

# THE COLOR LINE:

"People associate Jim Crow laws with the Deep South, the area where slavery had been legal and most widely practiced. But in the early 20th century, Portland joined the Jim Crow tradition [when] the Oregon Supreme Court ruled that institutions in Oregon can make distinctions based on race. From 1905 until 1953, the State of Oregon was officially, legally, a Jim Crow state, like Alabama and Mississippi might be. That situation did not change until the adoption in 1953 of the state-wide public accommodation law."

**“ Oregon was a southern state, transplanted to the north.”**

Otto Rutherford

"The racial accommodation between Blacks and whites that defined Oregon racial life in the early decades of the 20th century was an accommodation that was only reluctantly accepted on the black side of the race line. They had little choice in the matter. Their numbers were so small and the Jim Crow tradition was so strong in Oregon that Blacks had to accept accommodation whether they liked it or not, but they never accepted it as a permanent status and they always worked for creating a better reality in Oregon life for their children and for the next generations."

Dr. Darrell Millner  
Professor of Black Studies  
Portland State University

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



Like other members of the black business elite, W.D. Allen purchased a spacious home on the east side on the river where he raised his family. His status did not shield him or his children from the humiliation of segregation, however.

Courtesy of Anthony Allen Family

**“ Theater Draws Color Line”**

W.D. Allen and his son Robert, (latter a Senior at Grant High School), attended a performance at the Orpheum Theater on Tuesday evening. On entering the usher told them to go upstairs. Mr. Allen then inquired if there were not seats downstairs. The usher said there were, but that Colored people were prohibited from occupying them. Mr. Allen and his son ignored the usher and took seats downstairs. Later, they were approached by the manager who is quoted as having said: "Gentlemen, I would like to see you out in the lobby." Mr. Allen: "I don't care to go out there, and I don't care to be molested. I came to see the show."

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