PORTLAND'S



The History of Portland's African American Community (1805 to the Present)

February 1993

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History of Portland's African American Community (1805-to the Present)

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Table of Contents

Preface i

Chapter One
Black Pioneers in Portland (1805-1900) 1

Chapter Two
Building A Foundation (1901-1940) 23

Chapter Three
Changing Times (1941-1953) 57

Chapter Four
Seeking Empowerment (1954-to the present) 103

Maps and Tables 147

Photo Credits 149

Bibliography 151

Preface

It is not so much a Negro History Week as it is History Week. We should emphasize not Negro History but the Negro in History. What we need is not a history of selected races or nations, but the history of the world void of bias, race hate and religious prejudice.

Carter Woodson, 1926

In the spirit of Carter Woodson's quote, this document focuses on promoting African Americans in the City of Portland's history. To gain a true understanding of the social, economic, and political makeup of the City of Portland is to understand the dynamics that shaped the settlement patterns of African Americans. This document is not intended to provide a set of conclusions about the African American experience in Portland. The intent is to educate the general public about the African American presence in Portland by highlighting significant places, events, institutions, individuals and group achievements from 1805 to the present.

This project was conceived from the Albina Community Plan, a revitalization plan for inner north and northeast Portland. The plan covers a broad spectrum of policy areas and objectives and is intended to address the social and physical needs of the community. Past redevelopment efforts have taught community planners that preserving social and cultural resources is a key component to any successful revitalization plan. Preserving the past and using that past to anchor and enhance revitalization of inner north/northeast Portland is of critical importance to the future of Albina and to the City of Portland as a whole.

A difficult challenge in documenting the cultural and social history of Portland's African American community is that much of the historic physical evidence has been removed during past redevelopment programs and projects. This document attempts to restore those memories through oral interviews, pictures and maps. Special thanks to all the oral interviewees who invited me into their homes and shared their time and stories. Without your assistance, this document would be incomplete.

Special appreciation goes to Pauline Bradford, Verdell Burdine and Otto Rutherford and Attorney Mayfield Webb who donated their photos to the project. The Bureau of Planning would like to thank the History Project technical advisory committee members for their expertise and patience.

The terms "African American" and "black" will be used interchangeably throughout the document. The terms "Negro, Afro-American, Chinaman" have been used within their historical context. There are many references to Union Avenue, which has been renamed Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. Whenever an historical context is relevant to the understanding of that time period, I have included background information.

The term "Albina" means different things to different people. To many Portland residents Albina means any area on Portland's east side where there is a large percentage of African Americans. It is important to note that the boundaries of Albina change throughout the history period. Prior to Model Cities the Albina district was located within the Eliot Neighborhood boundary. During the Model Cities program the boundaries associated with Albina expanded to include Eliot, Boise-Humboldt, Woodlawn, Vernon-King-Sabin and Irvington. Nineteen square miles of land bounded by Broadway on the south, Columbia Boulevard on the north, Chautauqua on the west, and roughly 33rd as the eastern boundary has been designated as the Albina Community Plan land use study area. The historic character and Albina's roots as a separate city prompted the Bureau of Planning to designate this effort the Albina Community Plan.

Chapter 1
Black Pioneers in Early Portland (1805-1900)

Be not discouraged. There is a future for you....The resistance encountered now predicates hopes... Only as we rise ... do we encounter opposition.

Fredrick Douglas, 1892

Early African American Settlers in Oregon

African American settlers in the Oregon country can be traced back to 1788 and as early as 1850 in Portland. Opinion varies but by 1860 approximately 128 to 132 blacks and mulattos resided in Oregon country. Beginning in 1788, Caucasian American, African American, Spanish and European explorers sailed into the Willamette Valley interested in bear and sea otter trade with Northwest Coast Indians. During this period, before Oregon country established a provisional government in the spring of 1843, it was common for African Americans to come to Oregon on trading expeditions where they served as merchants, skilled laborers, artisans, sailors, and personal servants. Intermarriages among Native Americans and African Americans provided opportunities for blacks to serve as interpreters and guides in areas occupied by Native Americans.

The first black of record to set foot on Oregon soil was Marcus Lopez, a West Indian from the Cape Verde Islands. He was a cabin boy and cook aboard Captain Robert Gray's ship, the *Lady Washington.* The Voyage of *Lady Washington* originated in Boston, Massachusetts, sponsored by businessmen who were interested in potential sea otter trade with the Indians. On August 14, 1788, the ship landed at what is now called Tillamook Bay. A misunderstanding with Indians caused his murder. For many years the Bay was known as Murderer's Cove and Murderer's Bay.[1]

Sixteen years later, York, a member of the historic Lewis and Clark Expedition of 1804, became the second African American man of record to

[1]Anderson, Martha, *Black Pioneers of the Northwest: 1800-1918* (Portland, 1980), p. 51.

come to Oregon. He arrived on the Clatsop Plains October 18, 1805 and helped build eight cabins. This area was later named Fort Clatsop.[2] He was the first black man to explore what would one day become Portland. [3]

York's courage and strength during adversity won the respect of everyone in the expedition. He was given a full vote and his status became equal to that of everyone in the party.[4] After the expedition, York remained with Captain Clark and returned to St. Louis in September 1806, where they were hailed as heroes. In 1811, he was given his freedom and a six horse team and wagon, while the enlisted men of the expedition received 320 acres of land and double pay.[5]

Oregon's Black Laws

As the waves of white migrants came to Oregon country, Chinese, Japanese, and Native Americans as well as African Americans experienced the racist sentiment of Oregon's exclusion laws designed to prohibit slavery and exclude "Negroes, Chinamen, Kanakas and Indians" from coming to Oregon. Exclusion laws passed twice in the 1840s, and were made part of the state constitution in 1857.[6]

Some proslavery advocates saw the acquisition of the Oregon country as an opportunity to establish a slave state or at least a proslavery free state in the Far West. Two antislavery groups sought influence in Oregon. "Popular sovereignty" advocates felt the new region could be settled without slavery and free blacks, while abolitionists wanted to see the region open to both blacks and whites and become a western bulwark against slavery. [7] Neither the proslavery nor abolitionist interests dominated the Pacific

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[2]Anderson, Op.cit. p. 50.
[3]Demarco, Gordon, *A Short History of Portland* (San Francisco, 1990), p. 47
[4]Cantor, George, *Historic Landmark of Black America.* (Detroit, Michigan, 1991), p. 326-7.
[5]McLagan, Op.cit., p 4.
[6]McLagan, Elizabeth, *A Peculiar Paradise: a History of Blacks in Oregon, 1788-1940..* (Portland, 1980), p. 24.
[7]Taylor, Quintard, *Slaves and Free Men: Blacks in the Oregon Country, 1840-1860.* Oregon Historical Quarterly, Vol 83, No. 2, Summer, 1982, p. 153.

Northwest. Antislavery and antiblack popular sovereignty Democrats held sway in the region for the entire period until the Civil War brought about a major political realignment.[8]

Most of Oregon's early white settlers migrated to Oregon from the four states of the "Old Northwest" (Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio) or the bordering states of Kentucky, Tennessee and Missouri.[9] The antislavery forces in those states were constantly struggling against the dominant proslavery interests and many of the white residents migrated to escape the economic and political domination of slaveholders. Some moved to the free states of the Old Northwest while others migrated to the Pacific Northwest. In either case they carried a hatred of both slavery and blacks. One of them remarked that he had come to Oregon to get rid of "saucy free Negroes." Whites of the Old Northwest, whether of Southern origin or not, shared the idea that blacks were not only inferior but were a definite threat to a free white society. During 1830-1860 these states, already protected from slavery by Northwest Ordinance of 1787, passed laws to exclude or restrict free blacks as well.[10] Old Northwest migrants came to Oregon with their racial attitudes and transformed them into a series of black exclusion laws.

In the spring of 1843, 463 Willamette Valley settlers organized a general assembly to set up a nine member legislative committee.[11] The legislative committee drew up a code of laws similar to the laws enacted at Iowa's first territorial session, providing that all claimants might hold 640 acres, if they recorded their boundaries, made improvements within six months, and occupied the claim within a year of recording it. Slavery and involuntary servitude were prohibited and the franchise was extended to "every free male descendant of a white man, an inhabitant of this territory, twenty-one years old."[12]

The code used language of Northwest Ordinance of 1787 to prohibit slavery. The law was occasionally challenged but remained a part of the new

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[8]Ibid.
[9]Ibid.. p. 153-4.
[10]Ibid., p.154.
[11]Ibid., p. 155.
[12]Ibid., 155.

government. Yet there was evidence that a number of blacks brought to the Pacific Northwest between 1840 and 1860 were slaves in fact, if not in name. According to Brownell, of the 135 African Americans recorded as living in Oregon between 1850 and 1860 at least 14 were slaves. Many slaves brought to Oregon did not know they could gain their freedom in Oregon.[13]

The first code contained no prohibition against free blacks residing in the region. However, Oregon continued to grow as waves of migrants came. The original nine member legislation was replaced by seven new members. One of the new members, Peter Hardeman Burnett, dominated the committee.[14] Burnett, designer of Oregon's first exclusion law, a native of Tennessee and later governor of California, had lived in Missouri before migrating to Oregon in 1843. He felt that a black exclusion bill was necessary to "keep clear of that most troublesome class of population. We are in a new world, under most favorable circumstances, and we wish to avoid most of the evils that have so much afflicted the United States and Countries."[15]

Cockstock Affair

A major factor in the passage of the 1844 exclusion act was the Cockstock incident involving a dispute between James Saules, a black settler and Cockstock, a Wasco Indian. A dispute over ownership of a horse caused Saules to exploit local prejudice of Native Americans by accusing Cockstock of making threats against the lives of settlers in the area. Angered by his remark, Cockstock, along with several other Native Americans, came to Willamette Falls. The confrontation resulted in the death of Cockstock and George LeBreton, clerk and recorder of the Oregon Provision Government. Cockstock was killed by Winslow Anderson, another black resident, and LeBreton died of wounds received in the confrontation.

Local whites blamed Saules and Anderson for the incident, threatened their lives and encouraged them to leave the area. Saules, who had married a Native American woman three years earlier, issued a counter threat ,

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[13]Ibid. 167.
[14]Ibid.
[15]Ibid., p. 154.

claiming the ability to bring wrath of the Indians on the settlers. The Cockstock Affair precipitated the first major confrontation between Native Americans and Oregon's growing non-Native American population. The Cockstock affair had a number of implications for future black-white relations. White settlers, angry at blacks for inciting what could have been a Native American war, were apprehensive about the potential of a combined black-Native American uprising. This fear probably played a part in the first black exclusion legislation.

The 1844 exclusion law provided that persons who brought their slaves to Oregon were required to remove those slaves within three years. If the owner refused, the slaves would be freed. The law also stated that any free black person over the age of eighteen who did not leave the territory in two years if male and three years if female, would be subject to trial. If found guilty they would "receive upon his or her bare back not less than twenty nor more than thirty-nine stripes, to be inflicted by the constable of the proper county." Should the individual still refuse to leave, the punishment would be repeated every six months until he or she did.[16] The law was soon changed so that the "whipping" was repealed and the law was amended to include a provision for hiring out violators at public auction, with the employer being responsible for removing the black person when his service was ended.[17]

In 1845, following another wave of immigrants, the composition of the legislative committee was drastically changed. Peter Burnett did not run for reelection and the new committee was dominated by Jesse Applegate, an ex-Missouri farmer. This committee repealed the exclusion law and between 1845 and 1848 no action was taken regarding the status of free blacks in Oregon.[18] By 1849, Oregon was organized as a territory, and the population had grown to 12,000. Racist legislation, influenced by the Cockstock Affair, was seen as a way to protect the white population from combined Indian/Black hostilities. On September 21, 1849, another exclusion bill passed and the preamble to the bill stated:

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[16]Demarco, Op.cit. p. 48-49.
[17]Taylor, Op.cit., p. 155-6.
[18]Ibid., p. 157.

> **...situated as the people of Oregon are, in the midst of an Indian population, it would be highly dangerous to allow free Negroes and mulattos to reside in the territory or to intermix with Indians, instilling in their minds feelings of hostility against the white race...**

The law varied from the original exclusion bill of 1844 in that it was to take immediate effect and that African Americans had 40 days to leave the Oregon Territory. However, blacks already residing in the territory and their offspring were exempted.[19]

Oregon gained statehood on February 14, 1859. The move toward statehood occurred in the midst of the national turmoil that followed the Dred Scott decision in March 1857. The United States Supreme Court ruled that Congress did not have the power to exclude slavery from territories. When Oregon decided to change its governmental status from a territory to a state, the issue of slavery needed to be resolved. At the Constitutional Convention in August 1857, slavery extension and the rights of free African Americans were discussed. Slavery was overwhelmingly outlawed but a greater majority banned free African Americans from settling Oregon. On September 18, 1857, the Oregon State Constitution Convention passed a resolution that stated:

> **No free Negro or mulatto, not residing in the state at the time of adoption of this constitution, shall come reside or be within the state or hold any real estate, or make any contract, or maintain any suit therein, and the legislative assembly shall provide by penal law for removal by public officer of all such Negroes and mulattos, and for their effectual exclusion from the state, and for the punishment of persons who shall bring them into the state, or employ or harbor them.[20]**

The anti-slavery sentiment was an economic issue and not a morality issue. In the *Oregon Statesman*, supreme court Chief Justice George H. Williams warned that Oregon should "keep as clear as possible of Negroes, slave or free. Slave labor was both involuntary and lazy, while free black people

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[19]Ibid., p.158.

[20]Casey, Helen, *Portland's Compromise: The Colored School/1867-1972* (Portland, 1980), p. 1.

would degrade the labor market." [21] Not all Oregonians agreed with these racist assumptions and statements. Thomas Dryer, editor of *The Oregonian* in 1857 and a member of the legislature did not feel harshly about blacks, nor did he support the exclusionary efforts. In the debate on such bills in 1857, Mr. Dryer comments:

> **There are some free Negroes now in Oregon. Mr. Francis living in the City of Portland, is a black man and good citizen. A man of property who attends his own business, and does as much for the country as any other man in the country.**[22]

Post Civil War Years

After the signing of the Proclamation of Emancipation and during the Reconstruction period of 1865, African Americans began to advocate for full citizenship and equality. However, Oregon went its own way in attempting to prohibit full citizenship and equality for African Americans. Racist and oppressive legislation was passed in 1862 that prohibited people of color from voting, qualifying as witnesses in court cases and prohibited marriage between whites and persons of one-fourth or more Negro blood.

Many counties and cities in Oregon had exclusionary ordinances such as "sundown laws", requiring blacks to be out of town or off the streets by sundown. The Oregon legislative session passed a law which enforced an annual poll tax of five dollars to be paid by "every Negro, Chinaman (Hawaiian) and Mulatto residing within the limits of this state". The local sheriff was responsible for collecting the tax. If it could not be paid, they were forced to work on public roads at 50 cents a day until the fine was paid. [23]

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[21]MacColl, Kimbark E., *Merchant, Money and Power: The Portland Establishment 1843-1913.* (Portland, 1988) p. 91.

[22]Millner, Darryl, ***Blacks in Oregon (1858-1940)***, Blacks in Oregon: A Statistical and Historical Report (Portland, 197) p. 24.

[23]McLagan, op. cit., p. 64.

Impact of the Black Laws

In 1851, two years after the passage of the black exclusion law, the first and only successful attempt to enforce the law was made against a black sailor, Jacob Vanderpool. On August 20, 1851, Vanderpool was arrested and jailed for illegally residing in Oregon. Vanderpool, a West Indian, had come to Oregon in 1850 on the bark *Louisiana* and in 1851 was living in Oregon City.[24] He owned a saloon, restaurant and boarding house in Salem, Oregon.[25] He was the first and only black person of record to be expelled from Oregon because of his race.

In 1851, under the 1849 exclusion law, a complaint was brought against Abner and Lynda Francis, for illegally living in Portland. The Francises were ordered out of the Oregon Territory. The Francises were able to gather 225 names on a petition appealing the decision, and sent it to the state legislature.[26] The names of prominent whites such as Robert Newell, ex-trapper and official of the Provincial government, H.W. Corbett, a future U.S. senator from Oregon, and Thomas Dryer, editor and publisher of the Portland *Oregonian* appeared on their petition. [27] Although their petition was unsuccessful and the law was not repealed until 1854, the couple remained in Portland.

Oregon's exclusion laws, although not enforced vigorously, were successful in practice. All blacks residing in the Pacific Northwest between 1853 and 1865 lived with the possibility that they might be expelled at anytime.[28] Anti-black laws were successful in deterring early black migration and residence in the Oregon Territory. According to Jesse Douglas, by 1850 an estimated 55 Negroes lived in Oregon. By 1860 the figure held at 128. In the same decade California had gained 3,924 new black citizens.[29]

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[24]Ibid., p. 162-163.
[25]McLagan, Op.cit., p. 50.
[26]McLagan, Op.cit., p. 50.
[27]Taylor, Op.cit., p. 164.
[28]Taylor, Op.cit., P. 165.
[29]Millner, Op.cit., p. 25.

Early African American Settlers in Portland

Despite Oregon's exclusion laws and anti-black sentiment, a small community of blacks did settle in Portland. In spite of attempts to expel them from Oregon, Abner and Lynda Francis lived in Portland for ten years. In 1852, the couple ran a boarding house. Between 1856 and 1860 the Francises operated a mercantile store on the corner of Front and Stark. He advertised the lowest prices in Portland on such goods as wool plaid, French merino, silk dress goods, fashionable bonnets and mantillas and an assortment of furs, as well as groceries, cement and glass. In 1861, the Francises left Portland, for reasons unknown, and moved to Victoria B.C.[30]

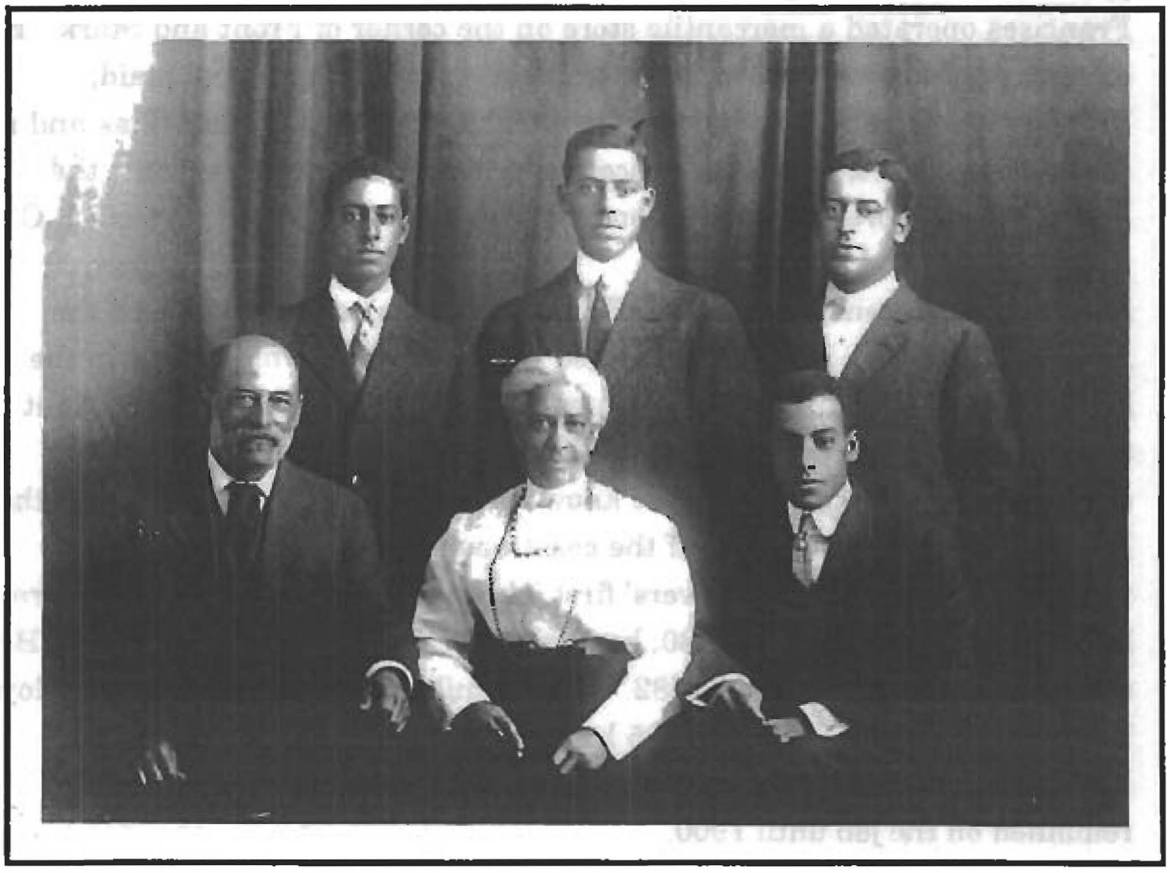
Another black pioneer was Allen Ervin Flowers, a cabin boy aboard the *Brother Jonathon*. In 1865 he jumped ship at Portland, hiding out in the brush along the river until the ship had cleared port before venturing out to make contact with the members of Portland's small African American community. Although he did not know it then, he was a lucky man, as the *Brother Jonathon* sank just off the coast near Eureka, California on its return trip to Oregon.[31] Flowers' first job was at the Lincoln Hotel where he served as a bus boy. In 1880, he worked for the U.S. Customs House. He married Louisa Thatcher in 1882. Their family consisted of four boys: Lloyd, Ervin, Elmer and Ralph. In 1885 he started working for the Northern Pacific Railroad as porter-in-charge between Portland and Seattle. He remained on the job until 1900.

Allen Flowers was one of the very few blacks who owned land. He purchased acreage near Mt. Scott where he raised horses and raspberries. He owned land in northeast Portland in the vicinity of the present day Coliseum Ford car dealership. He became Portland's first black developer when he constructed a road on NE Schuyler so that his wife could wheel her baby buggy to Union Avenue, which was the only through street to the river at that time.[32]

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[30]Ibid.
[31]Anderson, Op.cit., p. 59-60.
[32]Ibid.

Allen Flowers was a resident of Portland for 68 years. He and his wife took active part in civic and community affairs. The Flowers were members of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. Mrs. Flowers served on Bethel AME deaconness board, was a member of the Rosebud Club and a charter member of the colored YWCA. She lived in Portland for 45 years.



Allen Elmer (A.E.) Flowers arrived on *Brother Jonathan*, 1865
Seated: A.E. Flowers, Louisa M. Flowers, Lloyd Flowers
Standing: Ervin, Elmer and Ralph Flowers
(Courtesy of OHS)

The Colored School

In 1867 Portland's total population was under 7,000; fewer than 200 residents were black.[33] The City of Portland's sixteen black children were denied access to the city's free educational system.[34] At that time Portland's school network consisted of only two elementary schools - Central and Harrison Street schools. No black children were enrolled in the two schools. William Brown, a Maryland-born, black shoemaker, changed all of this when his children were sent home after attempting to enroll in the public school.[35]

Determined to have his children enrolled in public school, Brown sought the approval of the public school board of directors. Although there were no school laws that prohibited public school admission to black children, the board of directors denied Brown's request in fear that enrollment of black children would cause the white taxpayers to withdraw their financial support of public schools. Instead, board directors Josiah Failing, W.S. Ladd and E.D. Shattuck proposed a refund to black taxpayers:[36]

> **It costs us $2.25 per quarter for each child in school. Now, we will allow the colored people $2.25 for each child they send to school each quarter, and they can get a house and hire their own teacher.**

The black parents were not happy with this proposal and with the help of Thomas Alexander Wood, they rallied the board to allocate $800.00 to pay for the rent of the house, pay all bills and employ a teacher. After some debate the school, named the "Colored School", was opened the fall of 1867 on the corner of SW 4th and Columbia Street located in a building rented from school board director Judge E.D. Shattuck. Mrs. Abbie J. Young was hired at a salary of $650 a year and instructed twenty-one boys and five girls.

The Colored School was closed in the Spring of 1872 when the school board withdrew their financial support and local voters approved admitting black children to the three district elementary schools. The closing of the Colored

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[33]Casey, Op. cit., p. 2.
[34]MacColl, Op. cit., p. 193.
[35]Casey, Op. cit., p. 2-3.
[36]Ibid., p. 5

School marked the emergence of integrated schools in Portland. Of the 1,048 students enrolled in December 1873, 30 were black, spread evenly among 21 classes. Few, if any, black students went beyond the sixth grade in the ensuing years.[37]

The Completion of the Railroad Line and the Portland Hotel

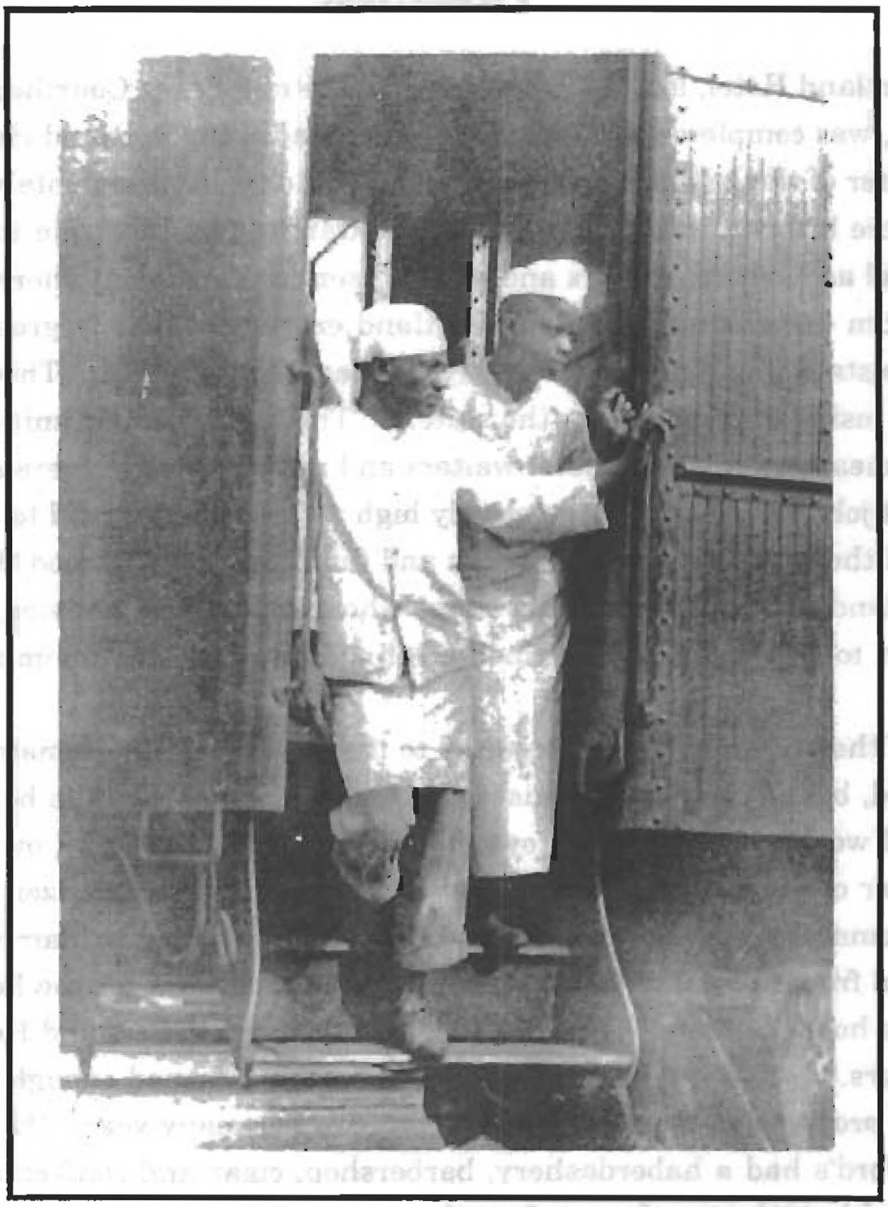
Railroad

In the early 1880s Oregon Railway and Navigation invested over $1.5 million in the construction of the Albina rail center. In 1883 a group of black people marched in a parade in Portland to celebrate the completion of a railroad line from the East Coast to Portland.[38] It was a significant event for black people, as the railroad offered new employment opportunities. By 1909, five transcontinental rail lines (*Southern Pacific, Santa Fe, Union Pacific, Northern Pacific, and Great Northern*) ran through the heart of inner northeast Portland and were serviced by the rail yards.[39] Soon black laborers came to Portland to work in the car shops, the roundhouses, and the yards of the new transcontinental railroads.[40]

The railroad continued to be a consistent employer of African Americans. Prior to the completion of the transcontinental rail lines, the three most common jobs held by black Portlanders were cooks, bootblacks and domestics. The transcontinental railroads brought black porters, dining car waiters, mail clerks and other railroad jobs to Portland. By 1941, the results of an industrial survey revealed that 98.6 percent of black people were employed in the railroad industry as waiters, cooks, porters, redcaps and shop laborers. Only 1 percent were employed in private industry, and .4 percent in business and the professions. [41]

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[37]MacColl, Kimbark E., Op. cit., p. 194.
[38]McLagan, Op. cit., p. 90
[39]PSU, *History of the Albina Plan Area* (Portland, 1990), p. 9.
[40]Demarco, Op. cit., p. 51.
[41]Ibid., p. 116.



Dining Car Cooks - Southern Pacific Railroad, 1916
(Courtesy of OHS)

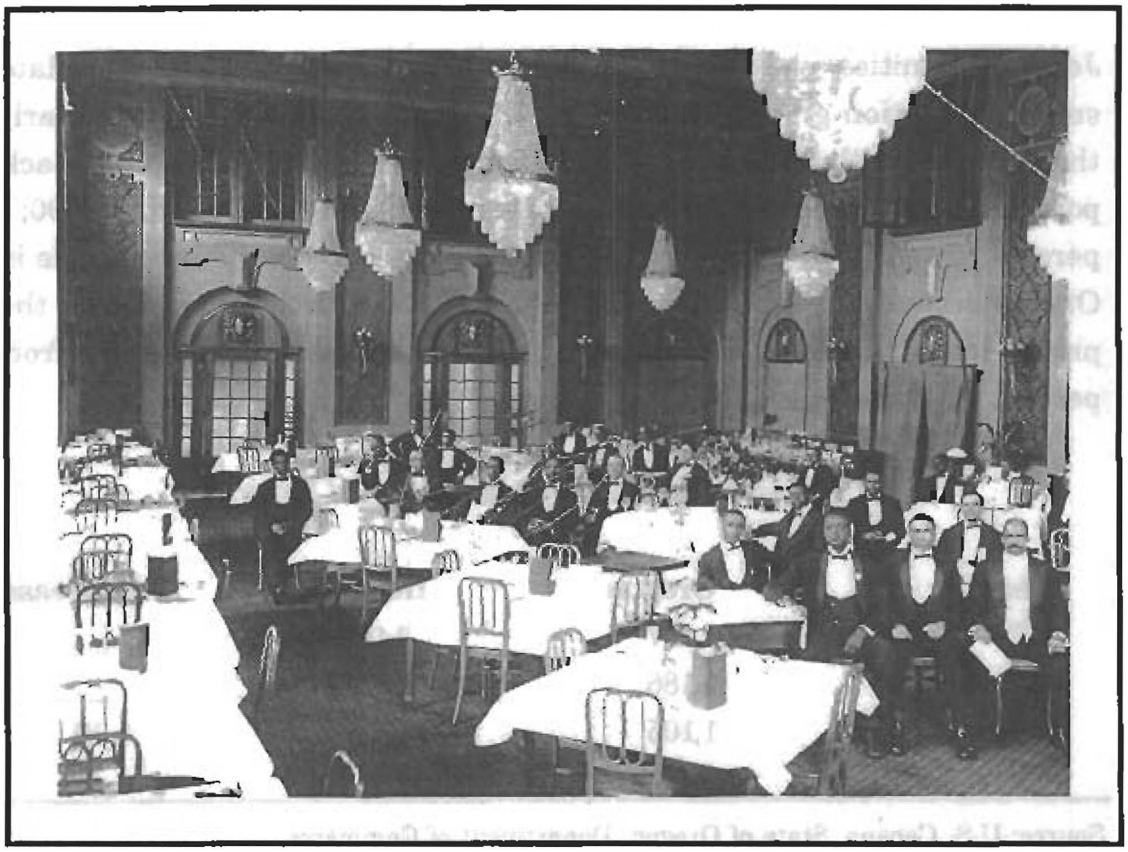
Portland Hotel

The Portland Hotel, located at the present site of Pioneer Courthouse Square, was completed in 1890. For three decades the Portland Hotel was the center of the business and social life of the city. Approximately 75 black men were brought from North and South Carolina and Georgia to work in the hotel as barbers, waiters and in other service positions. There was an unwritten understanding among Portland employers that Negroes brought into the state would not be re-employed by another employer. This forced anyone losing his job to leave the state.[42] The limited opportunities for blacks meant that jobs as hotel waiters and railway porters were some of the best jobs available. The relatively high wages and tips paid to the men allowed them to send for their wives and families. They formed the nucleus of Portland's first black "middle class" who owned modest homes, sent children to college and maintained a refined and cohesive community.

