest Region of the International Toastmistress Clubs and the secretary and president elect of the

Washington State Association of Colored Women's Clubs.... ("Twenty club to honor founder Eliza McCabe," Tacoma News Tribune, March 5, 1971.).

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Marci Whitney, "Eliza Enjoys Today, Not the Past," Tacoma News Tribune, August 25, 1974 p. E-7.

Eliza folder her arms on the card table, " I was wishing you weren't coming. There's nothing to write."

"Eliza," I said, "your friends think so. One woman is even tape recording your thoughts. Your life philosophy seems so beautiful, especially when many people are unhappy."

"Unhappy," questioned Eliza Champ McCabe, 88, pioneer, teacher, club organizer and lover of life. "Not me. When I get up in the morning I wonder what's going to happen today. I have a good time.

"Perhaps people are unhappy who expect too much. I enjoy the lily because it is a lily. And a violet because of its modesty. I am very careful of the now, not thinking about the yonder or the past."

She was raised in Texas surrounded by "club folks, school folks and church folks." At the age of fifteen she entered womanhood by dropping her dress to ankle-length. "That was the way of life. Then when the girls at ball games wore shorter dresses, like here, just horrid. The gentle lady will have a difference, not always following the fad."

She entered college and paid the bills by washing the laundry from a boys' dormitory. But all that changed when the shy country girl trilled a high-C note during a chorus tryout. She was accepted into a troupe that toured the South.

Mrs. McCabe often soloed earning her the title "Nightingale of the South," and enough money to pay the college bills.

She turned to teaching piano after graduating salutatorian. "I have the missionary teacher spirit. It's a sin to know something good and not to share it."

After several eyars she came to Tacoma on the advise of a friend and launched another project. The Tacoma City Association of Colored Women's Clubs, Inc. was at a low ebb. The members were dying off, and young women weren't interested.

Mrs. McCabe shot a burst of life into the association by organizing four clubs--Bethune Women's Christian Temperance Union, McCabe

Twenty, Gaines Improvement Club and the Lynd Seth Iota Sigma Club. The groups are study and fellowship clubs.

In addition, Mrs. McCabe wrote the national prayer for the Colored Women's Association "...We thank Thee for the godly women who, across the years, have lived valiantly and heroically and whose lives now challenge us..."

Mrs. McCabe, who was widowed twice, has two children, Mrs. N. Lois Bradford of Tacoma and Major Lionel V. Gordon (Ret) of Washington D.C.

"Sometimes I worry about leaving my daughter alone after I die," she said. "But then the Lord looked after me when my mother died. And He will look after her. So I don't need to worry about a thing."

Mrs. McCabe faltered and looked at me. "Are you sure you're going to have enough to write about?"

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#### EVERY YEAR STRIKES A SWEETER CHORD FOR MUSIC TEACHER

Marlowe Churchill, "Every year strikes a sweeter chord for music teacher," Tacoma News Tribune. March 9, 1978. p.1.

When the roll is called up yonder, Eliza McCabe will surely be there.

"The older I get," said Mrs. McCabe, who celebrated her 92nd birthday this week, "the calmer I become. I have all I need. There is nothing I want."

Mrs. McCabe, who has taught music to four generations of students over the pasty seventy years and is particularly fond of hymns as recently honored by the City of Tacoma for her community services.

The recognition the deeply religious Tacoman received is only more frosting on the cake in a career filled with happiness.

The woman who has been a guiding force in the black community here for forty-five years has a simple philosophy that has "made life so good and made people so nice to me. I forget what color I am."

She starts each day by asking "What's the Lord going to do for me today?"

As a result, Mrs. McCabe has been inspired to instruct more music students than she can ever recall, form a number of Tacoma Women's Clubs, lead church choirs, and rear "two wonderful children..."

Her birthday Sunday brought telephone calls from former students,

acquaintances and her architect son--Lionel V. Gordon said her daughter, Mrs. N. Lois Bradford of Tacoma.

"Mother's quite a little lady," said Mrs. Bradford, herself a music teacher.

