



*The Household of Ruth, the women's branch of the GUOOF, had a flourishing lodge in Tacoma before the turn of the century. 2nd from left, Mrs. Edward Edson. Mr. Ernie Tanner in foreground.*

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.

H.J. and Mr. Nettie Asberry left indelible marks on Tacoma. Mrs. Asberry was a college graduate from Kansas where she had majored in music. In Tacoma, Mrs. Asberry taught private piano lessons, and Mr. Asberry owned and operated a barber shop in the Tacoma Hotel. Both were active members in the Methodist Church; Mr. Asberry was a member of the Odd Fellows; and Mrs. Asberry organized Tacoma's NAACP chapter and the Federated Colored Women's Clubs throughout the state. Both

organizations exist today.

Mr. Asberry, Mr. Thomas W. Woods, and Mr. Edmond North were early Tacoma residents who worked in the service industries. Despite the location of Tacoma and Seattle as great port cities on Puget Sound, employment on the waterfront was closed to Blacks. Nor did any of them belong to the Colored Marine Cooks and Stewards Union, created in the early 1920s in Seattle.

An exception to the male employment pattern was Lawrence Sledge, who arrived in Tacoma from Mississippi in 1890. Sledge attended Stadium High School and later business college. Still he was not pleased with himself. Possessing a brilliant and inquiring mind, he yearned for the challenge of the legal field. Ultimately he studied law, passed the bar and in 1909 he became a very successful attorney (probably the first Black attorney in Tacoma).

Another exception was a woman. Mrs. Viola Berry arrived in 1919 and settled in Sumner in Pierce County. Soon afterward she deserted her former vocation of