Most of the original 75 men recruited to the Portland Hotel remained in Portland, bought homes and raised their family. Several of the hotel and railroad workers started their own businesses. E.D. Cannady, owner and publisher of the *Advocate* newspaper, became a prominent citizen of the black community. [43] William H. and Edward W. Rutherford, arrived in Portland from Columbia, South Carolina in 1897 to work for the Portland Hotel as house barbers. They provided room service to Portland Hotel customers.[44] Eventually the Rutherford brothers earned enough capital to acquire property on Broadway and Flanders. For many years, the Rutherford's had a haberdashery, barbershop, cigar and confectionary store and leased space for a cafe and tailor shop.[45] Burr Williams, a former railroad worker, came to Portland in 1898 and noticed the absence of respectable saloons for black patronage. In August 1899, he formed a partnership with Mrs. S. St. Claire and opened the Arcadia Saloon, which was said to be unequaled in the Northwest for a colored saloon.[46]

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[42]Anderson, Op.cit., p. 91.
[43]Ibid., p. 85.
[44]Rutherford, Otto and Verdell, Oral Interview, December, 1992.
[45]Ibid., p. 113.
[46]Hopkins, Op.cit., p. 57



Interior of the Portland Hotel Dining Room with black waiters posed at the tables, including head waiter Albert Morton.

(Courtesy of OHS)

Portland Becomes the Center of Oregon's Black Population

Job opportunities available at the railroads and Portland Hotel stimulated a small population growth within Oregon's black community, particularly in the parts of Portland located within Multnomah County. Oregon's black population had increased from 487 people in 1880 to 1,186 people by 1890; a 41 percent increase.[47] Between 1890 and 1900 the number of black people in Oregon decreased slightly, from 1,186 to 1,105, but in the same decade the proportion of the black population living in Multnomah County rose from 44 percent to 70 percent.

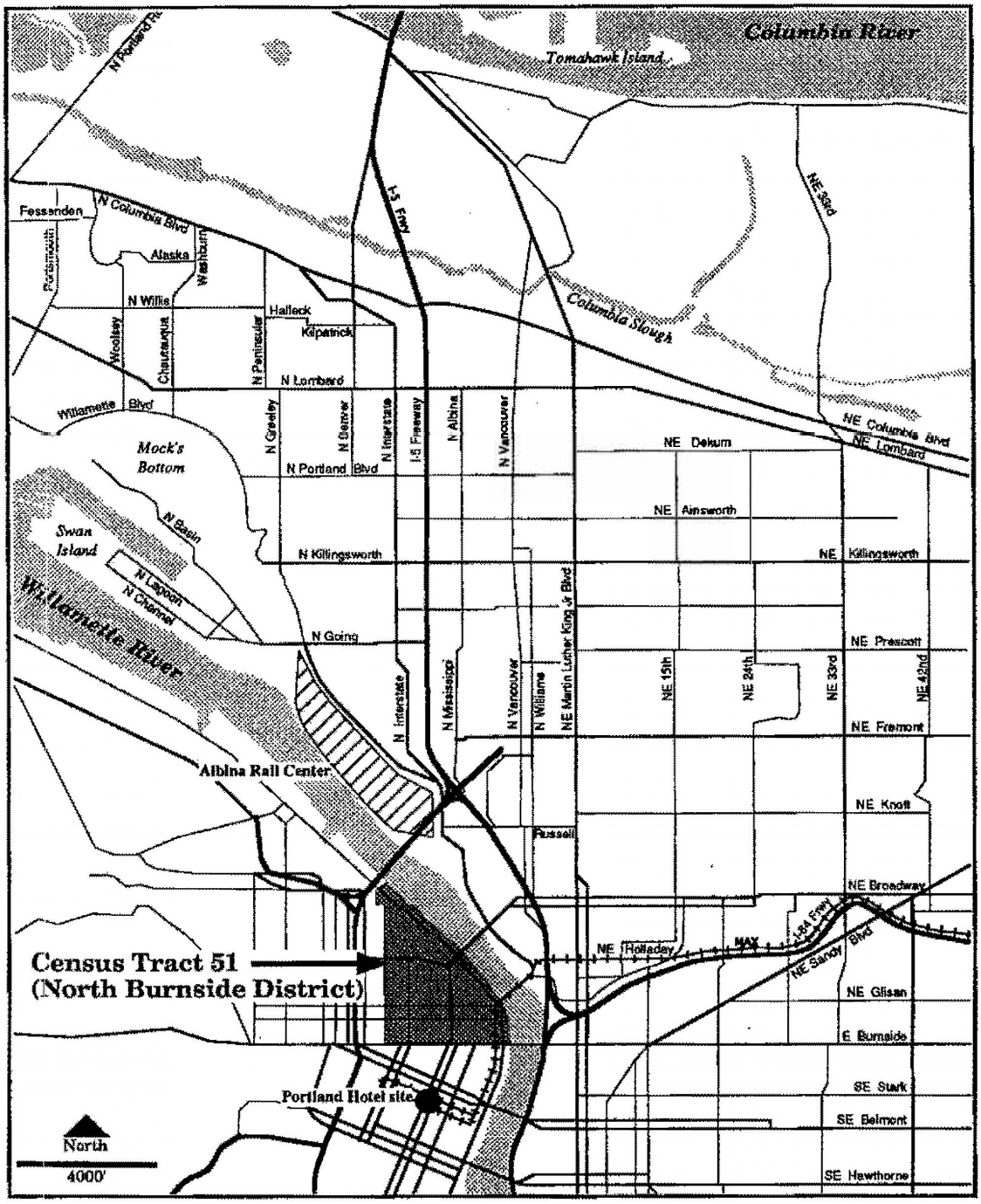
Table 1: Black Population in Oregon

Year	Oregon	Increase	Decrease
1880	487	141	-
1890	1,186	699	-
1900	1,105	-	81

Source: U.S. Census, State of Oregon, Department of Commerce

By 1900, the majority of Portland's blacks resided on the west side of the Willamette River. They were scattered within an area from SW Montgomery to NW Kearney, and from the river west to 12th Street (North Burnside District). The working class black community resided in this area because most black men worked nearby for either the railroads, the Union Station or the hotels. North Burnside housing was older and cheaper. This area has always had a racially diverse population in contrast to the more homogenous white residential sections of upper northwest and southwest Portland where the first families lived.[48]

[47]MacLagan, Op.cit., p. 109.
[48]MacColl, Kimbark, *The Growth of a City: Power and Politics in Portland, Oregon 1915 to 1950.* (Portland, 1978), p. 17-18.



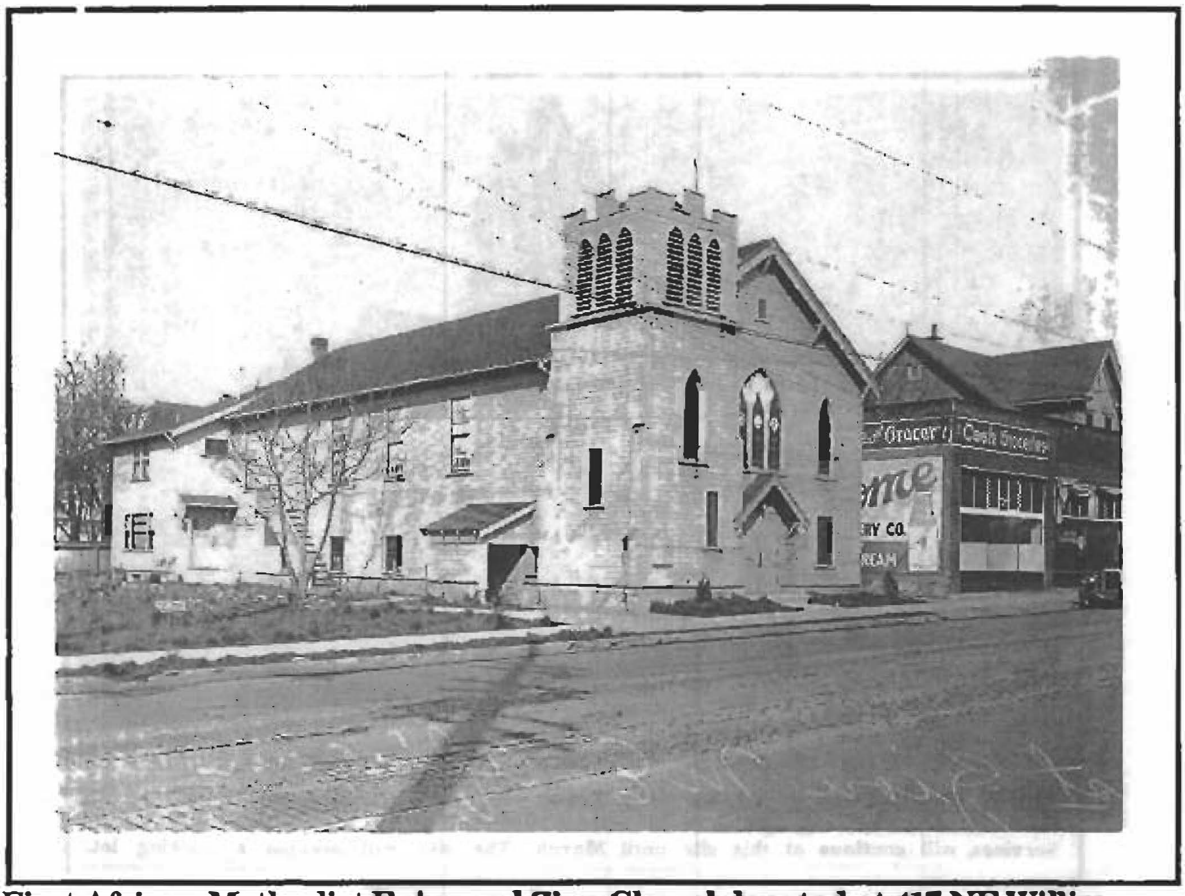
Census Tract 51 - North Burnside District

The African American Church in Portland

The concentration of Portland's black population in North Burnside District stimulated the establishment of four churches, serving a predominantly black congregation, in Northwest Portland between 1862 and 1901. The churches played a significant role in responding to the spiritual, economic, educational, political and social needs of Portland's small African American community. Out of these churches, all of which are located in Northeast Portland today, emerged prominent religious leaders who often spoke out against discriminatory housing and employment practices, and criminal injustices directed against African Americans. Several of these leaders are highlighted in the following chapters.

The first black church in Portland, First African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, formerly called People's Church, was organized in 1862, and met in the home of Mrs. Mary Carr, who owned a boarding house on First Street.[49] In January, 1869, the First African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church was incorporated in Portland, and property was purchased on NW Third Street, between Burnside and Couch. The first pastor of the church was Reverend J.O. Lodge. In 1883 the congregation erected a building on Thirteenth and Main, and remained there until 1916, when the congregation moved to the east side of the river and built a church at 417 NE Williams Avenue.[50] The church service is now being held at 109 N. Skidmore located on the corner of Vancouver and Skidmore. This church building was originally occupied by the Danish Norwegian Methodist Church. The church building was built by Dr. C. Larsen who served as the pastor of the Danish Norwegian Methodist Church from 1907-1913.

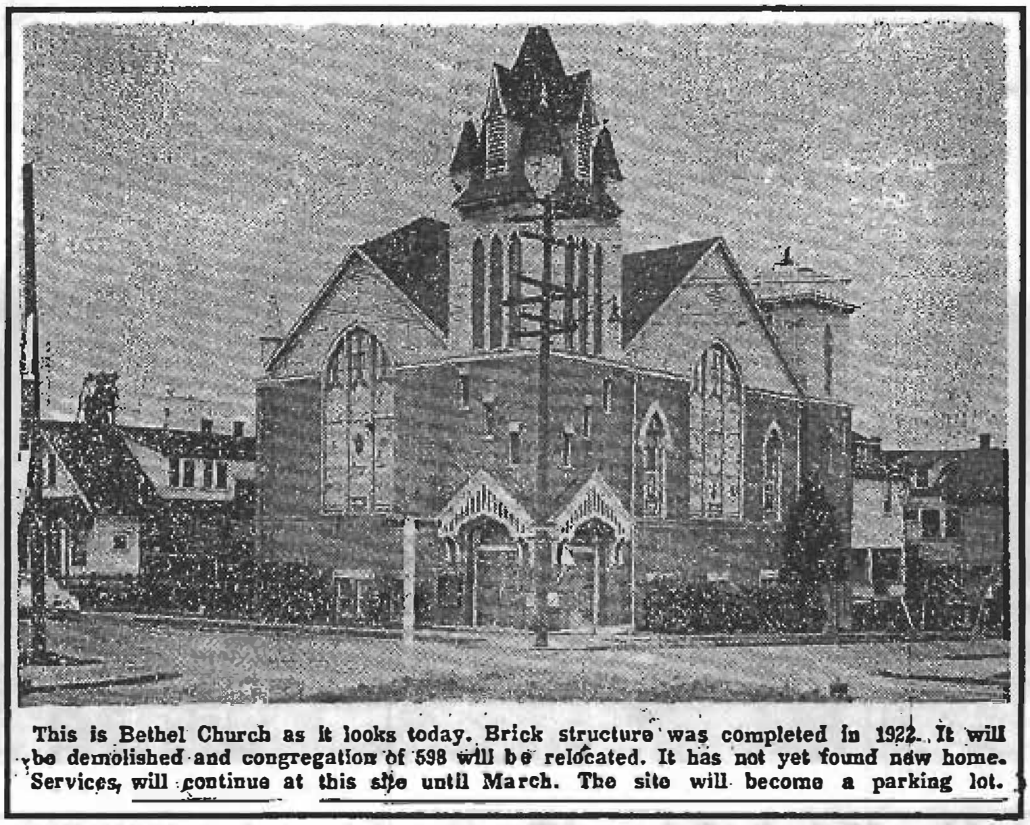
[49]McLagan, op. cit., p. 92.
[50]Ibid., p. 92



First African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church located at 417 NE Williams
(Courtesy of OHS)

Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, the largest black congregation, was established by Reverend S.S. Freeman and his wife, Lenora. Services were originally held in a two-story building owned by a black man named Mr. Jenkins. At that time, the Southern Pacific Railroad was the only railroad between California and Portland. There were a number of black porters and dining car men on that 'run'. Mr. Jenkins had a daughter, about thirty years old, who kept house for him. She became enamored with one of the porters, resulting in a decision to get married. Reverend Freemen performed the marriage ceremony and the bride and groom left town. Mr. Jenkins, not desiring his one and only daughter to marry and

leave town, padlocked the church, forcing Reverend Freeman to find a new location.[51]



This is Bethel Church as it looks today. Brick structure was completed in 1922. It will be demolished and congregation of 598 will be relocated. It has not yet found new home. Services will continue at this site until March. The site will become a parking lot.

Newspaper clipping of Bethel A.M.E. Church
(Courtesy of Verdell Burdine Rutherford)

In order to support his ministry, Reverend Freeman and his wife decided to operate a boarding house for the men working on the railroad. The boarding house was located at Third and Fourth on Everett. Women from the congregation came and helped serve the public, and the whole black community rallied to support the business. The successful venture enabled the Freemans to purchase an Old Japanese Mission building on Tenth Street between Everett and Davis. They conducted church services there until 1916, when they moved to the east side and built a church on Larrabee and McMillan.[52] When the church moved from the west side to Larrabee,

[51]Anderson, Op.cit., p. 88.
[52]Ibid., p. 92-93.

the basement was finished first and services were held there until the congregation could afford the rest of the building.[53]

In early 1950, when the site was cleared for the construction of the Memorial Coliseum, a newly constructed Bethel African Methodist Episcopal was built at its present location at 8th and Jarrett.

Around 1901 a third black church was established. First African Baptist was located at 311 Everett and Reverend T.F. Smith was the Pastor. Not much is known about this church. Unlike the other early black churches, this church does not exist today.[54]

A fourth black church, the Mount Olivet Baptist Church, was established in Portland in 1902 by Reverend J. L. Allen. The church was located at 85 7th North. In 1907, the Mount Olivet congregation had moved from its northwest location to the east side on First and Schuyler and was rebuilt at that same location in 1912. The lumber used to construct the building was donated by a local branch of the Klu Klux Klan.[55] Today Mount Olivet Baptist Church, due to increased membership, is in the process of remodeling a vacant building located in North Portland in the Portsmouth neighborhood.

Political Groups in Portland

Blacks in Portland began to organize politically as early as 1870, when the Sumner Union Club was organized and endorsed the platform of the Union Republic party. An organization called the **Bed Rock Political Club** was formed in the late 1870s, and was active until the waiters at the Portland Hotel organized the **New Port Republican Club.** This club had a membership of eighty, and was able to secure the employment of George Hardin as the first black man on the Portland police force in 1894. He served in this capacity until January 1, 1915 when he moved into the

[53]Oral Interview, Verdell and Otto Rutherford, 1992.
[54]Anderson, Op.cit., p. 105.
[55]Ibid., p. 93.

sheriff's office as deputy, the first of his race to hold this position. Hardin remained in the sheriff's office until his death in October of 1938.[56]

The next two decades were exciting and prosperous times for Portland's black community. Between 1900 and 1920, the work of many African American national organizations surfaced in Portland. Members of Portland's black community continued to organize fraternal lodges, women's clubs and political groups. Several individuals started businesses catering to a predominantly black clientele. Despite the persistent climate of discrimination, these groups were able to successfully meet the needs of that community.

[56]Anderson, Op. cit., p. 96.

Chapter 2
Building a Foundation (1901-1940)

True liberation can be acquired and maintained only when the Negro people possess power; and power is the product and flower of organization ... of the masses.

A. Phillip Randolph, 1937

Portland's Expanding East side

Prior to the early 1900s most Portlanders resided on the west side of the Willamette River. Until 1891 much of the east side, particularly Albina, was either wetlands or still in its original timbered state. With the opening of the Morrison Bridge, the construction of the Steel Bridge in 1887 and the extension of the street railways, land on the east side became attractive to developers and real estate agents. The price of building lots on the open land on the east side tripled or quadrupled between 1900-1910. Population on the east side grew rapidly, climbing from 32,000 to 120,000 during the first decade of the twentieth century.[1] In the next two decades, Portland built new middle class neighborhoods on the east side of the Willamette. The opening of the Broadway Bridge in 1912 also helped to serve this new burgeoning community.

The west side neighborhoods continued to grow from 1900 to 1910 but then started to lose population. By 1910 there was a noticeable difference between the east and west side of Portland. The east-siders were property owners and even with the inclusion of the upper-class neighborhoods on the West Hills, 70 percent of the west side families were renters.[2] The west side had two-thirds of the city's 1,045 blacks and almost all its Asian Americans. [3]

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[1]Abbott, Carl, *Portland: Planning, Politics, and Growth in a Twentieth-Century City* (Portland, 1983) p. 55.
[2]Ibid., p. 56.
[3]Ibid., p. 57.

The Black East Siders

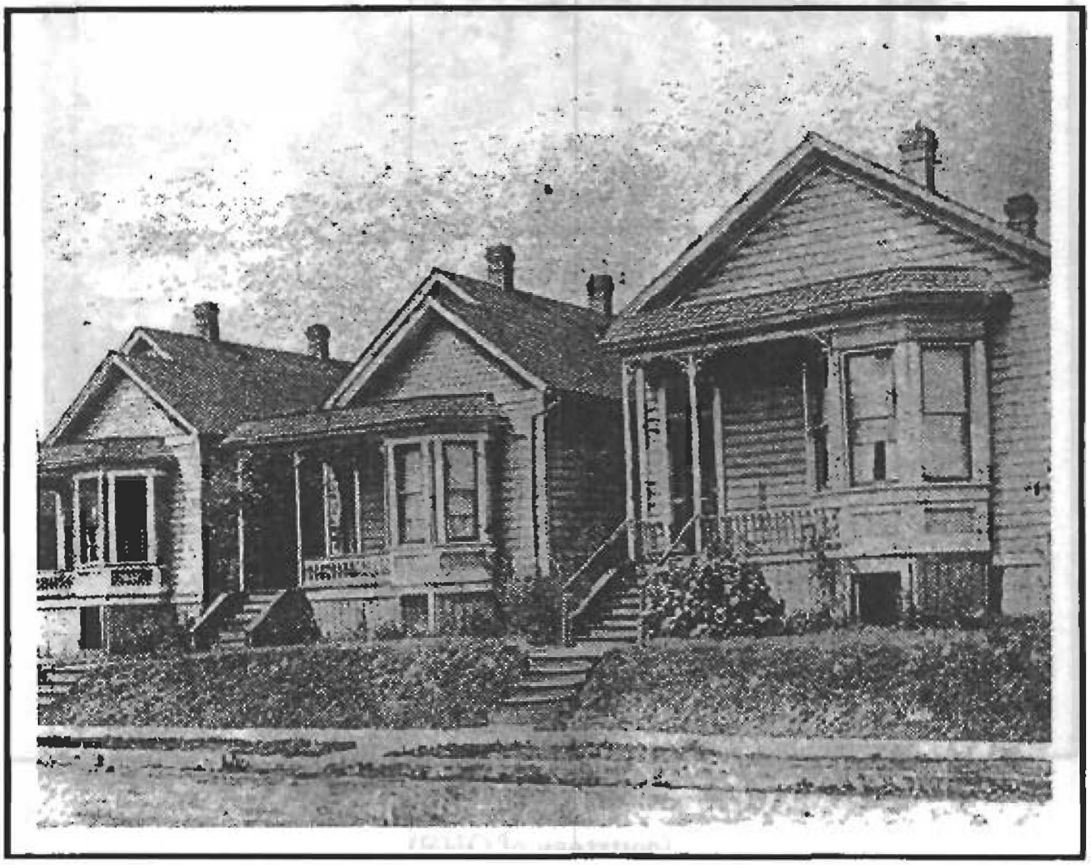
Only a few black residents lived in Albina and elsewhere on the east side of the Willamette. The completion of the Enterprise Lodge of Masons in 1903, located at Larrabee and Clackamas Street, initiated a gradual migration of blacks to Portland's east side. [4] The following is a partial listing of some of the African American families that resided on the east side during the first two decades of the twentieth century:

- William D. Allen, proprietor of the Golden West Hotel and his wife Linda Allen, lived on SE Madison at 19th Avenue.[5]
- Richard Bogle Sr. and Kathryn Bogle who resided and raised their son, Dick Bogle, Jr., on Tibbetts Avenue in southeast Portland.
- Mr. and Mrs. A.F. Flowers, black pioneering family lived on 387 East 1st St. N.
- George Hardin, Portland's first black police officer lived at 1008 East Yamhill.
- Isadore G. Maney Sr., a Mail Clerk for the Pacific Railroad, raised his family at 122 NE 1st and Schuyler.[6]
- Dr. J.A. Merriman, the first black physician to practice in Portland, lived on the corner of 14th and Prescott.[7]
- William and Edward Rutherford, black entrepreneurs and pioneering family, lived next door to each other at 49 and 50 East 8th Street, between Pine and Oak Street. [8]
- Mr. and Mrs. Elwood Raymond and Marie Smith lived on SE Woodstock Boulevard in 1918. Mr. Elwood Smith was a Pullman porter and his wife was one of the founders of the Oregon Association of Colored Women's Clubs.[9]

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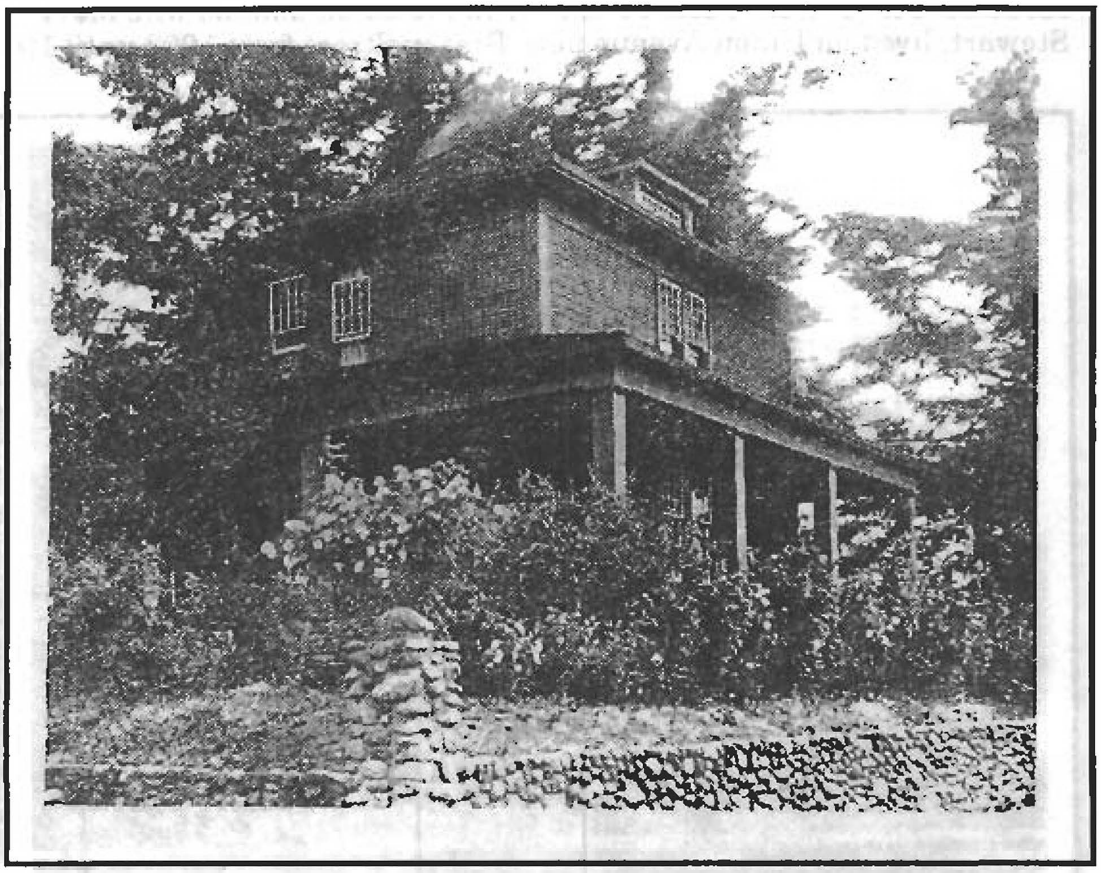
[4]Hopkins, Oznathylee, *Black Life in Oregon 1899-1907: A study of Portland New Age. (University of Oregon, 1974)*, p.4.
[5]The Oregonian-Food Day, *Early-day black Portlanders found social life in dining together,* (Portland, 1985), p. FD2.
[6]Oral history, Isadore Maney (Portland, 1992)
[7]Anderson, Op.cit., p. 87.
[8]The Oregonian -Food Day, *Enjoyment of good food legacy of Oregon's black pioneers,* (Portland, 1985), p. FD2
[9]Rothert, Yvonne, *Human rights advocate crusades for dignity of all,* The Oregonian, January 19, 1978, p.. C1.

- McCants Stewart, first black attorney in Portland, and his wife Mary Stewart, lived on Union Avenue near Brazee Street from 1903 until 1920.



A.E. Flower's Residence at 387 NE First Street
(courtesy of OHS)

- Fred Thomas and his wife Molly owned and operated a successful catering business located on NE Shaver Street. They delivered china, glassware and accessories as well as fine foods to addresses throughout the city during the 1920s and 1930s.



Dr. J.A. Merriman's House, 1463 NE Prescott
(courtesy of OHS)

European Immigrants

By 1900, over half of Portland's residents had immigrated from foreign countries or were children of immigrants.[10] Most of the east side was reserved for several thousands of European immigrants who had migrated to Portland's nearest equivalent to the large ethnic communities of New York or Chicago. With the construction of the rail shops in 1883, increasing numbers of working class Irish and German immigrants had moved into the old city of Albina. The railroads and industries such as the Portland Flouring Mill, Pacific Coast Elevator, lumber companies, saw mills, and shipyards attracted many Scandinavians, Polish and German immigrants seeking jobs.[11]

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[10]Bureau of Planning, *Draft Albina Community Context Statement,* (Portland, 1992), p. 41.
[11]Ibid.

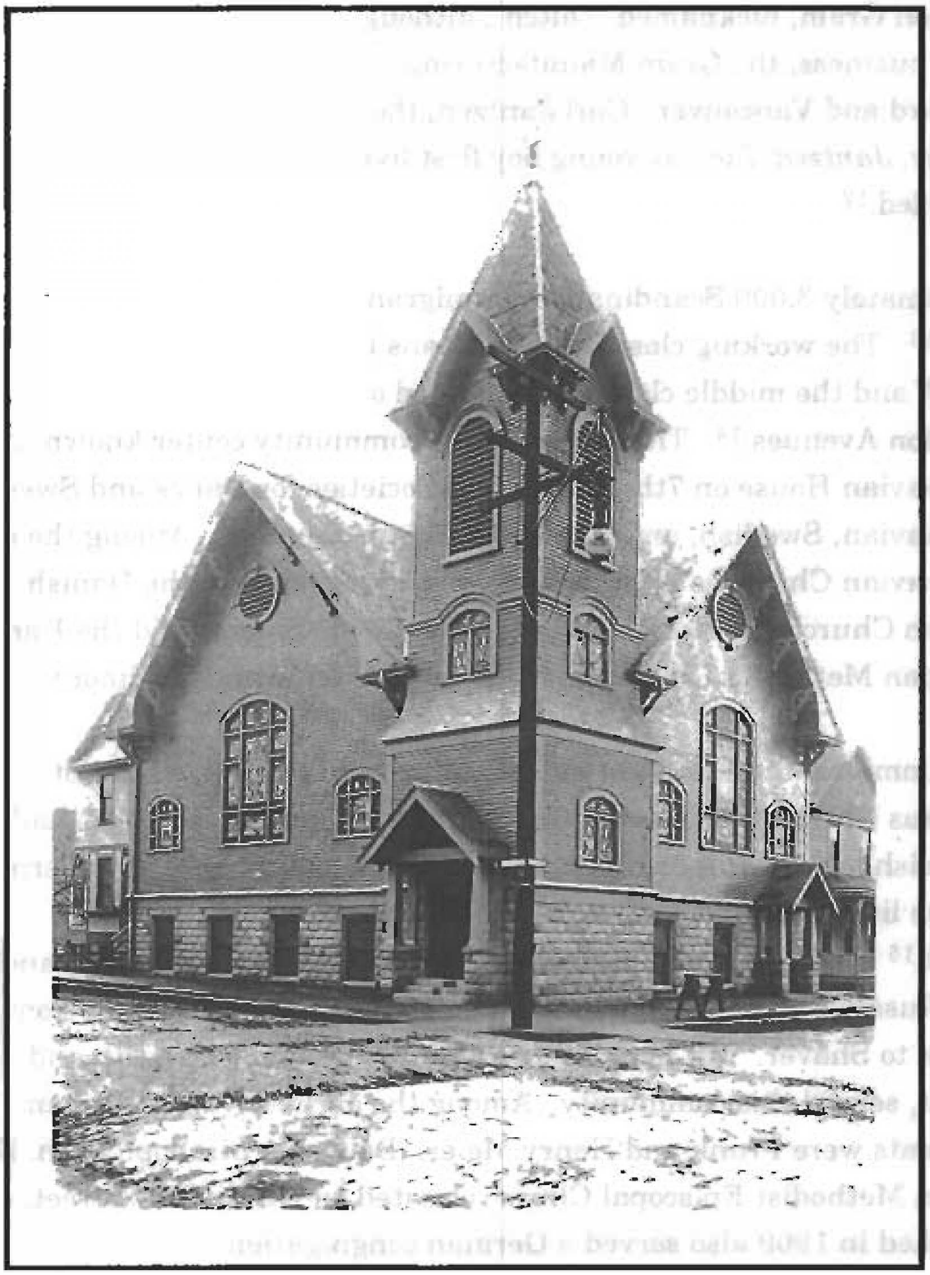
Bundesen Gram, nicknamed "Dutch", although he was a Dane, started a lumber business, the Gram Manufacturing Company located at Columbia Boulevard and Vancouver. Carl Jantzen, the founder of the swimming suit company, *Jantzen, Inc.*, as young boy first lived in Albina where many Danes had settled.[12]

Approximately 3,000 Scandinavian immigrants and their children lived in Albina.[13] The working class Scandinavians lived near the railroads below the bluff and the middle class families lived on higher land around Williams and Union Avenues.[14] They supported a community center known as the Scandinavian House on 7th; Mutual Aid Societies for Danes and Swedes; and Scandinavian, Swedish, and Danish Lutheran churches. Among the early Scandinavian Churches built in northeast Portland were the Danish Lutheran Church (Bethany) at Union and Morris Streets and the Danish Norwegian Methodist Church on Vancouver Avenue and Skidmore.

Polish Immigrants settled around Interstate and Failing, where St. Stanislaus Church opened in 1909. A group of German-Russians had begun to establish a close knit community in Albina around 1888. The German-Russians lived from NE 10th to NE 15th between Fremont and NE Prescott.[15] Emigrés from a number of Volga towns settled in Portland's "Little Russia," an area stretching along Union and 7th Avenues from Fremont to Shaver. Mt. Zion Baptist Church, located at NE 9th and Fremont, served this community. Among the earliest Volga German immigrants were Frank and Henry Meier. Deutsche Bischopf Meth. Kirche (German Methodist Episcopal Church) located on NE Rodney Street, established in 1909 also served a German congregation.

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[12]Ibid.
[13]PSU, *Op. cit.*, p. 40
[14]Ibid., p. 39-40.
[15]Bureau of Planning, *Op.cit.*, p. 42.



