

African Americans in Oregon Scholarship on the Verge

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African Americans have been in the area that became Oregon for hundreds of years, when the first black person, Marcus Lopez, arrived with the early explorers in 1788. As the centuries passed, more came, for a myriad of reasons. Some traveled West as pioneers, as did George Washington Bush, in search of fortune. Others, such as Robbin and Polly Holmes, came as the slaves of white settlers. Following emancipation, still more arrived, fleeing the South in search of more tolerant neighbors. The biggest influx of African Americans in Oregon came during World War II, when the wartime shipyards opened new doors of opportunity. While many African American workers left following the war, many remained, building what is now a small but culturally rich African American community in Portland with even fewer outside the city, sometimes as the only African Americans in a small rural community. While such stories are vibrant and are an essential aspect of Oregon history, the scholarship of African Americans in the state remains in its adolescence, failing to tell either a comprehensive history or compelling narratives that could animate the field. Despite this, interested historians have tremendous opportunities for study, indicating that African American scholarship in Oregon could be on the verge of prominence.

A number of issues characterize historical study of African Americans in Oregon. One, many works, while exhaustively researched, fall prey to the “one thing after another” stereotype of historical study, and are not animated with personal stories or a compelling thesis. Second, while there are dozens of stories of African Americans, they remain scattered or not thoroughly researched. As such, they remain in threat of being forgotten, lost in a decades-old historical journal or a dusty box of manuscripts. Third, while there are a handful of respected scholars, such as Darrell Millner and Quintard Taylor, those who have made African Americans in the Northwest a specialty are few. Fourth, much study focuses on the Portland area, leaving the realities of rural life unexplored. Fifth, while such books as Quintard Taylor’s *In Search of the Racial Frontier* are essential to the field of study, the stories of African Americans in Oregon are often explored as part of an assumed common Western experience, leaving the unique aspects of this state’s history somewhat unexamined. Finally, some sources simply cover the same content – Marcus Lopez, George Washington Bush, the Cockstock Affair, the exclusion Acts, the Holmes case, the Constitutional Convention and Vanport – and do not offer original insights or new research. Particularly repetitive are the number of biographical mentions of George Washington Bush, an important individual to be sure but one of dozens of esteemed African Americans in the Northwest whose stories should be told. In general, many sources seem to repeat the information found in two key studies, Daniel Grafton Hill’s 1932 thesis, “The Negro In Oregon” and Elizabeth McLagan’s 1980 *A Peculiar Paradise: A History of Blacks in Oregon, 1788 – 1940*.

To be sure, there are valuable exceptions. Carol Friedman’s “The Negro and the Oregon State Legislature,” offers detail that is absent in many surveys, concentrating on the specific actions of Oregon’s lawmakers throughout the state’s early history. Oznathylee Alverdro Hopkins offers a revealing description of articles of Portland’s African American newspaper, *The New Age*, at the turn of the twentieth century. Rudy Pearson offers great detail, delving into a specific time period in his dissertation, “African-Americans in Portland, Oregon, 1940 – 1950” to show the development and challenges of the African American community during and after

World War II. The Bosco Milligan Foundation, while including the common summary, nonetheless provides interesting detail in its study, *Cornerstones of Community: Buildings of Portland's African American Community*. Sources such as Elinor Langer's *One Hundred Little Hitler's* and Robert Dietsche's *Jump Town: The Golden Years of Portland's Jazz, 1942 – 1957*, offer what seems most lacking – African American history through a prism, through a specific perspective that brings stories to life. More than just surveys, these latter two works in particular offer personal stories and specific detail that serve as a welcoming gateway and contextual framework to a larger tale.

Despite its adolescence, there are a number of sources that could inform future study. There are several articles, albeit few recent, that have been written specifically about African Americans in Oregon. There are also several resources to inform histories of traditionally African American neighborhoods in Portland, sections in general Oregon history books on the topic and manuscripts that are relatively unexamined. Lenwood Davis's bibliography *Blacks in the State of Oregon* includes over 85 pages of citations of research and primary sources. There are a number of non-scholarly works as well, such as Lenora Morris' review of Portland's African American Rose Festival princesses. Internet searches on African Americans in Oregon reveal dozens of people and sources that could be further researched. What follows in this bibliography is but a sampling of the potential sources.

