

Black History Notebook

Chicago: My kind of town

by Alfred E. Cain

It was work that attracted many immigrants to Chicago. After the Civil War, the promise of good-paying jobs in industry caused numerous Black Americans to migrate here from the South. Though many of them found their prospects of opportunity misguided, or at least short-lived, Chicago's infectious energy claimed most of the newcomers forever. In time, some would themselves become entrepreneurs, turning their early disappointment and dejection into economic victory.



Chicago's first settler, Jean Baptiste Pointe Du Sable set up a small trading post on the Chicago River circa 1790. A tribute to its founder in Chicago's Washington Park is the Du Sable Museum of African-American History. [Photo courtesy of the Du Sable Museum of African-American History, Inc.]

Historically, it was a Black entrepreneur who holds the distinction of being Chicago's first settler. Jean Baptiste Pointe Du Sable, a fur trapper and trader, set up a small trading post on the river we know as the Chicago River about 1790. Born in Haiti, the son of a former slave mother and a French-merchant father, Du Sable first came to North America in 1765 after completing studies in Paris. He plied his trade in places along the Mississippi River and on the Great Lake passages to Canada. In his travels he had often passed the area which the Indians called Chicagou or Eschikagou, terms denoting the strong smell of wild onion and/or garlic said to hover over the area.



In 1893, Dr. Daniel Hale Williams performed the first successful open-heart surgery ever reported.

In short order after becoming established here, Du Sable added more buildings to the trading post, and soon he was joined by other settlers. At the turn of the century, Du Sable sold his Chicago business and moved to Peoria and from there to St. Charles, Missouri - the place where he is buried. The story of his experiences certainly validates the old saying: from one little acorn (Du Sable's trading post) grows a mighty oak (the great city of Chicago).

In 1837 the settlement by Du Sable had grown into a village of 4,170 residents and was incorporated as a city. Today, with a population of 3,369,357 and sprawling over a 228-mile area, Chicago is the nation's second largest city.

Despite the statistical status of "Second City," Chicago ranks first in many spheres. It's the busiest transportation center (rail or air) in the world. It is the veritable fountainhead of modern architecture, for Chicago boasted the world's first skyscraper and three of the world's ten tallest buildings have been erected there, including the Sears Tower, the world's tallest. It's also a cultural oasis, offering its citizens a symphony that is often called America's greatest, a galaxy of splendid museums, and an outdoor gallery of modern sculpture rising in many of the city's public spaces, including fine examples of the work by Picasso, Chagall, Calder and Oldenberg among its prizes.

Chicago derives much of its special character from its people who represent an intact ethnic diversity - one that has resisted the homogenizing effects of the so-called "great American melting pot." The people who have congregated here from all over the world have proudly and steadfastly retained many of the cultural traditions of other lands as they engage in - and make their mark on - many facets of the city's life.

Understandably then, a proud page in Black history has been written in Chicago. In 1891, medical history was made in Chicago when Dr. Daniel Hale Williams and an interracial group of supporters received a charter for the Provident Hospital and Training School Association. Provident thus became the first interracial hospital in the U.S. and the first training school for Black nurses in the country. "Dr. Dan" and Provident gained international fame in 1893 when he performed the first successful open-heart surgery ever reported.

Political history was made in Chicago in 1928 when Oscar De Priest was elected to Congress. De Priest was the first Black person elected since the departure of George H. White in 1905 and the very

first from a Northern state. That same South Side district, the 1st, has been represented by Black legislators ever since. The incumbent now is Congressman Ralph H. Metcalfe, who has since been joined by Congresswoman Cardiss Collins, representing the West Side's 6th District.

Glory has also come to Chicago from the achievements of some of its many Black writers and historians. Richard Wright made his first literary efforts there before going on to win world acclaim for his Chicago-based novel, "Native Son," and his autobiographical memoir, "Black Boy." In 1950, poet Gwendolyn Brooks, now Illinois Poet Laureate, became the first Black person to receive a Pulitzer Prize for "Annie Allen."

John Hope Franklin, distinguished professor of history at the University of Chicago, has seen his survey of Black history "From Slavery to Freedom" read for almost a generation. Another prolific commentator on Black history is Lerone Bennett, Jr. His book, "Before the Mayflower," is one of the most popular histories of Black Americans ever published.

That stalwart institution, the church, is alive and well in Chicago, where 957 houses of worship from 74 denominations serve the Black community's spiritual needs. Located here, too, is the national headquarters of the church-related but interdenominational Operation PUSH.

Chicago's singular place in blues, jazz, folk and pop music has been widely, and justly, recognized. Therefore, it should come as no surprise to learn that this is also the capital of the Black sacred music genre known as gospel music. It may surprise some people to learn that the man who refers to himself as "the grandfather" of this litting musical idiom, the venerable Professor Thomas A. Dorsey (composer of "Precious Lord") is still going strong, as one of the associate ministers and musicians at the Pilgrim Baptist Church.

It would be easy to carry on for much longer about Chicago and its accomplished citizens, and though we have only looked at a few facets, it is hoped that the reader begins to feel some of this vibrant city's fascination.

In addition to its abundance of food for thought, food for nourishment and satisfaction has always been a major part of Chicago's economy. For instance, in 1975 the food industry here grossed \$8.1 billion and was outranked only by the city's primary metals industry. An International Food Festival, held here in Chicago last July, resembled a culinary convocation of the United Nations. Virtually every part of the globe was tastily represented and the food did all the "talking."