German Methodist Episcopal Church at the corner of Stanton and Rodney, Portland, Oregon

(courtesy of OHS)

Resurgence of Anti-Black Sentiment

By 1906, blacks were allowed to vote and serve as jurors. Their children shared classrooms with white children. They sat side by side with whites in restaurants and theaters. But as European immigrants came into the area, unions refused to admit blacks and the ugly process of institutionalized discrimination became a reality for Portland's black community. Blacks were refused admission to theaters, hotels and restaurants. A pattern of resident segregation began to form around the 1920s. It became difficult for blacks to rent houses and apartments. Increasingly they were forced into less desirable districts, beginning with the Old North End, and culminating with Albina before War World II. [16]

Segregated Housing Pattern

Prior to 1920, blacks, in most cases, could buy or rent homes wherever they wanted. However, there were some cases where restrictive covenants or exclusionary clauses in real estate deeds, excluded Japanese, Chinese and African Americans from purchasing certain parcels. A restrictive covenant for the U.S. Grant Place subdivision is stated as follows:

> **... street known as U.S. Grant Place; and no building thereof shall be used or occupied otherwise than for strictly residence purposes, and shall not be used or occupied by Chinese, Japanese, or Negroes, except that persons of such races may be employed as servants upon said premises. The foregoing restrictions are to run with the land as general plan of improvement for the benefit of all owners within said addition...**[17]

As the number of African Americans migrating to the east side of Portland increased, deliberate methods were taken by realtors to restrict black settlement to certain parts of the east side. On March 6, 1919, *The Journal* on page 5 stated: "Realty Men Intend to Stop Sales of Homes to Negroes and Orientals."[18] Portland Realty Board added to its code of ethics a provision prohibiting its members from selling property in white neighborhoods to

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[16]MacColl, E. Kimbark, *The Shaping of a City,* (Portland, 1976), p. 137.
[17]Millner, Darryl, Ph.D., *Oregon Black History,* Portland, 1992)
[18]Anderson, Op.cit., p. 86.

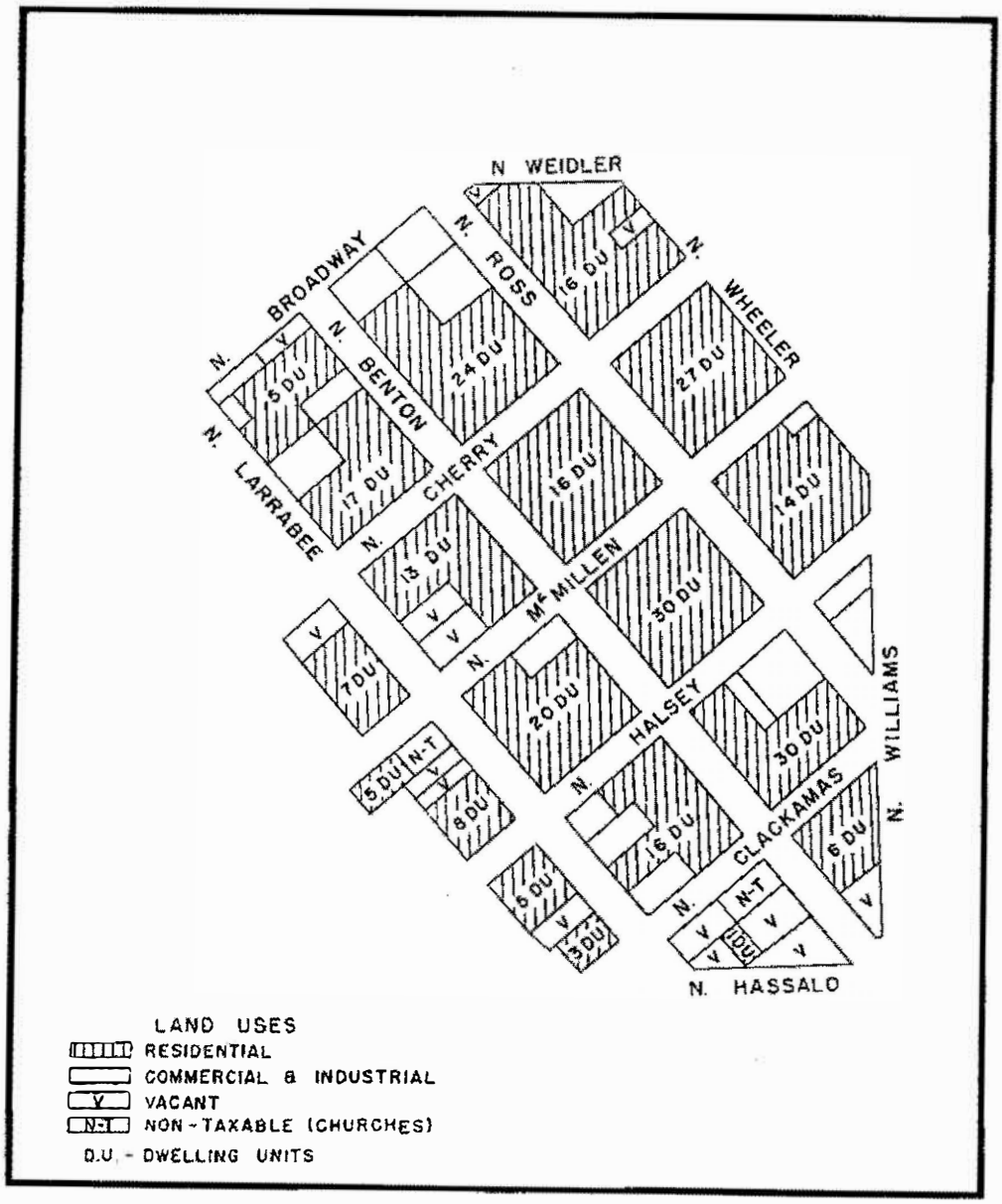
blacks or Asians, because they believed that such sales tended to cause a drop in property values.[19] Between 1920 and 1930 a segregated housing pattern began to form in Portland, and opposition to black people buying homes or renting apartments in white neighborhoods became more vocal.[20] White residents began to form petitions objecting to the presence of black homeowners in the neighborhood.

Dr. DeNorval Unthank, a prominent black physician practicing medicine in Portland, and his wife experienced the pressure of housing discrimination when they bought a house in 1930. Dr. Unthank and his wife moved into Ladd's Addition, an exclusively white neighborhood. They had been forced to move four times previously because of racist opposition. Visited by a group of citizens, they were informed of a petition signed by seventy-five people objecting to their presence in the neighborhood. Their house was vandalized, windows were broken and garbage (even a dead cat) was thrown on their lawn. A few months after they cleaned up the mess and repaired the window, the windows were broken again. Eventually the Unthanks moved from the neighborhood.[21] Dr. Unthank was once offered $1,500 to move out of an all-white neighborhood.[22] In 1932, human rights activist Marie Smith and her husband, Elwood, had a similar experience when they moved from their southeast Woodstock home to a white neighborhood in northeast Portland. Their northeast Portland neighbors signed a petition requesting them to leave, but this battle was won by the determined couple.[23]

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[19]MacLagan, Op.cit, p. 142.
[20]MacLagan, Op.cit., 142.
[21]Ibid.
[22]Staff writer, *Dr. DeNorval Unthank, civic leader dies*, Oregon Journal, September 22, 1977,p. C1.
[23]Rothert, Op.cit., p. C1.

By 1940 the majority of the black community had settled near the industrial areas, on the east side of the Broadway Bridge at the present vicinity of the Memorial Coliseum area.



Broadway-Steel Bridge Tract

The Color Line

Many theaters practiced discrimination. The Egyptian, Broadway and Pantage Theatres on Union Avenue would only allow blacks to sit in the balcony. Blacks could not occupy box seats. In 1905 the Oregon Supreme Court upheld segregation in theaters. This decision by Judge Frazier in Portland set a precedent for the right of theaters to draw a color line. Discrimination was practiced in restaurants, with or without Jim Crow signs. It was the exception rather than the rule for white-owned restaurants to serve black people. In 1907, the *New Age*, a weekly African American newspaper, noted that complaints were increasing, where there had been little or no discrimination ten years before.

> **It is within the memory of nearly all when Negroes' patronage was welcomed and largely sought after in such places as the Quelles and Freeman (restaurants,) now they are excluded from both places and with this came a number of smaller fry following the footstep of the more stylish places.**[24]

Limited Employment Opportunities

Employment opportunities for blacks were very limited. Jobs in the private sector were limited to service personnel in hotels, restaurants and in office buildings as janitors, doormen, porters, bellhops, waiters and cooks. The public sector provided employment opportunities for a few African Americans during this time. The first black mail clerk, Arthur A. Turner, was hired in 1909. A. Waterford was the first black man to work for the Portland Fire Bureau, and was appointed U.S. Deputy Marshall under Penumbra Kelly. Ralph P. Flowers was employed by the City of Portland as an auto mechanic, and was the first black person to get a job with the city under the civil service program. At the time of his retirement he was in charge of the city municipal garage. He was also the first black to operate a gasoline service station, and the first to be issued a dealer's license to sell automobiles. He operated a used car lot on Williams Avenue from 1939 to 1955.[25]

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[24]Ibid., p. 132.
[25]Ibid., p. 114.

Several black men secured specialized service contracts with the city. Cuban Crawford belonged to the Horseshoer's Union. He had a contract with the city to shoe all horses belonging to the fire and police departments. He also shoed race horses. His shop was on Main and 1st. Two blacks, Sykes and Enoch Newsome, received a city contract to clean the streets.[26]

There were several men who held professional jobs during the early twentieth century. In 1903, Dr. J.A. Merriman was the first black physician to practice in Portland. In 1909, Dr. Stanley Lucas, became the second African American to practice medicine in Portland. Otto Rutherford, a longtime Portlander, recalls Dr. Stanley Lucas.

> **Dr. Stanley Lucas name appears on my birth certificates, as the doctor who delivered me. Dr. Lucas was the brother-in-law of W.D. Allen, former owner of the Golden West Hotel. Dr. Lucas was hired by Northern Railroad Company.** [27]

Hugh A. Bell came to Portland in 1924 to practice dentistry. Dr. Bell's brother, Henri LeBel was an internationally renowned pianist. Dr. Elbert Booker, another dentist, came to Portland in 1927. Dr. DeNorval Unthank, who became one of the most prominent black leaders of the community, came to Portland in 1929. He received his medical degree from Howard University in 1926. He became the first black member of the Portland City Club.[28] McCants Stewart was the first black attorney in Portland and was admitted to the Oregon Bar in 1903. In 1914 he ran for the office of public defender in Multnomah County, and lobbied for a public accommodation bill in 1919. Eugene Minor attended the Northwestern School of Law in Portland and was admitted to the Oregon Bar in 1918.

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[26]Anderson, Op.cit., p. 90.
[27]Rutherford, Otto, Oral Interview, 1992.
[28]Oregon Journal, Op.cit., p. C1.

Employment opportunities for African American women were severely limited. Meier and Frank Company hired black women as maids and Olds and King hired women as elevator operators. Many were hired in private homes as domestic workers. Only two black women were employed as stenographers in offices. Mrs. Lizzie Weeks was the first black woman to become a matron of the Frazier Detention Home and was appointed probation officer of the Juvenile Court by Judge Tazwell.[29]

In 1912, Beatrice Morrow Cannady, became the assistant editor of the *Advocate*, a four page weekly newspaper. [30] She was the first black woman to practice law in Oregon. She attended Northwestern School of Law and was admitted to the Oregon Bar in 1922. In 1932 she ran for State Representative from District 5, Multnomah County, but was defeated. She moved to Los Angeles, California in 1934.[31] Although Mrs. Cannady sometimes took positions controversial in the black community, such as her open opposition against a separate colored YWCA, she was a positive role model for young black women.

Other women were housewives active in civic organizations. Mrs. Marie Smith and her husband came to Portland in 1917. Her husband became a Pullman porter and they lived on his pay of about $60 a month, allowing Mrs. Smith to become an activist in causes important to both of them. She was a founder of the Oregon Association of Colored Women's Clubs. She became the first woman president of the Portland Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1949-1950. She was the first woman to receive a Metropolitan Human Relations Commission Russell Peyton Award for outstanding commitment and dedication to human rights. She was named Portland's First Negro Citizen of the Year in 1950.[32]

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[29]Ibid., p. 115.
[30]Ibid., p. 111.
[31]Ibid., p. 115.
[32]Rothert, Op.cit.., p. C1.



Mrs. Marie Smith, Human Rights Activist
(courtesy of Verdell Burdine Rutherford)

Political and Social Institutions

At the turn of the century, African Americans were less than forty years removed from slavery. Many were poor and illiterate, and did not have any political power. African Americans, aware of their conditions, became preoccupied with the need for progress, uplift, improvement and social advancement.[33] Organizing the masses into unifying groups with common agendas was the tool to achieving social and political empowerment. Consequently, several national organizations and religious institutions arose at this time promoting civil and political rights, self-education, high morals and social regeneration of African Americans.

Portland's black community was no exception to this preoccupation with the need for social and political advancement. Several community institutions were established at this time which provided Portland's black citizens with political, social and economic stability. Fraternal lodges and political and social clubs were formed. Several of the men who worked in the hotel and/or railroads were able to establish their own businesses and became successful by serving the needs of the black community. Between 1896 and 1918, three newspapers highlighting black community life were created. Several black women, concerned about the education and social plight of African Americans, organized a federation of colored women's clubs.

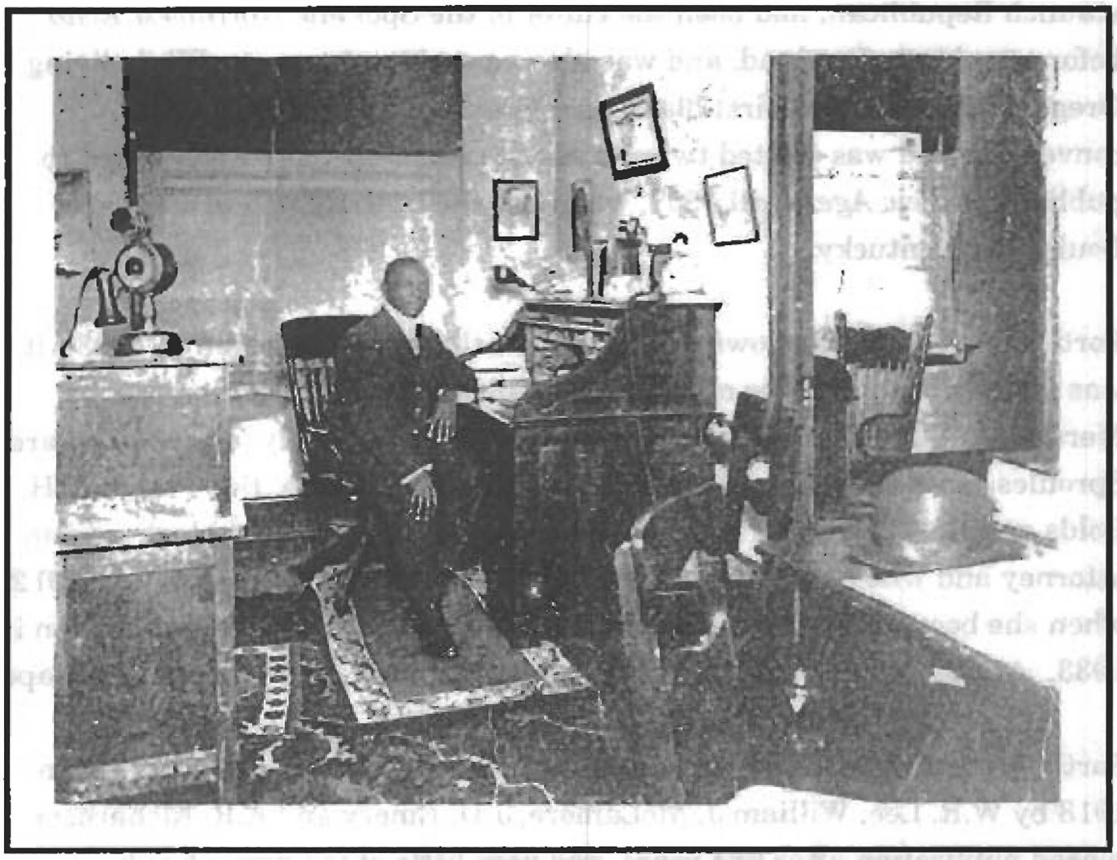
The Black Press

The black-owned newspapers served the African American community by advocating for the advancement of the black people. From the publication of the first black-controlled newspaper in New York City in 1827, most black editors and journalists viewed their publications not as mere "business enterprises" but as important weapons in the ongoing struggle for knowledge and Afro-American self-determination in the United States.[34] Between 1880 and 1910 literacy, education, protest, civil rights and self-determination was the main objective of the black press. The black press was instrumental in

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[33]Franklin, V.P. *Black Self-Determination: A Cultural History of the Faith of the Fathers*, (Westport, Connecticut, 1984), p. 16.
[34]Ibid., p. 176.

establishing "Afro-American" as a national and cultural identity which involved an awareness of a collective responsibility, a resistance to racism, and a commitment to self-definition.[35]



E.D. Cannady, 1913 - Editor, *The Advocate*

(courtesy of OHS)

[35]Ibid.

During the early part of the twentieth century, three black-owned newspapers emerged to highlight the social life, political views, personal achievements and business interests of Portland's thriving black community. In 1896, the *New Age* publication was established by A.D. Griffin. Griffin, a staunch Republican, had been the editor of the Spokane *Northwest Echo* before coming to Portland, and was also a prominent mason. While living in Oregon, he became the first black man to attend a Republican state convention and was elected twice to serve as a delegate. He continued to publish the *New Age* until 1907, when he left Portland and moved to Louisville, Kentucky.

Portland's second black-owned newspaper, the *Advocate* began in 1903. It was founded by a number of local black entrepreneurs including J.A. Merriman, J.C. Logan, Edward Rutherford, E.D. Cannady (editor), Howard Sproules, Edward Hunt, McCants Stewart, C.F.B. Moore, Bob Perry, W.H. Bolds and A. Ballard. Mrs. Beatrice Cannady, Oregon's first black woman attorney and wife of E.D. Cannady, took an active role in the paper in 1912 when she became the assistant editor. The newspaper ceased publication in 1933. At that time it was the state's only remaining black-owned newspaper.

Portland's third black newspaper, the *Portland Times,* was established in 1918 by W.R. Lee, William J. McLamore, J.D. Emery and E.R. Richardson. It ceased publication after five years, and very little of the paper has been preserved.

Civil Rights Groups

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), was created on February 12, 1910 when a group of sympathetic whites responded to the political and social inequalities of blacks in America. In the summer of 1908, the country was shocked by the account of race riots in Abraham Lincoln's hometown, Springfield, Illinois. A race riot raged for two days that killed and wounded several blacks and drove thousands away from the city. Articles of the incidents appeared in newspapers and magazines. One article written by William E. Walling, entitled "Race War in the North", declared:

> **"Either the spirit of the abolitionist, of Abraham Lincoln and of Lovejoy must be revived and we must come to treat the Negro on a plane of absolute political and social equality..." He ended the article by saying, " Yet who realizes the seriousness of the situations, and what large and powerful body of citizens is ready to come to their aid?"[36]**

Mary White Ovington, who had been studying the status of African Americans in New York responded to Walling's challenge by organizing an interracial group of ministers, professionals and activists interested in improving the conditions of African Americans. On February 12, 1909, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People was founded on the centennial celebration of Abraham Lincoln's birthday. Signers of the NAACP charter of incorporation included Jane Addams, W.E.B. Dubois, Professor John Dewey, Oswald Garrison Villard, President of New York Evening Post, and Ida Wells Barnetts. At the second conference, the NAACP united their effort with a black organization established in 1905 known as the Niagara Movement. The Niagara Movement had a similar platform, was hampered by lack of funds, and when the larger possibilities of this new association was clear, the two groups merged. Prominent leaders of the Niagara Movement brought their energy and ability to the Association. Former Niagara members, Dr. W.E.B. Dubois, Harvard and Berlin-trained scholar and author of *The Souls of Black Folk,* and James Weldon Johnson, author of "Negro Anthem, Lift Up Your Voice and Sing" became leading

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[36]Ovington Mary, W., *How the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Began,* (New York, 1914), p. 1

spokespersons for the NAACP, and they were bidding strongly for "mass support" for their integrationist strategies and legalistic attacks on the expanding system of Jim Crow segregation. By 1919, the NAACP membership peaked at 91,203.[37]

The Portland branch of the NAACP received its charter September 1, 1914 with 165 members. The Portland chapter of NAACP, operated by volunteers, is the oldest branch west of the Mississippi to be continuously chartered.[38] Officers of the first local branch included Dr. J.A. Merriman, president; Mrs. Beatrice Morrow Cannady, secretary and J.S. Bell, treasurer. The Portland branch has won many Thalheimer awards and citations from the West Coast Region for its outstanding support of the NAACP.

Much of the work of the local branch was given over to protest incidents of discrimination and to lobby for the passage of a public accommodations bill in the state legislature. In 1919 the Portland chapter drafted the first civil rights bill to be presented to the state legislature. The bill, which was defeated, called for an act establishing equal rights in places of public amusement, guaranteed all citizens equal enjoyment of public accommodation and prohibited the printing or posting of signs indicating that service would be refused to anyone on the basis of race or color.[39]

Shortly after the Portland branch was established, the branch became active in a desegregation case. A southern-owned lumber company moved to Vernonia, Oregon, bringing an African American labor force. The company established a separate school for African Americans. The local branch, with the support of the national association, fought against segregated schools and won.[40] When Oregon experienced a rising of the Ku Klux Klan in the twenties, the NAACP was actively involved in eliminating incidents of discrimination. At that time the Klan targeted their opposition towards

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[37]Franklin, Op.cit., p. 198.
[38]The Portland, Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, *1978 NAACP National Convention* (Portland, 1978), p.18.
[39]McLagan, Op.cit., p. 164
[40]Ibid.

Catholics and Labor Unions. In the thirties, an Anglo-Saxon citizen's group called Silver Shirts turned their hate towards the Jews.[41] In both cases, the local chapter vigorously and bravely opposed prejudice.

Fraternal Lodges

Fraternal lodges provided social, political and charitable functions within the black community. The Masonic and Oddfellows lodges were organized in Portland in 1883, and a black Elks Lodge, the Rose City Lodge, was organized with its women's auxiliary, the Dahlia Temple, in 1906. There was a local Knights of Pythias, the Syracuse Lodge, and in 1916 a second Elks Lodge was organized. Membership in the lodge was highly respected. Several of the prominent black citizens and church leaders in Portland were also members of the lodges. A short sketch printed in the *New Age* publication is a case in point. The sketch highlighted the life of Reuben Crawford, who was a caulker by trade (caulkers made the seam of a boat water-tight by filling with waterproofing materials).

> **Reuben Crawford ...born in St. Louis in 1828...In 1869 he came to Oregon...Although 74 years of age he is still whole and hearty, able to do a full day's work, and is looked up to as one of our influential and respected citizens...one of the leading members of the new church in this city...One of the leading members of New Northwest Lodge, No. 2554, G.U.O. of O.F.**[42]

Dues collected for a lodge provided charity to the members in need of assistance - help to needy orphans and to the widows of deceased members. Lodges provided graves in the lodge cemetery plot, and conducted funeral services. Lodge sisters provided nursing care to members who were sick. This was particularly important to many black people who did not have access to hospitals. Private nursing care was expensive and often unavailable.[43]

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[41] Ibid.
[42] Hopkins, OP. cit.,
[43] Anderson, Op. cit., p. 120.



Entrepreneur John C. Logan in fraternal costume
(courtesy of OHS)

African American Women's Groups

One of the oldest black women's organization in the United States and in Portland is the **National Association of Colored Women's Clubs.** Pioneers in black women's organizations were engaged originally in missionary and charitable work, sewing circles, reading clubs, mothers' meetings and community service organizations. Christian-based organizations such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Christian Endeavor Societies, the Baptist Women's Societies, and United Daughters of Allen, were the training grounds for later club work and helped build character of the women who lived in this period.

In 1893, Hallie Quinn Brown requested the opportunity to sit on the Board of Lady Managers for the World Fair and Columbian Exposition to ensure black Americans' representation in the World Fair and Columbian Exposition. Her request was denied because membership on the Board was by organization and not individual. Around the same time, in 1895, James W. Jacks, President of the Missouri Press Association, published an article stating that "most colored women in the United States were wholly devoid of morality and that they were prostitutes, thieves and liars." The article also stated that, "taking the whole Negro race into account, ninety percent of the Negro women are not virtuous." [44] These two incidents initiated the birth of the **National Association of Colored Women's Clubs.**

In the late nineteenth century several community based organizations, called Colored Women Club's, were established throughout the United States. Local clubs were designed to address critical issues confronting black families. In an effort to unite black women under a national platform, Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, founder of the first colored women's club of America - *Women's Era* - initiated the first national conference of African American women. Initially called the First Congress of Colored Women, black women throughout the United States assembled in Boston, Massachusetts July 29-31, 1895. Major agenda items included the charges made in the newspaper article by James Jacks and the need to promote their common goals of self-

[44]Wesley, Charles Harris, *The History of the National Association of Colored Women's Club: A Legacy of Service* (Washington D.C., 1984) p.

education, high moral character, and the education of women and young girls. In 1897, as a result of that conference, the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs was formed, with the motto: "Lifting As We Climb."

The first organized work among African American women in Oregon began in 1899, when Mrs. Lucy Thurman, a noted lecturer for the Women's Christian Temperance movement and third National President of the National Association of Colored Women, visited Portland. In 1911, inspired by Lucy Thurman's visit, several black women organized a Temperance Union in her honor. In 1912, the Lucy Thurman Temperance Union sent invitations to all the black women of Portland, "to organize and work for higher ideals, progressive ideas and a pure home life..." The pledge of "total abstinence" was not amenable to all women and the Lucy Thurman Temperance Union changed their name to the Colored Women's Council. In 1917 the group merged with nine other groups to form the Oregon Federation of Colored Women's Clubs (later changed to Oregon Association of Colored Women's Clubs). The purpose of the organization was "to promote the education of women and girls, to raise the standards of the home, to work for the moral, economic, social and religious welfare of women and children, to protect the rights of women and children, to develop capacities for leadership, to secure and enforce civil and political rights for the race, united service to the community and to promote interracial understanding."



Members of the Rosebud Study Club - Colored Women's Clubs, marched in the parade commemorating African American soldiers who left for Fort Lewis, Washington, August 1, 1918
(courtesy of OHS)

The list of past presidents of the Oregon Federation of Colored Women Clubs suggests that the membership included Portland's most prominent black citizens. Mrs. Katherine Gray was the first President. Other past presidents of the Oregon Association were Ruth Flowers, Bonnie Bogle, Thelma Unthank, Pearl Clow, Bernadette Plummer, Ann Shepherd, Mrs. Clifford Dixon, Mrs. Letitia Brock, Dorothy Vickers, Marie Smith and Elise Reynold.

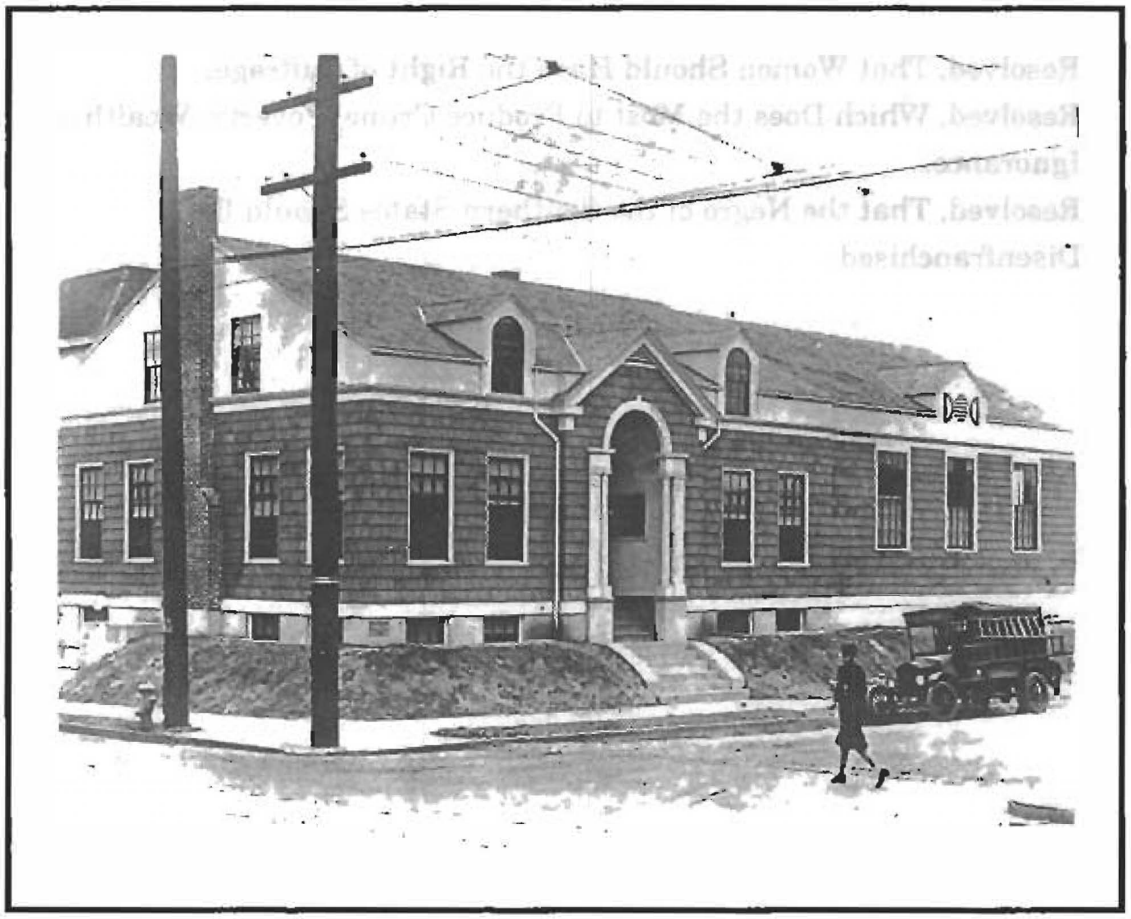


Colored Women's Council, 1914
(courtesy of OHS)

Another active women's association was the Northeast branch of the colored **Young Women's Christian Association** (YWCA) established in a portable structure on the corner of Williams and Tillamook in 1921.[45] Five years later, work was begun on a new building on this site, funded primarily by a gift of $12,000 from Mrs. E.S. Collins, a white woman active in the YWCA. An effort was made by white citizens to deny a building permit for the new YWCA and the protest was taken to the city council. The city attorney denied the request, saying that the city had no right to refuse to issue a building permit simply because it was for a black organization.[46]

[45]MacLagan, Op. cit., p. 121
[46]Ibid.

The Williams Avenue YWCA was managed by black women and became a community center. Many social and political clubs utilized the facility for their meetings. The building had a gymnasium and auditorium with a stage, kitchen, office, lounge, and locker rooms and showers for both boys and girls. At the writing of this report, the Williams Avenue YWCA is called the Elks Lodge IPBOE.



The Colored YWCA
(courtesy of OHS)

Literary Society

Portland black men were active in the **Paul Lawrence Dunbar Literary Society,** a type of debating society. The topic of the debate was published prior to the meetings with the name of the contestants. A large number of black men and women would be present to cheer for their position.[47] Some of the issues to come before the society were:

- Resolved, That Women Should Have the Right of Suffrage.
- Resolved, Which Does the Most to Produce Crime, Poverty, Wealth or Ignorance.
- Resolved, That the Negro of the Southern States Should Be Disenfranchised.

[47]Hopkins, Op. cit., p. 64.

Economic Conditions

Proliferation of black-owned businesses

The first two decades of the twentieth century was a very progressive time in Portland's black community. Increased economic prosperity and higher literacy rates among African Americans coupled with the resurgence of public accommodation discrimination initiated the proliferation of black-owned businesses. Segregation laws barring blacks from restaurants, hotels and movie theaters forced blacks to rely on their black-owned establishments or Asian establishments for the purchase of goods and services. In 1907, the *New Age,* a black-owned publication, comments on the successful black enterprises:

> **A visit to the several business enterprises being conducted by Negro men and women in this city would be in the nature of a discovery and agreeable surprise to the majority of our people and cause us to give up the belief that conditions are worse now than they were ten or twenty years ago. We find barbershops, grocery stores, restaurants, tailor shops, cafes, boarding and rooming houses, furniture stands, laundries, etc., all being run by Afro-Americans, and comparing favorably with any like establishments in the city.**[48]

Among other businesses owned and operated by black people were dressmaker shops, butcher shops, transfer and storage operations, catering businesses, furniture dealers, auto repair shops and photography studios. Below is a partial listing of black-owned establishments located throughout Portland during the early part of the century:

- Advocate Publishing Company, 401 Buchanan Building, located at 286 1/2 Washington in 1903.
- Arcadia Saloon, established by Burr Williams and Mrs. S. St. Clair in 1899, located at NW 4th and Everett Street.
- The Alpha, established in 1906, located at 269 1/2 NW Washington.
- Chandler and Bessilien Club Cafe and Barbershop, located at 393 Flanders in 1913, W. Burnside.

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[48]MacLagan, Op. cit., p. 112.

- Freeman Second Hand store located at 754 Union Avenue, N.
- The Golden West Hotel, established in 1906, located at 345 NW Everett, 1903-1930.
- Golden West Hotel Barbershop, Richard Waldo Bogle, Sr., located at 345 NW Everett in 1919.
- Investment Company, established in 1903, located at 230 Larrabee Street (The first black-owned establishment to locate on the east side).
- P. J. Summers Second Hand Store located at 12th and Glisan, W. Burnside, 1919.
- Rutherford Haberdashery, Barbershop, Cigar and Confectionary Store established by Edward W. and William H. Rutherford, located at Broadway and Flanders.
- Fred D. Thomas Catering Service, established by Fred and Molly Thomas, located at 312 NE Shaver Street.
- S.S. Walker Soft Drink, established in 1919, located at 395 NW Flanders.

By far the most successful venture was the Golden West Hotel located on NW Everett Street at Broadway which operated from 1906 to 1931 under the management of W.D. Allen. It was closed for two years, and reopened in November 1933 under the management of a black woman, Mrs. Catherine Byrd.[49] The Golden West Hotel was a very successful gathering place for the black community and for railroad men away from home. The hotel was the hub of black social life after church. The Golden West Hotel provided a place of residence for many of the railroad men and also contained a Chinese restaurant, saloon, barbershop, ice-cream parlor and candy shop.[50]

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[49]McLagan, Op. cit., p. 113.
[50]The Oregonian-Food Day, Op.cit., p. FD2.



