

## BLACK HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

Up until 1788, the Pacific Northwest region was occupied mainly by Native Americans and a few British and French fur traders. A trickle of explorers started to arrive in the area in the early 1800s, followed closely by settlers interested in farming the fertile land north and south of the Columbia River. By the late 1800s, there were several thriving towns, including Olympia, Centralia, Tacoma and Seattle.

The black population grew along with the development of the state of Washington. Black explorers gave way to black settlers, and finally black urban pioneers made their mark on the development of many cities and towns in Washington.

### York of the Lewis and Clark Expedition

In 1804, the Lewis and Clark Expedition left Missouri with a group of about thirty men, including Clark's black servant, the slave York. In the diaries of the expedition, Clark makes mention of York's abilities as a hunter and his resourcefulness on the trail. The expedition was considered a tremendous success, and York was given his freedom in 1806.



### George Bush, Early Settler

Among the steady stream of immigrants to the Columbia River area were a number of black men and their families, including George Bush. In 1844, at the age of fifty, Bush, his wife and five children left Missouri with 800 others and headed for the Pacific Northwest. The group spent seven months on the Oregon Trail before reaching the Dalles on the Columbia River. But the freedom Bush sought eluded him in Oregon. The provisional government there had recently passed anti-black laws that were as repressive as those he had left behind in Missouri. Bush crossed the Columbia River into what would become Washington state and formed the first American community there.