Because of the great number of sources, as well as the current issues within the field, there remains tremendous opportunity for further study. An interested scholar has, potentially, a variety of projects from which to choose. For example, the Oregon Historical Society has a number of articles that offer biographies of African American pioneers that could be compiled into one illuminating text. Similarly, the Society has over 60 oral histories that could be included in a common text. Studies of some of the more compelling components of earlier history are also waiting to be addressed. Examples include a study of the Knights of the Golden Circle, a proslavery movement in the 1850's that wanted to create, out of the Oregon territory, a slave republic separate from the United States. In addition, a biography could be written of one of the Knight's leaders, Joseph Lane, who was a territorial governor for Oregon and was a strong advocate for slavery during Oregon's statehood debates. Further, as Hopkins points out, a fascinating biographic study could be done of the editor of the *New Age*, Adolphus Griffin. Hopkin's study of the *New Age* was so illuminating, it almost begs scholars to review other African American newspapers in Oregon, such as the *Advocate*. The lives of prominent families and leaders have yet to be explored, perhaps most significantly the Bogle family, the ancestors of whom arrived in the pioneer days. Similarly, the Gordly family has been prominent in the Portland area for nearly a century. There also does not appear to be study of the number of slaves that arrived before the Civil War. Finally, the stories of rural African Americans in Oregon are almost entirely without narrative, particularly in modern times.

For this student of history, perhaps one of the most compelling stories that seem to be untold is that of Cheryl Dawn James. Her experience was documented in two slim folders at the Oregon Historical Society. These folders reveal that James was a Jefferson High School student in 1971 who was arrested for assaulting an FBI agent who entered her home to apprehend her older brother, Charles. Charles, 20, was in the Navy and had been wounded and decorated in Vietnam. He was reassigned to California following his wounds, where he requested leave to return to Portland to marry his fiancé and attend the birth of their first child. The Navy initially granted his request, only to turn him down at the last moment. He left anyway, notifying his commanding officer and his local congressperson, Edith Green. Charles was staying at his small

family home, with 14 of his 18 brothers and sisters, caring for his wife and their sick newborn infant when two supposedly unidentified FBI agents entered their home, reportedly saying, "You're coming with us, boy." A family dog lunged at one of the agents and was restrained by a younger brother. One FBI agent mistook the brother's action for aggression and put him in a stranglehold. Still not knowing that the men were from the FBI, Cheryl attempted to protect her young brother by hitting the agent over the head with a rolling pin. She was taken into custody and sentenced, as an adult, to 18 months in prison. While in prison, she was raped and became pregnant with a child -- she later had a son, Maurice. Charles was also sent to prison for an undetermined sentence.

In response to the James incident, both African Americans and whites became enraged and formed the Cheryl James Defense Committee, which included such prominent Portlanders as Stephen and Gretchen Kafoury. The Defense Committee was included on a list of organizations that were monitored by the Portland Police Bureau's Intelligence Division. Partially as a result of her supporter's efforts, Cheryl was released after 9 ½ months. Unfortunately, that is where the story ends. Further examination of this incident would be valuable not only to educate the general community, but it could also be a porthole through which to access modern African American history in Oregon, similar to the approach of Elinor Langer.

It appears that the type of scholarship that focuses on individual or compelling stories is perhaps the best approach to reaching a wider audience. For example, while the definitive survey book, *A Peculiar Paradise*, is out of print, there are at least three recent biographies of York of the Lewis and Clark expedition. Further, Elinor Langer's book was reviewed in works ranging from the New York Times to the Oregon Historical Quarterly.

Again, what follows is but a sampling of the sources available to the interested scholar. The works that I've reviewed I've annotated. Others I've listed as potential sources for further study.