W.D. Allen, 1919
Owner of Golden West Hotel and
President of Portland Times
(courtesy of OHS)

Another successful business venture was the Enterprise Investment Company. In 1901, eight prominent black men established Enterprise Investment Company, put up a capital investment of $10,000, bought land and erected a building at 230 Larrabee Street located at Larrabee and Clackamas Street. One of the stockholders in the Enterprise Investment Company was A.D. Griffin, owner and publisher of the *New Age*. The project, called the Enterprise Lodge of Masons, was completed in 1903. To be a member of the Enterprise Lodge of Masons you had to be "free born", pay dues in cash, be of high moral character, and able to read and write.

The building was used as a gathering place and to host formal dances. Masonic lodges and other organizations frequently sponsored "entertainment" held at local hotels or in halls owned by whites, but as the anti-black sentiments surfaced in the city, blacks were forced to restrict these parties to the ballroom in the Enterprise Investment Company building.

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Fred D. Thomas, 1917
Restaurant and Catering Services
312 NE Shaver
(Courtesy of OHS)

The Great Depression

In 1927 the *Advocate*, assessed the progress of the black community during the first two decades of the twentieth century:[51]

> **We have three thousand colored people, and we are gradually increasing. For the most part we are buying our homes in all parts of the city. We have one large hotel, a newspaper, three wealthy people, a branch of the YWCA, three churches and two missions. From the economic standpoint it is very difficult for one of our race to find other than menial work, yet we have two postal clerks, one shoe clerk, two stenographers in white offices, a clerk of the Child Labor Commission in the Court House, three men in the express business, one dentist and physician, and two attorneys.**

But the Great Depression created horrendous economic conditions for African Americans. By 1931 several of the black-owned businesses no longer existed. Portland's only remaining black publication, *The Advocate*, folded in 1933. The Golden West Hotel, Portland's famed black-owned hotel was no longer in operation. Service-oriented jobs traditionally held by blacks were now being occupied by Caucasians. This lost income made blacks unable to patronize black businesses. The collapse of black businesses was due, in part, to their sole dependency on African American customers.[52]

Many of the young people who grew up in Oregon in the 1920s and 1930s and graduated from high school and college had to take menial jobs if they wanted to stay in Portland. There were few employment opportunities in the professions for educated black people. It was not until the 1940s that the first black school teacher was hired in Portland. In 1937, Kathryn Hall Bogle wrote an article in *The Oregonian* called "An American Negro Speaks of Color". The article expressed her opinion about life in Portland for African Americans during the twentieth century. In the article Mrs. Kathryn Bogle recalled her experience looking for employment in Portland after receiving her high school diploma:

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[51]McLagan, Op. cit., p. 114.
[52]Tuttle, Local Colors, Video Production, 1990.

... Here the odd thing to balance. Several of those denying me employment in town offered me employment in their homes. There my color is not a bar! My employer will not criticize if I am employed in home in contact with his nearest and dearest! ...Were it not for this little quirk in a white man's discrimination against a brown skin, many thousands of Negroes could not earn the bare necessities for life.

From 1920 to 1940, Portland's black population remained relatively stable and had only increased from 2,144 to 2,565 people and the black population comprised only .24 percent of the total population of the state of Oregon. The Depression was partly responsible for the general stagnation of the size in the African American population. Lack of employment opportunities played a part in deterring black immigration to Portland. By 1940, most of Portland's black community resided in the Broadway-Steel Bridge area along Williams Avenue. They gradually moved into the Albina area, which had recently occupied by white working class members and previously denied to blacks.

Despite the growing climate of discrimination, the first forty years of the twentieth century was a very progressive and special era for Portland's black community. The pioneering spirit of Portland's early black residents helped to solidify and expand several black community institutions which are still active today such as the NAACP, Oregon Association of Colored Women's Clubs, and several fraternal lodges.

The next decade from 1940 until 1950 was a unique time for Portland. During War World II, the ship building industry recruited several thousand blacks to the Portland area. Portland's black population increased tenfold from approximately 2,000 to 20,000. Portland's established black community, which was slowly recovering from the Depression, was never the same.

Chapter 3
Changing Times (1941-1953)

We would not underestimate the achievement of the captains of industry who ... have produced the wealth necessary to ease and comfort; but we would give credit to the Negro who so largely supplied the demand for labor by which things have been accomplished.

Carter G. Woodson

The Kaiser Empire

In early 1941, England was at war with Nazi Germany. England needed ships, and east coast shipbuilders were swamped with orders for the slow footed freighters called "Liberty Ships". On January 10, 1941, the U.S. Maritime Commission approved the development of the Oregon Shipbuilding Company to be operated by a consortium of Todd Shipyards Corporation and Henry J. Kaiser's construction empire.[1] Henry J. Kaiser, a high school drop out, revolutionized ship-building with mass production techniques he developed on America's biggest construction jobs: the dams at Boulder, Bonneville and Grande Coule.[2] The Oregon Shipbuilding Company's manufacturing site was located on 87 acres of land on the east bank of the Willamette River, two miles south of its confluence with the Columbia. The Oregon Shipbuilding Company produced the first of 330 Liberty ships and 120 Victory ships in September 1941.

On December 7, 1941, Pearl Harbor was bombed and the United States entered the War. Within three months, Kaiser bought out the Todd interests and developed two more yards. The Kaiser Company-Portland used the site of the old city airport at Swan Island for the construction of T-2 tankers. The Kaiser Company-Vancouver on the northern bank of the

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[1] Abbott, Carl. *Portland: Planning, Politics, and Growth in a Twentieth Century City.* University Press: Lincoln and London (1983), p. 125.
[2] Meehan, Brian T., *When Kaiser Launched a Thousand Ships,* The Oregonian (December 3, 1992), p. A1.

Columbia built 30 LSTs, 50 cargo ships, and 50 escort carriers.[3] Oregon Shipbuilding (Kaiser) Corporation was on its way to becoming the nation's largest producer of "Liberty Ships."



Charlotte Moton-Hubbard, center, participated in the launching ceremony of the Liberty Ship Tuskegee, named for the black college where her father presided.
(courtesy of OHS)

[3]Ibid.

Kaiser Recruitment of Black Ship Yard Workers

Shipyard workers came as early as 1942 when the Kaiser yards emptied the rural counties of Oregon and Washington and drew the under-employed from the small towns of the mountains and plains. The shortage of available labor was so acute that the Oregon Shipbuilding Corporation ran help wanted ads in eleven states and imported both black and white workers from the East and South, bringing them to Oregon on 17-car trains dubbed "Magic Carpet Specials" and the "Kaiser Karavan."[4] Kaiser also recruited individuals from Union Pacific and Northern Pacific country of Idaho, Montana, Kansas, Nebraska, the Dakotas, and Minnesota and along the railroad connections from Iowa to Pennsylvania.[5]

The war and maritime boom changed the course of Portland history. The World War II shipyards had the single greatest impact on Portland. In two years, the local population swelled by a third as 160,000 people poured in. To match the growth today, the Portland area would have to absorb about 500,000 newcomers in two years.[6] The recruitment effort brought together a diverse group of workers from all across the country, about 25 percent of whom were black. In 1942, approximately 2,500 workers were recruited by Kaiser in New York City, about 300 were black[7]. The ship building industry in Portland recruited and attracted many people, particularly from the southern states, who were looking for good jobs and higher wages. Many black southerners, who had worked for extremely low wages, came to Portland in hopes of doubling and tripling their wages while working less hours. The previous net black migration to Oregon had never been greater than 1.0 percent. For the period of 1940 to 1950, it reached 6.9 percent. Estimates vary as to the exact number of blacks who migrated to Portland, since many left before the 1950 census, but population totals range from 20,000 to 25,000 blacks, a tenfold increase.[8]

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[4]Meehan, Op.cit., p. A12.
[5]Ibid., p. 126.
[6]Meehan, Ibid. p. A12.
[7]Maben, Manly. *Vanport*p. 87.
[8]Pancoast, Diane L., *Blacks In Oregon (1940-1950).* Blacks in Oregon: A Statistical and Historical Report (Portland, 1974), p. 40.

Racial Backlash

Portland was unprepared for a mass influx of people. The settlement of these workers was not accomplished smoothly. There was evidence of racial backlash; the war period saw a proliferation of "White Trade Only" signs. Housing was segregated. Unions barred blacks. Black migrants met open hostility. Former city commissioner J.E. Bennett suggested that the city should actively discourage the recruitment of black workers.[9] During this time there were no public accommodation laws in place to protect African Americans from discrimination. Most of the hotels, restaurants, motels, skating rinks, amusement parks, bowling alleys and night clubs refused service to blacks.[10] Edward Merchant, a retired Merchant Seaman, who came to Portland in 1943 to work in the shipyard, remembers the "White Trade Only" signs, and the absence of public accommodations and racial segregation laws.

> **I came to Portland in 1943 and was surprised to see the signs. All along Union Avenue (now called Martin Luther King Boulevard) there were "White Trade Only Signs".**[11]

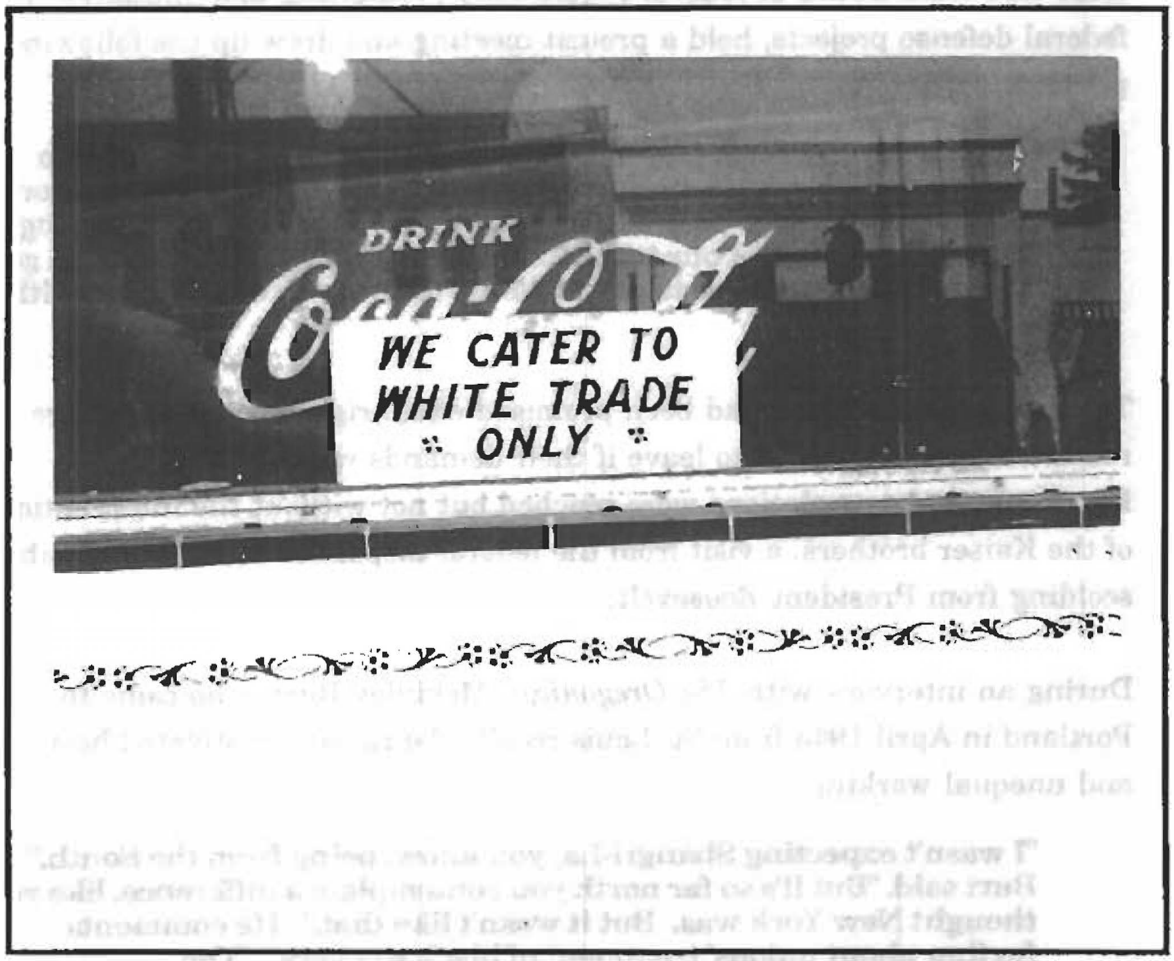
Regional Prejudices

Prior to World War II Portland was a quiet and content town. Established Portlanders became overwhelmed by the rapid growth and change. The City of Portland was ill prepared to service this increasing population of defense workers. Housing had been scarce since War World I, the transit system was overloaded and traffic congestion was very common. In a city with a disproportionate population over forty-five years of age, the arrival of young families nearly doubled the number of children under ten, placing new demands on the limited park system and restoring school enrollment to the level of the mid-twenties.[12] Regional and racial hostility towards white southerners and black migrants were very common. Even the established black community in Portland felt threatened by the newcomers.

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[9]Ibid.
[10]City Club, *Report on The Negro in Portland: A Progress Report 1945-1957,* p. 362.
[11]Oral Interview with Edward Merchant, 1992
[12]Abbott, Ibid.,

Many of the black and white shipyard workers were looked upon as backward riff raff by older residents. The small community of blacks felt that the accomplishments they had made would be overturned as more blacks poured into the area.



White Trade Only Sign. Restaurant unknown. (courtesy of OHS)

By 1943 a significant number of blacks had arrived in Portland. Racially-motivated incidents were reported on the busses. Unrest manifested itself at the shipyards. The blacks that came from the south had hoped that race relations would be better and different from their previous experience.

Jim Crow Labor Union

In November 1942, black workers formed the **Shipyard Negro Organization for Victory** to combat union discrimination.[13] Seventy five black workers recruited in New York, who had already participated in the industrial labor force and were aware of federal regulations prohibiting discrimination in federal defense projects, held a protest meeting and drew up the following petition:

> **We, the Negro people employed by the Kaiser Company, maintain that under false pretense we were brought from east to west to work for defense, and we demand, with due process of law, the following rights: (1) to work at our trades on equal rights with whites; (2) to go to vocational school or take vocational training on equal rights with whites.**[14]

The group claimed they had been promised equal rights when they were recruited and threatened to leave if their demands were not met. Eventually accommodations were reached but not without the intervention of the Kaiser brothers, a visit from the federal inspection team, and a public scolding from President Roosevelt.

During an interview with *The Oregonian,* Mckinley Burt, who came to Portland in April 1943 from St. Louis recalls the racially-motivated hostility and unequal working conditions at the shipyards:

> **"I wasn't expecting Shangri-La, you know, being from the South," Burt said. "But it's so far north you contemplate a difference, like you thought New York was. But it wasn't like that." He comments further about unions' treatment of black workers ..."The Boilermakers were the worst. They set up a Jim Crow union."** [15]

The Boilermaker Union had been a weak local of about 175 members before the war. Membership soared to more than 50,000 overnight. A closed shop agreement gave the Boilermakers great power. Black Boilermakers with the support of the local branch of the NAACP brought this matter to the attention of the federal government. Finally, under federal pressure, the

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[13]Ibid.
[14]Pancoast, Op.cit., p. 41.
[15]Meehan, Op.cit., p. A13.

Boilermakers created a separate auxiliary for black workers. However, the dummy local was never chartered. The Boilermakers collected dues from black workers, but blacks were not welcome at the plush union hall on Fourth Street.[16] Blacks were allowed to work at more skilled jobs and earned higher wages but they had no job security after the War.

The Housing Challenge

Settlement of black wartime workers was not a smooth transition. During World War II, housing was scarce for both black and white workers. The black migrants were excluded from the housing market and confined to a very small area along Williams Avenue, south of Russell Avenue, and a dormitory in Vancouver, Washington. Many of the new workers were tenants in spare rooms or renovated attics and some had to sleep on billiard tables in taverns using clothes for blankets and pillows.[17]

The Housing Authority of Portland (HAP) came into existence on December 12, 1941. The agency was presented to the public as a war emergency measure. It obtained its expertise by borrowing half of the time of the Planning Commission.[18] The crisis of Portland housing came in July 1942. The HAP responded by constructing 4,900 unit apartments and proposing a dormitory in Albina.

In 1942, before more than a few hundred black workers had arrived, neighborhood groups organized at every rumor of new housing for blacks.[19] Spurred by a rumor that federal housing authorities planned to build a dormitory on NE Flint Street, white residents of Albina organized to prevent the settlement of the new black workers in their neighborhood. Civic leaders made charges that the present black population was already a menace to the city and an increase in crime was noted. They also feared that property values would depreciate if more blacks were allowed to move

[16]Meehan, Op.cit., p. A13.
[17]Ibid., p. 42
[18]Ibid., p. 132.
[19]Abbott, Op.cit., p. 129.

in. A mass of 500 Albina residents presented the following solution to the housing problem of black workers:

> **"If it is necessary to bring in large numbers of Negro workers, locate them on the edge of the city," urged the President of the Central East Portland Community Club. "It would be much better for all concerned. If they are allowed to fan out through the city it soon will necessary to station a policeman on every corner."[20]**

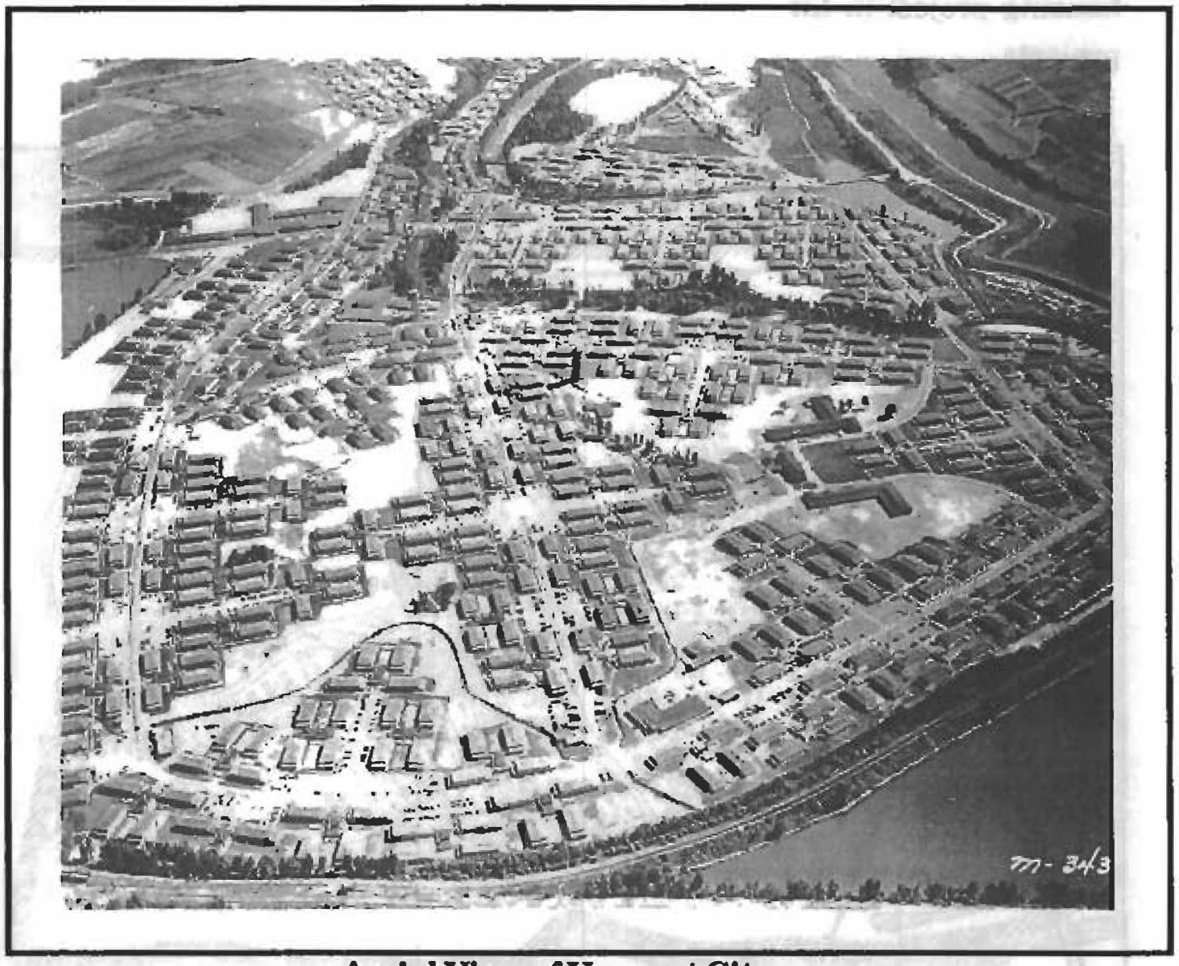
Vanport City

HAP found themselves between a rock and a hard place. The Albina residents did not want the dormitory in their community. The United States Maritime Commission and the shipyard executives, whose workers were leaving town because they could not find decent accommodations, found HAP's apartment construction to be too slow and inadequate. Representatives from the Kaiser Yards, which had the highest labor demand, were especially insistent that the Housing Authority was acting too slowly and that it was ignoring alternative mass dormitories in favor of apartments.

The key decision for housing Portland defense workers was taken without direct knowledge of the City Council or the Planning Commission. Meeting behind closed doors at the beginning of August 1942, Edgar Kaiser signed a contract with the Maritime Commission to build a massive project of 6,000 units (soon raised to 10,000). Henry J. Kaiser purchased 650 acres of land for the construction of worker dormitories. On August 18, the Maritime Commission approved the actual site on a square mile of Columbia River flood plain just north of the Portland city limits, located on low lying land diked by Denver Avenue and the Columbia Slough to the south. Three days later, 5,000 workers set the foundations and raised the frames for 700 identical apartment buildings on the muddy flats of Kaiserville, later called

[20]Ibid., p. 43.

Vanport City. The first tenant moved into Vanport on December 12, 1942.[21] In the course of one year (1943), what was to become the largest wartime housing project in the United States and the second largest city in Oregon was conceived, designed and built.[22]

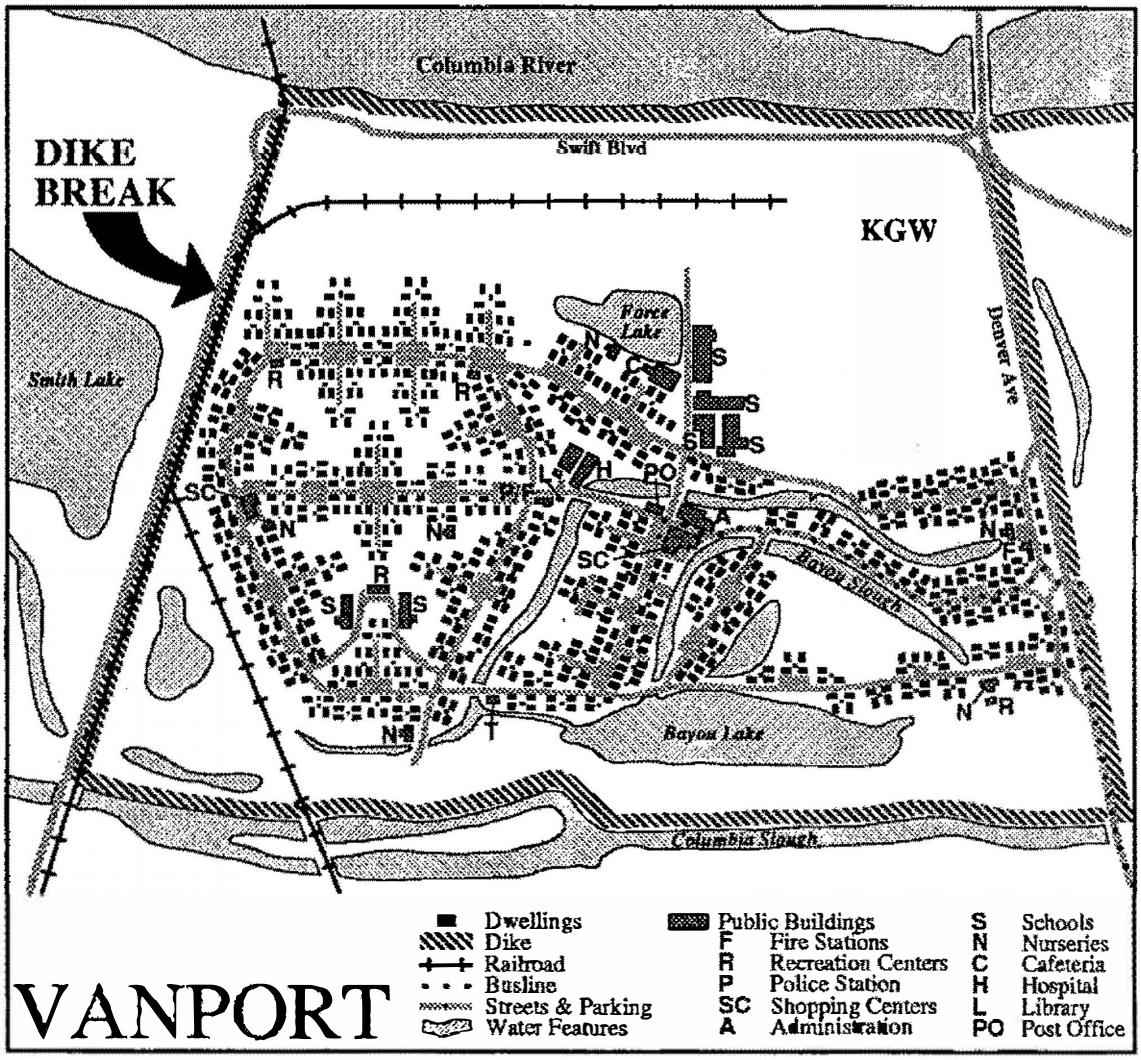


Aerial View of Vanport City
(courtesy of OHS)

[21]Ibid., p. 133.
[22]PSU, History of the Albina Plan Area, p. 30.

Federal Housing Projects.

Most of the black defense workers were confined to the Vanport housing project. Several blacks found homes in Federal housing projects in Vancouver, Washington which included McLoughlin Heights, Ogden Meadows, Bagley Downs and Burton Homes.[23] A few blacks lived in a housing project in Linnton, Fairview Homes and Guild's Lake housing projects.



Map of Vanport

(Bureau of Planning map based on information provided by OHS)

[23]Ibid., p. 32.

Housing Discrimination

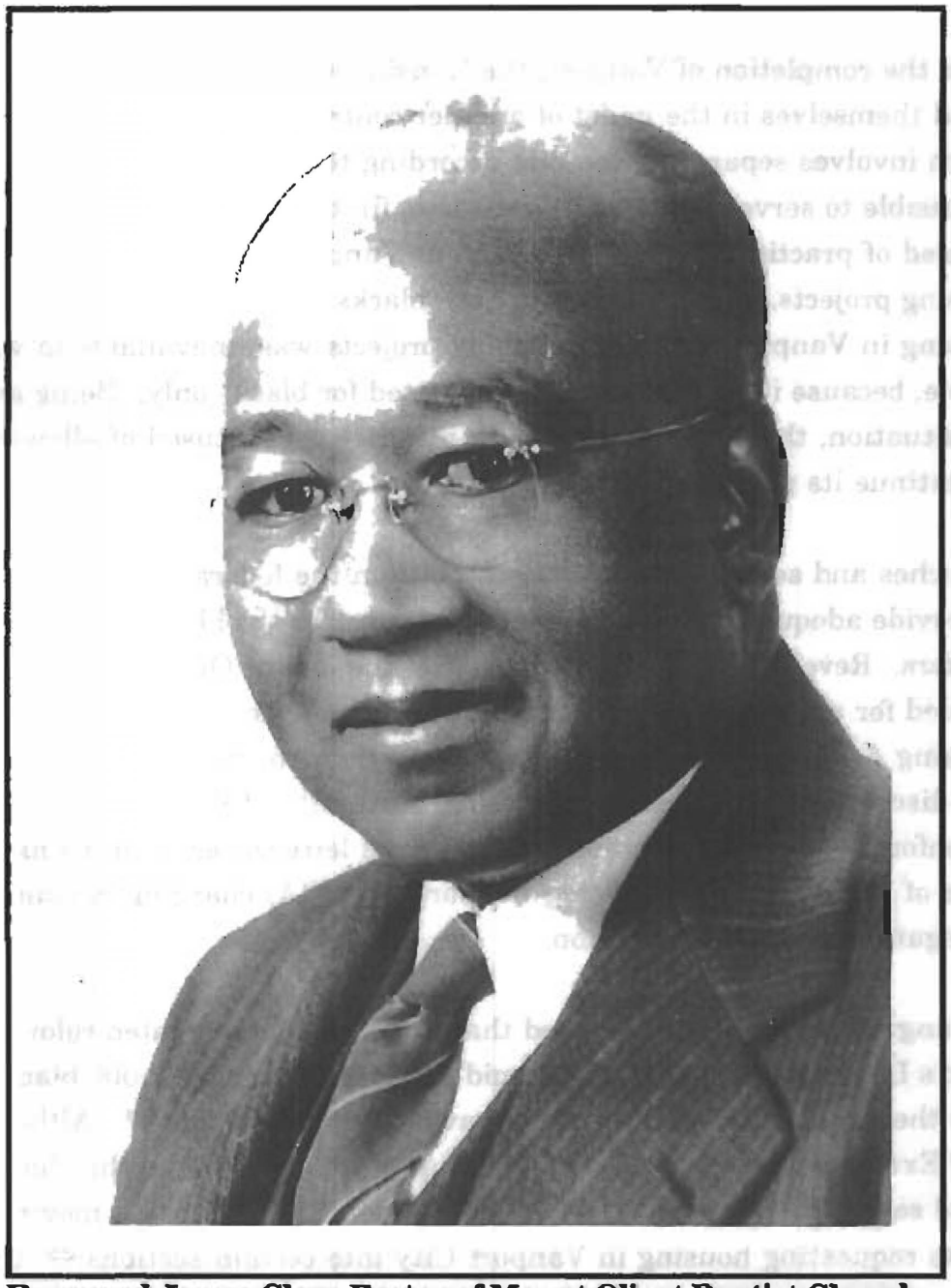
After the completion of Vanport, the Housing Authority of Portland (HAP) found themselves in the midst of another controversy - spot segregation - which involves separating tenants according to race. This made it impossible to serve people on a first-come, first-serve basis. HAP was accused of practicing spot segregation at Vanport and Guild's Lake housing projects, a policy unfair to both blacks and whites. Some vacant housing in Vanport and other housing projects was unavailable to white people, because it was in an area designated for blacks only. Being aware of the situation, the National Housing Authority was accused of allowing HAP to continue its practices.

Churches and social groups began to petition the federal housing authority to provide adequate and desegregated housing for the black defense workers. Reverend James Clow, pastor of the Mount Olivet Baptist Church, pleaded for an open housing policy in the city. Although the National Housing Authority was only one of two government agencies which had an anti-discrimination clause, the Housing Authority of Portland (HAP) did not enforce the clause. Reverend Clow sent a letter directly to the national office of Federal Public Housing Authority (FPHA) charging housing segregation and discrimination.

Housing Authority officials stated that the clearly demarcated color lines at Guild's Lake (with 1,300 blacks in mid-1943) and Vanport (2,000 blacks) were the result of free choice among available apartments.[24] Although HAP Executive Director, Harry Freeman, continued to deny the charges of forced segregation, by mid-1944 it became clear that HAP was moving all blacks requesting housing in Vanport City into certain sections.[25] Charges of discrimination and segregation continued until 1947 when the newly formed Urban League of Portland took HAP to task about the living conditions and arrangements at Vanport.

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[24]Abbott, Op.cit., p. 143.
[25]Maben, Manly, Op. cit, p. 68.



