

James (Jim) Yarbrough was appointed in July, 1987, Deputy Executive Secretary, Centennial Commission, Washington State. There are five children in the Jim Yarbrough connection with Cragwell to provide another direct link with the Washington D.C. past and the state of Washington's future including the next 100 years to the year 2089.

TACOMA

Recordkeeping involving blacks was very sporadic and not much information is available before 1889 although the city of Tacoma was founded in 1868. Some of Tacoma's earliest urban black pioneers were Edward Frank and Mary M. Edson, grandparents of Charlotte Breckenridge. The Edsons left Kentucky heading west, stopping first in California. Not satisfied in California, they continued to Washington in early 1889. In Tacoma Mr. Edson became a prominent businessman with a barber shop located at 1139 Commerce Street.



Edward Frank Edson

Mrs. Edson taught music in their home at 1422 K Street for more than fifty years. Together, they were among the organizers of the Allen A.M.E. Church on October 9, 1889. Mrs. Edson organized the first choir in the church and served as its first organist. Like most early Tacomans, the Edsons were club members. She joined the Sierra Leone Club and along with her husband became a member of the Puget Sound Lodge GUOOF (Odd Fellows). Both are buried in the South Tacoma Cemetery.

Another of Tacoma's earliest black pioneers, John Conna, experienced both hardship and success. He brought the first lawsuit in Tacoma alleging discrimination in a public accommodation. He served as sergeant-at-arms to the state Senate during the first legislative session. Mr. Conna was an active participant in the Prince Hall Masonic Order, ran a successful real estate business and became president of the first black Republican club in Tacoma.