Annotated Bibliography

African Americans in Oregon

Berry, Edwin C. "Profiles: Portland." *Journal of Educational Sociology*. Vol. 19, No. 3, Race Relations on the Pacific Coast (Nov., 1945), pp. 158 – 165.

This excellent study looks at the transformation of Portland during years of World War II. It offers a timely, first-hand perspective, given that it was written in 1945 by Berry, who was the secretary of Portland's Urban League. Berry attests to the difficulties encountered by African Americans who came to Oregon to work in the shipyards and who attempted to make Portland their home. Once in Oregon, these migrants found work but also barriers to integrating into the general Portland community. Specifically, Berry writes of how the Portland Realty Board adopted a rule prohibiting its members from selling a home to an African American outside of specifically designated areas. This rule effectively restricted African Americans to the sub-par, temporary housing at the shipyard. Not only did this inhibit permanent settlement, it meant that the majority of African Americans were not allowed, as they were residents of Vanport, to vote in Portland city elections. Berry continues with a discussion of the union restrictions that further disallowed permanent settlement. While so many African Americans found work in the shipyards, the fact that they were not members of a union foretold of an end to gainful work at the end of the war. He finally suggests that Portland was "mined," about to explode with racial tension, with one of the few hopes the small number of organizations, the Urban League included, which sprung up to help African Americans. Berry's first-hand perspective lends this article to being an essential resource to understanding Vanport and the context of the development of Portland's African American population.

Davis, Lenwood G. *Blacks in the State of Oregon, 1788 – 1974: A bibliography of published works*. Monticello, Illinois: Council of Planning Librarians, 1974.

This work includes sources arranged according to specific categories such as newspapers, both black and white, books, articles in periodicals, articles in newspapers, editorials in newspapers, public documents, and includes the text of the Oregon Black Agenda, the guiding document of the first Oregon Black Political Convention. Davis includes articles in a number of historical quarterlies from beyond the West. Most of the works that Davis cites are unpublished, typically student papers, theses or dissertations.

Dietsche, Robert. *Jumptown: The Golden Years of Portland Jazz, 1942 – 1957*. Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2005.

Dietsche, the founder and former owner of the famed Django Records in Portland, provides a conversational and highly detailed account of the rise of jazz in Portland during and following World War II. He traces the beginning of the jazz culture to Portland's war-time shipyards and the building of the Grand Coulee Dam, both of which brought African Americans from all over the country as workers. While certainly this culture welcomed blacks and whites, its heritage and involvement of blacks brought entertainment and opportunities to African American musicians and residents. Jazz clubs, according to Dietsche, provided a tremendous

meeting place for a great many distinguished musicians and their admirers. He relates story after story, in a tone that implies he was in the room, of great performances, of chance meetings of musical greats, and of the sometimes-tragic lives of those who made the clubs their second homes. Dietsche also places the clubs and the prime meeting spots, sharing their original location. As such, the book becomes a bit of a geographic, as well as a cultural history. At times, the stories are so personal and the names seemingly so familiar to the author that the reader can feel excluded, as if overhearing a great story on a bus. Once that is overcome, however, the book can be seen as an excellent introduction to a lesser-known part of Portland culture, one that could reshape the way residents think of themselves. So removed, it seemed was Oregon from the Cotton Club and the musical culture of the South, it may come as a pleasant surprise, through Dietsche's book, that so many musical powerhouses, from Charlie Parker to John Coltrane, once spent time in our seeming hinterland.

Friedman, Carol. "The Negro and the Oregon State Legislature." Seminar Paper, Portland State University, 1969.