The recognition prompted Mrs. McCabe to describe the "starting of my second life," in Tacoma when she came here as a widow in 1933 from Texas. "When I came to Tacoma," she recalled in her modest South Tacoma home, "I thought about retiring, I was forty-seven. But there was too much to be done here."

She started some women's groups, became active in the Allen African Methodist Episcopal Church and resumed her career as a music teacher.

She has slowed down only a bit. She still teaches a score of piano students in her home.

The soprano concert voice that helped her earn her way though college in 1910 still has the melodious tones of a trained singer.

The mind that has inspired countless pupils to excel in their lives still provides an insight into the personal philosophy by which Mrs. McCabe lives.

"I do my best every day," she said. "I let nothing bother me. It's just a matter of overcoming it all. I find the simple things now satisfy me the most. Life is just sweet."

Mrs. McCabe believes music, the timeless classics, not this popular stuff, has made her life more serene.

"I have my mamma to thank for that," she said, glancing toward a portrait hanging prominently in her living room.

"She couldn't read or write," Mrs. McCabe said, "but she wanted me to go to college more than anything else. She pushed me. And I've never forgotten when she came to my graduation. She kept me going." (Marlowe Churchill, "Every year strikes a sweeter chord for music teacher," Tacoma News Tribune. March 9, 1978. p. 1. ).

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ELIZA MCCABE, TACOMA CIVIC LEADER, RETIRED MUSIC TEACHER IS DEAD AT 99.

Jerry Pugnetti, "Eliza McCabe, Tacoma Civic Leader, retired music teacher, is dead at 99," Tacoma News Tribune. June 5, 1985 p. A-1.

Eliza Champ McCabe, a Tacoma piano teacher who was a prominent

force in community and church affairs, particularly in the black community, died Tuesday, she was ninety-nine.

Mrs. McCabe, who was widowed twice, organized a variety of women's clubs, rose to leadership positions in state and national organizations and helped organize what now is the city's senior citizen program.

In 1979 Mrs. McCabe received the Tacoma-Pierce County Municipal League's distinguished citizen award for her community service. "Failure was not in her vocabulary," said Berdie Edwards, retired coordinator of the City Department of Human Development's senior's program. "She had the innate ability to get the best out of people. She was a magnet that drew black women together and she was the catalyst who held them together."

Mrs. McCabe was raised in Texas in a family heavily involved in church, schools, and various clubs. After graduating from Wiley College in Marshall, Texas, in 1910, she taught piano in Texas and Louisiana before moving to Tacoma in 1933.

She soon plunged into Tacoma civic affairs. Mrs. McCabe founded the Newcomers Club, a group that promoted women's activities and interracial understanding. It was later renamed the McCabe Twenty Club in honor of its founder.

Mrs. McCabe also had a guiding hand in organizing other clubs including Bethune women's Club, Gaines Improvement Club, and Lynd Seth Iota Sigma Club. Those groups later were merged into the Tacoma Association of Colored Women's Clubs.

Under her leadership the association launched a senior citizens program that ultimately became a city program which provides meals and activities for the elderly.

Mrs. McCabe became president of the State Association of Colored Women's Clubs and served as chaplain for the national association. She helped write the association's prayer and is used by affiliate clubs throughout the nation.

Mrs. McCabe also was active in Allen African Methodist Episcopal Church, serving on church committees and as a Sunday School teacher until her death.

"She was a devout religious individual who never wearied of teaching those of the church, old and young alike," said the Rev. Mansfield Collins, Allen, AME pastor.

Mrs. McCabe also continued giving piano lessons until not long before her death.

"She started me loving music," said Betty Busch, a long time student who learned the piano from Mrs. McCabe beginning at the age four. "I still have fond memories of her having me bounce a ball to

teach me how to count."

Mrs. McCabe is survived by a daughter, Mrs. Naomi Lois Bradford, at home, and a son, retired Major Lionel V. Gordon of Washington D.C.

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Jerry Pugnetti, "Eliza McCabe, Tacoma civic leader, retired music teacher is dead at 99." Tacoma News Tribune, June 5, 1985 p. A-1-2.  
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6. HELEN STAFFORD.

WOMAN HONORED FOR ACHIEVEMENT.

