

George Washington, Founder of Centralia

Another black pioneer to brave the trials of the Oregon Trail was George Washington. Born a slave in Virginia in 1817, Washington was adopted by a white couple, the Cochrans. Washington and the Cochrans headed for the West Coast in 1850. He eventually moved north to an area called Centerville, which later became Centralia. Washington was particularly interested in developing the town of Centralia. It was on the railroad line, which meant the town would flourish and grow. To that end, Washington donated land for the construction of several churches. In 1891, as a symbol of his public spirit, he platted and designated a block of land as a public square.



William Grose, Urban Pioneer

Blacks also moved into the growing towns along the Puget Sound. William Grose moved to Seattle in 1860. There he worked at the trade he knew best—cooking. In 1876, he opened his own business, a combination inn and restaurant named "Our House." In 1883, he expanded his business by building a three-story hotel on Henry Yesler's wharf. "Big Bill the Cook," as he was nicknamed, was a prominent figure in the black middle class and was renowned for his generosity. He died a very wealthy and popular man—it is said that sixteen carriages were not enough to carry all the mourners at his funeral.



Susie Cayton, Woman of Accomplishments

Susie Cayton came from an illustrious background—she was the daughter of one of the few black senators in the United States. Susie Cayton herself was one of the few women of the day to attend college, where she studied journalism. She published many articles and stories and developed a reputation as a writer. After her marriage to Horace Cayton and subsequent move to Seattle, she became a prominent member of the black middle class in that city. In 1900 she became the associate publisher of *The Republican*, the black newspaper published by her husband. It was unique enough for a woman to go to college and have a career; it was doubly unique for a *black* woman to do so.