Reverend James Clow, Pastor of Mount Olivet Baptist Church and past president of the Portland branch of NAACP, served as spokesperson for the black community of Vanport.
(courtesy of OHS)

Professional Opportunities at Vanport

Vanport City provided opportunities for professional blacks. In 1945 W.L. Van Loan, superintendent of Vanport City Schools, reported to the City Club that seven Negro teachers were employed in the Vanport school system; four in child care centers, and three in the elementary schools.[26] Prior to 1945 there were no black teachers employed in Portland. Two teachers, who had previously worked for the Vanport City Schools, Robert G. Ford and Mrs. Leota E. Stone, became the first black teachers to serve as staff of the Eliot Elementary School.[27] In September 1952 Robert G. Ford became the first black teacher to receive appointment in a Portland high school.[28]



Robert G. Ford and Leota Stone, Portland's first black school teachers

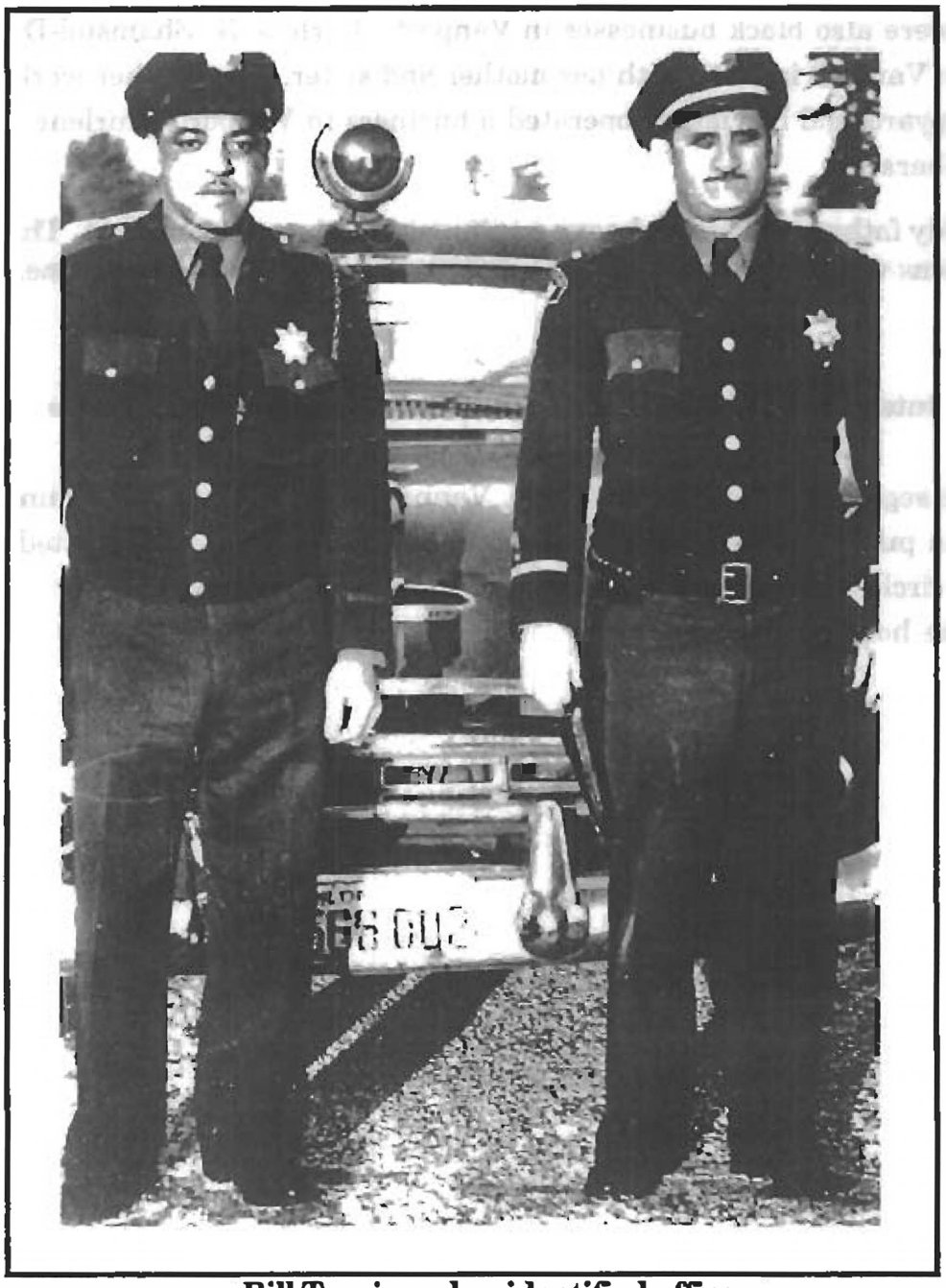
[26]City Club, *The Negro In Portland.* (Portland, 1945) p. 66.
[27]Ibid.
[28]Ibid.

Mr. Ford came to Portland in 1943 to work in the Vancouver, Washington shipyards. He became an English and Social Studies teacher at Roosevelt High School. In 1971, he was chosen teacher of the year by the Portland Association of Teachers.[29] Leota Stone was hired a few months after Ford, to become Portland's second black teacher. Mrs. Stone was married to Pastor Robert Stone of St. Phillip Episcopal Mission Church, the first black Episcopal Mission Church.

In addition to school teachers, the City of Vanport hired two black sheriffs, Matt Dishman and Bill Travis. Both were later hired as Multnomah County Sheriffs.[30] In honor of his service to the black community, members of the Lion's Club renamed the Knott Street Center the Matt Dishman Center.[31]

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[29]The Oregonian, *City's First Black Teacher Honored,* p. 4M-MP
[30]*Ibid.*
[31]Oral Interview, Isadore Maney, 1992.



Bill Travis and unidentified officer.
(courtesy of OHS)

There were also black businesses in Vanport. Lurlene N. Shamsud-Din came to Vanport in 1945 with her mother and sister. Her mother worked in the shipyard and her father operated a business in Vanport. Lurlene remembers:

> **My father operated a heavy equipment business in Vanport. That was very impressive for a black man to accomplish at that time.** [32]

Integrated Schools, Recreational Facilities and Public Places

Despite segregated housing patterns, Vanport upheld a non-discriminatory policy in public places, recreational buildings, and schools. Integrated prayer circles and Bible schools were common at Vanport and other Wartime housing projects.

[32]Oral Interview, Lurlene Shamsud-Din, 1992.



Original newspaper caption:
No color line here - Daily Bible school in Vanport City at Recreation Center No. 5 ministers to all who attend, regardless of race.
(courtesy of OHS)

World War II Ends

The highest occupancy peak at Vanport was reached during January and February of 1945. As the war drew to a close, the shipyard orders began to decline and layoff began. As early as March 1945 approximately 500 white families left Vanport each month until September, when the rate accelerated following the end of the war. In January 1945 black families constituted 18 percent of the total families. By October the proportion had risen to 35 percent. As early as March 1945 there were over three and a half times as many black families in Vanport as there were in all other HAP projects combined. From 1946 on, total population levels did not change, and racial ratios did not undergo significant changes.[33] By May 1945 the population of Vanport City had fallen to 30,842, as many of the war workers returned to their home-towns, moved to other parts of Portland or received new job opportunities elsewhere.[34] Approximately 10,000 of the original 20,000-25,000 blacks who immigrated to Portland during the war, remained in Portland.

Table 2: Growth of Vanport City Population

Date	White	Black	Total	% black
January 30, 1943	4,840	1,176	6,016	19.5
June 30, 1943	22,932	2,156	25,088	8.5
January 30, 1944	28,160	2,159	31,093	6.9
June 30, 1943	23,232	3,818	27,082	14
November 1, 1944	26,656	5,808	32,622	17.8
May 1, 1945	24,525	6,317	30,842	20.4

Source: City Club, 1945

[33]Manby, Op.cit., p. 88.
[34]Ibid.

Several factors combined to confine blacks to Vanport after the war. There was a general housing shortage which created increasing competition from white households. Also, many white households rented housing which formerly had only been rented by black renters. Finally, as the shipyard began to shut down, black workers, unprotected by union seniority were laid off first. They did not have the money to compete in the housing market.

Aside from economic factors, a pattern of racial segregation had formed in Portland between 1920 and 1930. Although the Realtor Board did not publicize its racial exclusionary policy until 1945, a copy of the text manual used by realtors quoted a statement made by Chester A. Moores in 1939, the vice-president of Commonwealth, Inc. He said:

> **We were discussing at the Realtor Board recently the advisability of setting up certain districts for Negroes and Orientals. We talked about the possibility of creating desirable districts which would actually cater to those groups and make life more pleasant for them. After all, they have to live too, the same as youngsters.**[35]

In 1945 the only housing, outside the Federal housing projects, open to blacks was located in a segregated and concentrated area bounded by NE Holladay, North and NE Russell, NE Union and the Willamette River. Real estate agents were bound by a code of ethics established by Realty Board in 1919 that made them subject to dismissal if they sold outside the prescribed area. Land values in the central Albina area were high because it had always been targeted for light industrial and commercial activities. No mortgage firms were found to be interested in soliciting or financing loans to Negroes for buildings.[36] This encouraged the growth of substandard housing in that area. The scattering of blacks outside this prescribed area was due to black ownership in particular districts before discriminatory practices or when a black person bought directly from a owner who disapproved of the restricted sales policy.

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[35]MacColl, Kimbark, Op.cit., p. 540.
[36]Pancoast, Ibid., p. 46.

Vanport Flood

By May 21, 1948, only 6,000 of Vanport City's original 9,942 housing units were still standing. A total of 16,931 individuals resided there, some of whom were veterans attending the Vanport Extension Center (now Portland State University) and teachers who taught at the Extension Center.[37] Vanport was mainly the home for poor families who had come to Portland to work in the war industries and were left unemployed after the shipyard layoffs. Approximately 5,000 blacks lived in the housing project, which was not intended as permanent housing, and would have been closed had other housing been available.

On May 30, 1948 Vanport City experienced a flood that virtually wiped out the housing and community facilities and turned Vanport into a lake. Although Vanport City sat in the midst of the flood plain of the Columbia River, there had never been any real concern for its safety. The Vanport project seemed well protected from the two areas of visible water, an island channel about a mile to the north, North Portland Harbor, and on the south a dirty, narrow body of sluggish water called the Columbia Slough. Except during major runoffs, water usually could not be seen from the base of the high railroad fill on the west, where the delta-like area at the confluence of the Willamette and Columbia rivers ended. Out of view were backwater lakes and marshes, and it was from there that the Columbia Slough waters originated. Denver Avenue on the east served in effect as the first of several lateral dikes stretching eastward up from the Columbia River.[38]

May 1948 produced a combination of warm temperatures and heavy rain throughout much of the basin, bringing the most water since 1894. As the river began to build towards what turned out to be an early crest, little apprehension was felt. Routine 24-hour patrol of the north and south dike area was completed on Tuesday, May 25th. The west dike railroad fill was added to the patrol when the rising waters of Smith Lake reached a relatively high level. At this point, HAP decided to call the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, who had experience in flood control.

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[37]Maben, Op. cit., p. 89.
[38]Maben, Ibid.



Vanport Flood, 1948
(Courtesy of OHS)

After explaining to the Corps about their preparation, the Engineers informed HAP officials they had nothing to worry about. The river continued its rapid rise and now appeared more threatening. On Friday, May 28th, telephone operators were placed on twenty-four hour duty. Meetings were being held by the Red Cross concerning emergency housing. The Housing Authority set the number it could provide emergency housing for at 1,000-1,500, and the Red Cross at 7,500. At the outside, the possible total could be no more than 10,000 and additionally it was felt that 16,000 could not be fed either. HAP's recorded description of the meeting leaves the impression that evacuation would have been ordered if housing could have been found. [39]

[39] Ibid.

On May 30 at 4:00 a.m. a sheet of paper bearing a message from HAP was shoved under each door by the furnace fireman. The message was developed to reassure the residents that the flood situation had not changed, the Vanport dikes were safe and that they would be warned if evacuation was necessary. At 4:00 p.m. the Corps of Engineers announced that the ground level at Vanport City was 15 feet below the level of the Columbia River and Smith Lake. At this point Sheriff Pratt was approaching the Red Cross about possible evacuation of Vanport. The administration building switchboard operator called in before going to work and was told by the on-duty operator that the dike might go anytime.[40] At approximately 4:17 p.m. the railroad fill gave.

One former Vanport resident, Rosa Lee Washington, remembers the flood.

> **One Sunday, they had put this slip under our door in Vanport, saying don't be alarmed everything is okay. People thought so. Well, that Sunday about 4:00 p.m. the Police came by and told us to get out of there, the dike has broken.[41]**

It had occurred where it was not particularly expected. Although the railroad fill was not built as a dike, many regarded it as the strongest link in the chain.[42] At the college approximately 30 students and faculty had been working removing records. When the dike gave, they scattered throughout Vanport to spread the alarm. Sheriff Pratt estimated that there was about a 10 minute warning period before effects of the water were visible. As the surging waves moved in, they were quickly absorbed by the slough. After the slough filled and a sheet of water spread over Vanport, the waves began to roll again; cars were sent careening, houses wrenched apart; the water reached the high part of the project near Denver Avenue, and all vehicular traffic was quickly flooded out. [43]

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[40]Ibid.
[41]Oral Interview, Rosa Lee Washington, 1992
[42]Ibid.
[43]Ibid.

As Vanport residents gathered their family members and attempted to gather their personal belonging, the water level rose higher and higher. Many people, like Rosa Lee Washington, saw everything they owned become washed away by the flood.

> **When we got up to the highway, there were people up there with suitcases, trunks and what ever they could carry. We didn't get nothing. My husband tried to get our things but the Police told him to forget about that stuff and just get outta there. He just made it to the bank where we were standing when the water had risen to his waist and we grabbed him by both hands and pulled him up.**

The Vanport flood was a very tragic and frightening time for Portland. The sound of sirens is a constant reminder to many Portlanders of the flood. The City of Vanport that was built within a few months was virtually wiped out within a few minutes.

> **We could see the housing units colliding and collapsing. ...Everybody who made it to the highway was just screaming. I never seen anything like it. I thought it was the end of the world. Later on that night, the highway bank where we were standing became flooded. It just shows how good God is, it could have happened while we were standing there. Anyway, every time you heard a siren you jump, got scared. It was very frightening.**[44]

The Portland community pulled together to help the surviving flood victims. Many of the black people who were left homeless were taken in by families, churches and organizations such as the YWCA in the metropolitan area. In a letter, dated June 24, 1948, Essie L. Maguire, Executive Director of Williams Avenue YWCA writes,

> **People began to come almost at once to the Williams Avenue YWCA and with the help of volunteers from the community and food and equipment from the Red Cross, we served about 515 meals a day to people who were living in homes of friends or who had been taken in by members of the community, or who were sleeping in one of the three churches in the community... Four members of our staff lost everything they had. These were three colored janitors and one man who lived at Vanport for want of a better place... It was amazing the way the whole community organized itself for the emergency. One wishes it might come oftener, through less tragic means.**[45]

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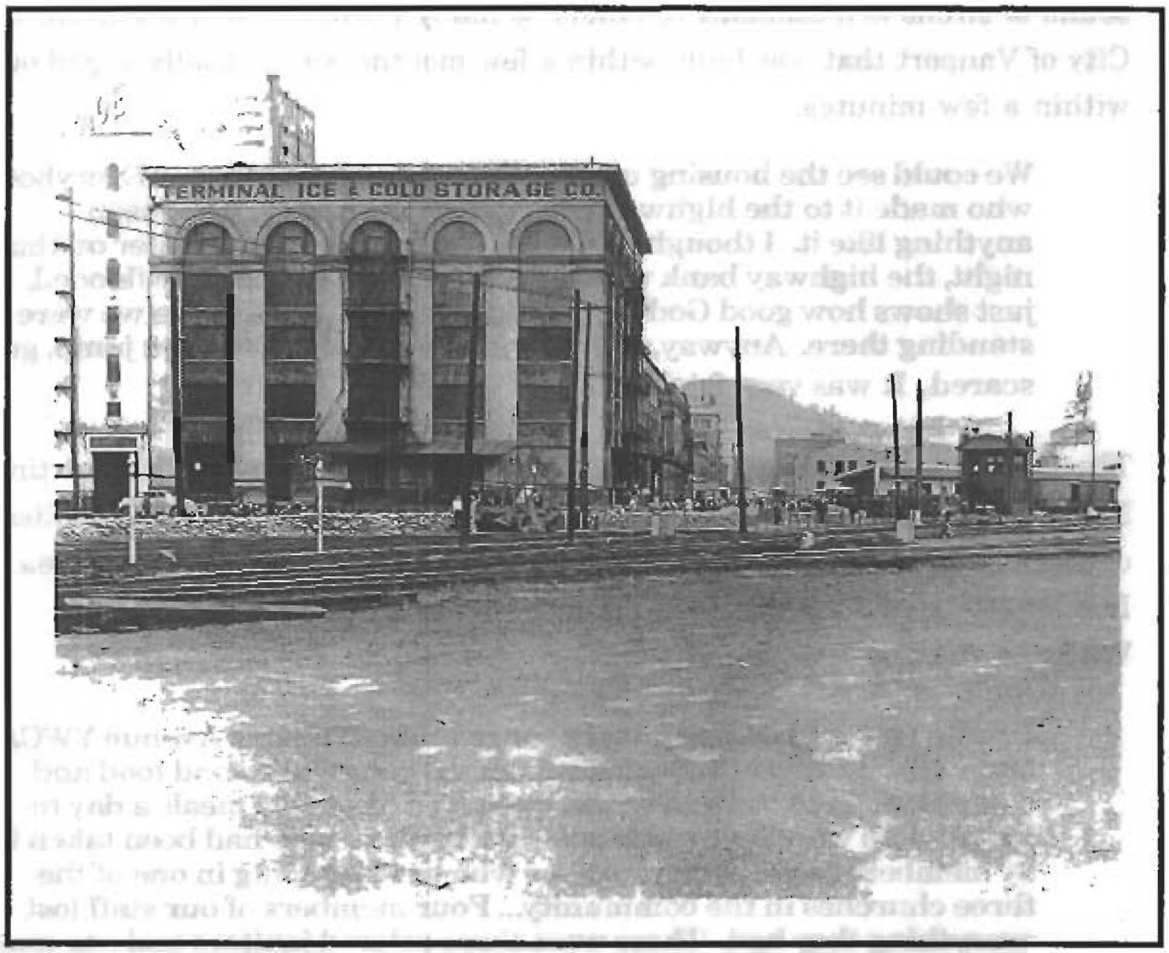
[44]Oral Interview, Rosa Lee Washington, 1992

[45]Williams Avenue YWCA, correspondence, OHS Manuscript Collection.

The Questionable Number of Tragedies

Many people felt that the thirteen people reported to have died in the flood was not accurate. They believed that other bodies were secretly buried in the Terminal Ice and Cold Storage Company Building. When asked about the small death total, Rosa Lee responds by saying:

They claimed that only a few people died. I didn't believe that. Because so many people worked graveyard and swing shift. Some people couldn't even get out. They pretend it was only thirteen people. But I never believe that.



Terminal Ice and Cold Storage Co. building where some people believed victims of the floods were buried.
(courtesy of OHS)

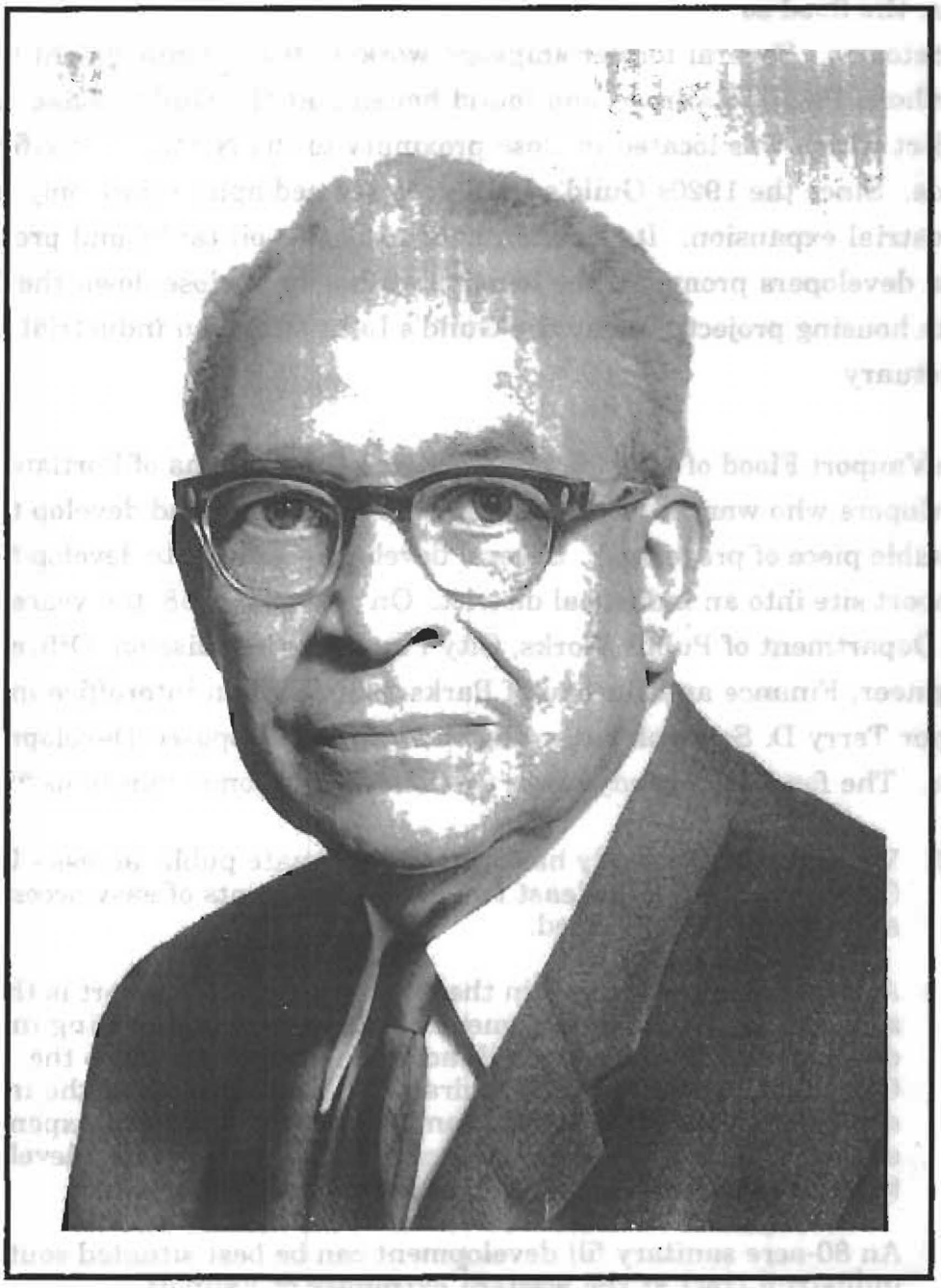


Vanport Refugees
(courtesy of OHS)

Dr. DeNorval Unthank provided medical care to so many Vanport residents that the Red Cross used his medical records as a way to account for families and individuals who may have been missing during the flood.[46] Mrs. Rosa Lee Washington had just given birth to a baby boy ten days before the flood. Tragically, her fifteen year old son's funeral was held the same day she gave birth to her son. Dr. DeNorval Unthank and his wife came to Vanport looking for Mrs. Washington when they heard that the water had risen. Rosa Lee remembers Dr. Unthank's generosity:

> **Dr. Unthank delivered four of my children that were born in Portland. He was a good doctor. They (Unthank and his wife) came out to Vanport when the water had risen, but they wouldn't let anyone into the flooded area. He said he hung around but they would never let him in. Before they got back over to Portland, Vanport had flooded. You see, he knew that my fifteen year old son had died of a brain disease, and his funeral was the day he delivered my newborn son. With the Vanport flood, he knew I needed him. Well, he eventually found me.**

[46]Oral interview, Tom Unthank, 1992.



DeNorval Unthank, M.D., 1961
(courtesy of Verdell Burdine Rutherford)

After the flood some former Vanport residents left and went back to their hometowns. Several former shipyard workers found employment with the Northern Pacific Railroad and found housing at the Guild's Lake housing project which was located in close proximity to the Northern Pacific rail yards. Since the 1920s Guild's Lake area seemed appropriate only for industrial expansion. Its location near explosive oil tanks and pressure from developers prompted the housing authority to close down the Guild's Lake housing project. Today the Guild's Lake site is an industrial sanctuary.

The Vanport Flood of May 30, 1948 resolved the dilemma of Portland developers who wanted to get rid of the housing units and develop this valuable piece of property.[47] Several developers wanted to develop the Vanport site into an industrial district. On June 24, 1958, ten years later, the Department of Public Works, City Planning Commission, Office of City Engineer, Finance and Bureau of Parks submitted an interoffice memo to Mayor Terry D. Schrunk regarding the Vanport Proposed Development Plan. The feasibility study made the following recommendations:[48]

1. Vanport site presently has only one adequate public access - U.S. 99 (Denver Avenue). At least two additional points of easy access to the area should be developed.

2. A 130 acre tract situated in the northern part of Vanport is the best area for industrial development. This land abuts existing industrial development, has nearby rail facilities, and is nearest to the Columbia River, and thus hydraulic fill material from the impending dredging of the ship channel can be brought in at least expense. It is suggested that such industrial tract be filled above flood level in order to be as attractive as possible for industrial development.

3. An 80-acre sanitary fill development can be best situated south of the industrial tract at the western extremity of Vanport.

4. The remaining 425 acres of the Vanport site can well be put to recreational use. The recommended north-south main traffic route, which is an extension of Chautauqua Boulevard, through Vanport site bisects the proposed recreation area. A 150-acre municipal golf course is proposed for the west portion while areas for swimming

[47]PSU, Ibid., p. 34.
[48]City of Portland, Vanport Proposed Development Plan, 1958, p. 1-2.

facilities, lighted ball fields, children's day camp, picnics, canoeing, midget boat riding, automobile driver's training course, parking field, drag strip, tennis, and other court games would be provided for in the 275-acre area to the east.

5. A further study should be taken to determine whether it would be advantageous for the City to acquire all of the property at the southern extremity of the Vanport site.

Today, the Vanport site is occupied by the Portland International Raceway, Heron Lakes Golf Course, West Delta Park, cattle stockyard, manufacturing and production uses and industrial uses.

Housing Portland's New Black Population

The Vanport Flood did not create a housing shortage in Portland, it intensified an existing housing problem for low-income workers. Approximately 16,931 people were made homeless by the Vanport Flood. In addition to those displaced by the flood, approximately 90,000 out of 534,000 persons living in the metropolitan area occupied substandard housing units. This meant that 1 out 5 were not properly housed.[49] The housing situation in the Portland area had been acute for many years. As early as 1937 the Oregon Legislature passed the Housing Authority Law S.99-2002 which pointed out the need for public support of housing for low income groups. This statute stated that there were many unsanitary and unsafe dwellings in the state and that there was a special shortage of adequate dwellings for low income workers. The law recommended that public funds be made available for clearance and replacement of these unsanitary or unsafe housing conditions. [50]

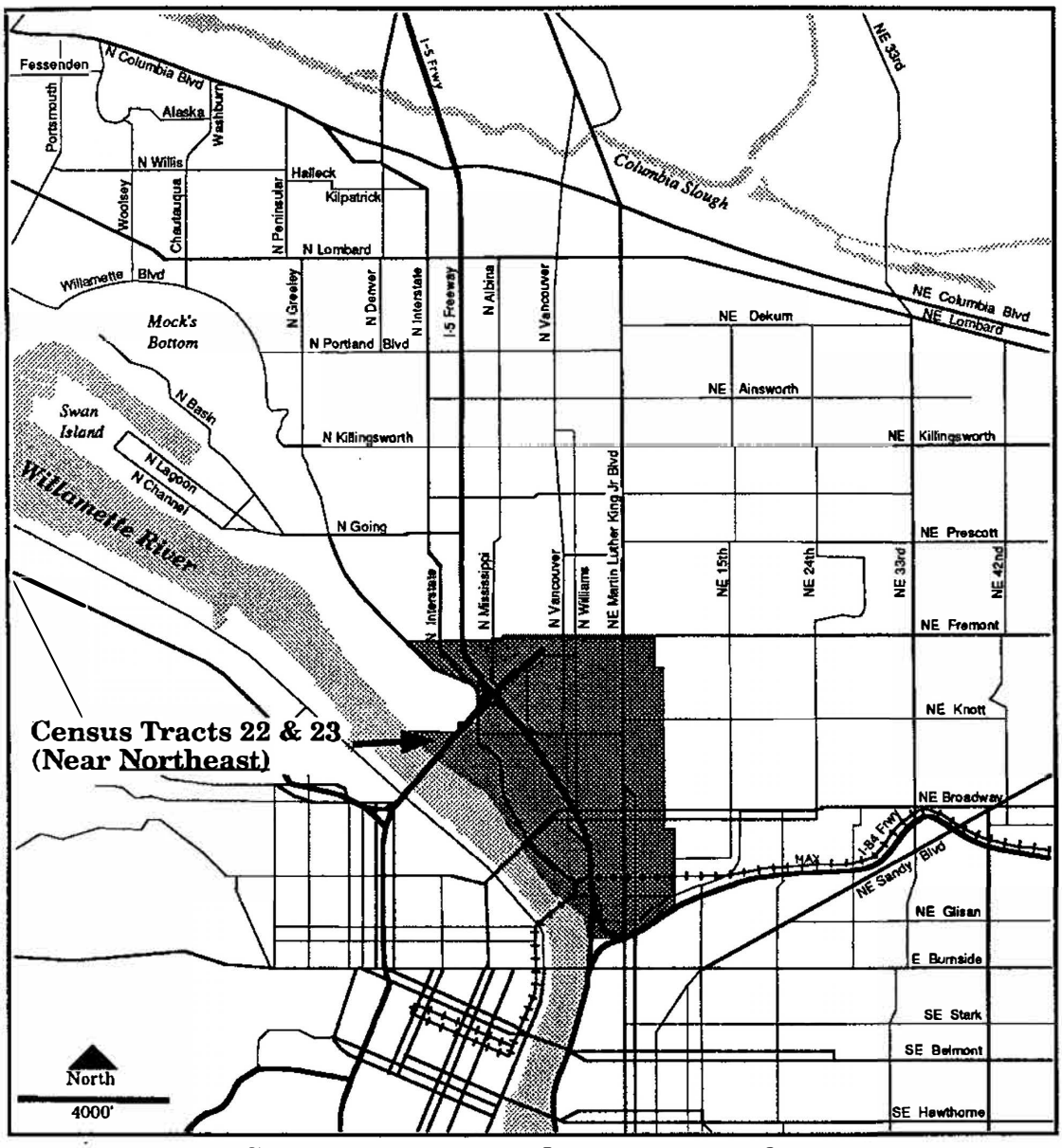
The resettlement of the displaced flood victims reinforced the pattern of segregation. By 1950, blacks resided in all except one of Portland's 61 census tracts, but nearly half of Portland's African American population resided in a concentrated area of inner northeast that was once occupied by white working class and that, ironically, was denied to blacks. Housing discrimination and red-lining practices restricted blacks to an area of the city bounded by Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard on the east, Interstate Avenue on the west, Oregon Street on the south, and Fremont on the north. By 1950, 90 percent of the houses in this area were more than fifty years old. The city's lowest income households were found in this area.

After World War II, there was evidence of "white flight" from the inner northeast area. While blacks were steadily moving into census tracts 22 and 23, whites were rapidly moving out. According to the 1950 census reports, the tracts with the highest nonwhite population were 22 and 23, covering the inner (Albina) northeast area, where 46 percent of the black

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[49]City Club, Ibid., p. 79.
[50]City Club, Interim Report of Committee On Standard Housing, 1948, p. 79.

population lived.[51] The nonwhite population of tract 22 increased from 792 in 1940 to 2,820 in 1950, while the white population in the area dropped from 6,159 to 4,395. In census tract 23, nonwhites increased from 407 to 1,863 and whites decreased from 6,136 to 5,187. The two tracts together gained 3,484 nonwhites while losing 2,713 whites.[52]



Census Tracts 22 and 23: Inner Northeast

[51]Urban League of Portland, Interracial Progress: Bi-Monthly Report, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 2.
[52]Ibid.

The primary basis for residential segregation was the myth that property values decline when non-whites enter white neighborhoods. Until 1952, the doctrine that an African American presence depressed property values was the official position of the Portland Realty Board. Although the doctrine had been officially abandoned, it was common knowledge that 90 percent or more of the real estate brokers in Portland would not sell a home to an African American in a white neighborhood even when the prospective buyer could handle the deal financially.[53]

[53]City Club, Report on the Negro in Portland: A Progress Report 1945-1957, p. 359

Limited Employment Opportunities

After World War II few black people found jobs outside of service-oriented professions and the railroad industry. Blacks who had earned college degrees often found themselves working at filling stations, as waiters, waitresses and bartenders and in other service oriented jobs. It was common for men to work two jobs to take care of their families. Isadore Maney, a Portland native, remembers how difficult it was for blacks to get a professional job in Portland:

> **After the War odd jobs were plentiful. Several men worked two or three jobs to take care of their families. However, it was difficult to find a job in his or her respected fields of study.** [54]

Maney graduated with a degree in sociology and worked odd jobs to take care of his family. He recalled that the Princeton Athletic Club, formerly called Columbia Athletic Club, and the Cosmopolitan Club provided job opportunities for professional blacks who could not find jobs in their field.

> **There was a standing joke that the Columbia Athletic Club had the best educated waiters and bartenders in town.**[55]

Women with professional degrees often worked in clerical positions. Mrs. Ruth Neal graduated from Tennessee State with a degree in business education. She came to Portland in 1950 with her husband Richard Neal, Jr., Portland's first black pharmacist. Now retired from the Department of the Interior, she recalls the difficulty in finding a job in Portland:

> **I went to several agencies looking for work. They would give you any excuse for not hiring you. They would say that the job is already filled. At one place of employment, the receptionist said that the lady who is doing the hiring was out and to come back. When I came back they met me at the door. It was hard. You just had to keep plucking.**

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[54]Oral Interview, Isadore Maney, 1992.
[55]Oral Interview, Isadore Maney, 1992.