"Woman honored for achievement." Tacoma News Tribune. May 23, 1971.

Mrs. W.P. (Helen) Stafford, of Tacoma was named State Woman of Achievement for 1971 by the Washington State Business and Professional Women's Clubs meeting this weekend in Richland.

Mrs. Stafford automatically became a candidate for the state honor when she was selected by the Tacoma and Lakewood BPWCs in February as Tacoma's Woman of Achievement.

Already striking a claim to a number of firsts, Mrs. Stafford is the first black woman statewide to be named to this honor. She was the first black woman to be employed as a case worker in the Pierce County Office of the State Department of Public Assistance; she was the organizer of the first chapter in the Northwest of the Alpha Kappa Alpha, a Negro woman's collegiate sorority; and she was a member of one of the first NAACP youth groups to be organized in her native state, Kansas.

She is affiliated with numerous civic and cultural organizations in Tacoma. Among them are the Model Cities Advisory Association, the Council on Aging, the Tacoma Urban League. She is a graduate of the University Kansas, is a former teacher and social worker.

The local BPWCs flew Mrs. Stafford to Richland Saturday where she received the honor at a luncheon climaxing the BPWC state convention. "Woman honored for achievement," Tacoma News Tribune. May 23, 1971.

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Betty Anderson, "Helen Stafford looks back on her lifetime," Tacoma News Tribune. February 22, 1982.

Helen B. Stafford has suffered her share of insults and indignation. But she has managed to sidestep ridicule on the road to successful careers in teaching and social work. Some say her efforts have paved the way for young blacks to join the main stream

of society.

Stafford recalled some of the incidents in her life that she said made her what she is today, a caring, active woman always seeking to help others in some way.

She is the daughter of an ex-slave who moved his family to Topeka, Kansas, in the late 1800s to start a new life.

Stafford excelled academically from the time she started school at the age of four. She had studied German in high school and was interested in continuing language studies when she enrolled at Kansas State University at the age of sixteen.

"My German teacher said was surprised to see a colored girl in his class because we had thick tongues and couldn't learn the language," she recalled.

A science teacher told her that colored people couldn't comprehend the science material and advised her not to take a science course.

But Stafford stayed in school and learned not to spite the teachers, but because she didn't want to disappoint her parents.

"If I had talked back to that teacher I would have been expelled immediately," she said, "And there would have gone all my father's money."

She said she respected her father for what he had gone through in his early life and appreciated how hard he worked to pay for her schooling.

Stafford helped to pay school expenses as much as she could. She awakened at four o'clock each morning, grabbed a scrub board and washed clothes for a professor's wife before attending her first class at eight a.m.

"I think people my age (she declined to tell her age) have had a exciting past," said Stafford. "Kids today are not aware of those things and are not appreciative. Young people nowadays have little or no respect for older people and it's too bad. They could learn a lot."

Stafford moved to Tacoma after she had graduated from Kansas State University with a degree in home economics and minor study in sociology. She taught in Kansas schools for a couple of years before she met Wendell P. Stafford and moved to Tacoma to marry him on New Year's Eve in 1926.

Stafford applied for a teaching position here and was met with amused reactions by school personnel. "They thought it was very funny that I wanted a job as a teacher and one person went so far as to tell me that (he) wouldn't even hire a colored janitor," she said.

The rejection didn't stop Stafford. She recognized that she couldn't fight the prejudice then, so she stayed at home and cared for herself, her husband, and their daughter.

Several other young women who stayed at home and reared their children would get together on social occasions, Stafford said.

"That's when the Matrons Club was organized," she said. It was in 1927 and the women who attended these meetings often brought their children along. It was the women's only social outlet she said.

Stafford tried to join other women's groups during those early years in Tacoma, but was turned down because the groups did not accept black women. She tried to be a member of the American Association of University Women and the League of Women Voters. The groups eventually accepted her, she said.

According to Stafford, the efforts of local civil rights groups opened the doors for blacks to be hired by local department stores.

Stafford was president of the local NAACP when the members boycotted large department stores downtown and in the central business district until blacks were hired as employees.