Friedman's work moves beyond the typical summary of African Americans in Oregon and provides more in-depth discussion of the specific actions taken by the Oregon state legislature to actively discourage settlement by people of color in the state. She takes up de Toqueville's question as to whether people are more extreme in their racism in places where slavery never existed. She finds that, indeed, Oregonian legislators passed several pieces of legislation that demonstrated such racism. She discusses specifically the legal restrictions on immigration, the exclusion act, and the failure to ratify the post-Civil War amendments. Friedman also argues that the ultimate decision to reject slavery in the state was not based upon an abolitionist sentiment, but rather the pragmatics of not wanting to antagonize poor white laborers and the quandary of supporting slaves during long, rainy winters. She cites several statements by anti-slavery legislators that condemn abolitionists as agitators. Among her most detailed discussions is of the 1868 legislature, dominated (43 out of 69 seats) by the Democratic party, which had a platform that stated that Oregon should be on "a white basis for white men." This legislature rescinded previous approval of the 15th amendment and passed a bill allowing for white men only to bear arms. Two years later, the newly elected Democratic Governor Grover included in his inaugural address an additional denouncement of the 15th amendment, saying it should be up to states to decide for themselves what to do with "inferior races." Details such as this help prove Friedman's thesis and help ensure that her paper is a valuable contribution to the field.

Hayes, Ralph. *Northwest Black Pioneers: A Centennial Tribute*. Seattle: Bon Marche, 1994

Part of a publicity effort by the Bon Marche department store to show its support for the African American community, this resource has a common historical summary, short biographies, overviews of significant organizations and pictures of prominent African Americans in the Northwest from the days of discovery through to 1994. The first 26 pages discuss Oregonians, with the last 57 pages devoted to Washingtonians. Individuals discussed include York, George Washington Bush, and A.E. Flowers. Lesser known Oregonians include Lou Southworth, who came to Oregon as a slave and eventually purchased his freedom with gold he mined near Jacksonville. Hayes also discusses Richard and American Waldo Bogle, who moved

to Oregon only to flee to Walla Walla to escape the exclusion laws. The booklet includes short biographies of several “firsts,” the first African American police officer, cowboy, educator and a number of politicians. More recent figures are included, such as Dick Bogle and Jim Hill. The work offers basic information on these topics and offers some interesting anecdotes, but generally provides only summaries of the lives of those who must have, and continue to lead, groundbreaking lives.

Hill, Daniel Grafton. “The Negro in Oregon.” Thesis, University of Oregon, 1932.

Perhaps the first significant work of its kind, Hill’s resource has been used repeatedly throughout the field of African American scholarship in Oregon. Despite its occasional historical inaccuracies and overused data (McLagan, in her notes of *A Peculiar Paradise*, cites errors in dates and details, and Hopkins in “Black Life in Oregon” suggests that it is “incomplete and overused”) it nonetheless provides a starting point, an entryway, into the field. It includes what is now a common summary – York, the Holmes case, George Washington Bush, the constitutional convention – but it also includes information that many other scholars have somewhat overlooked. In particular, Hill discusses in some detail the realities of life for rural African American Oregonians, documenting, for example, the exclusionary acts of some white rural citizens, the institutions of importance to rural African Americans, such as churches, schools and business, and the population numbers throughout the state and in La Grande, Salem, Pendleton and Grants Pass in particular. He further documents the health problems African Americans encountered, the growth of African American popular culture and the rise of community institutions in Portland. With perhaps the exception of McLagan’s work, below, such a comprehensive discussion is without parallel. Hill’s writing style lacks personality or distinction, and his study is somewhat flawed in methodology and detail, yet his survey is invaluable reading for anyone interested in the topic.

_____. “The Negro as a Political and Social Issue in the Oregon Country.” *The Journal of Negro History*. Vol. 33, No. 2. (April, 1948), pp. 130 – 45.

In this article, published 16 years after he wrote his thesis, Hill simply presents a trimmed-down version of his original findings. Perhaps most telling about this article, however, is that it is the only one that has “Oregon” in its title in the over 100-year history of the journal (later the *Journal of African American History*).

Hopkins, Oznathylee Alverdo. “Black Life in Oregon, 1899 – 1907: A Study of the Portland New Age.” Thesis, Reed College, 1974.

