

The Black Engineer Who Made Skyscrapers A Livable Domain

By Prof. McKinley Burt

Today we honor the brilliant African American innovator, Dr. David Crosthwait (1891-1976). A man whose innovative genius literally changed the skylines of all the major cities of the world. No human occupancy would be feasible above a half-dozen floors without his pioneering inventions in 'thermodynamics' (heat transfer) that made it possible to deliver hot water, air conditioning and plumbing to unbelievable heights in the sky.

As is too often the case, I only became aware of this blackman's contribution to the world's science, technology and comfort (34 U.S. Patents and 80-foreign) when idly leafing through a related industry manual in the PSU library.

The Dunham Manufacturing Company of Chicago, Ill. had proudly devoted six pages of their monthly publication to the accomplishments of their "Chief Research Engineer."

Breaking all racial precedent, there appeared the picture of a very ebony-hued Dr. Crosthwaite, "1913 graduate of Purdue University, Mechanical Engineering."

Fascinated by these revelations and eager to add an account of his marvelous contributions to my next book on "Black Inventors of America", I immediately got in touch with both the Dunham Mfg. Co. and Purdue University (1974), being led to further information on Crosthwait's career and eventually to telephone contact with the great man himself.

His installations ranged from the Rockefeller Center to the Empire State Building and far beyond. See copy of letter here from

the Dean of Purdue School of Technology to the President of the University.

As you will be made aware here

try-shaping inventions, Dr. Crosthwait's electric career parallels that of the famous black electrical engineer, Howard E. Latimer, member of the "Edison Pioneers." Both men wrote the accepted codes and manuals for the installation and operation of their inventions

of accomplishment stand on the shoulders of those who came before them."

Here he made reference to Norman Rillieuk, the black engineer in thermodynamics who invented the 'Sugar Refiner:

He said I learned so much from studying his works and ideas "(The U.S. Forest Service described the Sugar Refiner as the greatest invention in the history of chemical engineering, and I found it to be true").

Unfortunately, Dr. Crosthwait died before he could come to Oregon to speak to my class and others as he promised me. But I have sought to let the many know of his genius and his dedication to motivating our youth to follow in his footsteps.

Purdue University
School Of Technology
West Lafayette, In-



diana 47907

October 31, 1974

Dr. Arthur G. Hansen President
Purdue University

Dear President Hansen:

It is a distinct pleasure to nominate Mr. David N. Crosthwait, Jr. for an honorary doctor's degree. Mr. Crosthwait received the B.S. in Mechanical Engineering in 1913 and also the professional Degree of "Mechanical Engineer" for Purdue University.

After graduation he was active in connection with the design, installation, testing, balancing and servicing of power plants, heating and ventilating systems.

He has also returned to Purdue each summer for a number of years to teach in our United Association Instructor Training Program.

He was a Research Engineer and subsequently director of the Research Laboratory of the C.A. Dunham Company where, he devoted his time to the development of methods of improving product quality.

He also worked on methods of heat transfer, heating, ventilating and air conditioning equipment as well as pumps and temperature control equipment.

This work led to Mr. Crosthwait being granted 34 U.S. patents and 80 foreign patents.

The Variable Vacuum system he invented and developed was installed in Rockefeller Center, Stuyvesant Town and other large buildings throughout the world.