"Today's young blacks don't realize what was done and won't even wait on some of the older blacks," she said.

Stafford also has been involved with the NAACP, the Tacoma Urban League board of directors, the city Human Relations Commission, the state Retired Public Employees Board and the Martin Luther King Center Board. She also has been superintendent of the Sunday School at Allen African Methodist Episcopal Church and organized the church Altar Guild.

Her other civic involvements include organizing the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Tacoma Chapter of Links, and the local Association of Colored Women's Clubs. She has been president of the state Association of Colored Womens' Clubs, president of the Presidents' Council of women's organizations, Church Women United, and the Evergreen Unit of the Parliamentarians.

Stafford also was a member of the YWCA Board of Directors when young black girls were not accepted as members.

She was instrumental in getting the YWCA to allow blacks to use the swimming pool and to use the center one or two days a week. But only blacks attended during those times and events usually were held toward the end of the week.

Stafford said a major change in Tacomans' attitudes toward blacks occurred followed World War II. A few blacks had been transferred here to work in the shipyards or were in the military and more moved into the area after the war.

"That's what it takes, is a lot of us," she said, "to vote, make changes."

Stafford is a widow and her daughter, Betty, has provided her with four grand children. One grand daughter is expecting the birth of Stafford's first great grand child.

Stafford said she has always liked young people and has always tried to help them through civic involvement.

"Back when I came along, not too many blacks had an education and I was taught that it's your responsibility to help others along."

Betty Anderson, "Helen Stafford looks back on her lifetime," Tacoma News Tribune. February 22, 1982.

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Nancy Bartley, "A return in triumph, woman to get alma mater's highest honor," Tacoma News Tribune. May 11, 1987.

It has been sixty-seven years since Helen Beck Stafford walked to "Pomp and Circumstance" at Kansas State University's commencement exercises.

This week, she'll be going back, not as the scorned twenty year old black women who despite racial prejudice graduated with a degree in home economics, but as a distinguished alumni and recipient of the university's highest honor.

Stafford, a Hilltop resident, is to receive the Medallion, an annual award given to alumni who have been outstanding in their fields, made significant contributions to the community, state or nation or given humanitarian service.

The tiny woman with a shock of silver hair was a founding member of the Tacoma Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the first black member of the local League of Women Voters, served on the first board of directors of the Tacoma Urban League and was a member of the local YWCA Board.

Last year she was given an honorary doctorate by the University of Puget Sound for humanitarian services.

Stafford was nominated for the most recent honor by Elizabeth May Galloway of Topeka, Kansas, a past recipient and friend of hers. Additional support was given by Bethel Schneebeck of Tacoma.

"At age 87, she is still studying, still challenging, still encouraging and still unifying hearts and minds of those separated by race, color or background." Schneebeck told the alumni

committee.

"It is difficult to put into words the many and important contributions to society of this woman who "...has worked with pride, intelligence and diligence toward integration and participation for all."

According to Luella Johnson, a Tacoma friend, "Helen's spirit permeates wherever she serves, whether in the kitchen or before many VIPs. She is a VIP with humble feet, hands and soul."

The selection committee was particularly impressed with Stafford's ability to rise above prejudice and graduate from Kansas State University at a time when blacks were discouraged from participating said Pennie Wallerstedt, spokesman for the alumni association.

"I'm excited about the Medallion. It means quite a bit coming from the university. The last time I was there was sixty years ago. There were very few blacks, maybe twenty-five or thirty total, and we were not made to feel welcome," Stafford said.

As a home economics major, the curriculum, required living for six weeks in the "practice cottage," a home where students were supposed to put to use the skills learned in the classroom. Unlike the white women, Stafford was not allowed to live there.

Swimming was also a requirement for graduation, but blacks were not allowed to use the pool, Stafford said.

"My memories of Kansas State are not very happy," she said.

One of eleven children and the daughter of a former slave, she was raised to value education. Her father who was one of the brick masons who helped build Kansas State University chose the university for her because it had a thriving home economics program.

"A young black girl could always get a job in home economics. You know you're supposed to learn to cook and sew, " she said. Her four brothers found education wasn't as helpful in finding work.