In this overview and analysis of the Portland *New Age*, an African American newspaper, Hopkins describes the conditions of life in the city as well as the general perspective of many African Americans at the time. Her analysis also shows the extent to which the small African American community was close knit and intimate, describing the articles and mentioning that [they?] assumed each reader knew the other. Hopkins also discusses the way in which the paper reflected the national ideological debate between Booker T. Washington and WEB Dubois. The editor of the paper, Adolphus Griffin was a Washington follower and exhorted Portland’s African Americans to follow his self-help, non-confrontational approach. Hopkins suggests that

Griffin, in turn, gained widespread acceptance throughout the state and was the “leading black man at the turn of the century.” The *New Age* also reflected a regional bias against Southern blacks, who were described as “ignorant and lustful.” This description exists despite extensive coverage of the racist violence sweeping the South at the turn of the century.

Hopkins traces the shift in the approach of the newspaper over the years, which became more open to Dubois’s intellectualism and became more sympathetic to Southern blacks as Portland’s blacks faced similar issues with job and housing discrimination. Hopkin’s work is emblematic of the direction for the field of African American scholarship in Oregon, detailed, analytical, historically significant and thoughtful.

Little, William and James Weiss, eds. *Blacks in Oregon: A Statistical and Historical Report, 1788 - 1940*. Portland: Black Studies Center and Center for Population Research and Census, Portland State University, 1978.

Little and Weiss present what is almost entirely a statistical report on the history of African Americans in Oregon. While Darrell Millner provides a written summary of African American history, other authors focus on the numbers. Diane Pancoast focuses on the population shifts from 1940 to 1950. Little looks at population distribution throughout the Western states. Carolyn Murray, along with Little, contrasts African American and white populations in Oregon. Virginia Mitchell and Little review black and white enrollment in Oregon’s high schools, while Jacqueline Loville looks at blacks in Oregon’s postsecondary institutions. Carolyn Murray analyzes mortality and birth rates and Thaim Kamara looks at fiscal inequality. While sparse on analytical narrative or contextual information, the data can serve as a resource for historians doing research on Oregon’s black history.

Karolevitz, Robert. “George Washington: Northwest City Builder.” In *Negro Digest*, v. xii, no. 11 pp. 70 – 75.

This popular history, told in a somewhat hyperbolic article, discusses the life story of the prominent African American Northwesterner, George Washington Bush. Karolevitz tells of how Bush was adopted at birth by a white couple in Missouri, who gave him an education similar to that of white children. As grown man in 1842, he was granted citizenship rights as the by-product of a suit in which he sought redress for an unpaid debt. Bush eventually left Missouri, accompanied by his parents, in search of a fortune in the Northwest. He settled in the Oregon territory, in an area that later became Centralia, Washington. There he amassed lands valued at over \$150,000. He also married, was widowed, married again, and had one son. He was one of a handful of African Americans who petitioned for exemption from Oregon’s exclusion act. By the time his petition was eventually declined, the State of Washington had been formed and he was living outside of Oregon’s new boundaries. When the Panic of 1893 hit, Bush became a one-man relief agency, doing everything for his neighbors from sewing clothes to providing needed financial relief. The information provides valuable insight into this important man but also falls prey to romanticizing him to an extreme.

McLagan, Elizabeth. *A Peculiar Paradise*. Portland: The Georgian Press, 1980.

McLagan offers one of the few works that attempts to provide a comprehensive overview and summary of African Americans in Oregon through 1940. As such, the work discusses familiar topics, such as Marcus Lopez, George Washington Bush, the Holmes case, the exclusion acts, the Constitutional Convention and the continuing legislative and social history in Oregon during and following the Civil War that discouraged the growth of the African American population in the state. What makes this work different from other summaries is simply the extensive detail that McLagan includes. Primary documents, original quotes and personal stories make this work more comprehensive and engaging than shorter and less recent studies. As she has acknowledged, a second edition is needed to carry the history to the present day, and the stories of rural African Americans need to be brought to greater light.