Urban League of Portland

The Urban League of Portland worked hard to change the employment practices and attitudes towards blacks. First established in New York City in 1910 to assist blacks migrating from the south to the urbanized north, Portland's branch of the Urban League was established in 1945. [56] The League's first office was located at Sixth and Burnside Street, where the U.S. Bancorp Tower stands today. At that time, the League was occupying office space from Dr. DeNorval Unthank, one of the founders of the Urban League. An examination room was converted into office space.[57] Several concerned members of Portland's black and white community leaders came together and recruited Edwin "Bill" Berry from Chicago to head the Urban League of Portland. What became apparent to Bill Berry when he arrived was that his main task was to help the former shipyard workers return to their native homes. Determined not to be used by the white establishment to lead a black exodus from Portland, he threatened to pack his bags and leave. Eventually he stayed and became the first executive director of the Portland Urban League dedicated to integrating Portland's black community into the mainstream.[58]

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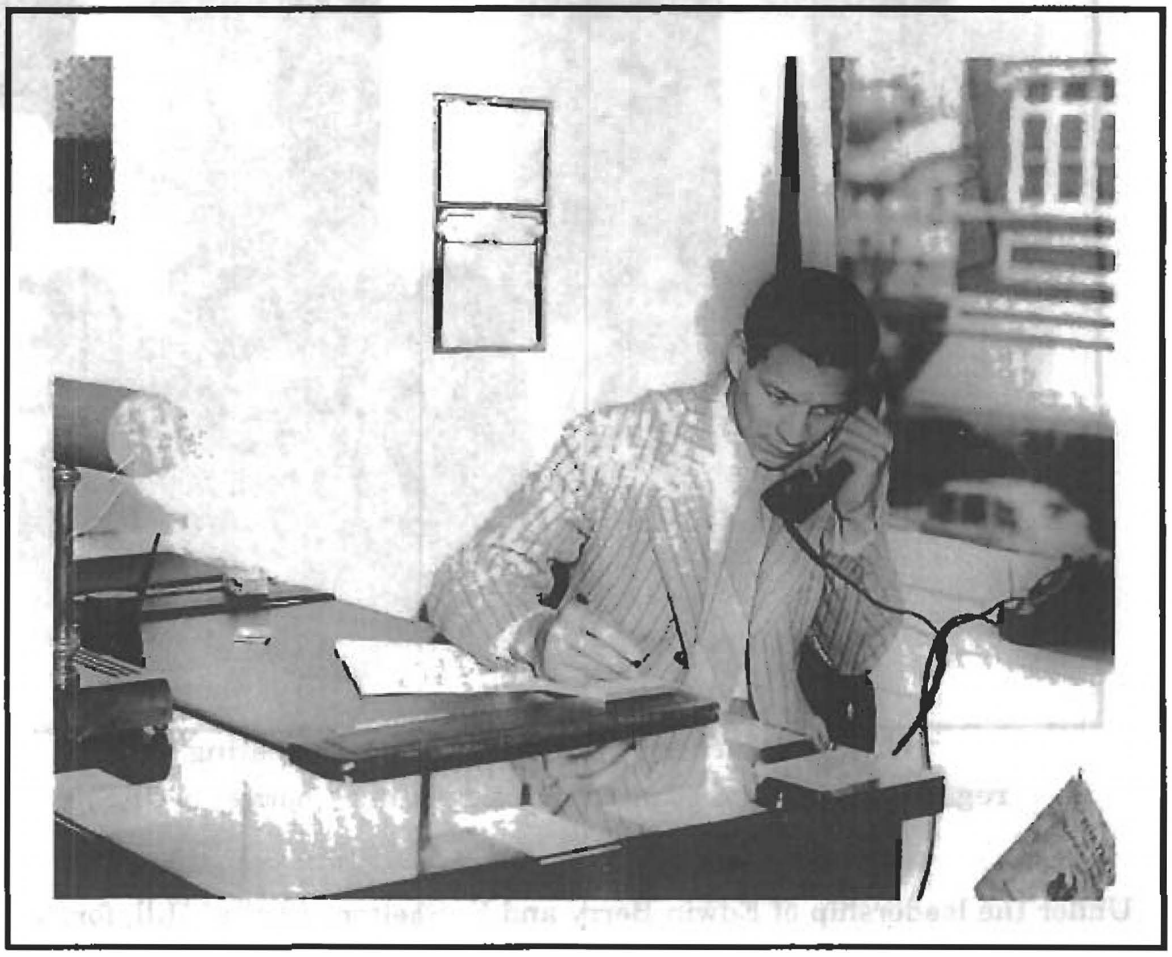
[56]Paulsen, Janet. Urban League Crusader, The Oregonian, January 16, 1992, p. 8.
[57]Oral Interview, Tom Unthank, 1992.
[58]Local Colors, 1992.



W.W. II Veterans at the Urban League meeting regarding jobs and educational assistance (courtesy of OHS)

Under the leadership of Edwin Berry and E. Shelton "Shelly" Hill, former Urban League job development specialist, the Urban League of Portland became the forerunner in opening doors and seizing job opportunities for blacks. They worked with Meier & Frank, Lipman and Wolfe, Olds and King, and Eastern Department Stores to break down employment barriers. Prior to 1946 the department stores only hired blacks in housekeeping positions. The Urban League was responsible for the placement of Alene Grice and Clara Mae Peoples, the first black elevator operators at the Eastern Department Store which once stood at the corner of 10th and Washington in downtown Portland. Alene Grice came to Portland in 1946 from Chicago, where she had worked in an office for a mail-order firm.

Seeking employment as an elevator operator, she was shocked to learn that the city's major department stores employed blacks only in housekeeping positions.[59] Eventually, blacks made up the entire staff of elevator operators at the store.



Edwin 'Bill' Berry at the Urban League office located at 6th and Burnside
(courtesy of OHS)

Several approaches were used to reach white employers in the Portland area. One of the most successful approaches was the deliberate placement of light-skinned blacks to break the ice. Light-skinned blacks were less threatening to white employers than dark-skinned blacks.

[59]Paulsen, Op. cit., p. 8.

But sometimes, as Pauline Bradford recalls, that approach did not always work:

> **Often being light skinned worked against you. Sometimes an employer wanted to hire a dark skinned African American, whose racial identity could not be mistaken.** [60]



Signing agreement with State Employment Service in 1950. E. Shelton "Shelly" Hill, standing (courtesy of OHS)

Other approaches included doing your homework and anticipating the objection of the employers before they could express them. Before approaching the head of Rose City Transit, Shelly Hill surveyed transit company officials in major cities throughout the country that had employed black drivers for years. Shelly Hill was very successful in the placement of minorities in new jobs and in developing employment opportunities. He

[60]Oral Interview, Pauline Bradford, 1992.

successfully placed two black men as bus operators with the Portland Traction Company. The pair, Robert Dillard and Arvoll Rae, were the first nonwhite operators to be hired in Portland.[61]

Edwin Berry was executive director of the Portland Urban League from 1945 to 1956. In January 1956 he left Portland to become the executive director of the Chicago Urban League. More than 300 people attended a testimonial banquet in his honor.[62] Known for outstanding leadership in racial and human relations, Edwin C. "Bill" Berry influenced thousands of individuals in Portland and Oregon. In January 1956 E. Shelton "Shelly" Hill was appointed the acting executive director of the Portland Urban League. He worked for the Urban League until 1973, almost twenty years.

[61]Paulsen, Op. cit., p.8.
[62]Ibid.

Legislative Progress from 1949-1953

From 1949 to 1953, a series of legislative and official actions designed to eliminate discriminatory practices based on race in education, employment and public accommodation were initiated and passed. These four years were very progressive times for Oregon. Many people felt that certain politicians had to die before this kind of legislation could pass.[63] The following is a listing of legislative actions which passed from 1949-1953.

Chronicle of Legislative Action from 1949 to 1953

1947 Legislature defeated a fair employment practice law.

1949 The Fair Employment Act became law on July 16, 1949.

1950 Commission on Intergroup Relations created by ordinance of the City Council, granting the Commission the responsibility of investigating "problems arising between groups in the City of Portland which may result in tensions or discrimination on account of race, color, religion, or national origin or descent."

City of Portland civil rights ordinance defeated in the general election.

1951 Vocational School Laws enacted by the legislature prohibiting discrimination in vocational, professional or trade schools in Oregon.

Repeal of Oregon's Miscegenation (interracial marriages) Law.

Governor's Executive Order directing the National Guard to pursue a strict policy of non-discrimination.

Repeal of the Oregon statute prohibiting the sale of alcoholic beverages to American Indians.

State Insurance Commissioner's order to insurance companies in Oregon requiring elimination of the surcharges formerly levied against non-white drivers.

Repeal of statute requiring a biennial census of the sanitary and thrift habits of Chinese and Japanese residents.

1953 Public Accommodation Law prohibiting discrimination in places of public accommodation, resort, or amusement and establishing the right of all persons to equal facilities. Oregon joined its neighboring states of Washington and California, the District of Columbia and 18 other states in banning racial discrimination in eating, lodging and amusement places.

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[63]Local Colors, Audiovisual Cassette, Produced 1990.

Amendment of the Oregon State Constitution deleting the word "white" therefrom with respect to reapportionment of population which was based, previously, on the white population.

Passage of Public Accommodation Laws

The passage of public accommodation laws was a long and difficult struggle. It began in 1893 and despite repeated attempts was not successful until 1953.[64] As early as 1893, black people began to go to the Oregon state legislature lobbying to repeal the defunct state constitution that excluded African Americans and Chinese from the state and prevented them from voting, and also to repeal the ban on intermarriage and to pass a public accommodation law.[65] In 1895, Reverend Brown, pastor of the First African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Zion Church, spokesman for the black community, canvassed the legislature, attempting to get them to repeal old laws enacted in the 1840s and 50s. Reverend Brown was not successful in his efforts.[66] In 1919, the Portland Branch of the NAACP drafted the first public accommodation bill, which was defeated.

On April 13, 1953, the Oregon Legislature approved a state's civil rights bill when the House of Representatives passed the senate-approved bill by a vote of 46 to 11. The bill prohibited hotels, motels, restaurants and amusement places from discriminating on the basis of race, religion or national origin. The civil rights bill allowed those discriminated against to sue up to $500. It was no longer legal to refuse admission to black residents to swimming pools, picnics, skating rinks and theaters.

Under the leadership of Otto Rutherford, the local branch devoted much of its energy to passage of the bill. Edgar Williams, a representative of the NAACP, had been battling for a civil rights bill ever since he came to Oregon in 1918. Such a bill had been introduced at 17 legislative sessions since 1919. When the house vote was announced in 1953, tears rolled down

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[64]MacLagan, Elizabeth. *A Peculiar Paradise: a History of Blacks in Oregon, 1788-1940.* (Portland, Oregon 1980).
[65]MacLagan, Op. cit., p. 157.
[66]Anderson, Op. cit., p. 86.

the cheeks of Edgar Williams.[67] Other local organizations, including many social and fraternal organizations, Oregon churches, the Urban League of Portland, the National Association of Colored People and the Portland League of Women Voters united in their success under the banner of the Oregon Committee for Equal rights. Ex-Mayor Dorothy Lee, Police Chief Leon V. Jenkins, labor leaders Gust Anderson and Phil Brady and Congressman Homer Angersoll were among the many civic leaders who supported the bill.

Many felt that without Representative Mark Hatfield's support, the civil rights bill would not have passed. He worked closely with local groups and led the argument against referring the bill to the people. The Civil Freedom Committee, headed by Rev. Elbert D. Riddick, sought to use the referendum measure to delay or postpone voting on the state civil rights bill until the 1954 general election. The group effort failed when they only collected 9,925 of the 23,375 valid signatures needed. In 1950, a referendum measure led to the defeat of the City of Portland civil rights ordinance.

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[67]Scott, Hugh, *Rugged Battler for New Civil Rights Law Credits Friends in Legislative Victory*, Oregonian, Sunday, April 19, 1953.



NAACP Delegation thanking the sponsors of the civil rights bill.
Left to right seated: Senator Philip Hitchcock, Rep. Mark O. Hatfield.
Left to right standing: Edgar Williams, Marie Smith, Ulysess Plummer, Rev. J. Harold Jones, Lorna Maples, Verdell Burdine Rutherford and Otto Rutherford.
(Courtesy of Verdell Burdine Rutherford)

First Black Employees

Progress in the legislative arena led to a proliferation of "first" black employees in Portland's workplaces. The Urban League bi-monthly report, called the Interracial Progress, often noted progress of employment opportunities for blacks. The following is a partial list of some of the first blacks hired by various companies that were noted in the Interracial Progress from 1952 to 1958: [68]

First Black Employees

August 1952	Mark A. Smith, vice president of Urban League Board of Directors and president of Vancouver branch NAACP, appointed Deputy Commissioner, Oregon Bureau of Labor, Fair Employment Practices Division.
1952	William Carr became the first black member of Portland's Fire Department.
September 1953	Dr. William Couch, Jr. of Chicago became the first black faculty member at Portland's Reed College. He taught English and humanities.
July 1953	Isaac E. Alford was promoted to the post of assistant manager of the Columbia Athletic Club. He was the first black to attain managerial status in a local establishment of that size.
August 1953	William Hilliard was employed as a full time sports writer for *The Oregonian*.
December 1954	Vann's Walnut Park Chapel became Portland's first black-owned funeral home. C. Don Vann, formerly of Lansing, Michigan, opened up his funeral home at 5211 N Williams Avenue.
1954	Black reporter appointed church editor for *The Oregonian*.
	First black hired at Camas Crown-Zellerbach paper mill, Bailey Manufacturing Co., Firestone Company Appliance Store, Northwest Leather Company, Equitable Life Insurance.
	Portland Church of Christ Women elect first black president.

[68]Urban League of Portland, Op. cit., Volume 1

February 1955	Alonzo C. Glosson was appointed the first black teacher at MacLaren School for boys, Woodburn, Oregon.
1956	*Oregon Journal* hires first Negro Reporter.
	Sears and Montgomery Ward hire first blacks in non-custodial jobs.
1957	Mrs. Phil Reynolds was named Oregon Mother of the Year. Mrs. Reynolds was the first African American to receive this honor.



Pauline Bradford, one of the first black women hired by the Department of Agriculture in 1951.
(courtesy of Pauline Bradford)

Other firsts in Portland included Thomas Vickers, first black dentist; Herman Plummer, first black real estate agent; and Richard Neal, Sr., the first black pharmacist. All of these men in some form or fashion were recruited by Shelly Hill to come to Portland.[69] When asked what brought him to Portland, Richard Neal, Sr. responded as follows:

> **I had a friend, E. Shelton Hill. We had worked together years ago as dining car waiters for the Union Pacific Railroad in 1928. I was among ten students from Wilberforce University to work on the railroads. He wrote me a letter and said that there was a need for a black drugstore in Portland. So I came out and looked and decided to come back. I opened up a pharmacy at Williams and Knott. I operated the drugstore from 1950 to 1957.**[70]

Establishing the Framework

For the first time in Oregon, the framework was in place at the legislative level to prevent discrimination. However, much of the advance resulted from state and local legislation, rather than from the voluntary efforts of the private and social institutions. In 1957, the Portland City Club Committee on Negro Progress sent detailed questionnaires to 92 heads of Portland firms. Replies were received from 48 firms. The survey reported that 28 out of 48 firms employed blacks. Fourteen of the 48 firms had no established policy regarding the employment of African Americans. Only one firm stated that it had changed its hiring since 1945 and began hiring blacks. [71]

Despite legislative advances in the fifties, African Americans in Portland continue to struggle for employment and home ownership opportunities throughout the next forty years. In the sixties there was a growing discontentment among the African American about the quality of life in their community. The City of Portland searched for ways to revitalize inner northeast Portland. The next chapter highlights events and redevelopment projects that had a significant impact on the African American community in inner northeast Portland.

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[69]Oral Interview, Ellen Law-Driggins, 1992.
[70]Oral Interview, Richard Neal, Sr., 1992.
[71]City Club, Op. cit., p. 365.

Chapter 4
Planning In Albina (1954 to the present)

Revolution, to be successful, must be for something, not just against something. Revolution is fighting to create a new system.

Stokely Carmichael, 1973

Revitalizing Inner City Neighborhoods

Until the 1960s, community planners ignored inner city areas as viable residential areas. Instead they tried to concentrate high-intensity uses and interstate highway systems in inner-city neighborhoods in order to isolate and protect the highlands and the automobile suburbs.[1] Very poor, but vibrant, inner-city communities located within three miles of downtown Portland were considered to be beyond salvage. These "unsalvageable" areas were targeted for massive land clearance that resulted in destroying viable neighborhoods and displacing residents. Large scale developers and institutional uses were the primary beneficiaries.

Applying nationally accepted planning principles, Portland's professional planners viewed older inner city residential areas as "blighted areas" that no longer served their original purposes as stopover neighborhoods (staging areas for minority ethnic newcomers to the city).[2] Many planners felt that these areas would better serve institutional and fringe commercial uses as the city grew and demanded space for its central functions.[3] Land in Portland inner city areas was in demand for use by a growing downtown office district, by light industry, for warehousing, highway development and by expanding institutions such as Emanuel Hospital, Portland State College, the Memorial Coliseum, the Civic Center, and the Lloyd Center.

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[1]Abbott, Carl, Portland, Planning, Politics, and Growth in a Twentieth Century City, (Portland, 1983), p.186.
[2]Ibid., p. 23.
[3]Ibid., p. 186.

Revitalizing Albina

Prior to War World II, most blacks were scattered throughout the east side of Portland. After the War, blacks were primarily concentrated in an area located just north of the Broadway and Steel Bridges, in the proximity of the present day Memorial Coliseum. This area became very vulnerable to development pressure because of its location to the growing downtown and the nearby Lloyd commercial district.

In November, 1956 the citizens of Portland voted to build a war memorial sports center on the east bank of the Willamette River. The City Planning Commission's justification for clearance of residential homes was based on a land use survey of the Broadway-Steel Bridge area which concluded that over 60 percent of the housing was substandard.[4] This decision, which had the side effect of clearing the southern end of Portland's black community and moving an estimated 150 persons, increased the value of the land around the new Lloyd Center shopping complex.[5]

The purchase of right-of-way for the East Bank-Minnesota Freeway between Broadway and Fremont removed approximately 125 dwellings which formerly housed 300 persons.[6] Most of the families displaced by the purchase of the right-of-way and construction of the Coliseum were black, and there was little or no organized effort to help them find new homes.[7] Most of them relocated themselves into the nearby overcrowded area bounded by Broadway to the south, Fremont to the north, NE 7th to the east and I-5 to the west.

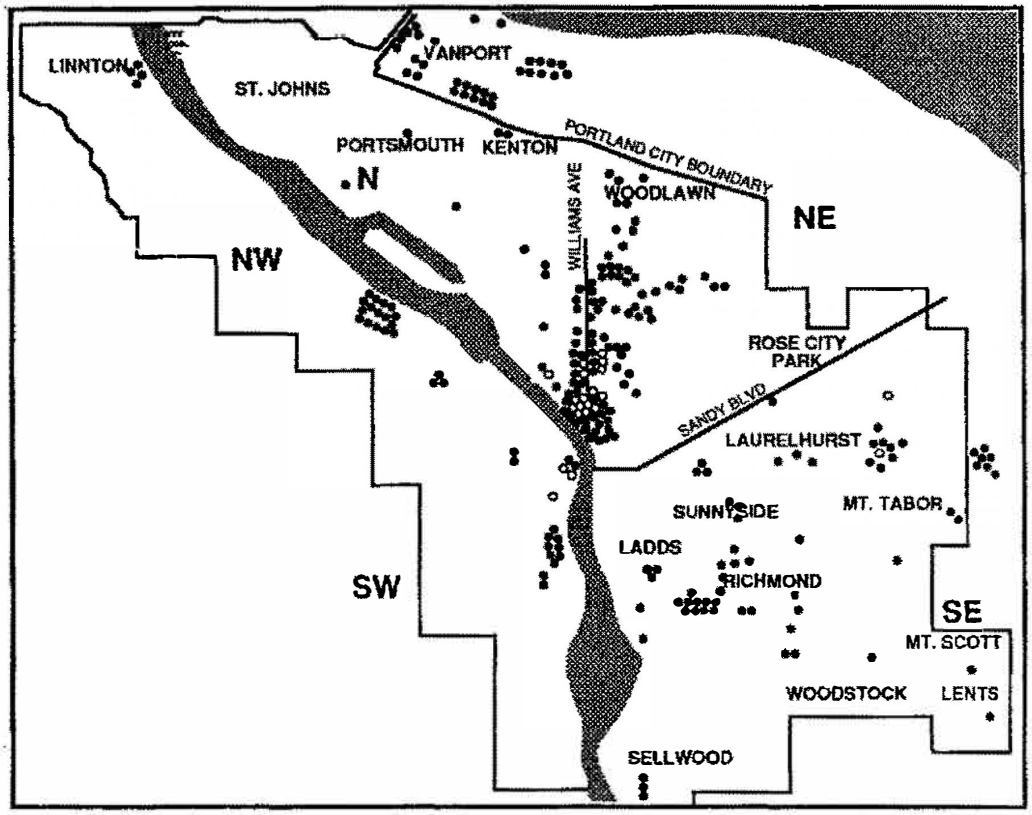
Williams Avenue District

Since the thirties, as blacks gradually began to settle on the east side, black community life has centered on and around Williams Avenue. During and after World War II, the number of black-owned businesses located on

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[4]Ibid.,
[5]Ibid.,
[6]Lattie, James, Commission Director Sees Challenge In Albina Renewal Plan, The Oregonian, July 31, 1963, p. 10.
[7]Ibid.

Williams Avenue increased. Several former defense and railroad workers, who were unable to obtain working capital at the local banks, saved enough money to open up little mom and pop groceries, dry cleaners, shoe repair shops, night clubs and other service type businesses. Most of these businesses were located along Williams Avenue.



Black Population Distribution Map, City Club, 1945

Mrs. Ranson, former painter's helper for the Oregon Shipyard and retired owner of Woodlawn Cleaners, recalls the number of black-owned businesses on Williams Avenue:

> **There were several black-owned businesses on and around Williams Avenue. I remember the Fraternal Hall, Citizen Fountain Lunch Restaurant, Paradise Club, Scotty's Barbecue, Wallace Barbecue (where Doris' Cafe is located today). Keystone Club, a gambling facility, was closed after Dorothy Lee became mayor of Portland. She worked with members of the church community to make gambling illegal. Cotton Club was a popular dance club located on Vancouver. Neighborhood Bill's Grocery store made his own sausage. Johnson and Smith's record store was owned by two former railroad men.** [8]

[8]Ranson, Willie Mae, *Oral Interview*, 1992.



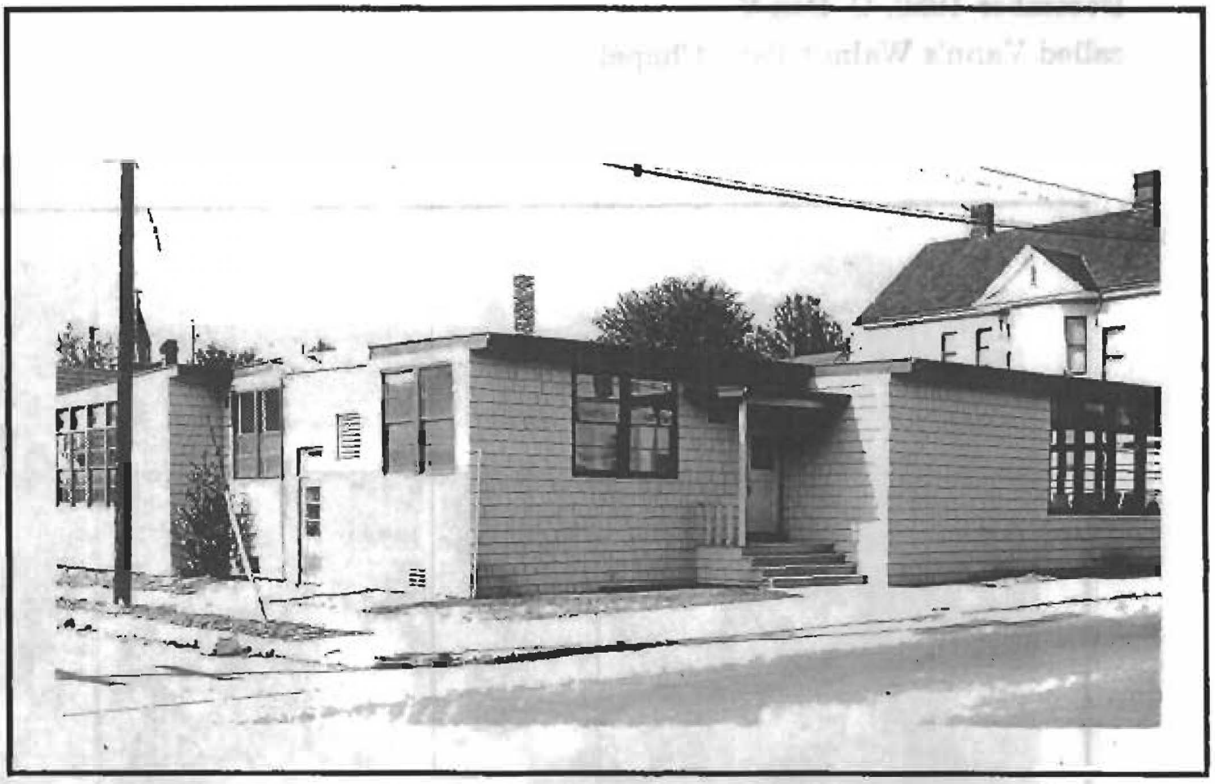
N Williams Avenue and Russell Street, 1962
(courtesy of OHS)

Besides businesses, there were several community-based resources that were highly valued by the black community. Since 1921, the Williams Avenue YWCA has continued to be used by local groups. Several women's groups, such as the Oregon Federation of Colored Women, used the facility for scholarship teas. Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, located at NE McMillan and NE Larrabee, was often used to host formal dinners. In December 1956, C. Don Vann opened up the first black-owned funeral home called Vann's Walnut Park Chapel located at 5211 Williams Avenue.



Williams Avenue YWCA- Oregon Association of Colored Women's Club (OACW) Scholarship Tea, 1950s
(courtesy of Pauline Bradford)

One highly valued community resource was the Blessed Martin's Day Nursery, owned and operated by Immaculate Heart (old St. Marys), opened on Williams Avenue in 1940 to take care of the children whose mothers were finding employment in the wartime economy. Its original population was 50 percent black. [9] The day nursery was named after St. Martin de Porress, a Mulatto patron saint of Immaculate Heart Parish.[10]



Blessed Martin's Day Nursery located on Williams Avenue
(courtesy of OHS)

[9]Pancoast, Diane L., Blacks In Oregon (1940-50), Blacks In Oregon: A Statistical and Historical Report, 197 , p. 40.
[10]Immaculate Heart Parish, Immaculate Heart Icons: In Celebration of Immaculate Heart Church Centennial (1890-1990), Pamphlet.

The Blessed Martin Day Nursery was one of the first day nurseries that offered sliding scale fees. Eventually the center was bought out by Emanuel Hospital. According to Betty Ansfield, a Northeast Portland resident, Blessed Martin's Day Nursery was a valuable and much needed resource:

> **What is much needed in the community today is the Blessed Martin's Day Nursery, a Catholic operated nursery which was eventually bought by Emanuel Hospital Urban Renewal Project. My kids went to that nursery. If it had not been for that nursery, a lot of us working mothers could not have survived, because it was a necessary part of the community.**[11]

Urban Renewal in Albina

Several redevelopment projects targeted for inner north and northeast Portland in the late 1950s and early 1960s had devastating impacts on Portland's black community. More than any other neighborhood in the city, the Central Albina area, now called the Eliot Neighborhood, suffered at the hand of urban renewal, or "Negro Removal" as skeptics called it in the sixties. The Eliot Neighborhood, in particular, lost almost half of its residents - over 3,000 people between 1960 and 1970. Most of them were black.

The federal legislation commonly known as "urban renewal" was designed as a long-range effort to achieve a better urban environment through rehabilitation or redevelopment of deteriorating areas. To revitalize the cities of America, Congress passed the Housing Act of 1949, declaring that "the general welfare and security of the nation and the health and living standards of its people require housing production and related community development sufficient to remedy the serious housing shortage, the elimination of substandard and other inadequate housing through the clearance of slums and blighted areas, and the realization as soon as feasible of the goal of decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family".[12]

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[11] Oral Interview, Betty Ansfield, 1992

[12] City Club, Report on Urban Renewal in Portland, Volume 52, No. 12, p. 26.

The Portland City Council, with strong leadership of the new Mayor, Terry Schrunk, submitted to the voters the charter amendment creating the Portland Development Commission (PDC).[13] On May 16, 1958, a charter amendment creating the Department of Development and Civic Promotion to be administered by the Portland Development Commission was approved. PDC was authorized to perform all functions prescribed under Title 42 of the U.S. Code relating to slum clearance, urban renewal and urban development and redevelopment. In addition to its renewal powers, PDC was given authority to:

> **...promote industrial expansion and location and acquire such property, real or personal...inside or outside the city, as the Commission and the Council may find appropriate or convenient in accordance with comprehensive zoning and development plans...[14]**

Central Albina Study

The Portland Development Commission (PDC) published the Central Albina Study in November 1962. This plan was a General Development Urban Renewal Program which allowed the planning of a large renewal area in one unified scheme but allowed staging of actual renewal process over a period of up to 10 years.[15] The plan defined the "Central Albina Area" to be bounded by Fremont Street, Union, Broadway and Interstate Avenue. The Central Albina area at that time contained 3.4 square miles. Thirty One Thousand Five Hundred persons, or 8.5 percent of the population in Portland resided in that area. Twelve Thousand Five Hundred Forty Four, or 80 percent of Portland's black population was contained in that area. The Albina area bounded by Killingsworth Street, 16th Avenue, Banfield expressway, and Interstate Avenue was termed the "Study Area". [16] PDC concluded that compared to the "Central Albina Area" urban blight in the "Study Area" was far less acute and the level of

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[13]Abbott, Op. cit., p. 170.
[14]City Club, Op.cit., p. 29.
[15]Portland Development Commission, Central Albina Study, 1962.
[16]Ibid.

dilapidation was lower and not nearly so concentrated. The average value of dwellings was higher than in the Central Albina Area.

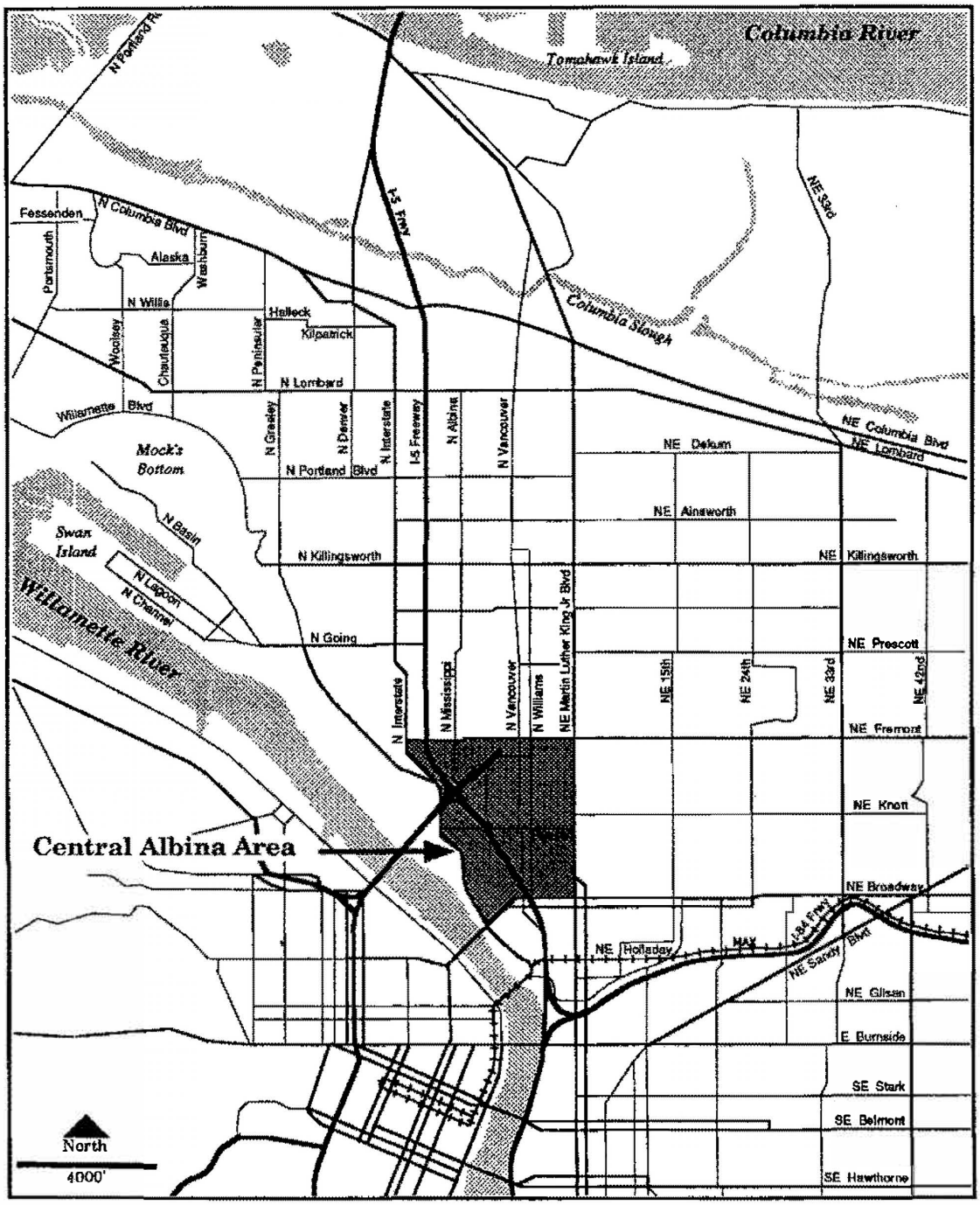
In the Central Albina Study, PDC concluded that the Central Albina Area was considered to be in advanced stages of urban blight and regarded as being beyond rehabilitation. The Central Albina Study noted:

> **Clearly, urban renewal, largely clearance, appears to be the only solution to, not only blight that presently exists in central Albina, but also to avoid the spread of that blight to other surrounding areas.**[17]

In addition, the plan suggested that "the primary characteristics of the Central Albina Area - excellent freeway and major street access, as well as the availability of all normal utilities and the level of the stable nature of the hilltop land itself - make this area unusually well suited to transportation, distribution, and service industries."[18] In accordance with the plan most of the land in the Central Albina Area would have been cleared to encourage industrial development, with strips of commercial uses along Union and between Vancouver and Williams Avenue north of Russell Street. A small area of residential use was proposed for the area south of the Emanuel Hospital. The Planning Commission allocated more than 10 blocks for hospital expansion, allowing space for a program which was already underway.[19]

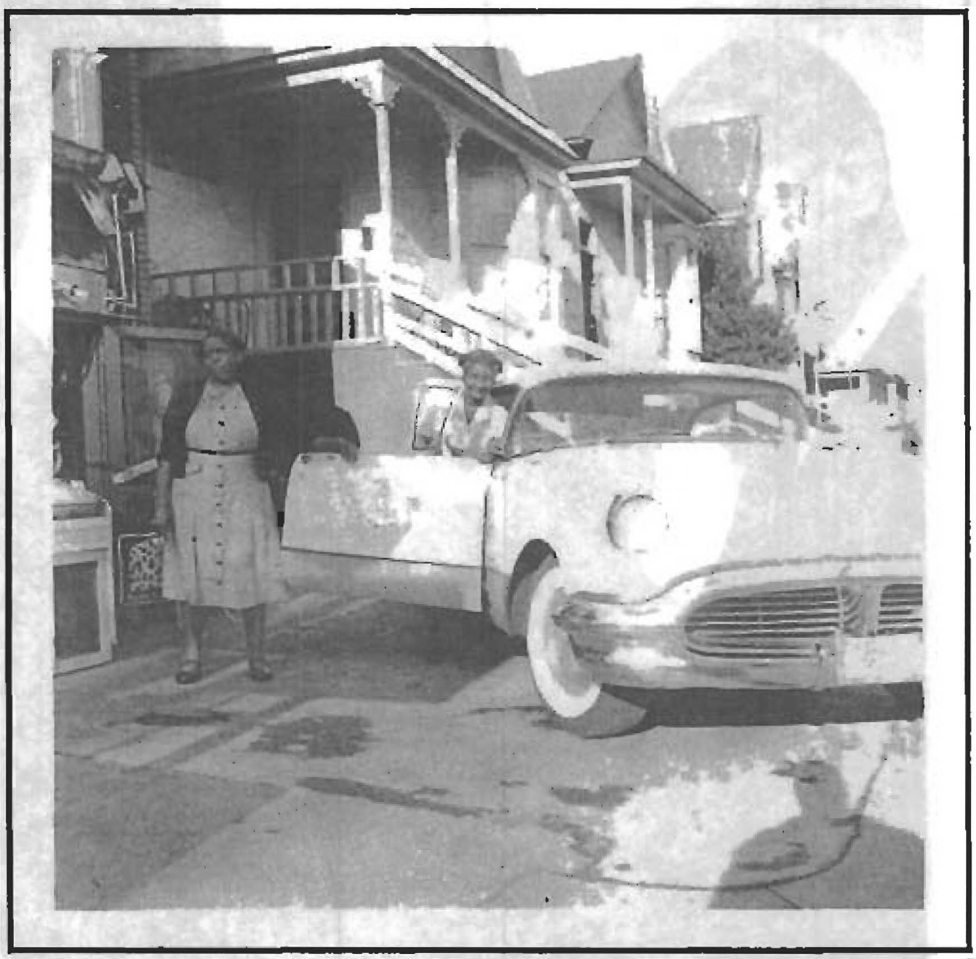
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[17]PDC, Op.cit.
[18]The Oregonian, Op.cit., p. 10.
[19]Ibid.