"Its always been easier for a black woman to get work than a black man. Still is. In the dark ages black women could always get a job as a cook or house keeper.

"There was nothing for a black man to do that required an education. So they went to work.

She recalled hearing her brother asked her mother if he could grow up to be president. "Maybe not the president, but you can be almost anything you want to be," her mother replied.

"So you see it's no wonder so many black people are paranoid. If

you tell a person he's inferior, he begins to believe it. We have so much to overcome." Stafford said.

After graduating from college Stafford followed an older brother to Tacoma. When she applied for a teaching job she was ridiculed.

"They thought it was very funny that I wanted a job as a teacher, and one person went so far as to tell me he wouldn't even hire a colored janitor," she said.

She later became the first black case worker for what was then the Tacoma Department of Public Assistance. "The morning I walked in the office was humming. Then my supervisor took me around and introduced me and there was this deathly silence," she said.

In one case, one initially hostile woman became a friend. "People are ignorant until they learn differently and get to know you," she said.

While Stafford worked as a case worker her husband Wendell, whom she met and married after moving to Tacoma, was employed as a waiter at the old Tacoma Hotel.

She has one daughter, Betty Busch, children's librarian at the Moore Branch of the Tacoma Public Library, four grand children and three great grand children. Her husband died in 1951.

With years of fighting behind her, Stafford is looking forward to being the guest of her alma mater.

"The human spirit is really strong," she said, "...once you rise to the occasion."

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Paul Swartz, "Stafford honored for lifetime of work," Tacoma News Tribune. December 24, 1987.

More than one hundred years ago, her father was the property of a southern landowner. Less than sixty years ago, the pool in the Tacoma YWCA was drained and refilled after she and another black woman finished their weekly swim. Six years ago the Tacoma YWCA named her its Woman of the Year.

Helen Beck Stafford, 88, has seen a lot of changes since she arrived in Tacoma in 1926 and most of the nearly 150 people gathered in her honor last week agreed she helped many of those changes to come about.

"In the city of Tacoma we have a national treasure in this woman," Carolyn Martin, a vice president of the International Training in Communication, of which Stafford is a member. The Tacoma chapter of ITC, formerly Toastmistress International, hosted the reception.

"She gives and gives and asks for nothing back. What she's done for the people here is measureless."

Stafford was recognized by many speakers for her contributions to the community. Among them are several firsts; the first black member of the local League of Women Voters, a founding member of the Tacoma Chapter of the NAACP, the first black case worker for the Department of Social and Health Services in Pierce County and membership on the first board of directors of the Tacoma Urban League.

She stays active today, after retiring in 1970, "Retiring just gave her more time to devote to other things," her daughter, Betty Busch said. "She still has at least one meeting almost every day. I've given up trying to count how many organizations she belongs to."

In 1986, the University of Puget Sound honored her by giving her an honorary doctorate of humanitarian service degree. Last May she returned to Kansas State University where she received the alumni association's highest honor, the Alumni Medallion for lifetime achievement sixty seven years after she graduated.

"She never runs out of energy," said Ruth Jeffries of the Matron's Club. "I don't know how she keeps it up, but she does. She's touched many lives in so many ways."

Bil Moss Lombard, past president of the Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority agreed. "She has had a tremendous influence on my life," she said. "She's seen Tacoma grow and change, but there are still some of the same problems that have always faced blacks. We never give enough recognition to those who inspire us, those who give us so much to us."

Martin said response to the surprise reception had been good. "Everyone wanted a chance to get up there and talk about her. They all wanted to know why this didn't happen sooner," she said.

Tacoma Mayor Doug Sutherland joined briefly to speak about Stafford. "This city is well over a hundred years old and in that time it has had many successes," he said. "One of its greatest successes is Helen Beck Stafford. I hope we all find the courage and confidence to do what she's done."

Longtime friend Bethel Schneebeck followed the mayor with words that encompassed the sentiments of most others paying tribute that night. "Someone said, 'What you have dies with you, what you do lives on.'" She said, turning to Stafford. "You can be sure that when your time comes what you have done will live on long after

you're gone."

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