Millner, Dr. Darrell, et al. “Cornerstones of Community: Buildings of Portland’s African American History.” Portland, OR: Bosco Milligan Foundation, 1995.

Millner joins other scholars, such as Quintard Taylor, Carl Abbott and Cathy Galbraith to identify and describe the histories of buildings in the Portland area that were and are of significance to the African American community. It provides a well-written summary of African Americans in Oregon, followed by a contextual statement that suggests that the study of buildings provides a window through which impressions of many community members can be seen. The report describes the first buildings of significance to the African American community and discusses the building boom that occurred during the 1905 Lewis and Clark Exposition. As went the African American community, so did their building and housing patterns. Neighborhoods, as these patterns show, followed a history of de facto segregation in which African Americans centralized their homes and businesses, civic and religious institutions in specific areas in an attempt to forge a protective and supportive community. Unlike other races, African Americans, until recent decades, remained in these communities, as shown by building patterns that allowed for housing solely within the confines of the community for a growing middle class. The brochure provides a number of personal stories of the people behind the bricks, adding texture and depth to what could have been a dry survey. It concludes with an excellent chart and map that provides more detail about the buildings of significance to the African American community. It is a work that could be expanded in the future to serve as an important resource on Portland’s African American history.

Millner, Darrell. *York of the Corp of Discovery*. Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 2004.

As much a biography as it is a challenge to previous scholarship on York, Millner discusses York’s role in the Corp of Discovery at the same time he attempts to de-romanticize his contribution. While Millner frankly discusses York’s value to the mission as a laborer, he also specifically takes on two traditional stereotypes that have permeated much of white accounts of his role. First, Millner challenges what he calls the Sambo tradition, or of making York appear to be a passive child-like man who lacked leadership, intelligence or any significant civilizing characteristics. The second approach is the superhero stereotype, in which York is given traits far exceeding the normal man – strength, patience, ability to win the affections of all Native women. Generally, these two stereotypes obfuscate the reality of the story of York, diminishing our over-

all understanding of him and of the social context of his participation in the expedition. Millner's treatment of the subject is valuable, leading the reader to challenge romantic or reductionist stereotypes of this important figure. Perhaps more importantly, in this study Millner also does something rare – he brings larger questions of historiography into the scholarship of African Americans in Oregon.

Moreland, Kimberly. “History of Portland’s African American Community (1805 to the Present).” Portland: City of Portland, Bureau of Planning, 1993.

Moreland's survey attempts to restore the history of African American Portland that had been destroyed or altered as a result of the city's redevelopment efforts. It does that and more, describing the context for and the challenges of the development of Portland's African American community. It includes oral histories, maps and pictures that chronicle what had been a different landscape. Moreland first includes a typical summary of Oregon's African American community, but then expands on this history to describe several community institutions and issues relevant to Portland's African Americans. In particular, she discusses the railroad as the key industry drawing African Americans to the area, the development of the Colored School in 1867 as an important institution in educating many community members and the building and subsequent destruction of the Portland Hotel, which had offered employment to so many African Americans. Moreland details how the Eastside became the central site for Portland's African American community, drawn in great measure by the Enterprise Masonic Lodge, an important gathering place. Only briefly mentioned but valuable are details about African American newspapers, civil rights and women's groups, black-owned businesses, legislative acts, Portland's Black Power movement, and tensions with the white community. Finally, Moreland includes an excellent bibliography and interview list that could be used for future study.

Morris, Lenora. *The Ebony Princesses of the Portland Rose Festival, 1967 – 1982*. Portland: Morris Scholarship, 1982.

Morris offers a non-scholarly look at the 36 young African American women who served as either princess or queen in the Rose Festival. She includes sometimes-brief profiles of the women and of those who she spoke with, updates about their lives. She includes some discussions of how being involved with the Rose Festival changed their lives, and what it meant to be African American on the Court.

Musgrave, James. “The Negro in Oregon before Statehood.” Paper, Portland State University, 1966.

