

THE TRI-CITIES

Pasco, Kennewick, Richland

The Tri-Cities are comprised of three towns, Richland, Pasco, and Kennewick, which lie at the junction of the Yakima, Snake, and Columbia Rivers. This area of the Pacific Northwest was first explored by Lewis and Clark on their commissioned exploration for President Jefferson. York, Clark's servant, was the first black to visit the Tri-City area when the expedition camped at the junction of the Columbia and Snake Rivers in October, 1805.

John Hinds, a black mountain man, spent time in the Pasco Basin in 1836. He came to Waiilatpu, southeast of Pasco, with Marcus Whitman and was buried in the Whitman's cemetery.

Tri-City history does not begin until 1884 when Pasco came into existence. Kennewick emerged second, slowly developing into an organized community around the turn of the century.

Richland, the youngest of the three, began formation in 1943 with the beginning of the Hanford Works. The Tri-City area as we know it today was primarily a pass-through area for blacks seeking employment in other areas in the state.

The Tri-City area black population around the turn of the century was scant. The first black pioneers to come to the Tri-City area and take up residence were three black families who settled in Pasco in 1906. Work was scarce, but the men found employment as railroad workers. Among these early Pascoites were the Suttons whose daughter, Gladys Sutton Coleman was the first black graduate of Pasco High, in 1924.

