

MIDDLE CLASS AMERICANS

Portland's Early Black Community

"In that early generation of the Black community here...you could find the very powerful strains of what you might call pursuit of the American dream. In some ways it was an atypical, a unique Black community. After all, those Blacks who came to Oregon made a conscious choice to travel a significant distance and to participate in a community that had a tradition of racial hostility. They tended to be especially committed to home ownership. They were certainly a very talented population. Many were college graduates although they could not hold the kind of jobs that would be appropriate for a college graduate. They might have to become janitors or work at the hotel, but they were a well educated, a cultivated and cultured community."

Darrell Millner
Professor of Black Studies, Portland State University

"Our social life was centered on the church activities."
Kathryn Hall Bogle

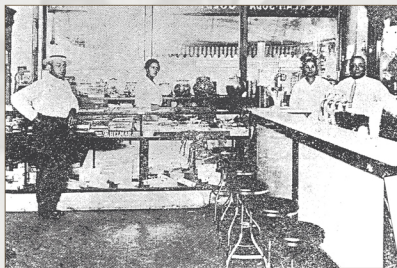


The Mt. Olivet Baptist and Bethel AME Church Sunday Schools at a joint outing. Until about 1912, the Golden West Hotel was flanked by churches on two sides: Mount Olivet Baptist Church on 7th Avenue (now Broadway) just north of the hotel, and the Bethel AME Church located at Everett and 10th Avenue, three blocks west. As Portland's African American population shifted to the east side of the river and Williams Avenue by the 1920s, however, the churches followed.

Courtesy of the Oregon Historical Society

In 1890, 75 Black waiters and barbers were hired from the Carolinas and Georgia as employees for the lavish new Hotel Portland. Paid relatively high wages, and sharing a philosophy of hard work, respectability, and accommodation, they formed the nucleus of Portland's first Black "middle class." They bought homes on the east side, raised families and sent their children to college. They also organized the New Portland Republican Club whose 80 members were able in 1894 to secure the hiring of George Hardin, the first Black man on the Portland police force.

Courtesy of the Oregon Historical Society



The August 2, 1919 Portland Times called A.G. Green's Candy Shop, the "finest ice cream parlor and candy shop west of Chicago." In later years, the confectionary and cafe located at the Northwest corner of Everett and Broadway was operated by former expressman Erastus Richardson.

Courtesy of the Oregon Historical Society

"They had an ice cream parlor here...on the Broadway side, on the corner, and after church...this was a mecca."
Otto Rutherford

Spring Chicken served
Saturday and Sunday
as long as they last
BAKED HAM
Every day
With Potato Salad
Saturdays and Sundays
RICHARDSON'S CAFE
Broadway and Everett Streets

Members of Portland's early 20th century Black community shared a rich social life punctuated with classical music recital, theatrical and literary society meetings, and performances by both visiting artists and local talent. The seven piece Willamette Orchestra (only five members are shown here) included Beatrice [Mrs. Edward] Cannady, co-editor of the black newspaper, the Portland Advocate, piano, and Raymond Cagle, second violin, seated in front of her.

Courtesy of the Oregon Historical Society



"After church, certain numbers of us used to drift up to the Golden West Hotel...in order to have our dinner. Often they were swamped with customers all of a sudden every Sunday. So we utilized that time by visiting more with other people who had come out of other churches. There was a great swapping of laughter, exchanges, plans for the coming week - just a general get-together, socializing."

Kathryn Hall Bogle

"Those Portland Blacks who worked for the Portland Hotel or for the railroads represented the highest occupations in the Black community here. Now, that being said, those occupations were not comparable to a middle class status or an upper class status in the white community. They were at the top of the Black employment pyramid but the color line separated them from the class structure on the Caucasian side of the line."

Darrell Millner



"William Duncan Allen in Recital"

At the Williams Ave. YMCA, 7 N Tillamook, Tuesday evening September 6, 1927, W.D. Allen, Jr. will be presented in a piano recital. Mr. Allen is a student at Oberlin College where he is pursuing his musical studies. Mrs. Jesse Cole-Grayson, contralto, will assist on the program. The admission is 50 cents. Tickets are on sale at the YMCA and the Golden West Hotel."

Portland Advocate, August 27, 1927



Waldo Bogle was born in Walla Walla, Washington of a prominent Black family. This photo was taken in 1904 when Waldo was in his twenties. After his father's death, Waldo moved to Portland to establish his own reputation as barber and businessman at the center of the African-American social and economic community. Waldo Bogle was well known as the proprietor of the Golden West Barber Shop from 1913-1930.

Courtesy of the Oregon Historical Society