History of African-Americans in Portland & Oregon

A Selected Bibliography

This bibliography lists sources for the history of African-Americans in the city of Portland and the state of Oregon, and less comprehensively, the Pacific Northwest and Far West. A list of Portland and West Coast African-American newspapers and periodicals and a brief list of selected general Portland and Oregon historical studies follow the main bibliography.

This document will be updated from time-to-time; corrections and additions may be sent to: Nicholas T. Starin, Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, 1900 SW 4th Ave., Suite 7100, Portland, OR, 97201; nicholas.starin@portlandoregon.gov

Books, Articles, Reports, and Theses


Boston, Clarinér Freeman. *An Historical Perspective of Oregon’s and Portland’s Political and Social Atmosphere in Relation to the Legal Justice System as it Pertained to Minorities, with Specific Reference to State Laws, City Ordinances, and Arrest and Court Records during the Period 1840-1895*. M.S. Thesis, Portland State University, Dept. of Administration of Justice, 1997.


Brownell, Jean B. *Negroes in Oregon Before the Civil War*. Unpublished manuscript, Oregon Historical Society.


Davenport, T. W. "Slavery Question in Oregon," Oregon Historical Quarterly, 9, 3 (September 1908),189-253.


——. "Sources for History of Blacks in Oregon." Oregon Historical Quarterly, 73 (September, 1972), 197-211.


Horowitz, David. The Ethical Dilemmas of Tracking Down the Klan The Oregon KKK of the 1920s. Sound recording of a lecture at the Oregon Historical Society, 1985.


——. “‘As Citizens of Portland We Must Protest’: Beatrice Morrow Cannady and the African American Response to D.W. Griffith’s ‘Masterpiece.’” Oregon Historical Quarterly, 107, 3 (Fall 2006).


——. “‘Unwelcome Settlers: Black and Mulatto Oregon Pioneers, Part II: Census Tables.’” *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, 84, 2 (Summer, 1983).


—. “The Emergence of Black Communities in the Pacific Northwest, 1864-1910,” Journal of Negro History, 64 (Fall, 1974), 342-354.


——. “Racial Discrimination in the Workplace: a Study of Two West Coast Cities During the 1940s,” Journal of Ethnic Studies 8, 1 (Spring 1980), 35-54


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**Portland African-American Newspapers & Periodicals**

*Advocate*. 1903 – 1936[?]. Note: Related to *Beaver State Herald* and *Mt. Scott Herald*.


*New Age*. 1896 – 1907. Titled *Portland New Age*, 1905 - 1907

*Newspaper* [sic]. 1967 – 1970[?] "A bi-weekly publication serving the Albina community."

*Northwest Clarion*. 1946 – 1965[?]


*Observer*. 1945 – 1950[?].

*Oregon Advance Times*. 1968[?].

*Oregon Mirror*. 1962[?].

*Pacific Dispatch*. 1940 – 1947[?]

*People’s Observer*. 1943 – 1945

*Portland Challenger*. 1952 – 1954[?].

*Portland Inquirer*. 1944 – 1946[?].


*Portland Times*. 1918 – 1923. [uncertain citation; other publications exist with same title]

*Scanner*. 1975 – present.


**Selected Early West Coast African-American Newspapers & Periodicals**

African-American periodicals from other West Coast cities occasionally reported on events in Portland and Oregon, as did those with national readerships published in other locations, such as the *Colored American*, printed in New York.

**Oakland**

*Sunshine*. 1907 – 1922[?].

*Western Outlook*. 1914 – 1928[?].

**San Francisco**

*Elevator*. 1865 – 1904[?]

*Mirror of the Times*. 1857[?].


*Vindicator*. 1887 – 1889[?].

*Western Outlook*. 1900[?].

**Seattle**

*Clayton's Monthly*. 1921[?]

*Clayton’s Weekly*. 1917[?] – 1920[?]
The Facts. 1962 –
The Northwest Enterprise. 1931[?] – 1952.
The Pacific Northwest Bulletin. 1943 – 1946[?]
Progressive Herald. 1933[?]
The Puget Sound and Inland Empire Observer. 1959 – 1960[?].
Republican. 1896 – 1898[?]
Rising Sun. 1911[?]
Searchlight. 1919[?]
Seattle Dispatch. 1947 – 1948[?]
The Seattle Enterprise. 1920 – 1930.
Seattle Republican. 1900 – 1910[?].
The World. 1899 – 1900[?].

Selected General & Miscellaneous Historical Works on Portland and Oregon


— Compiled by: Nicholas T. Starin, City Planner II, Historic Resources Program
Abner Francis’s store, corner of Front and Stark, ca. 1858

Abner Hunt Francis, a friend of famed abolitionist Frederick Douglass, arrived in Portland in 1851 with his wife Sydia (or Lynda) and his brother O. B. Francis and were among the early city's very few African-Americans. Within days of opening their trading business, Abner’s brother was arrested for violating the territorial exclusion law of 1849, which made it illegal for “any negro or mulatto to come in or reside within the limits” of Oregon. In September 1851, Judge O. C. Pratt ordered the Francis family to leave the territory. The expulsion order was not enforced however, after a petition signed by 211 Portland residents protesting their expulsion and urging repeal of the law convinced the legislature not to enforce it. Abner Francis remained in Portland for a decade, operating a profitable trading business and amassing a fortune estimated at $36,000 when he left for Vancouver Island in 1860.