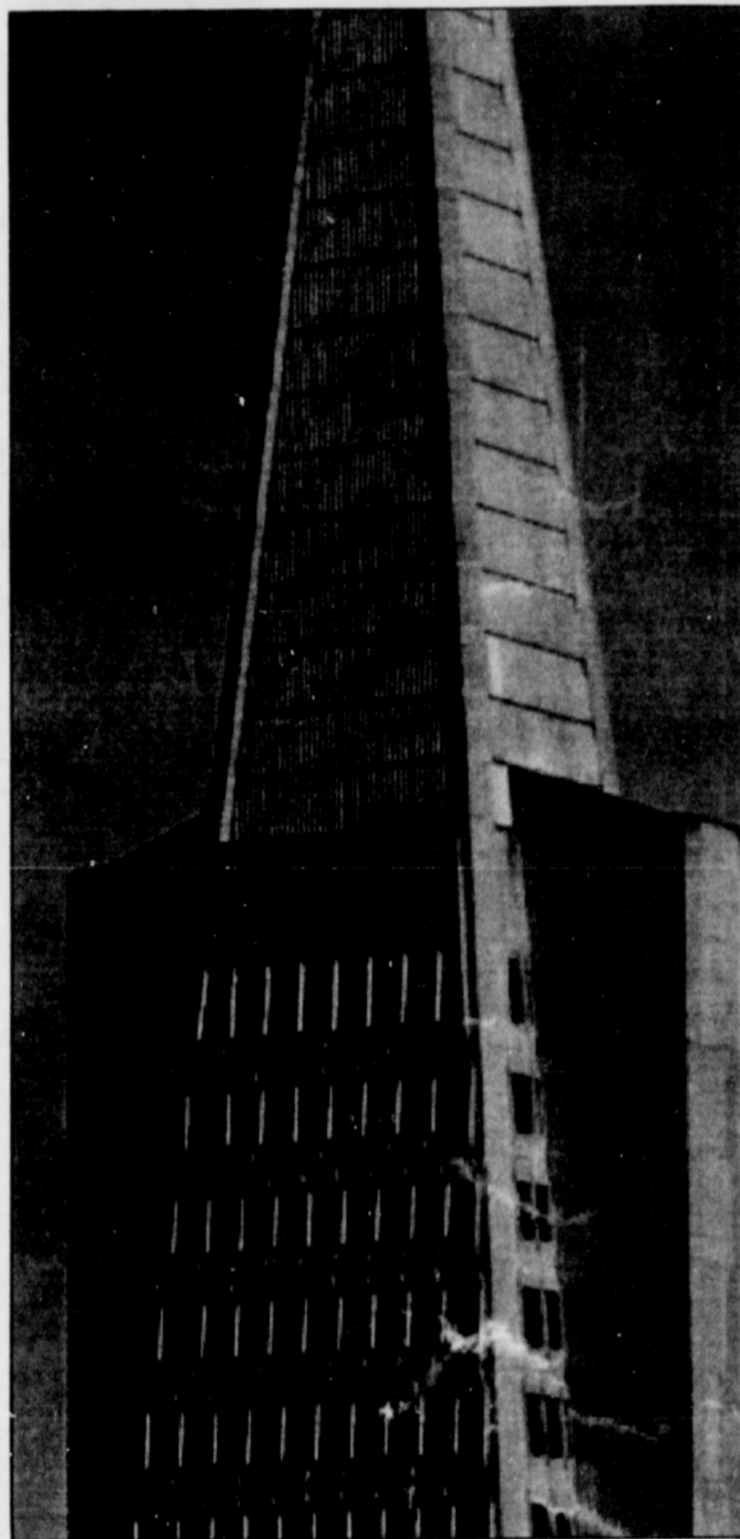
He has made many contributions to trade and technical publications.

He holds membership in a number of national societies and organizations and is a registered Professional Engineer in Iowa, Illinois and Indiana.

He is past president and former member of the Urban Renewal Commission of Michigan City.

On the basis of his long relationship with Purdue University and for his contribution to the field of technology, I support the Faculty of the Department of Manufacturing Technology in their recommendation that David N. Crosthwait, Jr. be awarded Purdue University's highest honorary degree.

Sincerely yours,
George W. McNelly, Dean
School of Technology



by this description of his industry man, easy to talk to; "All men

The
Portland Development Commission
and its staff

would like to salute
the contributions that
Black Americans
have made to this
great nation of ours.

The Portland Development Commission works to bring together community resources to achieve a vital economy with healthy neighborhoods and quality jobs for all citizens. The Commission is committed to working with the community to make our city a better place to live for all Portlanders.

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McMenamins Kennedy School is a proud participant of Black History Month, with the recent west coast premiere of "Through the Open Door" the opening movie of The Cascade Festival of African Films.



Sleep In Class

A great introduction to McMenamins Kennedy School is the **Schoolyard Package**. Included in this special offer are a night's lodging for two, dinner and breakfast in the Courtyard Restaurant, and admission to the movie theater and soaking pool. The cost of the Schoolyard Package is \$99 per night, per couple, Sunday through Thursday (add 9% county room tax). Based on availability. Call (503) 249-3983 for reservations.

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Brewer Dinner • March 11 • 7:00 • \$30

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Matchbox Blues • February 12
Jive Talking Robots • February 26
Groove Revelation • February 19
Jane Doe • March 11

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