



Black History



BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Readers Share Their Black History

The Portland Observer would like to thank all of those who brought in their treasured family photos to share for Black History Month. We are still requesting that you bring in yours with some background on each picture so that we can showcase them.



Mary Lee Taylor as the bride in an old-fashioned mock wedding in the 1930s. Mary Lee was the daughter of O.C. and Birdie Lee Taylor. (PHOTO COURTESY OF GARY ANN TAYLOR)



Above: the Spaceburger with a drive-in food and dairy owned by Jeanette and Bill Russell. This was one of the first black-owned businesses that was located at North Shaver and Vancouver. They served burgers, fried chicken, pop and shakes. (PHOTO COURTESY OF THELMA RUSSELL)

To the left: Eliza Washington was born in 1800 and worked on George Washington's plantation. When she was officially a freed black, she moved to Mississippi. (PHOTO COURTESY OF L.C. ODDIE)

My Interview with Grandmother

BY STEPHEN HANKS FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

I had no idea that my last and only interview with Grandmother Shelton would be in 1989. I waited around for another interview seven years too late. Twenty-four hours after New Year's Day in 1997, Grandmother Shelton passed on. She was the Mississippi born mother of three children, which included by mother Fern. The other day, I listened to the 10-year old taped conversation:

"I was born Indianola, Mississippi, right there in Sunflower County...how old am I?...you not supposed to ask me that...my papa was Julius L. Lipscomb, born in Columbus, Mississippi. He said he was a Black Jew, and my grandfather on my father's side was named Julius Lipscomb also. He was born 1885 in Montgomery,

Alabama...how he end up in Mississippi?...he was a slave and worked for a slaveowner named Dr. Dabney Lipscomb who came first to Alabama from South Carolina then brought his family and slaves to Columbus...Papa's mother was named Margaret from Georgia...Papa met my mother, Nora Fuller, and they were married around 1894...my grandparents on Mama's side were Peter and Eliza Fuller from Virginia...Mama said she was born at Tibbee Station near West Point, "Tibbee" is an ole' Indian word for "water fight" because at Tibbee Creek there was that Indian war the Chickasaw and Choctaw fought the Chakchiuma...there were Indians and Black slaves all up 'round Tibbee Station in the old days...when was Mama born?...all she told me was "I was born the second year surrender."

Her family lived next door to one-legged Gus Cannon who was a farm laborer on Mr. Ryland's plantation...when was I married?...you sho' asking a lot of questions...before I married Grandpa Shelton, I married Willie McCoy of Port Gibson, his family from down in Louisiana...we married in 1920 and had our first child the next year, you Uncle William McCoy, then we left Mississippi and moved to Caruthersville, Missouri where you Aunt Dore and your mother Fern were born...then I married Grandpa Shelton and came here to Portland in 1945 so Grandpa could work at the ship yards...we first lived on North Blandena then later near Columbia Villa while Granpa ran his tailor shop downtown on Fifth and Salmon...now, before you ask me any more questions, let me say this: make sure you get your education and don't

run with the wrong crowd, 'cause your mom and dad working a lot of hours for you and your brothers to make it, so don't let anyone tell you that you can't make it...if you put your mind to something and concentrate - NOW YOU COOKIN' WITH GAS!...how old am I?...I don't remember (grin), probably 100 years old..." As I listened to my taped interview with Grandmother, I was spellbound. Being a genealogist, I very much eagerly desired to investigate Grandmother's story the next chance I got. Uncle William, the late Senator Bill McCoy, had often mentioned of going back to Mississippi to do just that. My mother also gathered what information she could at the family reunions. On my next day off, I drove to the National Archives Federal Census Repository in Seattle to verify the names, places and dates Grandmother had supplied. Most of them all checked out, except for her age, which I now learned from the 1910



Grandmother Lucy Shelton

census was that she was not 100, but 90. How far back could I trace my roots? After a whole day spent and still dozens of questions and new leads, I knew it was time to call it a day and begin the three hour drive back to Portland. But before I left, there was one question I needed an answer to:

when was grandmother's mother, Nora Fuller Lipscomb born? I kept turning the microfilm reader and soon her name appeared. Grandmother was right, for her mother was born "two years after surrender" in August of 1867.

Is your family tape recorder ready?



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