In this 64-page paper, Musgrave discusses the familiar summary of African Americans in Oregon, including York, the Cockstock Affair, George Washington Bush and the Holmes custody trial. He also includes the debates surrounding the state Constitutional Convention and slavery. While he offers nothing new to the discussion of the field, his writing style has flair, making his overview one of the more enjoyable to read.

Oregon Historical Society. “Bibliography of Black History.” Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1990.

This work is simply a listing of the holdings of the library that relate to African Americans in Oregon and to some extent, in the Northwest. As it was published in 1990, it is unfortunately somewhat out of date. An updated version is not being planned. What a review of the sources did reveal is that there are a limited number of scholars who have written extensively on the topic, and among those, there are very few women. Instead, Lenwood Davis, Quintard Taylor, Darrell Millner and Lancaster Pollard are among the small handful of scholars who have written more than two or three works on African Americans in the region. Clearly, more needs to be done.

Pearson, Rudy. “African Americans in Portland, 1940 – 50.” Ph.D. Dissertation. Washington State University, 1996.

This thorough and well-documented discussion of the African American community’s transition in Portland during the years of World War II is a valuable contribution to the field. Pearson provides a brief, common, summary of the history of African Americans in Oregon, which provides no innovative insights, but follows up with a focus on Portland during the war years that provides personal stories, detailed statistics, and a comprehensive overview to the era. Pearson discusses the influx of African Americans from the East, many of whom arrived on trains known as “Kaiser specials.” Once in Portland, these new arrivals faced difficulties finding work on the same level as whites. Pearson thoroughly examines the causes of many of these difficulties, including the activism that sprung up to fight exclusion of African Americans by shipyard unions. Specifically, the group Shipyard Negroes Organized for Victory served as a vehicle for African American discontent, not only in the workplace, but also in housing discrimination and white-only businesses. Beyond the shipyards, however, Pearson looks at how the rise in the African American population brought about a vibrant cultural scene, with jazz clubs and dance halls. Pearson also looks beyond the end of the war, reviewing how the African American community developed roots in Portland’s neighborhoods following the decline and eventual flooding of Vanport. In general, the study provides excellent insight into roots of today’s African American community.

Savage, Sherman, H. “Early Negro Education in the Pacific Coast States.” *The Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 15, No. 2, (Spring, 1946), pp. 134 – 139.

Savage discusses the way in which schools became one of the central civil rights issues to African Americans living in the West. While the majority of the article discusses schools in California, a small section addresses Oregon and its African American children. The first settlers in the late 1800’s had only the option of an all-black school, but eventually became politically active and pushed for integration. They were successful and thus, in 1873, schools in Portland opened their doors to African Americans. Savage looks beyond Portland, however, discussing the activism of an African American barber, J.B. Mitchell, in Pendleton who pushed to allow his daughter to attend integrated schools. Despite the fact that opponents opened up a rival barber shop in an attempt to push him out of town, he was successful. As a result, schools beyond

Portland became integrated. Savage presents new information but does so in an article that only mentions Oregon as part of a supposedly common Western experience for African Americans.

Taylor, Quintard. *In Search of the Racial Frontier*. New York: Norton, 1998.

In this expansive work, Taylor attempts to confront the image of the West as being that comprised almost solely of white people. He relies upon a vast number of primary sources and detailed research to document the lives and realities of those African Americans who found their way into Western territories from the 1500's through to the present day. Time and again, such pioneers came in search of opportunity, or rarely, were brought here as slaves. Taylor defines the West as that which it perhaps was centuries ago, anything from Texas and Kansas onward to the Pacific Ocean. As such, his topic is immense, particularly considering the time period he attempts to tackle. The result is a work that serves as an invaluable resource, almost a reference book, which can be used as a starting point for unearthing the great number of stories to which he only sometimes alludes. Certainly, Taylor proves his point that African Americans in great numbers made the West their home, and in doing so, helped make the West what it is today. As a book, however, a story meant to engage, it lacks a centralizing thesis and too often leaves the reader swimming in perhaps too expansive of a pool of information.