Central Albina Study Area boundary

If the Central Albina Plan had been implemented, approximately 1,400 black families would have been relocated.[20] How to relocate one-third of Portland's black population without creating another black ghetto became a serious concern to many black leaders. In 1957, Joy O'Brien, then Chief Relocation Adviser for the Urban Renewal Division of the Portland City Planning Commission, warned the City Club against the dangers of unplanned relocation activities.



Mrs. Power stands outside of Power's Grocery store located in Central Albina, 1956
(courtesy of Pauline Bradford)

[20]Ibid.

Joy O'Brien pointed out that people displaced by government action may be moved into the path of another government clearance project or into already crowded low income neighborhoods.[21] Attorney Mayfield K. Webb, then president of the Portland chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) believed that it was not necessary to create an isolated area of low income housing development. He believed "that most Portland residents were better prepared to and more receptive toward integration than what was generally believed."[22]



Attorney Mayfield K. Webb and his wife, Juretta Webb, present the former Governor Mark Hatfield with two tickets to the NAACP Freedom TV Spectacular. (Courtesy of Mayfield Webb)

[21] City Club, Op. cit., p. 65.
[22] The Oregonian, Op. cit., p. 10.

City officials and professional planners seemed to ignore the fact that many of these residents did not want to move. Many people, particularly the elderly, wanted to remain. Since the mid-1960s, residents in that area had been asking for housing assistance.[23] City officials and professional planners viewed the challenges of relocating blacks as one of preventing another ghetto and ignored the fact that many of these residents did not want to be uprooted and removed from their established communities.

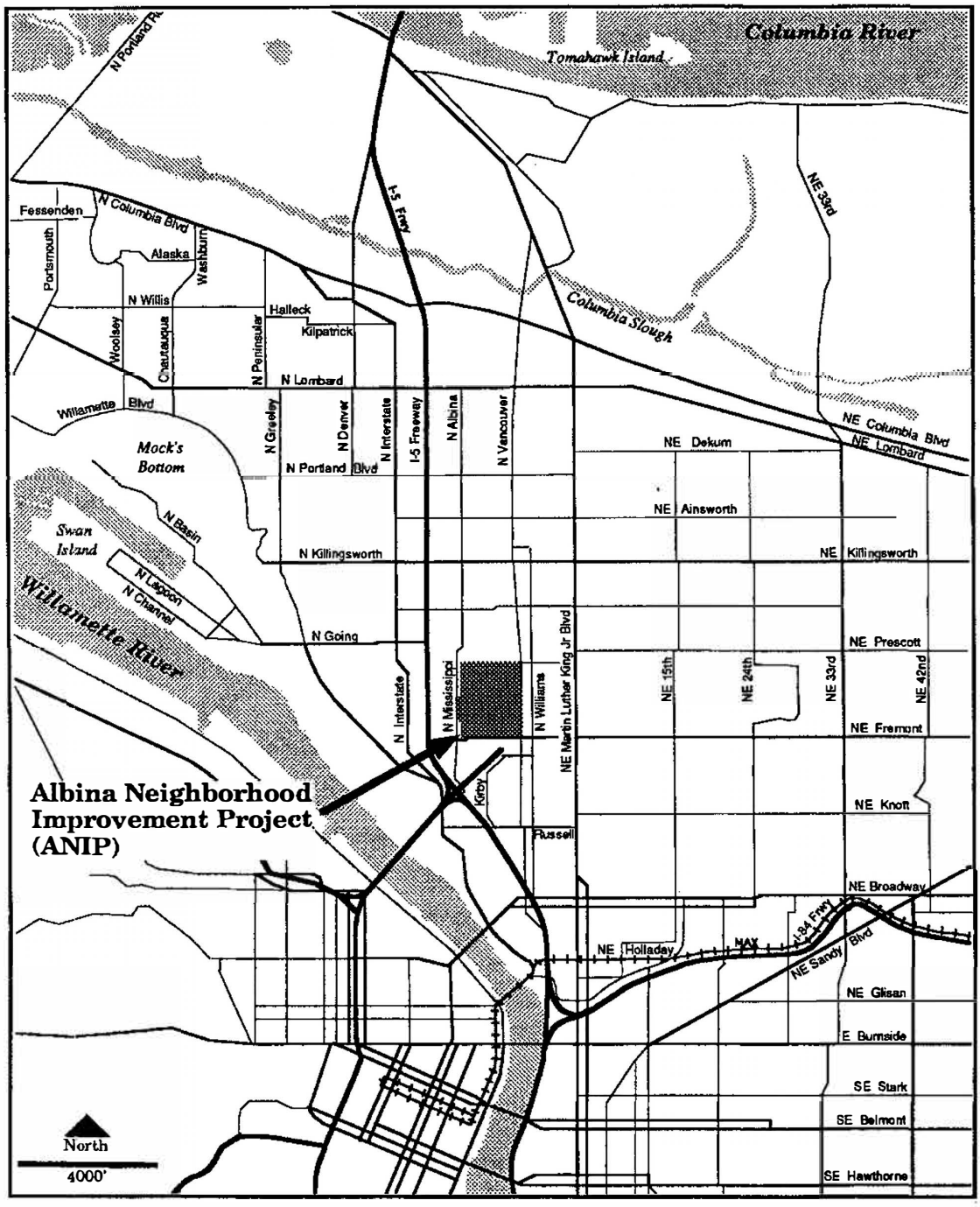
Attorney Mayfield Webb noted in an article entitled "Relocation Of Families Poses Problem On Any Albina Project" written by James Lattie of *The Oregonian*, "that Negroes have had more than their share of difficulties in some urban renewal projects in other areas (of the United States) where they have become known as "Negro removal projects," suggested that it was time to start to prevent similar trouble in Portland."

Albina Neighborhood Improvement Project (ANIP)

In 1959 the Albina Neighborhood Council, made up of clergymen, professional people and other interested people, was formed and began meeting monthly to define the area's needs and problems and to explore possible solutions. With advisory assistance from PDC and the Planning Commission, the Albina Neighborhood Council began to investigate the possibility of a federally-assisted neighborhood improvement project.[24] PDC organized the Albina Neighborhood Improvement Committee with Reverend Cortlandt Cambric as chairman. On August 1, 1961 Portland Development Commission launched a $1 million neighborhood improvement project, involving 96 acres and 35 city blocks in the Albina district bounded by N Fremont and Skidmore Streets, Vancouver Avenue and the alley between Albina and Mississippi Avenue. [25] The Albina Neighborhood Improvement Project (ANIP) was the first urban renewal project targeted in Northeast Portland and focused on rehabilitation.

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[23]Abbott, Op.cit.
[24]City Club, Op.cit., p. 40.
[25]Ibid.



Albina Neighborhood Improvement Project Boundary

This project area contained 755 dwelling units, 509 of them residential structures and seven commercial buildings. The ANIP area was described as an "older residential" area with about 63 percent owner-occupancy. The area contained 54 percent blacks and 46 percent whites.[26] The ANIP was commended as an example of how well whites and blacks can work together. Many Albina residents considered ANIP to be a successful revitalization project and in 1967, more than 1,000 Albina residents petitioned City Council to extend PDC's project south of Fremont Avenue. This request was denied based on the Planning Commission's Central Albina Study which wrote off the future residential potential of the entire area south of Fremont and west of Union. The City Council did approve extension of the boundary north of Skidmore Avenue. Originally the project area covered some 35 square blocks. The area was extended in 1968 to include 13.5 blocks north of Skidmore.

[26] Oregon Journal, City Plans $1 Million Project To Give Albina Area New Face, August 1, 1961.



ANIP Neighborhood Cleanup
(courtesy of OHS)

Ceremonies marking the completion of the Albina Neighborhood Improvement Project were scheduled for February 20, 1972. The 12 year rehabilitation project involved a tree planting program, street and residential rehabilitation programs, development of a five acre park named for Dr. DeNorval Unthank and neighborhood cleanups. PDC Albina project staff processed 118 loans and 169 grants totaling $764,212, and 285 owners invested $457,698 in improvements through conventional loans.[27]

[27]The Oregonian, Ceremonies to Note Albina Project End, February 18, 1972, p. 4M.

Attack on Poverty

The idea of fighting poverty was initiated during the John F. Kennedy administration and followed up on by President Lyndon B. Johnson after Kennedy was assassinated in November of 1963. President Johnson declared the War on Poverty in January 1964 when there was virtually no political pressure on the government to do anything about either ghettos or poverty. The Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) was created to run the War on Poverty Programs.[28] By the fall of 1965 President Johnson's poverty program would stand as the national government's chief direct response to the problems of the northern ghettos, but the program was conceived with only the haziest understanding of what ghettos' problems were.[29]

Albina Citizen's War on Poverty Committee

In 1964 Albina was targeted to receive War on Poverty funds. Members of the Portland community organized a ten member temporary planning committee chaired by Reverend O.B. Williams, pastor of Vancouver Avenue First Baptist Church. The permanent committee, made up of clergymen and community activists, was instrumental in channeling the War on Poverty funds to Albina. The birth of the Albina Citizen's War on Poverty Program was the forerunner of citizen participation programs in Albina. Attorney Mayfield Webb was selected as the Executive Director of the Albina Citizen's War on Poverty Committee's Neighborhood Service Center located at 59 NE Stanton Street. [30] The Neighborhood Service Center operated as a one stop service center. Some of the programs which operated from the Center were a free legal service program, family counseling service, planned parenthood program, Urban League Job Development and Training program, Housing Department, Community Services section and Vocational Counselor.[31]

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[28]Ibid.
[29]Ibid.
[30]Oral Interview, Betty Thompson, 1992.
[31]Albina Citizen's War on Poverty Committee, *Report On Program Year A of Albina Neighborhood Service Center,* , Oregon

Several innovative programs were conceived out of the anti-poverty programs. The Head Start program, a preschool day nursery and the Low Income Family Emergency (LIFE) Center are legacies of that program. Both the Head Start and the LIFE Center operate in the Albina Community today. The LIFE Center, an emergency food and clothing program, was started by former employees of the Neighborhood Service Center. The LIFE center, a storefront building on NE Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, received national recognition for the innovative concept of promoting self-sufficiency by mandating that the clients work at the center before receiving services.[32] The Head Start program, administered by Albina Ministerial Alliance, provides day care to low-income preschool children. It is a very valuable service to the Albina Community.

Growing Black Power Movement

During the early sixties when government officials were searching for cures for the inner city problems, the United States experienced the rise of the black power movement. This political movement had a powerful impact on future anti-poverty programs. The idea of integration as cure for the inner city, with its implication that blacks would do well to assimilate into white culture was not seen as politically acceptable by liberal policy makers.

However, older, established black civil rights groups like the Urban League and the NAACP encouraged integration into the white culture. Initially, they saw the black power doctrine in direct opposition to the civil rights movement and were threatened by the aggressive stance used by black power groups. In 1966, the NAACP publicly disassociated itself from the black power doctrine. Its position was backed by Vice-President Hubert Humphrey who says, "We must reject calls for racism whether they come from a throat that is white or one that is black." Black militant groups such as the Black Muslims, Black Berets and Black Panthers viewed the Urban League and the NAACP as passive and controlled by the establishment.

[32]Oral Interview, Betty Thompson, 1992.

Malcolm X, in a speech presented at the Militant Labor Forum on "Prospects for Freedom" in 1965, expressed this view:

> **...Ten years ago or more, the NAACP was looked upon as a radical leftist, almost subversive, movement and then when the Black Muslim movement came along, the power structure said, "thank the Lord for Roy Wilkins and the NAACP..."**

Bitter and tense times were experienced by the NAACP when the National Executive Director Roy Wilkins began to acknowledge and defend black militants for shaking up the establishment, yet warning against the endorsement of the kind of radicalization that could force whites out of the movement altogether.

Militant Groups In Portland

On July 9, 1961, Clarence "Charles CX" Debiew and his wife established a mosque on Williams Avenue. The couple stirred up much interest when they introduced the Portland area to the Black Muslim movement founded by the Honorable Elijah Muhammed. The Black Muslim movement combined the Nation of Islam religion, with self-preservation and culture identity to empower black urbanites and solve problems of Urban America. The following quote by Elijah Muhammed defines the essence of the nation of Islam.

> **Knowledge of one's identity, one's self, community, nation, religion and God, is the true meaning of resurrection, while ignorance of it signifies hell.** [33]

The Black Muslims also claimed that "White men were devils". Many local blacks, not supporting that doctrine, accused the couple of advocating black supremacy and violence, an allegation which the Debiews denied.

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[33]Bell, Janet Cheatham, *Famous Black Quotations; on women, love and other topics,* (Chicago, Illinois), 1991, p.81.

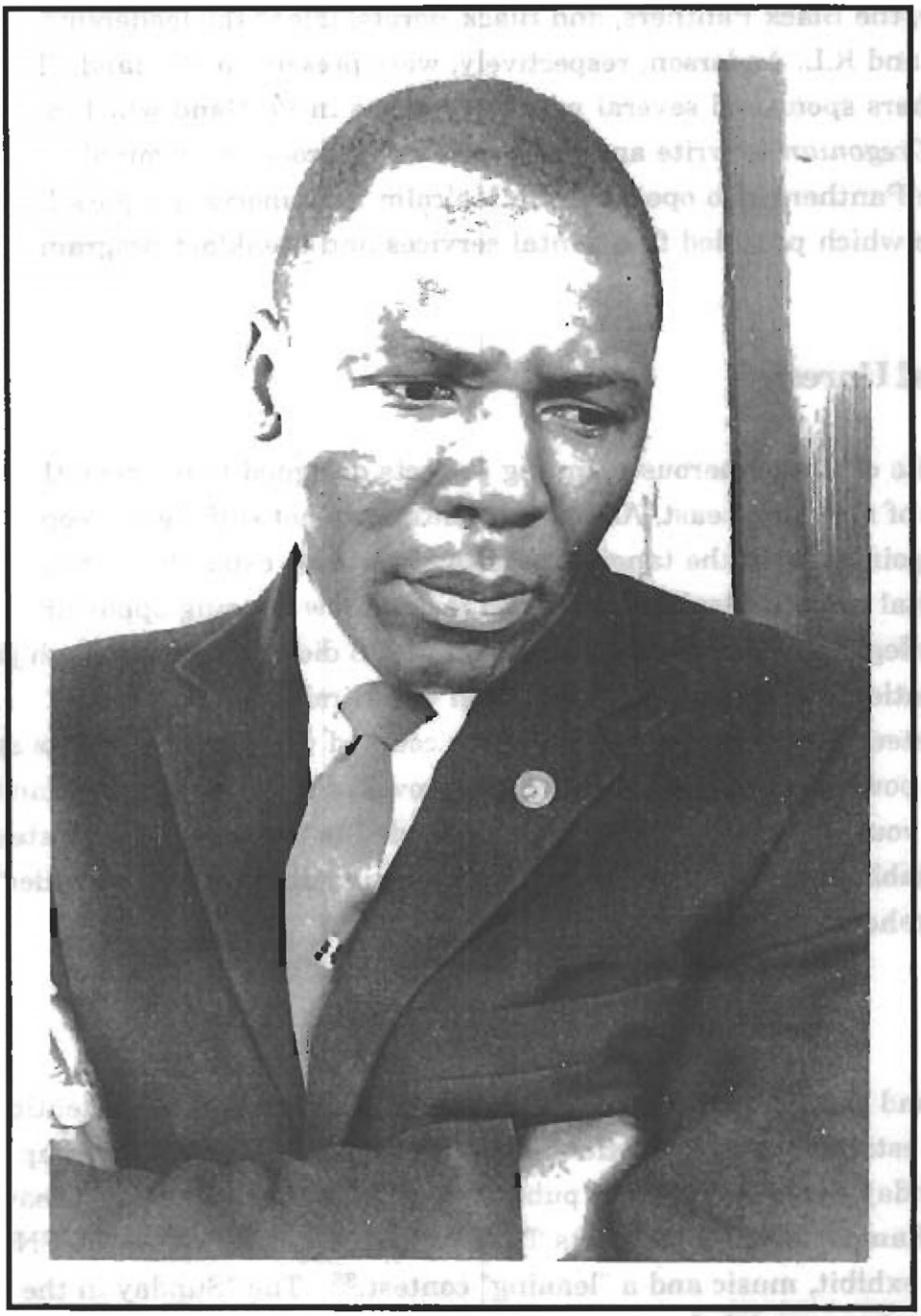
E. Shelton Hill, the executive director of the Urban League of Portland, whose mission was integrating blacks into the mainstream, stated in *The Oregonian*:

> **...any group, black or white, that advocates racial hatred is a detriment to the well-being of the community.**[34]

The couple left Portland when they did not receive much support from the local black community. However, in 1968, another attempt was made to begin a Muslim mosque in Portland. Several followers of the Honorable Elijah Muhammed started meeting in their homes. The group grew larger and later purchased and renovated a building for worship. The mosque was located at 7th and Fremont, presently called Mr. C Wigs. In May 1977, members of the Nation of Islam moved to Mississippi and Shaver Avenues where they operated a bakery, Fish Market and Sister Clare Muhammed School. The bakery specialized in natural whole wheat products. Some of the courses taught at the school included culture, history, social studies, and language. Linda Johnson was the director of the school. The Muslims also operated a restaurant on Union Avenue.[35]

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[34]Hilliard, William, Leader of the Portland Established Muslims Denies "Black Supremacy" Movement, The Oregonian, p. 8.
[35]Lurlene Samsud-Din, Oral Interview, 1992.



Charles CX Debiew, Leader of the Black Muslims in Portland
(courtesy of OHS)

Later, the Black Panthers, and Black Berets, under the leadership of Kent Ford and R.L. Anderson, respectively, were present in Portland. The Black Panthers sponsored several positive projects in Portland which prompted *The Oregonian* to write an article entitled "Heroes or Criminals." The Black Panthers also operated the Malcolm X Memorial People's Dental Clinic which provided free dental services and breakfast program.

Social Unrest

In spite of the numerous planning projects designed to improve the blighted areas of near northeast, Albina residents were not satisfied. People were disappointed with the tangible results of the ever expanding Emanuel Hospital project, displacements and lack of new housing opportunities. Major legislative successes from 1949 to 1966 did not create enough jobs. Recreational activities for black youth were limited. The growing discontentment with the quality of life coupled with the civil rights and black power movement of the sixties, provoked a riot among Portland's black youth. The City of Portland responded to the growing discontentment by establishing federally-funded programs in Albina which provided comprehensive services.

The Disturbance at Irving Park

Portland experienced a race riot in Albina which caught the attention of the white establishment in Portland. On Sunday, July 30, 1967, a group planned a "Sunday in the Park." The public was invited to see Eldridge Cleaver from Ramparts, the Black Arts Theatre from San Francisco, the SNCC photo exhibit, music and a "leaning" contest.[36] The "Sunday in the Park" (which the press labeled as a Black Power rally) was scheduled to take place in Irving Park located at 7th between Knott and Fremont Street. There were rumors that a riot was being planned. The National Guard were driving around Albina in their jeeps and trucks. The Portland Police were constantly circling the area. Four FBI vans, seven cars with plain-clothes

[36]Brown, Colden Jr., Rapping About Albina "Disturbance", The Vanguard, p. 10.

officers, and two FBI agents in plain-clothes were on hand. In church, local pastors were telling youth to stay away from Irving Park because the sponsors were criminals with records who were planning a riot.[37]

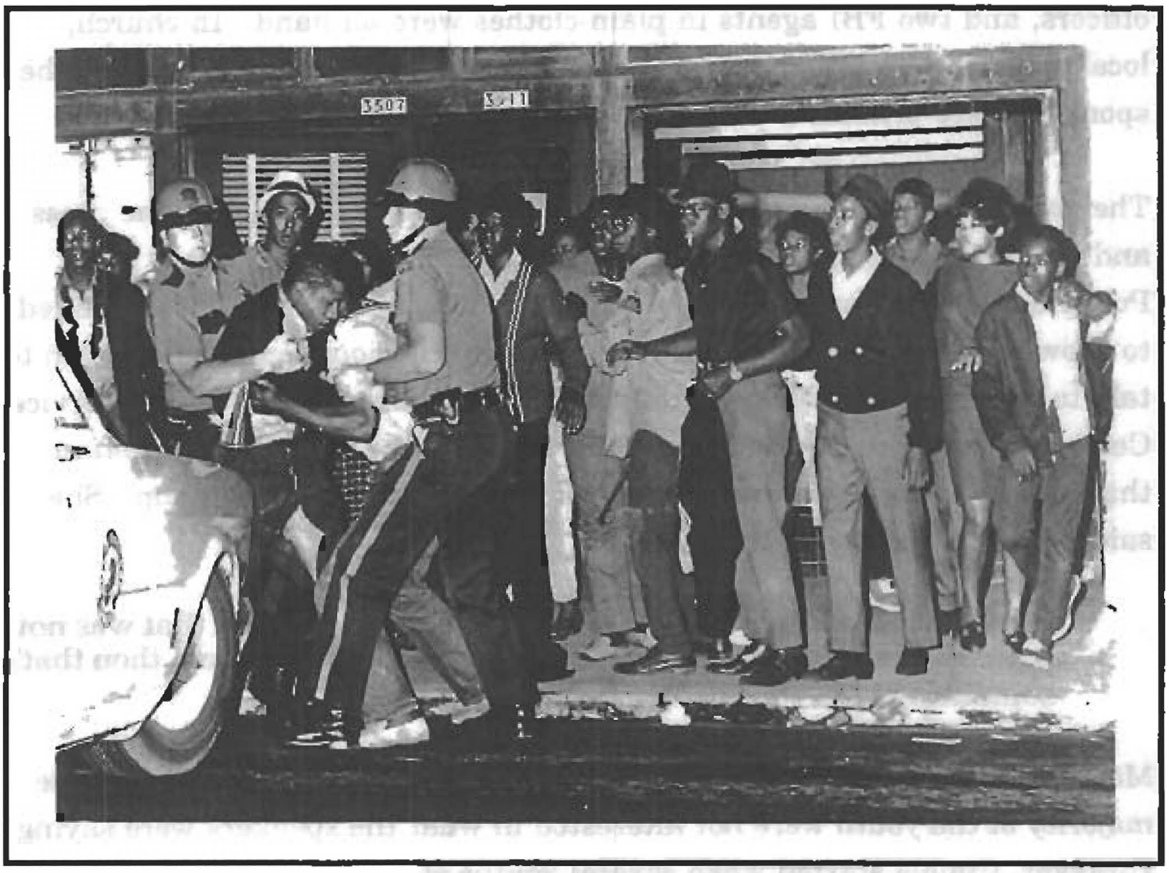
The group who planned the event was never identified by name; the press and police called them "outsiders". When Eldridge Cleaver, noted Black Power activist and author of Soul on Ice, and the Black Arts Theatre failed to show up at the "Sunday at the Park", the mysterious "outsiders" began to talk to the crowd about a revolution. Erma Hepburn, Neighborhood Service Center worker who was at Irving Park that Sunday, told *The Oregonian* that she did recognize a majority of the men in the speaker's group. She said she overhead one of them say:

> **It was rumored they were there to incite a riot - he said that was not true. But he added, If you're here to talk about revolution, then that's something else.** [38]

More than 100 youth were at the park and center workers noticed that the majority of the youth were not interested in what the speakers were saying. However, trouble started when several youths started chasing the FBI Agents. Another group started beating up a Park Supervisor, Ira Williamson. People began throwing bottles at passing cars. In the meantime, the group who planned the event decided to leave because no one was listening to them and they didn't want the microphone to be damaged.[39] The riot lasted two days. Approximately 200 blacks vandalized, looted and fire-bombed several businesses located along Union Avenue between Fremont and NE Beech.[40] One man was shot and 50 people were arrested.[41] Two local pastors, Reverend Wendall Wallace and O.B. Williams, were asked to go to Irving Park to calm down some 80 youths who were throwing bottles and rocks at passing white motorists.[42]

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[37]Ibid.
[38]Olmos, Robert. Negro Leaders Declare Albina Refuses to Accept Black Power Theory, The Oregonian, August 1, 1967, p. 16.
[39]Ibid.
[40]Portland State University, History of the Albina Plan Area, 1990, p. 47.
[41]Brown, Op. Cit., p. 10.
[42]Portland State University, Op. Cit., p. 47.



Fight on 3500 block of NE Union Avenue
July 15, 1966
(courtesy of OHS)

The two nights of random violence left lasting marks on Union Avenue. Immediately after the riot, shopkeepers along Union Avenue began protecting their property from future vandalism attempts. They used steel bars and wood boards to conceal windows facing Union Avenue which created a vast strip of "anti-riot or fortress" decor along the avenue.

On the other hand, the riot in Albina opened dialogue between City officials and residents of Albina. After the riot, Park Chief Francis J. Ivancie became the first local official to go into Albina and talk to the people. He declared doors were open for recreation ideas with the local residents.[43] Mayor Terry D. Shrunk met with a group of youth from Albina who later feared that the Mayor "missed the message." The delegation of youth from Albina asked the Mayor to help them get jobs, improve school curricula, provide better municipal services and housing conditions and withdraw heavy police patrols from the neighborhood.[44] Some youth felt that the programs already operating in Albina (War on Poverty and Albina Neighborhood Improvement Projects) were not effective and if any progress was made, it was not coming fast enough.

Black youth were unhappy with the community leadership. Before the meeting with Mayor Shrunk, the delegation of youth conferred with several clergy and told them that many of the clergy had "sold out" to middle class standards, won't listen to what they have to say and have lost all contact with the people on the street.[45] The Society for New Action Politics (SNAP) during a public hearing told the City Council that:

> **Negroes serving on social agency and Office of Economic Opportunity boards in Albina are Uncle Toms. 'Uncle Tomism' seems to be running rampant over there right now.[46]**

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[43]Staff Reporter, Parks Chief Ivancie Talks To Albina People, Declares Doors Open For Recreation Ideas. The Oregonian, August 3, 1967, p. 13.
[44]Sanderson, William, Negro Youths Fear Mayor Missed Message Of City Hall Discussion, The Oregonian, August 3, 1967, p. 15.
[45]Ibid.
[46]The Oregonian, Op.cit., p.13.

Model Cities Demonstration Project

The War on Poverty looked for solutions to poverty that would be local and decentralized, and would circumvent state and local government and Congress. This earned the enmity of members of Congress, mayors, governors, and cabinet secretaries, so the War on Poverty was in trouble politically from the start.[47] Hundreds of anti-poverty programs were run largely by inexperienced people which led to highly publicized failures. It was commonly said that the Vietnam War drew President Johnson away from the War on Poverty and weakened his financial commitment. Negative public opinion against the War on Poverty helped to weaken President Johnson's support for the program. The Albina War on Poverty was eventually phased out and replaced by the Model Cities Demonstration Project.

The Portland Model Cities program was initiated in April 1967. The grant application prepared by PDC, the Planning Bureau, City Attorney's office and Park Chief Francis Ivancie, was "dropped in the mail without seriously expecting the Washington bureaucracy to fund it". In November 1967 the Federal Housing and Urban Development department did criticize the application for its citizen participation component which was "mostly at the level of informing residents rather than involving them and because it ignored the problems of working with lower income groups." Nonetheless it was funded for one year. [48] The Model Cities program came along when the City of Portland needed to address the growing discontent in Albina. Its emphasis on citizen participation made the program politically expedient.

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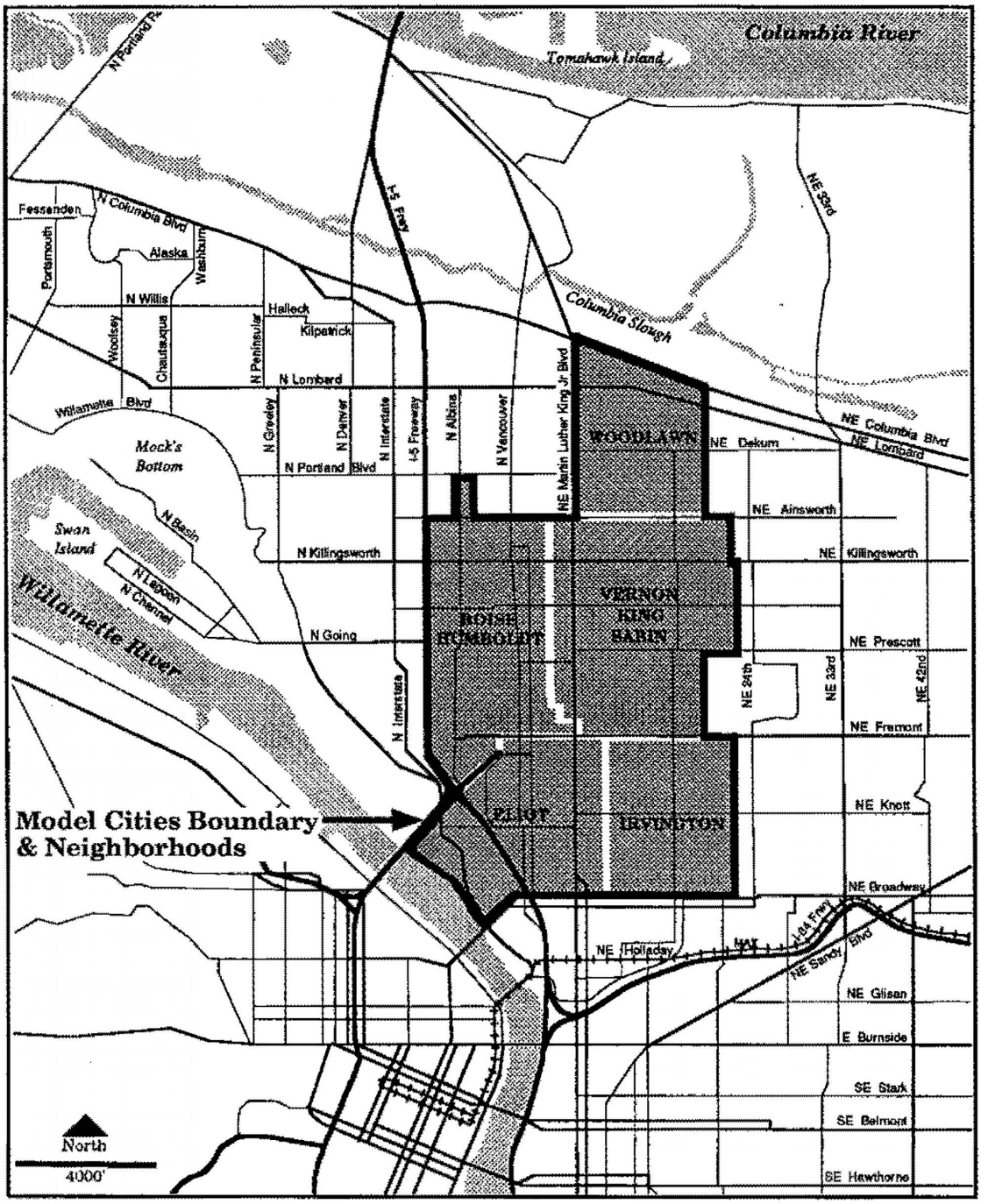
[47]Hilliard, Op.cit., p. 38.
[48]Abbott, Op.cit., p. 193.

