

# WORKING ON



Waiters posing in front of the dining car of the Northern Pacific's Spokane-Portland-Seattle run c. 1915. William Rutherford (at far right), Otto Rutherford's father, was recruited by the Hotel Portland from South Carolina in 1897 as a barber. For a time, he owned a group of businesses with his brother Edward, but he pulled out of the partnership and went to work for the Northern Pacific as a barber.

Courtesy of the Oregon Historical Society

**THE GOLDEN  
- WEST HOTEL**  
1906 - 1931

*“I always worked two jobs. You ran on the road, you waited tables at the Portland Hotel, then in later years the race track opened and you worked at the race track...All of us did that. We had to do it to make ends meet.”*

Otto Rutherford

There were two economic realities for Blacks in Portland at the turn of the 20th century. One was a severely restricted list of job opportunities. Men could find work on the railroads and at the Hotel Portland as cooks, waiters, porters, boot blacks and barbers or could hire themselves out as laborers. Women were employed as domestics in private homes or at Meier and Frank. But access to white collar and professional jobs was closed in Portland's segregated society.

The second reality was an antidote for the bitter pill that was Jim Crow. The growing number of Black workers flocking to the rail yards needed basic services: lodging, restaurants, grocery stores, and barbershops, as well as spiritual support and entertainment. If Blacks were denied these services by whites, enterprising members of the Black community would have to supply them. W.D. Allen's Golden West was the most important example among dozens of new Black businesses.



Hedspeth's Restaurant was located at Flanders and Tenth Street near the North Park Blocks. NW Flanders Street seems to have been a primary east-west coordinate of the early Black business community between 1910-1930. The storefront next door to Hedspeth's restaurant was a barbershop occupied at one time by Walter Becton's Café Club Barbershop and by Hele and Rutherford's Barbershop at another date.

Courtesy of the Oregon Historical Society