Newcomers to the city are often surprised to find that contrary to its "meat and potatoes" reputation, Chicago restaurants provide a superbly cosmopolitan variety of foods. Its ethnic restaurants are legion and the quality of the foods served is authentically superb.

The numerous Black restaurants range from many simple stands purveying carry-out orders of chicken, ribs, fish and sandwiches to several elegant, sit-down dining rooms offering some of the best food available anywhere.

A menu from Chicago

The festive menu that we are suggesting in this installment is a distillation from some of the most memorable meals I've enjoyed in Chicago. As expertly interpreted by the Kraft Kitchens, this is banquet fare that takes second place to none. Homemakers who elect to duplicate the suggested menu will likely be asked the names of their caterers.

With this menu, the festivities can begin in the living room. Around a punch bowl, family and guests can limber up their appetites for the main event by nibbling on hors d'oeuvres that are deceptively easy to prepare and deliciously easy to eat. Miniature Ham Puffs can be made a day in advance and refrigerated. For variety, fill the bite-size cream puff with any of your favorite sandwich salad fillings - egg, tuna, shrimp or crab. To serve warm, heat at 375° for 10 minutes.

Souffleed Appetizers are tangy cheese triangles. Cut the toast into any shape you wish - fingers, circles, diamonds, squares. Melba toast or crackers can also be substituted for toast, with bacon, olive slices, anchovies or pimento for garnish. These appetizers are best served right from the oven.

To round out any collection of hors d'oeuvres, offer a Frosted Chicken Liver Pate'. A well-seasoned chicken liver mixture, this decorative selection is sure to be popular. Remind your guests there's more to come!

Roasted poultry is always an entree favorite. But if you've been stuck in a rut of turkey, goose or duck, you may find capon a pleasant alternative. Even if it's true that "chicken ain't nothin' but a bird," chefs, gourmets, and even garden variety food lovers will attest that capon is special. This elite relative of the chicken is bred to provide lots of moist and tender meat. Stuffed with a flavorful oyster dressing, don't be surprised if lady guests succumb to the vapors and their gentlemen have seizures of rapture - they recover instantly if you make an attempt to remove them from your table.

Onion, which some authorities trace back to Egypt of the Pharaohs, has long been a popular seasoning ingredient. We have followed the example of wise cooks in the past and have combined delicately sweet white onions in a cream sauce with a subtle nutmeg accent. For a crispy topping, sprinkle with croutons or toasted almonds just before serving.

Our recipe for spoon bread is the ultimate transfiguration of corn meal mush. This baked Southern speciality, which ranks with a fine soufflé, is made with cornmeal, milk, eggs, margarine and served with a spoon. It can be traced to the first Virginia colonists who learned methods of cooking with cornmeal from the Indians. We leave to your own judgements what other vegetable side dish to prepare; however, boiled green string beans or broccoli all come to mind, as does a wilted lettuce or spinach salad.

Fancy dinner desserts need to be outstanding and plentiful, and they seem even better when wrapped in tradition. We offer a selection that meets all these criteria. Baked Lemon Pie is another Southern favorite brought North. It has a custard-type filling with a delightful citrus flavor. This lip-smacking treat will provoke many requests for your recipe.

Dried-Apple Turnovers featured here are today's descendants of what were called half moon pies. Even earlier in the American colonies, they were beloved and frequently called crab lanterns. One improvement over the ancestral recipe is the flakiness of the crust. According to the Kraft Kitchens, this is the result of Parkay margarine and baking powder. These "fried pies" are filled with a spicy apple mixture of dried apples for a moist but not runny filling - an important feature for turnovers.

Our last dessert suggestion is a compact, finely-textured pound cake with an



exotic taste of orange and spices. Once, cooks used a pound each of butter, flour and sugar to make this cake, hence the name. Our recipe retains that old-fashioned texture and deliciousness.

While these are more than enough desserts for a single meal, making them all is one way of assuring that no unannounced caller will find your hospitality lacking. Besides, the keeping quality of the fried pies and pound cake is good with the ordinary kind of care you give baked goods. The lemon pie? We've never had enough left over for this to cause us any concern, and unless there's only yourself for dinner, neither will you...

DRIED APPLE TURNOVERS

- 1 4-oz. pkg. dried apples, chopped
- 1/2 cup water
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 tablespoon Parkay margarine
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
- Dash of salt

- 2 cups flour
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 3/4 cup Parkay margarine
- 1/4 cup cold water
- Oil
- Confectioners' sugar

Combine apples, water, sugar, margarine and seasonings. Cook 5 minutes over medium heat, stirring frequently.

Combine dry ingredients; cut in margarine until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Sprinkle with water while mixing lightly with a fork; form into ball. Divide dough in half. On lightly floured surface, roll out each half to 16 x 8-inch rectangle; cut each into eight 4-inch circles. Spoon level tablespoonful of apple mixture onto each circle. Moisten edges; fold pastry in half. Seal edges with a fork. Refrigerate 1 to 2 hours.

Fry in 1-1/2-inches of hot oil 3 to 5 minutes or until golden brown, turning once. Drain; sprinkle with confectioners' sugar.



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