_____. **The Emergence of Black Communities in the Pacific Northwest, 1865 – 1910. *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 64, No. 4. (Autumn, 1979), pp. 342 – 354.**

In this thorough article, Taylor ties the viability of Northwest African American communities to that of the over-all health of a respective city. As such, he traces the growth of such communities along with the economic and cultural opportunities that the city as a whole offered its citizens in the Post-Civil War era. More specifically, Taylor looks at what he calls the region's first African American community, which emerged in Portland in 1860. This community was centered around the church, with the founding of the People's Church in 1862. Following the church, African Americans also founded the Portland Colored Immigration Society in an attempt lure other African Americans from around the nation. By the early 1900's, the majority of Oregon's African American population, around 775 at the time, centered in Portland and found community in churches, newspapers and a Masonic lodge. Taylor discusses some element of the political activism of the growing number of Portland African Americans, most of whom were focused on electing sympathetic politicians and ensuring their own opportunities in housing and schools. One key campaign, albeit unsuccessful, was an 1890's attempt to repeal Oregon's exclusion law. While blacks were successful in putting the issue on the ballot, the residents of the state narrowly defeated it. Insight such as this ensures that Taylor's work provides original information. As with his book, above, however, he tends to almost list facts, without weaving them into a compelling narrative.

Additional Resources

In addition to the below, the index of the Oregon Historical Society Quarterly lists over a dozen biographies and specific issue articles. The Society's library also holds vertical files, newspapers on microfilm and additional manuscript collections, more of which are being catalogued all the time. OHS also has records for 69 oral history interviews of African American Oregonians of

approximately 3,000 interviews in the collection. Interviews continue to be collected and deposited, so additional research is advised. Some journals may be difficult to locate. For example, the *Negro Digest*, now called *Black World*, is available through Portland State University. Therefore, this bibliography provides an excellent start for conducting research on African Americans in Oregon; however, it is not exhaustive.

- Anderson, Martha. *Black Pioneers of the Northwest, 1800-1918*. (no obvious publisher) 1980.
- Bogle, Kathryn Hall. "Oral History Interview: Kathryn Hall Bogle on the African American Experience in Wartime Portland." *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 93 (1992): 394-405.
- Brame, Herman L. *African American Athletes in Oregon: A History from 1804 to 1950*. Portland, OR: H.L. Brame, 2000.
- Broussard, Albert S. "McCants Stewart: The Struggles of a Black Attorney in the Urban West." *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 89 (1988): 157-179.
- Herzog, June. "Study of the Negro Defense Workers in the Portland-Vancouver Area" Senior Thesis, Reed College, 1944.
- Hogg, Thomas C. "Black Man in White Town." *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 63 (1972): 14-21.
- Johannsen, Robert W. "The Oregon Legislature and the 14th Amendment." *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 51 (1950): 3-12.
- Katz, William Loren. *The Black West*. Seattle: Open Hand Publishing, 1987.
- La Plante, Raymond Bernard. "The Negro at Jefferson High School [Portland]: A Study of Racial Change." PhD. Dissertation, University of Oregon, 1970.
- Lockley, Fred. "Some Documentary Records of Slavery in Oregon." *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 17 (1916): 107-115.
- Lovrich, Nicholas P., Jr., Charles H. Sheldon and Erik Wasmann. "The Racial Factor in Nonpartisan Judicial Elections: A Research Note." *Western Political Quarterly* 41 (1988): 807-816.
- McClintock, Thomas C. "James Saules, Peter Burnett, and the Oregon Black Exclusion Law of June 1844." *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 86 (1995): 121-130.
- Millner, Darrell. "African American History of Oregon." *Encyclopedia of African American Culture and History*. New York: MacMillan Publishing, 1993.
- Pearson, Rudy. "'A Menace to the Neighborhood': Housing and African Americans in Portland, 1941-1945." *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 102 (2001): 155-179.

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