During 1968, the Model Cities program began a five year planning process which included nine working committees. Each committee, established by a Citizen Planning Board, was developed to create work programs, preliminary budgets for Model Cities projects and a *Comprehensive City Demonstration Model Plan for the Model Cities District.*[49] The planning process was based on the concept that citizens should be involved in determining the major issues that will shape their neighborhood and affect their lives. The Comprehensive City Demonstration Plan for the Model Cities District that reached the council members on December 16, 1968, followed HUD's three part requirement for a problem statement, a first year action plan, and a five year plan. The product shocked the city bureaucrats, for it was the first official statement that expressed the residents' own perceptions of the problems of Northeast Portland neighborhoods. Since the Model Cities area was 50 percent black, the problem statement spoke directly about racial discrimination. It embarrassed political leaders who maintained that blacks in Portland faced no special problems because of race.[50] Although there was much political in fighting, the program received final approval by the council in April and federal funding in July, 1969.[51]

The Portland Model Cities district was a 4.3 square mile area bounded by the Willamette River and Minnesota Freeway on the west and NE Broadway on the south. The east boundary follows an irregular line roughly in the vicinity of NE 21st Avenue. The north boundary is NE Columbia Boulevard east of Union Avenue and Ainsworth Street west of Union. The district included eight neighborhoods: Eliot, Boise, Humboldt, Woodlawn, Vernon, King, Sabin and Irvington.[52]

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[49]Portland City Planning Commission, A Comprehensive Development Plan for the Model Cities District. (Portland, Oregon), 1971, p. 1.
[50]Abbott, Op.cit., p. 194.
[51]Ibid., p. 195.
[52]Ibid., p. 9.



Model Cities Boundary and Neighborhoods

Portland Development Commission (PDC) involvement made the residents fear that the program was another guise for urban renewal. Local protest demanded that PDC did not control the plan and that the program hire a black director rather than a white director. Model Cities had three white executive directors before Mayor Shrunk recruited Charles Jordan from Palm Springs, California to head the Model Cities Program. The politics of hiring someone that the 27 member citizens' board and the Mayor would approve was very difficult. Charles Jordan's recruitment was not without controversy. They flew him to Portland three times before they offered him the position. At his first interview, they were surprised that he was black. The application did not have a classification for race and the panel never thought a black man would have a resumé like his. Three months after his first interview, he received a call from the Mayor's Office asking him to come back to be interviewed by the citizens' board. When Charles Jordan went to the interview, held at Portland Community College, television cameras and angry Black Berets (under the leadership of R.L. Anderson) greeted him. After he left the interviewing room, members of the board closed the door to discuss the interview. All of sudden, the Black Berets kicked the door open and said that they were not happy with the hiring process and wanted someone to be hired who lived in Portland. Frightened board members, some of whom were senior citizens, were exiting the room through the windows.[53] R.L. Anderson, according to Jordan, later became one of his biggest supporters.

Eventually Mayor Shrunk offered the position to him and Jordan accepted. A month after Jordan moved to Portland, he received a letter from Housing And Urban Development (HUD) which said he had six months to get the program in order or they would take away the funding. Several comprehensive programs were started. Charles Jordan said:

> **The Model Cities Program was an exciting concept. There were a lot of lessons learned. There were a lot of things, in retrospect, that we didn't do right. We had 4 square miles to deal with. And we had the opportunity to deal comprehensively with that area. Of course, there was so much we did not know. The Model Cities brought together hundreds of people and threw a lot money at them - 3.75 million**

[53]Ibid.

dollars. They were not prepared to deal with those dollars. It was like the federal and city government were saying these are your crumbs and you do what you want to do with them.[54]

The Model Cities program included an extensive citizen participation process. They had a 27 member board and several working committees. Jordan said:

There were meetings every night. A lot of citizen participation. These were the two hardest years of my life. That experience prepared me for City Council more than anything else. It was excellent training ground.

The City of Portland's transitional plan was a good one. When the Model Cities program was phasing out, several former Model Cities employees were employed with the City of Portland.

The City Demonstration Agency (CDA) coordinated the Model Cities program with other city and public agencies. The Model Cities Citizens' Planning Board, through the CDA staff, was the body through which all programs were formulated. In most cases, the citizen was not experienced in dealing with this complex system. Although Mayor Shrunk was very supportive of the Model Cities Program, Charles Jordan wished that he would have been more politically astute at that time, in working with the city's power structure.

Charles Jordan remained the Executive Director of Model Cities for two years. He left to work for newly elected Mayor Neil Goldschmidt and established the City of Portland Human Resources Department. When Jordan left the Model Cities Program, Al Jamison became the executive director. Charles Jordan eventually became the first black commissioner for the City of Portland. He served in that capacity for ten years.

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[54]Ibid.

There was outgrowth from the Model Cities program. In 1970, the City applied for **Neighborhood Development Program (NDP)** funding to make physical improvements to the Model Cities neighborhoods. Substantial improvements were made under the NDP. These included:[55]

- Rehabilitation of 1,600 housing units through program loans and grants;
- Private rehabilitation of an additional 250 units;
- Planting nearly 600 street trees;
- Improvement of over 5 miles of streets to City standards;
- Creation of more than 7 acres of parks at three sites; and
- Eight neighborhood policy plans were developed, but were not adopted by the City.

Another outgrowth of the Model Cities program was the **Union Avenue Redevelopment Plan.** In December 1973, the City of Portland and the Model Cities Planning Board agreed to launch the Union Avenue Redevelopment Program. The goals of the program were to create new economic opportunities for local businesses, enhance the physical appearance of the street and provide housing opportunities in the surrounding neighborhoods. One of the results was the construction of the median strip with landscaping on Union Avenue.

The re-engineered street was designed to alleviate high accident rates along Union Avenue, create pull out lanes at major bus stops, manage traffic and provide left turn signals. However, the improvement eliminated on-street parking and made it difficult for cars to stop and patronize local businesses. The loss of on-street parking is perceived by many in the Albina community as one of the factors hindering revitalization of Union Avenue's business district.[56]

The program was terminated in 1974. A total of 18.5 million dollars was spent in the five years of the Model Cities Program.[57] Additional products of Model Cities were the King Neighborhood Facility located at 4815 NE 7th

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[55]Bureau of Planning, Background Report: Volume I; The Albina Community, p. 14.
[56]Ibid., p. 16.
[57]The Oregonian

Avenue, Albina Health Care Center (which is now defunct), Cascade Center of Portland Community College, career programs, business development programs, nutritional programs for children and services for senior citizens.[58]

The greatest legacies of the Model Cities era were: the development of black leadership at the grassroots level, delineation of neighborhood boundaries to promote a sense of neighborhood, and citizens becoming more knowledgeable about the workings of city bureaucracy. The Neighborhood Development Program resulted in plans for Woodlawn, Irvington, King/Vernon/Sabin, Boise/Humboldt, and Eliot. In 1973, these neighborhood policy plans were completed and presented to Mayor Shrunk, although these plans were never formally approved by the City Council. One reason for this was that federal cutbacks in aid to cities and social programs made implementation at the local level almost impossible without diverting a large amount of city and county funds.[59]

The Albina Corporation

Besides the Model Cities program, several innovative programs were initiated during the late sixties and early seventies. In May 1968, the Albina Corporation, a black-owned and operated manufacturing firm (with a black only workforce) was established in Albina. The manufacturing and training site was located in a former bowling alley at 3810 N Mississippi. The Albina Corporation was initially conceived by Linus J. Niedermeyer, a successful Portland businessman who had been impressed by the Watts Manufacturing Company of Los Angeles, a "ghetto subsidiary" of the Aerojet Corporation. Mr. Niedermeyer felt that a similar project in the Albina District would be desirable. With the assistance of the Portland Metropolitan Steering Committee, the local Community Action Agency and the Albina Citizen's War on Poverty Committee, a neighborhood Office of

[58]Ibid.
[59]Ibid., p. 15.

Economic Opportunity group, a business plan and organizational structure for the proposed corporation was developed.[60]

Developed at the time that national attention was turning to economic development in the inner city, the Corporation was designed to overcome shortcomings of the early government efforts to revive "ghetto" areas economically and socially. The Corporation's mission was to stimulate the economic revitalization of a depressed inner-city area by hiring the "unemployable" and motivating them not only to gain skills but to own the majority of the capital interest in the Corporation.[61] Under the two-factor economic theory of Louis O. Kelso, providing for "capital ownership by corporate employees", the Corporation provided an Albina Investment Trust, a deferred compensation trust established in behalf of the employees.



The Albina Corporation Trust Committee, 1968

[60]The Albina Corporation, *The Albina Corporation Story: A New Winning Approach to War on Poverty*, 1968, p. 4-5.
[61]Ibid., p. 3-4.

Attorney Mayfield Webb was appointed the president of the Albina Corporation which operated for two and one half years. The company produced wood, metal, plastic and fiberglass fabrications and electro-mechanical assemblies.[62] In February 1969 the company received a $1.2 million contract from the Department of Defense to paint ammunitions boxes by an electro-coating process. When the Vietnam War ended defense spending on war supplies declined and the Defense Department terminated their contract with the Corporation.[63] Attempts to secure other contracts were unsuccessful and the Albina Corporation went out of business in June 1971. The company's reliance on the Defense Department contract, and their inability to secure civilian contracts led to the closure of the company. Despite its short history, the Albina Corporation employed and trained more than 500 black males and 100 of them stayed with the company until it closed its doors. According to Mayfield Webb, "we could not train them fast enough, before they were recruited by other local manufacturing firms."[64]

Albina Art Center

Another innovative program designed for Albina residents that received Albina War on Poverty funds was the **Albina Art Center** located at 8 NE Killingsworth. The Albina Art Center was incorporated on December 29, 1964. The Center was organized to provide a means of developing the cultural and intellectual resources of Albina and other similar socio-economic areas within metropolitan Portland. The center provided visual arts, music and drama classes. The Art Center had 800 paid members from all over Portland. Rufus Butler was the first managing director. The board was made up of several prominent white members, such as Arlene Schnitzer.

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[62]City Club, Mayfield K. Webb - The Albina Corporation, City Club Bulletin, 1969, Vol. 49, No. 36, p. 1.
[63]Mayfield Webb, Oral Interview, 1992.
[64]Ibid.



Albina Art Center production of the Pied Piper
(courtesy of OHS)

The Art Center was an active and positive community resource. The center held concerts and plays at Peninsula, Irving and Dawson Parks with a collective attendance of approximately 7,250 people. Active during the rise of black power doctrines of black self-help and empowerment, the organization was viewed as being controlled by whites. There was a segment within the organization which felt that the Center should not accept 'white money'.[66] In 1973, the center found itself struggling to survive, hoping to receive $40,000 promised by the Model Cities Program. The money was never obtained and the assets of the Albina Arts Center were transferred to the Albina Women's Association headed by Betty Overton. The Center operated for another five years before closing its doors in 1977.

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[66]Oral Interview, Thomas Unthank, 1992.

The Albina Art Center Corporation held fond memories for many Albina residents. Ronnye Harrison, a local jazz musician, attended the Albina Art Center when he was thirteen years old. When asked about his experience at the Albina Art Center he replied:

> **The Albina Art Center gave me positive music direction. I learned how to read music and to play jazz. ...The center gave me a sense of belonging. Instructors such as Thara Memory, were always around to help you. They had dance classes and I would go to the center just to watch learning in progress... I would love to see the Albina Art Center come back.** [66]

Emanuel Hospital Urban Renewal Project

In 1967, needing to expand or relocate in order to stay technologically abreast and competitive, Emanuel Hospital announced that, with the assistance of federal grants, it would build a 19 acre health campus. The project require multiblock land clearance of the Central Albina area, now called the Eliot Neighborhood. The urban renewal project was initiated during the Model Cities Program. By 1971 the comprehensive Development Plan for the Model Cities District admitted that:

> **...Many people, particularly elderly, wanted to remain. Rehabilitation and rebuilding of the Eliot Neighborhood for residential purposes is consistent with broad community goals of improving the variety and quantity of housing opportunities in the central Portland area.**

When it was time for the Model Cities Planning Board to vote on the Emanuel Project some people did not understand that the vote was being taken. Despite bitter opposition from neighborhoods, PDC carefully reserved the Emanuel Urban Renewal project from the Model Cities planning process.[67] Staff from Emanuel Hospital had been working with PDC and the Planning Bureau since 1962, when plans for the Emanuel Hospital expansion were first initiated in the Central Albina Study. At that time the Planning Commission allocated more than ten blocks for hospital

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[66]Oral Interview, Ronnye Harrison, 1993.
[67]Abbott, Carl, *Portland: Planning, Politics, and Growth in a Twentieth-Century City*, University of Nebraska: Lincoln and Lincoln, 1983, p.196.

expansion. Since 1962, PDC wrote off the entire Eliot Neighborhood for industrial, commercial and institutional uses.[68] Despite neighborhood requests for housing assistance, city officials continued to ignore this opposition. Hospital administrators were stunned when they went to surrounding neighborhood to ask for help building the new center and the community answered with a resounding "no". As the project moved forward, Emanuel Hospital found itself caught between PDC and the community.[69]



Emanuel Hospital Protesters, 1972
(courtesy of OHS)

[68]Abbott, Op. cit.
[69]Hartnett, Susan G., *From Albina to Eliot: The Transformation of a 1887 City to 1991 Inner City Neighborhood*, Portland State University, USP 510, Summer 1991, p. 6.

In the end the massive land clearance razed 188 houses in the area between Russell and Cook, west of Vancouver Avenue.[70] A local group called Emanuel Displaced Person's Association (EDPA) organized to fight the urban renewal plans. The group, headed by Mrs. Leo Warren, was formed in 1970 when families immediately surrounding the Emanuel Hospital were confronted with the expansion plans which included the land of many of these residents. Residents were required to move within ninety days. Homeowners were compensated for the value of their home and given up to $15,000 in relocation compensation. Renters received up to $4,000 in relocation compensation. [71] Emanuel Hospital, PDC and the Housing Authority of Portland joined the Model Cities Planning Board and EDPA in signing an agreement which pledged to use "maximum energy and enthusiasm" toward a goal of replacing the lost housing in the neighborhood.[72] When the expansion plan came to halt because of federal budget cuts, many of the displaced residents were bewildered and felt cheated. When asked by a Portland Observer reporter about her feeling towards the Emanuel Hospital building halt, Mrs. Warren replied:

> **Didn't they have a long range plan? After all, if your life's investment was smashed to splinters by a bulldozer to make room for a hospital, you could at least feel decent and perhaps tolerable about it; but to have it all done for nothing! Well, what is there to feel?**

New Solutions to Old Challenges

Under Mayor Neil Goldschmidt changes came with a neighborhood revolution that erupted in every sector of the city between 1967 and 1972. Albina, Corbett-Terwilliger, Northwest Portland and other old neighborhoods demanded new attention to their needs.[73] Community leaders at the grassroots level forced professional planners to listen to them and redefine their planning practices as they related to neighborhood planning. By the 1970s policy makers recognized that inner-city

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[70]Ibid., p.7.

[71]Allen, Rosemary, *Displaced residents confused by halt,* Portland Observer, Volume 3; No. 27 (Portland, Oregon), April 12, 1973, p. 1.

[72]Ibid., p. 7.

[73]Abbott, Op.cit., P. 194.

neighborhoods could be reused as residential areas and that it was important that planning practices involved a comprehensive approach which addressed the dynamics among socio-economic needs and physical land use changes. In the eighties the Eliot Neighborhood headed the list of Portland neighborhoods that were ripe for private reinvestment.

Albina Community Plan

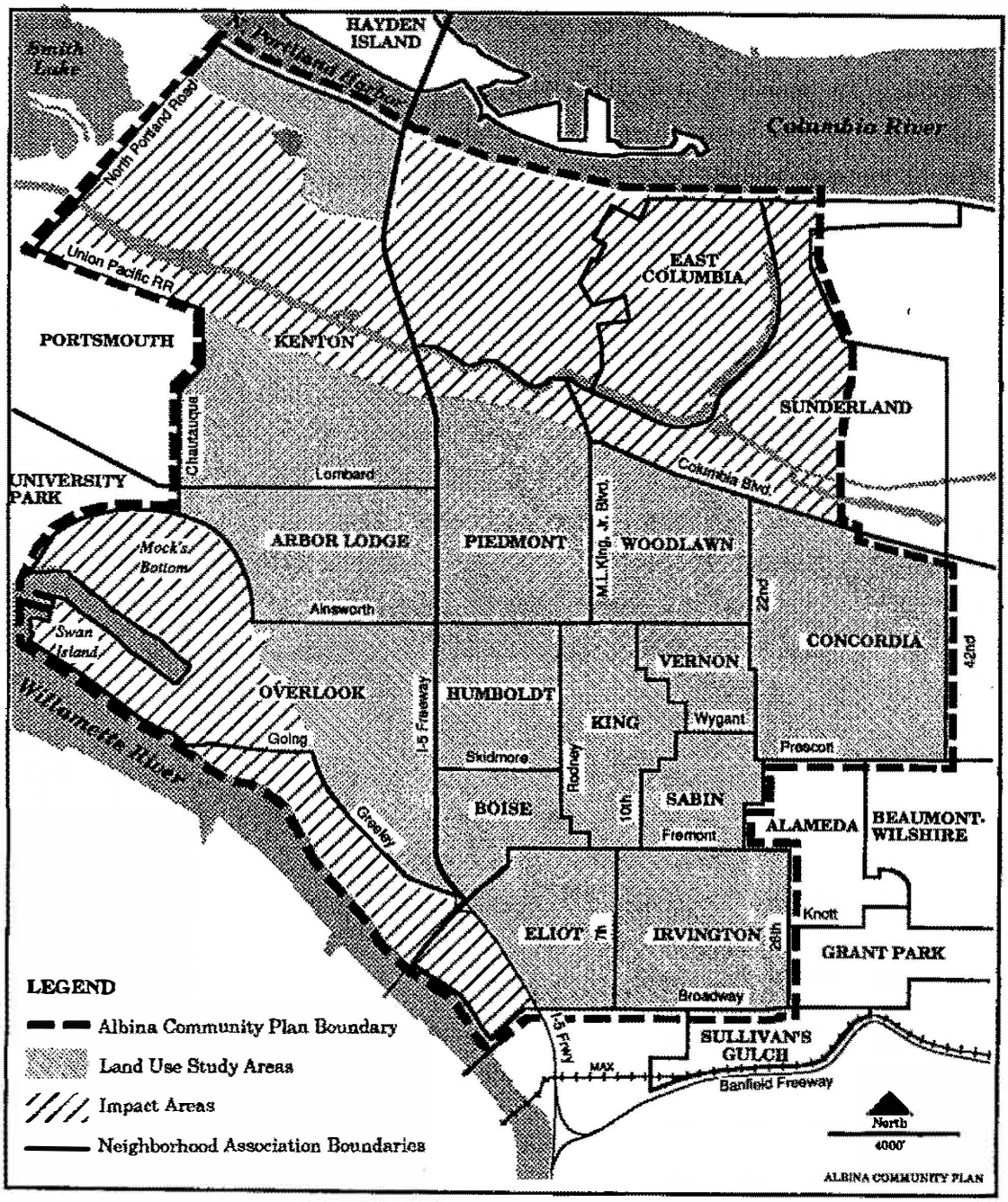
The Albina Community Plan, the latest planning effort in Albina, represents a major commitment on the part of the City of Portland as well as the citizens of Albina to improve the quality of life in the district. The plan represents the extensive work of citizens, neighborhood and business associations, the N/NE Economic Development Alliance and Portland Bureau of Planning.

The Albina Community Plan is the first comprehensive planning effort for the area since the Portland Model Cities Program. The Albina Community Plan, covering 19 square miles, includes the Model Cities Neighborhood area as well as six additional neighborhoods. The Albina Community Plan process began in July 1989 with the expectation that it would take at least three years to complete a district plan and a number of accompanying neighborhood plans. The Recommended Albina Community Plan is scheduled to go to City Council for adoption in Spring 1993.

The Plan proposes a series of comprehensive strategies covering a broad spectrum of policies. Land use, transportation and public service strategies address livability, increased accessibility, reduction of land use and transportation impacts, improving the developability of land, preservation of Albina history, and improvement in public infrastructure. This Plan also includes social and educational programs to address the most pressing concerns of the people of Albina. These programs include job training, family services, and improvement in educational opportunities. [74]

[74]Bureau of Planning, Portland's Albina Community Plan: Planning Commission's Draft, September 1992

One of the most important and innovative parts of the Albina Community Plan is the action chart. Each policy has a set of action strategies designed to guide implementation. Local agencies have been identified that are committed to championing these strategies. The Albina Community Plan calls for a monitoring committee to assure that the action strategies are fulfilled.



Albina Community Plan Boundary and Neighborhoods

Following in the tradition of the Model Cities Program, the Albina Community Plan promoted and encouraged citizen participation. When asked about his perception of the citizen participation initiated in the Albina Community Plan, Art Alexander, Commissioner Mike Lindberg's Assistant replied:

> **The Albina Community Plan provided opportunity for and encouraged citizen participation. But they may not have liked what they heard.** [75]

However, the outcome of this Albina Community Plan planning process has yet to fully surface. Realistically, the fiscal environment that exists today creates a major obstacle for the implementation of the Plan. Measure 5 has placed state, county, local governments and the Portland public school system in a weaker position. Measure 5, a constitutional amendment, created a ceiling on property taxes. Implementation of many projects and programs called for in the Albina Community Plan will be slowed as state and local government and school budgets are adjusted in response to Measure 5's limitations.[76]

Portland Development Commission's primary tool for implementation of urban renewal districts (tax increment financing) may no longer be a viable option for revitalizing deteriorating commercial districts. State of Oregon higher education system has increased tuition costs and proposes severe cut backs in staff and degree programs. Park and recreational services have been cut. Family service programs, depending on state and county funding, may diminish. Measure 5 has had a major impact on city-wide and state-wide services. Albina, a community with a large percentage of low income and disenfranchised groups, is being impacted by the changes resulting from passage of Measure 5.

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[75]Art Alexander, Oral Interview, 1992.
[76]City Club Of Portland, *Report on Tax Increment Financing in Oregon,* City Club of Portland Bulletin, Volume 72, No. 2, June 14, 1991, p. 16.

Challenging Times

By 1990, 33,530 African Americans lived in Portland, comprising 7.7 percent of the total population.[77] The center of the black community continues its northward shift within north/northeast Portland. Nearly 80 percent of the city's African American residents live in inner northeast Portland. By 1990, the majority of black residents in northeast Portland were concentrated on the west side of King Boulevard, north of Fremont and south of Killingsworth Street (King, Boise, Overlook, and Humboldt neighborhoods). Despite this concentration, Portland lacks an eastern style black ghetto in which African Americans make up 90 percent or 95 percent of the population for mile after mile in areas like the east side of Cleveland or the south side of Chicago. Nearly three-fourths of the Portland area's African Americans are a minority within their own neighborhoods as well as within the metropolitan area as a whole.[78]

Progress has occurred in the African American community within the last twenty years. African Americans have been elected both city and county-wide to serve on the Portland City Council and the Multnomah County Board of Commissioners. In 1974, Bill McCoy was Oregon's first African American to win legislative representation and today he is one of three black lawmakers. Treasurer Jim Hill of Salem is the first African American to serve in statewide office.[79] In 1984, Margaret Carter was the first black woman elected to represent Portland's black community in the House of Representatives. Former police officer, Dick Bogle, Jr. became Portland's first African American City Commissioner. Oregon has three African American trial judges, all in Multnomah County, and the Oregon State Bar counts 49 blacks among its 9,678 active members.[80] Recently retired, Mercedes Diez became the first black woman Judge.

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[77]City Club, Study of Racial and Ethnic Relations in Portland Housing: Subcommittee Report, City Club of Portland Bulletin, Volume 72, No. 39, March 6, 1992, p. 265.
[78]Abbott, Carl, Ethnic Minority in Portland: A 1990 Census Profile, The Center For Urban Studies, Portland State University, September 1991, p. 5.
[79]Rede, George,*Discriminatory laws last for decades,* The Oregonian, February 8, 1993, p. 1.
[80]Ibid.

Over the last twenty odd years, several promising community-based organizations were founded to empower black residents to control critical issues in their community. The **Black Education Center** opened in 1970 to provide African American children with a place where basic reading and math could be taught while the students' sense of cultural awareness was aimed at the advancement of people of African heritage.[81] The **Black United Front** was organized in 1979 to focus on economic fairness, political empowerment, quality and positive education, positive cultural awareness and police abuse and misconduct. Over past twelve years, this group has taken an aggressive role in negotiating fair treatment for African Americans in Portland. Founded by Rev. John Jackson and Ronnie Herndon, the Black United Front has successfully negotiated an affirmative action plan with Fred Meyer, an agreement with Nike to open a Nike factory outlet in Albina, and triggered a delay of the federal community development fund distribution until the black community could seat a representative on the Economic Development Advisory Committee.

The Black Education Center and the Black United Front are only two examples of the type of organizations that are dedicated to serving the black community in Albina. Other nonprofit organizations such as the black churches; Black United Fund; the Coalition of Black Men; the North/Northeast Economic Development Alliance; the Northeast Community Development Corporation; One Church, One Child; Albina Ministerial Alliance; Self Enhancement, Cultural Recreation Band; World Arts Foundation; The Northeast Workforce Center; House of UMOJA; and Yaun Youth Care Center, Inc. are all working together to provide community services to African Americans. The expertise, creativity and self determination are in place to build and develop a healthy community.

This is a time of real challenge in addressing the social, physical and economic needs of the African American community. The violence that erupted in the Los Angeles riots of May 1992 signifies a lingering frustration and anger among African Americans concerning their position

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[81] Batiste, Aliyson R., Center provides blacks cultural background for education, The Oregonian, p.3m11.

in American society. The African American experience in Portland and in the United States has made us knowledgeable in many areas. The proper and effective use of this knowledge will allow the City of Portland to become a forerunner in creating innovative solutions and revolutionary changes.

Maps and Tables

Maps

Page 17 Census Tract 51: North Burnside District

Page 31 Broadway-Steel Bridge Tract

Page 66 Vanport City

Page 87 Census Tracts 22 and 23: Near Northeast

Page 105 Black Population Distribution, 1945

Page 112 Central Albina Study Area Boundary

Page 116 Albina Neighborhood Improvement Project Boundary

Page 130 Model Cities Boundary and Neighborhoods

Page 142 Albina Community Plan Area and Neighborhoods

Tables

Page 16 Table 1: Black Population In Oregon

Page 74 Table 2: Growth of Vanport City Population

Photo Credits

Cover Page

Hegpeth Restaurant, 1912 (Order 87976-Loc. Lot 679)

Chapter One

Page 10. A.E. Flowers Family (Order 12699 -Loc. 113A)
Page 13 Dining Car Cooks -Southern Pacific Railroad, 1916 (Order 24250-Loc. 113A)
Page 15 Interior of Portland Hotel Dining Room With Waiters Posed At Table (Order 018291- Loc. 9999y485)
Page 19 First African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (Order 1960-Loc. 113A)
Page 20 Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church (Courtesy of Verdell Burdine Rutherford)*

Chapter Two

Page 25 A.E. Flowers' Residence (Order 67995-Loc. Lot 679)
Page 26 Dr. J.A. Merriman's Residence (Order 87996-Loc. Lot 679)
Page 28 German Methodist Episcopal Church (Order 009192-Loc. 0317P359)
Page 35 Mrs. Marie Smith (Courtesy of Verdell Burdine Rutherford)*
Page 37 E.D. Cannady, 1913 (Order 87994-Loc. Lot 679)
Page 42 Entrepreneur John C. Logan (Order 82449-Loc. Lot 679)
Page 45 Members of the Rosebud Study Club - Colored Women's Clubs (Order 48767-Loc. Lot 679)
Page 46 Colored Women's Council, 1914 (Order 87973-Loc. Lot 679)
Page 47 The Colored YWCA (Order 87975-Loc. Lot 679)
Page 51 W.D. Allen, 1919 (Order 84658-Loc. Lot 697)
Page 53 Fred D. Thomas, 1917 (Order 39035-Loc. 113A)

Chapter Three

Page 58 Launching of the Tuskegee Liberty Ship (Order 72261-Loc. 113A)
Page 61 White Trade Only Sign (Order 0334A72-Loc. 0334A72)
Page 65 Aerial View of Vanport City (Order 68778-Loc. 1689)
Page 66 Map of Vanport City
Page 68 Reverend James Clow (Order 001398- Loc. 0020P398)
Page 69 Robert G. Ford and Leota Stone (Order 022271)
Page 71 Bill Travis and unidentified officer (Order 87974-Loc. 1689)
Page 73 Vanport Integrated Vacation Bible School (Order 78867-Loc. 1689)
Page 77 Vanport Flood, 1948 (Order 75895-Loc. 1689A)
Page 80 Terminal Ice and Cold Storage Company Building (Order 60392-Loc. 1689A)
Page 81 Vanport Refugees (Order 38667-Loc. 1526)
Page 83 DeNorval Unthank, M.D. (Order 25442-Loc. 113A)

(Chapter Three Continued)

Page 91	WWII Veterans at the Urban League Meeting (Order 25457-Loc. 113A)
Page 92	Edwin "Bill" Berry (Order 26047-Loc. 113A)
Page 93	E. Shelton "Shelly" Hill (Order 25459-Loc. 113A)
Page 98	NAACP Delegation thanking the sponsors of the civil rights bill (Courtesy of Verdell Burdine Rutherford)*
Page 100	Pauline Bradford (Courtesy of Pauline Bradford)*

Chapter Four

Page 106	N. Williams Avenue and Russell Street, 1962 (Order 25043-Loc. 1691)
Page 107	Williams Avenue YWCA - Oregon Association of Colored Women's Club Scholarship Tea (Courtesy of Pauline Bradford)*
Page 108	Blessed Martin's Day Nursery (Order 007405-Loc. 0029P172)
Page 113	Mrs. Power Stands Outside of Power's Grocery store (Pauline Bradford)*
Page 114	Mayfield Webb, Juretta Webb and former Governor Hatfield (Courtesy of Mayfield Webb)*
Page 118	Albina Neighborhood Cleanup (Order 78808-Loc. 1691)
Page 123	Charles CX Debiew, Leader of Muslims (Order 002373-Loc. 0024P373)
Page 126	Fight on 3500 Block of NE Union Avenue (Order 84803-Loc. 113A)
Page 135	The Albina Corporation Trust Committee, 1968 Courtesy of Mayfield Webb)*
Page 137	Albina Art Center Production of the Pied Piper (Order 52661-Loc. 1691)
Page 124	Emanuel Hospital Protesters, 1972 (Order 023743-Loc. 036P093)

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Oral Interviewees

Art Alexander, community activist and Assistant to Commissioner Lindberg.

Bessie Anfield, retired Multnomah County employee and longtime Albina resident.

Pauline Bradford, retired school teacher, community activist and longtime Albina resident.

Mckinley Burt, educator, writer and community historian.

Ellen Law-Driggins, retired school teacher. Active in Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Graduate Chapter Sorority.

Pastor Donald Frazier, Mt. Sinai Community Baptist Church and native Portlander.

Fay Gordly, retired railroad worker and longtime resident of Albina.

Joyce Harris, community activist and executive director of the Black Education Center.

Reverend John Jackson, former Pastor of Mount Olivet Church and community activist.

Charles Jordan, director of Portland Bureau of Parks and Recreation, former City Commissioner and former director of the Model Cities Program.

Isadore Maney, native Portlander and retired postal worker.

Edward Merchant, retired merchant seaman and former shipyard worker.

Viola and Julius Moore, retired longshoreman, former shipyard workers and longtime residents of Portland and Irvington neighborhood.

Ruth and Richard Neal Sr., retired federal employee and Portland's first black pharmacist, respectively.

Nathan Nickerson, former employment specialist for the Urban League of Portland.

Ralph Nickerson, native Portlander and manager of First Interstate Community Lender Program.

Willie Mae Ranson, retired owner of Woodlawn Cleaners and former painter's helper for the Oregon Shipyard.

Warren Robinson, former owner of grocery store located on Williams Avenue and first black person to serve on the Pharmacy Board.

Verdell Burdine Rutherford and Otto Rutherford, native Portlanders and active in several civic organizations. Otto Rutherford was past president of the NAACP, and former director of the Adult Senior Center. Verdell served as Dr. Unthank's secretary for 25 years.

Lurlene Shamsud-Din, Program Administrator of Sabin Demonstration School, and former Vanport resident.

Betty Thompson, community activist and former Albina War on Poverty Committee member.

Tom Unthank, former board member of the Albina Art Center, artist and son of DeNorval Unthank.

Herbert Warren, retired Esco worker and longtime resident of Portland.

Rosa Washington, former resident of Vanport and Guild Lake Housing Project.

Mayfield Webb, former president of the NAACP and Albina Corporation and former director of the Albina War on Poverty Center.

History Advisory Committee

Dr. Carl Abbott, Portland State University, Professor and Historian

Elise Anfield, Native Portlander and Assistant to Mike Lindberg

Richard Brown, Photographer/Community Folk Artist

Mckinley Burt, Writer/Community Historian

Michael "Chappie" Grice, Educator/Community Historian

Rick Harmon, Editor of Oregon Historical Quarterly,

Joyce Harris, Executive Director of the Black Education Center

Dr. Darryl Millner, Former Chair of Portland State University, Black Studies Department

Kamau Sadiki, Community Historian

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