

The community in the Pacific Northwest to concentrate upon next, is that of the urban area, called Seattle. But a few transitional sentences are in order before presenting the business persons recognized as parts of this Centennial Tribute. In the introduction above, we touched upon the fur-trading industry in a generic sense before de Sable and Edward Rose. Then we presented sketches of York and George Washington; each was identified with a specific era in the economic development of what was to become America, and later, the Pacific Northwest within this same America.

Now we come to Black entrepreneurs in up-and-coming urban Seattle. Here, the all-important Lewis, Clark and York Expedition is vital to Seattle's beginnings. As indicated, the British had to be eliminated before Americans could migrate here in great numbers and possess their land. At first, they were mostly farmers. But no urban environment can exist, populated with just farmers. Urban dwellers make demands upon personal appearances, housing, recreational and leisure time, land, even jobs, that are not necessarily duplications of those of farming communities. And since rural and urban South had co-existed for a good many years, when Blacks did migrate to the Pacific Northwest, some already were acquainted with the outlines of an urban environment, though some came from the East, too.

In 1875 William Grose opened a restaurant-boarding house in Seattle. Thus, he began in the foods and hotel business. And he was the proprietor. Apparently, business was good until the fire of 1889 destroyed it. He did not fold, for he also owned some land and built a home for himself on some of it; he also built other homes. Thus, his birthplace, Washington, D.C., must have offered excellent background for learning to live in an urban setting, that also was useful while helping what became the Territory and state of Washington's largest city. He sold its citizens food; he provided for residents and transients alike, sleeping accommodations. And to others, he sold land. Thus, like many of his contemporaries, no matter what color, variety was his specialty in the rendering of service, or should one write, services?

Speaking of service, there was another type of entrepreneur that was closely related to the urban community. The barber shop. Black males had long been engaged in this type of economic activity where most of their clients were white. During slavery, and for some time afterwards, one has reason to believe, white males were the ones most capable of paying enough per visit to provide income for the barber. Thus the pattern persisted in Seattle in the early days. Besides, in the 1890 census, there were only 406 Blacks in the entire city of 81,000. And then there was the competitive angle. Cut hair of white customers, or go into another line of business.

Two men important in Seattle's early history became barbers for families also identified with this Sound City for many years. The Denny family and the Blethen family. Mr. Dixon and Mr. Cragwell, respectively.

Since the fire of 1889 destroyed almost all of downtown Seattle, including where William Grose operated his hotel-restaurant, much rebuilding had to be done. Two more men in post-fire Seattle, possessed the technical skills to become entrepreneur craftsmen. But one opted for the field of evangelism. The other became a carpenter and a contractor. Mr. Ray followed his wife into evangelism, giving up masonry. Mr. Harvey became the carpenter-contractor, specializing in home building.

The fire apparently did not destroy the business of Mr. Dean although it was located in downtown Seattle, too. Mr. Dean ran a colored employment agency; but given the total population of Black Seattle in 1890, he must have accepted clients who were non-Black to have survived. There were just too few Blacks to have catered exclusively to them.

Appropos of urban environment making demands upon people, and the reverse, Black urban pioneers experienced the editing and publication of their own newspaper. The Oxendines started the Seattle **Standard** in 1892. This paper lasted for two years. It was followed by another, The **Republican**, published by a Black man and his wife, Horace R. and Susie Revels Cayton, both college graduates when they arrived in Seattle in the mid 1890's.

Another early urban entrepreneur in Seattle owned a business where he was able to develop a spinoff that carried benefits to each. Mr. Norris was in the poultry business, later going into the transport business. The two together helped the Norris family provide greater services to its customers. And only the depression of the Twenties led to a downfall. In this sense, the Norris family was not alone.

Just how successful each of these businessmen and women were in terms of dollars, is difficult to determine, but that each became parts of the business scene in the early days of the Pacific Northwest, is the heart of the matter.