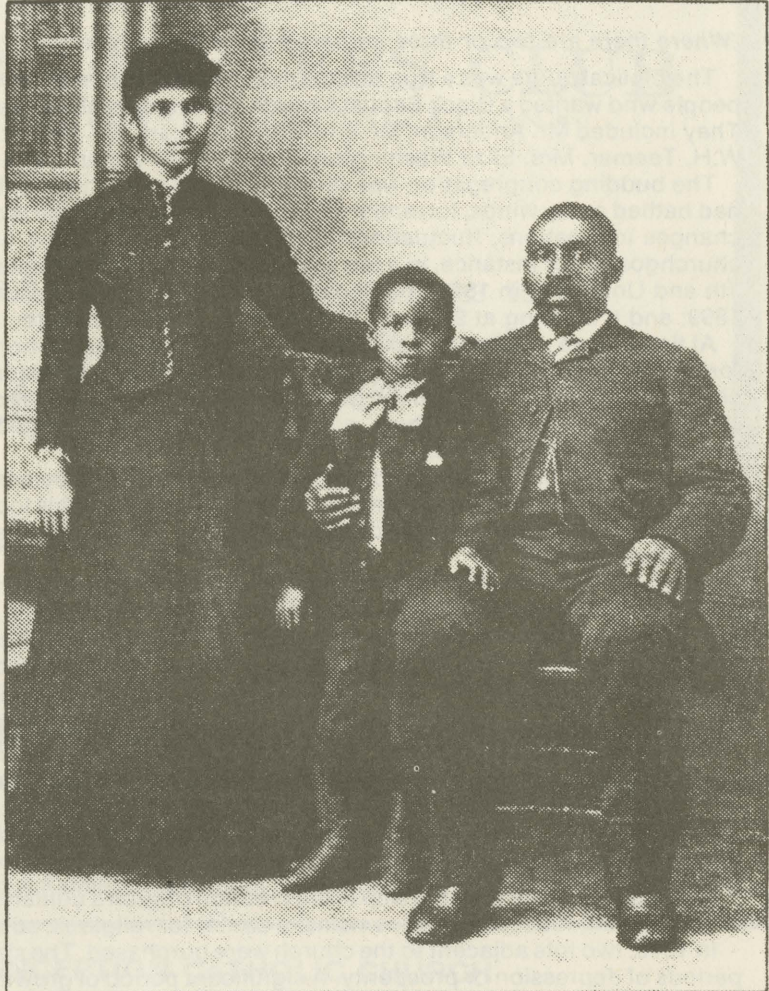


AREA PIONEERS GAVE WANETA SCHOOL

Pictured at right are Ole Washington, his wife, Lucy, and their eldest son, Oley. The Washington family figured prominently in the Waneta School whose students are planning an all-school reunion Saturday, July 17, at St. Joseph's School. The Washington family donated the land for the Waneta School in April of 1901. When the land was given, it was stipulated that it be returned to the family when it was no longer needed for a school. That took place in 1944. The school building still stands and is used as a residence now. Mrs. Vivian Sears, Mabton Road, is the only surviving member of that family, one of seven children. She is 81 now and has a vivid recollection of the history of the area, known then as the Sage Valley. The Washington family came to that area in 1891, Mrs. Sears said, from Roslyn where they had worked in coal mines. The district, at that time, was designated as district #35 of Yakima County. Mrs. Sears remembers that Benton County had not yet been formed and Yakima County extended all the way to the Columbia River at Pasco.



Historical Sketch of the Sears Family.

A Look at a Black Family (Business Life)
Sunnyside, Yakima Valley, Washington State

1920 - 1930's Philip Sears born September 20, 1896

Vivien Washington born March 14, 1901

were wed April 29, 1920 and of that union (6) six children were born:

Veatha Sears Bell, Waynes Sears, Dona Sears Clash, Mark Sears Lucia Sears Newborn, and Paul Sears.

Philip and Vivien Sears was a forceful couple willing to pursue and endeavor on new horizons. Philip at the time of their marriage was employed by C. Speck Motors, a Chevrolet and Buick dealership in Sunnyside, Washington. Philip was a mechanic and worked in the service department. He also had great salesmanship skills. He desired to sell cars as well as work on them. He talked to Mr. Speck about being a salesman. Mr. Speck replied he liked his work and ability, but could not employ him as a salesman because he was black (negro). Philip was not daunted by Mr. Speck's decision. From that day Philip was self-employed.

In the following years Philip and Vivien moved into the business world. Entering the business world was not always easy with racial barriers and obstacles, but they worked hard to accomplish their goals.

In the early 1920's they purchased 20 acres of land from Martin Maloy, a black pioneer bachelor owning several pieces of property. The land they purchased was on the Sunnyside-Mabton Highway, Sunnyside, Yakima Valley, Washington. On the 20 acres they built and operated a gas station/grocery store. The station and grocery store was the first of its kind outside of a major town. The operations was located on the main highway connecting the Columbia River to the south over the Horse Heaven Hills. The gas and products sold were by Standard Oil and the grocery store products of the major labels of that era. Their business was brisk and Philip and Vivien worked hard. By then they had two young children with a third on the way. As time progressed their business location became an oasis serving the immediate area in the county as a neighborhood store. Customers came from miles around to buy gas, shop for groceries, use the telephone and to socialize. The central location of the business was also a beacon of welcome to weary travelers driving in from other states. For many newcomers both black and white it was their first stop in the state of Washington. On the remainder of the land was a traveler's campground, farming and diverse use.